

# Widespread Divorce Complicates Church Rules On Weddings

By FATHER JOHN L. THOMAS, S.J.  
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I am a divorced Protestant who would now like to marry a Catholic girl. I married my first wife, a divorcee in the Methodist church. She had been previously married in a Methodist ceremony to a divorced Catholic. My fiancée thinks that because my wife was previously married, my marriage to her was invalid. How does the Church regard my first marriage?



Your experience is a good example of the complications that arise when divorce becomes prevalent.

Although I would not presume to give a definite answer to your question on the basis of the evidence at hand, it seems clear that your fiancée is not correct in her judgment concerning the validity of your marriage.

According to your account, your wife's first marriage was contracted with a divorced Catholic in a Protestant church. If this information is correct, her first marriage would not be regarded as valid by the Catholic Church because her partner was Catholic and consequently not capable of entering a valid marriage in the Protestant church.

Further, since he was divorced, there is a good possibility that his first marriage was valid and he would have been unable to contract another valid marriage for this reason.

Hence on the basis of the information you have presented, it appears that your marriage was valid, so that you are not free to contract a valid marriage in the Church as long as your wife is living.

Under the circumstances you and your fiancée should consult her pastor, or if this should prove unduly embarrassing for special reasons, you should consult the Marriage Court maintained at the local diocesan Chancery.

Every Catholic Chancery includes a Marriage Court staffed by competent canon lawyers with special training in

dealing with complex marriage cases such as your own. The members of this Court will be able to tell you what further information is required to determine if your marriage is valid.

Because Church laws regarding Protestant marriages are frequently misunderstood by Catholics and Non-Catholics alike, we shall take this occasion to explain the general laws determining the Church's view of such marriages. Confusion concerning the Church's viewpoint in this regard may have serious consequences.

Some misinformed Catholics start keeping company with divorced Protestants in the mistaken belief that the Church does not regard Protestant marriages as valid.

If they do not learn differently until they have fallen in love, there is serious danger they will compromise their salvation and enter an invalid marriage. Catholics have no right to expose themselves to such a temptation.

Even should there exist serious doubts that the Protestant's marriage was invalid, Catholics have no right to start keeping company with a legitimate Church authority, not were heary as what thinking, has definitely stated that the marriage was not

valid and consequently there is no impediment to marriage.

The general laws of the Church in this matter may be stated briefly as follows. First, a valid marriage contracted between two baptized persons is a sacrament, and since it has been consummated, it can be dissolved only by the death of one of the partners.

Second, although Church law decrees that Catholics can validly contract marriage only "before the pastor or the Ordinary (Bishop) of the place, or a priest delegated by either of these, and at least two witnesses," Protestant couples are not bound by this legislation, and consequently their marriages are regarded as valid if the marriage contract was valid in other respects.

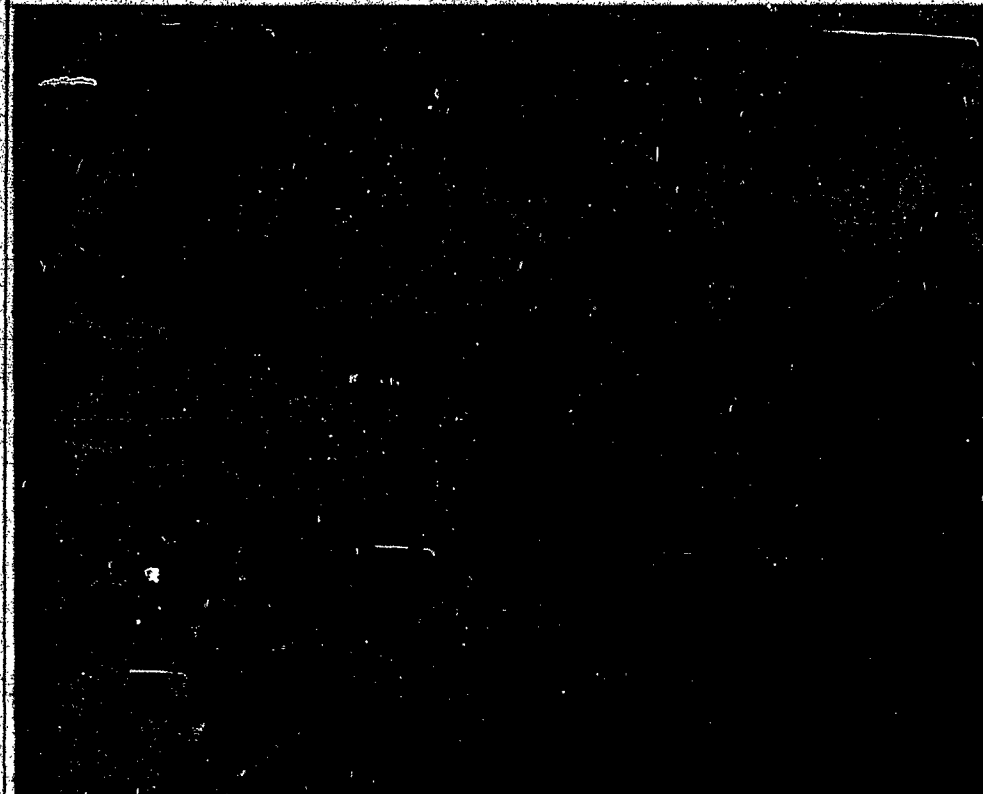
Third, the civil courts have no direct or indirect power over the validity or licitness of the marriage of Christians, nor do they have any power to dissolve a valid marriage contract, although they presume to do so in this country.

It follows that the Church regards marriages validly contracted by Protestants as valid and sacramental. Since the civil courts have no power to dissolve such marriages, divorced Protestants are not capable of contracting another valid marriage.

Unfortunately, many Protestants believe that they are free to marry again, and consequently do not hesitate to start company keeping.

Because some 800,000 persons are divorced every year in our country, and the majority of these will eventually remarry, it is highly important that Catholics face this situation realistically. Since they are not able to marry divorced persons, they have no right to keep company with them.

As I have suggested, some Catholics start dating such persons and wait until they have fallen in love before facing the fact that they are not free to marry. Considering the force of human love, it is not surprising that an unfortunate number then conclude that they have passed the point of no return and become involved in invalid marriages.



## St. Louis Honors Peace Priest

St. Louis — (RNS) — Father Dominique Georges Pire, O.P., Belgian winner of the 1958 Nobel Peace Prize, received an honorary doctor of laws degree from St. Louis University — and smiles of admiration from student representative Miss Barbara Resnick and the Very Rev. Paul C. Belmont, S.J., university president. The Belgian priest is noted for his work among displaced persons in Europe and the establishment of entire villages to house them. He was the first priest ever chosen to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

## Are Catholics To Blame? School Budgets Stymied

Harrisburg, N.Y. — (NC) — Public school superintendents were told here a study of 18 public school districts failed to show a definite tie-in between the size of parochial school enrollment and the deficit of public school budgets.

Mr. Lindbloom, supervising principal of the Elmwood, N.Y., school district, reported on the study, conducted in Nassau County in an effort to identify factors in voter resistance to public school budgets.

He spoke to about 70 area school superintendents who form the Metropolitan School Study Council. He urged them to encourage more extensive studies, saying his survey, which will be published in about a month, can present only "indications, not conclusions."

Only in one of the 18 different possible factors and numerous combinations of factors in the study did the proportion of

## Sun Spins Again, Witnesses Say

Lisbon — (RNS) — A claim that the sun was seen to "whirl" in the sky following recent ceremonies marking the first anniversary of the Christ the King monument near here has been made by Father Sebastiano Pinto, director of the monument's secretariat.

He said the phenomenon took place after Manuel Cardinal Gonalves Cerejeira, Patriarch of Lisbon, had left the scene of the monument in the late afternoon of May 17 when the anniversary was commemorated.

"I was caught with a few hundred remaining in a sharp wind and the sun whirled," Father Pinto said. "When it was over some one cried 'Look at the sun!' We saw it dancing distinctly with constant rotations, now to right now to left."

"It constantly changed color from golden yellow to green and red, with rapidly whirling discs superimposed one on the other, constantly leaving and coming together."

The priest pointed out that green and red are the Portuguese national colors. His report has been placed in the hands of Cardinal Gonalves Cerejeira, who has ordered a full enquiry into the phenomenon, which was said to have been seen by "hundreds" of others.

Earlier, A. Von, Lisbon Catholic conservative daily, published a statement from a Portuguese scientist who contended that during the unveiling ceremony for the monument last year he saw the sun covered by a "whirling disc."

The report came from Prof. Antonio de Vasconcellos Pinto Coelho, who wrote the paper that at the monument's inauguration on May 17, 1959, he noticed on that stormy day that the sun "was obscured by a

double financial burden on Catholic parents who are asked to pay for parochial school expansion and, at the same time, for continued high public school budgets, he stated.

There are other factors in the same picture which may reflect in some degree the efforts directed toward the city more important, he stated, citizens' concern of taxpayers over indebtedness of the expanding public school system and the economic pressures on taxpayers building their own homes, especially in suburban areas such as

gradually succumbing to blight, Nassau county.

parochial schools are expanding and even then its definite role is undetermined, he said.

Mr. Lindbloom declared that when both public schools and parochial schools are expanding rapidly, there appears to be voter resistance to increased public school budgets.

But how big a part, if any, of the resistance is played by Church school expansion is unknown, he said. "It could be entirely coincidental and add up to zero," he added.

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## Peace Seen In Fatima Message

Lisbon — (RNS) — Manuel Cardinal Gonalves Cerejeira, Patriarch of Lisbon, declared here that Our Lady of Fatima during her apparitions to three children in 1917 showed the world that only penitence and prayer can triumph over Russia and her "diffusion of errors."

The Patriarch spoke after celebrating an open-air Solemn Mass at the foot of the Christ the King monument near here to mark the first anniversary of its dedication.

"It is a commemoration in which you are taking part," he told thousands of Catholics gathered at the monument, "comes at a time of the world when God alone knows if it will be merely uncertain or also tragic."

"We Christians," he said, "hold the destiny of the world in our hands at the apocalyptic moment of our common fate. We must conform to Fatima's appeal."

After the Mass, the faithful joined other Catholics in church services all over Portugal during which they renewed last year's dedication of the country to the Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

During the apparitions at Fatima, the Blessed Virgin, according to the three children, recommended the frequent recitation of the Rosary and urged works of self-mortification for the conversion of sinners.

## Prayers Asked For Refugees

Hong Kong — (NC) — Refugee relief projects undertaken by the Catholic Church here were highlighted in a special week of prayer and sacrifice requested by Bishop Lawrence Bianchi of Hong Kong. The Bishop called for observance of "refugee week" to enlist further local support for the needs of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Red China.

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