

Pope Francis' Recent Statements on Divorce & Remarriage

Dear Parishioners,

Holy Mother Church with great solicitude desires the reconciliation of all her children and that each one of us participate fully in the Sacraments. She understands well that our lives can become quite complicated and we often bear wounds from our past. If you are in an irregular marriage situation which places you in conflict with the teaching of the Church, there may perhaps be a path back home. And so I sincerely invite you to contact a priest to examine what the possibilities be. That being said, certain clarifications need to be made about our teaching.

There has been much speculation in the press concerning Pope Francis, the upcoming Synod on the Family in Rome, and possible changes regarding divorce and remarriage. Unfortunately in some quarters there seems to be a deliberate obfuscation of Catholic doctrine.

The starting point in the discussion is the teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself, Who said: *"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery"* (Mark 10:11-12).

And so the Catholic Church ought not be excoriated for teaching this same doctrine. It is what Christ the Lord taught. But many never seem to have heard it at all.

Holy Mother Church has understood this to mean that a true marriage is *indissoluble*. But that is not a chain. Rather it is a strengthening bond. We see this in the union of spouses who have persevered for 50 or 60 years. It is obvious that indissolubility is a blessing.

But sometimes, tragically, the spouses must separate, and even seek civil or legal divorce, perhaps to protect themselves and/or their children. This doesn't mean divorce is good, only that it can be tolerated in grave circumstances. But such a person, after repenting and confessing should they be culpable of any personal wrongdoing in causing the breakup is *still* a member of the Church. They are *not* excommunicated and they are free to receive Holy Communion.

Yet attempting another marriage is another matter - if you take the words of Jesus seriously. However, the Church teaches that some couples who *appeared* to have been married have been found to have attempted it *invalidly*.

This can be due to a variety of causes: lack of full consent, ignorance about the nature and ends of marriage, force, fraud, psychic incapacity, there are others. These are called grounds for a *decree of nullity, aka an annulment*. It means that, for all appearances, there was never a true marriage in the "eyes of God." Such people are therefore free to marry (not *remarry*, for they never were truly married).

What Pope Francis has just done is to reform the canonical process by which such a decree of nullity is made. Speaking with reporters about this on his flight back to Rome from his visit to the USA, he said: *"...It [an annulment] is not divorce because marriage is indissoluble when it is a sacrament. And this the Church cannot change. It's doctrine. It's an indissoluble sacrament. The legal trial is to prove that what seemed to be a sacrament wasn't a sacrament...There are so many reasons that bring about (an annulment), after a study, an investigation. That there was no sacrament...But, I like that you asked the question about 'Catholic divorce.' That doesn't exist. Either it wasn't a marriage, and this is nullity -- it didn't exist. And if it did, it's indissoluble. This is clear..."*

The October Synod on the family in Rome will not reverse this teaching. Even if there are confused voices that spew forth heresy, nonetheless the Church herself will not succumb. A discussion is about to ensue on serious questions regarding marriage and family. When it is over, our doctrine will remain faithful to the teaching of Jesus Christ for the simple reason that the Catholic Church is His Infallible Bride.

Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam,

-Father de Rosa