

May Girls Who 'Have' to Marry Wear White Veil at Wedding?

By FATHER JOHN L. THOMAS, S. J.
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How can girls who "have" to be married do so at a Nuptial Mass in beautiful white veils and gowns, have a big reception, and a bigger write-up in the papers? Do they really have the priest's permission for this? I'm not throwing stones because I know girls are weak, and if God forgives us, we should forgive them. But Father, a veil — and a white veil at that — is hard for me to forgive.



I'm afraid you're more than a little confused on several rather basic points. Unfortunately, you are not alone in this regard. The misconceptions your letter reveals seem all too common, particularly among older women.

One wonders whether they are merely less informed or more articulate. Perhaps both, but at any rate, they need to be enlightened.

One of your basic misconceptions stems from the failure to distinguish between the essential religious elements of the marriage ceremony and the accidental, changing social customs that are associated with it. The laws regulating Catholic marriage are found in the canon law of the Church. These laws clearly specify the conditions under which the parties are capable of marriage.

According to the legislation of the Council of Trent (1563) the form of celebration requires that the marriage be contracted before an appropriate priest and at least two witnesses. Most Catholic couples now marry at a nuptial Mass. Among some national groups, however, it is customary for the couple to attend the usual morning Mass and then celebrate their marriage in a special service later in the day, although this custom seems to be disappearing.

Since marriage is also a social event, society has surrounded it with various customs and practices differing from region to region and according to the circumstances of the couple's social class and standing in the community. These customs

and practices are not the direct concern of the church. Throughout her history she has accepted or tolerated them as long as they were not in conflict with moral law and the dignity of the sacrament.

With these considerations in mind, let us look at your problem. You protest that you and others are scandalized because brides who are pregnant have a big wedding. You must admit that the size and quality of the wedding are social matters, not directly related to the religious essentials of the ceremony. Further, since the couple are entering a valid, sacramental union, they obviously have the right to celebrate their marriage at a nuptial Mass.

Their marriage differs in no essential respect from that of any other couple. The fact that the bride may be pregnant is no way affects the

marriage. It is valid, sacramental, blessed by God, and confers the graces needed by the couple for their state of life.

I think what you're trying to say is that the bride should be ashamed to have a big wedding because she is pregnant. Does this conclusion follow? We presume that the couple are sorry for their sin, and have made their peace with God. As two Christians they are now contracting a sacramental marriage and have a right to share in the full religious ceremony of the nuptial Mass. The type of social event they wish to make of it is up to them — it's their marriage.

But they're making a mockery of premarital chastity. Are they really? We show our regard for premarital chastity by the way we instruct, train, and guide our youth, as well as in dating patterns we promote or tolerate. Unless we are willing to be perennially duped, we cannot make the marriage celebration a public criterion of premarital behavior.

How can the priest allow them to wear a white veil? You have two questions here. First, it is not the function of the priest to tell brides what to wear, beyond specifying that they should dress modestly. Second, although at some time in the past the custom of wearing a white bridal veil came to be used as a sign of the bride's virginity, this was obviously a social rather than a religious symbol. It probably served a useful purpose in distinguishing first-marriage brides from those married again or from public offenders.

At present, white bridal veils and gowns appear to be a matter of choice. Nobody assumes — if they ever did — that a white veil "proves" the bride's virginity. Neither brides — or older women — are forced to make a public confession of their past.

Finally, you say you find this wearing of white veils hard to forgive. Have you been personally offended?

Tax Aid Asked For All Schools

Syracuse — (RNS) — Direct subsidy from public funds to church-related colleges and universities provided they are open to students of all faiths and races and "are not designed to advance any creed" was endorsed here by the chancellor of New York's municipal colleges.

There seems to be no escape from the conclusion that direct subsidy from tax funds should be given to all units of higher education that are now only indirectly subsidized. Dr. John B. Everett told the Association of Colleges and Universities of the State of New York.

His proposal followed by about a month a similar recommendation made by the New York State Committee on Higher Education, that public aid be given to private colleges and universities, including church-related institutions, if this assistance can be provided legally.

Dr. Everett observed that the main argument against state aid for church schools centers in "the presumed violation of a rigid separation of church and state."

"To argue that state or fed-

eral grants to sectarian institutions is a use of tax money for religious purposes," he continued, "is tantamount to saying that sectarian institutions are religious rather than educational in purpose and function."

"If this be true, then they should be refused accreditation as educational organizations and the state and other institutions should stop accepting their credits. Since this obviously is absurd, where is the Church-State controversy?"

Dr. Everett stressed, however, that if a college or university is "a propaganda agency for any particular set of religious or political beliefs" or if it is "designed to serve only a special racial, creedal or national group, it should have no right to funds which are collected from all citizens."

Sunday Sales Bans Face Top Court Test

Washington — (RNS) — The U. S. Supreme Court today took its first step in deciding whether it is legal to ban Sunday sales of certain commodities.

Attorneys for the states and the Federal Government argued that Sunday closing laws are constitutional. They argued that Sunday is a day that is set apart for religious purposes, and that the government has a right to protect the health, safety, and welfare of workers by keeping them from working on that day.

In this connection, the United States Supreme Court has held that the government has a right to regulate the hours of work of its employees. It has also held that the government has a right to regulate the hours of work of its contractors.

Attorneys for the states argued that the states have a right to regulate the hours of work of their citizens.

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Boston Girl, Youth of Year

Washington — (RNS) — Anita Louise Giardullo, 21-year-old honor student at Emmanuel College, Boston, and vice-president of the National Council of Catholic Youth, has been named the "Outstanding Catholic Youth of the Year."



ANITA GIARDULLO

Mrs. Joseph E. Schirder, director of the Youth Department, National Catholic Welfare Conference, who announced the award, said the girl was selected from nominees from thousands of parishes and more than 100 Catholic colleges and Newman Clubs in the U.S.

"Anita represents and exemplifies many thousands of Catholic young people across the country who live their daily lives honoring God and practicing loyalty to their country," she said.

Miss Giardullo, who will be formally presented with the award in Boston in February, has worked her way through school as a part-time dental assistant, piano instructor, and sales girl. While on a partial scholarship to Emmanuel where her junior year, she represented

her school as a student senator to the State of Massachusetts in 1947.

Active outside of school, she has belonged to her parish Catholic Youth Organization since 1943, when she served as its vice-president. Anita then became CIO secretary vice-president, archdiocesan vice-president, and New England regional vice-president in 1948.

Miss Giardullo, who once was a beauty title from among 2,000 entrants in a contest sponsored by a Boston firm, also has been honored by the Knights of Columbus at a testimonial dinner in her honor.

Anita lives with her parents in Boston. She attended Fitter Central High School, where she was class president in her first and second years, and student council president in her senior year.

A member of the Dean's List, College Class President in her sophomore and senior years and Student Council secretary in her junior year, she represented

her school as a student senator to the State of Massachusetts in 1947.

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