

How Does A Catholic Get A Marriage Annulment?

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What are the rules governing an annulment? Recently a girl in my town received one from the Church after living with her husband for eight months. Next month she's going to get married again and have a big church wedding. It's being rumored that she paid a lot of money. When people ask me about it, I don't know what answer to give. How did she get her first marriage annulled?



Although you don't know all the specific details in this case, you can be sure of one thing. Midge, she wouldn't be permitted to enter a second marriage unless she had a right to it according to Church laws.

There's nothing mysterious about an annulment.

The marriage legislation of the Church is clearly stated in the code of canon law and ecclesiastical courts exist in every diocese to handle any cases which may come up. The Roman Rota, the Church's highest court of appeal, is the official interpreter of the Code and also passes on special cases sent to it from the various diocesan marriage courts throughout the world.

Hence the first marriage of the girl you mentioned must have been handled by one of these annulment courts. Since we don't have any specific information about this first marriage, we can only state the general norms which govern such cases.

First, evidence may be presented to the court to prove that a valid marriage contract has never existed—that is, a so-called marriage is null and void from the beginning either because of some existing annulment impediment (age, impotence, existence of previous marriage bond, prohibited degree of relationship, etc.), or from lack of proper consent (caused by force or fear, defective knowledge of the object of the contract, pretense or fictitious consent, etc.), or from substantial defects in the prescribed form of celebration (Catholics must be married before a priest and two witnesses).

If conclusive evidence is offered that any of these annulling conditions existed, the court issues a decree of nullity. It should be noted that this decree does not dissolve a valid marriage, it merely states that no valid marriage was found to exist.

Second, a much rarer possibility is that a valid marriage bond existed but was dissolved by the Church. To avoid all misunderstanding, let it be stated at once that only death dissolves a sacramental marriage bond (valid

marriage between baptized persons) that has been consummated. In other words, there is never any question of dissolving a valid consummated sacramental marriage.

However, Church legislation does provide for dissolution of marriage in a few special cases. Among these, the principal ones are: first, an unconsummated marriage in which the parties cannot be reconciled, and one party petitions for dissolution.

The Pope may terminate the bond of the unconsummated marriage by a decree to that effect.

Second, if the marriage between a baptized and a non-baptized person breaks down and later one of the partners is converted to the Catholic faith, a dissolution of the previous non-sacramental bond may be granted by the Pope to allow the convert to marry in the Church, provided the parties cannot be reconciled and scandal is avoided.

The third case is called the Pauline privilege. This occurs when there has been a valid marriage between two unbaptized persons; the subsequent conversion of one of the partners to the Catholic faith, and the refusal of the non-convert to live in harmony with the converted spouse. Under these circumstances, dissolution of the previous non-sacramental marriage is granted to allow the convert to remarry in the church.

Now the first marriage of the girl you mentioned, Midge, must have fallen under one of the many possibil-

'Caused Divisions'

Vietnam Reds Arrest Priests

Saigon — (RNS) — Two priests were sentenced to prison by a people's court in Communist North Vietnam on charges of having "disturbed the public peace, caused divisions among the people, and calumniated the regime."

Father John Baptist Nguyen Van Vinh, Vicar Delegate of the Vicariate Apostolic of Hanoi, was given an 18 months sentence, and Father Joseph Trinh Van Can, rector of Hanoi Cathedral, received a 12 months prison term.

The trial followed an incident in which the two priests unwittingly became involved.

The North Vietnam press was then denouncing "the massacre of over 1,000 inmates in a concentration camp at Phu Loi in South Vietnam." In spite of an official denial by the South Vietnam government, the people of North Vietnam were mobilized in a violent campaign of indignation and protest. Demands were made by "patriotic priests" that public Masses be offered and the cathedral bells be tolled for the "victims."

The two priests were put in a delicate position.

If they refused, they ran the risk of being denounced for indifference to the misfortunes of their countrymen and even of complicity with the "enemies of the people." On the other hand, the priests maintained, the facts of the alleged massacre were not clear and, moreover, public Masses could be celebrated only for known Catholics.

The priests accordingly refused to yield to the pressure of the "patriotic Catholics." The matter promptly organized a "memorial service" at a city club, where a suspended priest gave absolution for the dead and later led a procession through the streets.



Gridiron Stars In Seminary

Vancouver — (NC) — Three former football stars are among 21 seminarians from British Columbia now studying to be Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

They are Bill and Leo Sweeney, brothers, and Peter Durkin, all of Vancouver. Bill, who will be ordained next year, was a well known football player with the University of Portland. Leo, his younger brother, played professional football with the British Columbia Lions. Peter Durkin was prominent with the Vancouver Golfer's squad.

Church Builds Homes In Germany

Cologne — (RNS) — More than 225,000 apartments have been completed by Roman Catholic building associations in Germany since the end of World War II, according to a report published here.

Prelate Cites NATO Peace Achievements

London — (RNS) — William Cardinal Godfrey, Archbishop of Westminster, declared here that whatever the NATO nations "can do to enlighten the peoples of the world on the deeper and closer union of brotherhood that binds them together" will truly be "a powerful contribution to the peace of the world."

At the same time he stressed that "without God, Our Father, the brotherhood of man loses all meaning."

The cardinal preached at a Mass in Westminster Cathedral commemorating the tenth anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Noting that it was intended to revise the NATO treaty after the first decade of its existence, in the light of experience, he asked: "How better can the second decade begin than by thanking God for what has been preserved and fostered and asking His aid as we go forward into the unknown, into years so fateful for mankind?"

Cardinal Godfrey said that in NATO's first ten years "we have learned a great deal, not indeed, more about the sound moral principles which are the basis of international law, but certainly of the sad fact that such principles can be set aside so easily when little importance is attached to them."

Cardinal Godfrey stressed that those who were concerned with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty wished to make it clear that besides the moral law binding individual persons, there also is the law binding on nations in their mutual relationships.

Shepherd And Lamb

Pittsburgh — (RNS) — Bishop John J. Wright, newly installed Bishop of Pittsburgh, greets six-year-old Cornell Horten of St. Richard's church. The youngster is among the thousands of men, women and children who have flocked to meet the prelate since he became the Diocese of Pittsburgh's eighth ordinary.

Priest Voted Citizen Of Year

University Heights, O. —ban community as their first "Citizen of the Year." (RNS) — Father Henry F. Birkenbauer, S.J., head of John Carroll University's seismology observatory, was chosen by 18,000 residents of this sub-

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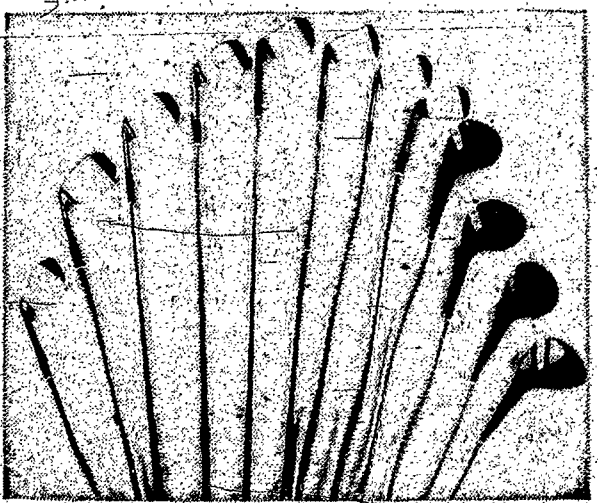
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