
Divorce and remarriage

By Fr. Vincent Pereira, JCD – Judicial Vicar

Divorce and remarriage is a delicate and difficult subject for Catholics to deal with, because a Catholic marriage is seen as a sacrament, a source of divine grace. As a divine and benevolent institution, the Church feels a deep empathy with Her children's painful situations and She seeks ways and means to embrace them in peace and reconciliation, as the father in the parable embraced his prodigal son. Persons divorce civilly for various reasons that may result from their inability to understand the essential rights and obligations arising from the marital consent or to critically evaluate the marital decision and to be able to carry out and share the marital responsibilities. Pastoral experience shows that some are simply incapable of marriage and yet marry. Some may think that remarriage outside the Church is the only option, but it is not. The divorced are strongly encouraged to enquire and find out how they can still enjoy the sacraments and possibly marry in the Church.

If enquiry proves that the previous marriage was null, there is no hindrance to marriage in the Church. Even if a couple has "married" outside the Church, the couple is invited to attend Sunday Mass, while abstaining from receiving communion until they are able to celebrate a sacramental marriage within the Church. The Church through the Chancery and Marriage Tribunal attempts to regularize any irregular marital relation so that couples receive grace and relief from the pain caused by irregular situations. Some couples simply require the assistance of the Chancery for administrative process. Others require the Marriage Tribunal for judicial process, depending on the nature of the previous marital union.

Pope Benedict XVI, now emeritus, announced the *Year of Faith*, which began on October 11, 2012 and will conclude on November 24, 2013. In his apostolic letter, "Door of Faith," Benedict encourages us "... to arouse in every believer the aspiration to profess the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope... to intensify the celebration of the faith in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist". May couples hear his call to renew their faith in the grace of the sacrament of marriage.

This article is the third of a series on the value of Marriage Law and the Tribunal Ministry. In the next issue, the article will be on annulment: a judicial process.