



THE OPEN WINDOW
Fr. Louis Hohman

Q. You once said that "in situations involving moral law God is the Judge and He alone. God alone can know the situation and the dispositions of the person who acted against the external law. He alone can know whether the person acted in good conscience or not, whether he had sufficient knowledge and freedom."

How would you apply this reasoning to a divorced Catholic who asks you to marry her to a Catholic man? Would you perform the ceremony? In not, what would your reason be, assuming that she is convinced she acted in good conscience?

A. What kind of publicly verifiable knowledge do we have about the first marriage? Is it verified that the contract between the couple actually took place before legitimate witnesses and there are no externally provable impediments to the contract?

Is the contract real and valid in the eyes of God? It is quite possible that in a particular marriage there stands an impediment which cannot be known to society but which is known to the couple and God. For example, a wife may know for a fact that her "husband" internally refused to enter a permanent marriage but would not

tell anyone, including the priest or witnesses; the marriage would then be considered valid in the external Church court but would be de facto invalid in the eyes of God (and of the wife for that matter).

A person's conscience may tell him wrongly that in his case the prohibition of a second marriage does not hold and then go out and get married a second time; assuming the person were sincere, there would be no sin but probably the judgment of the person was in fact erroneous and certainly the Church would not approve a second marriage. Nor could I, as a priest of the Church assist at such a second marriage because I could not act as legal representative of the Church in an action which the Church considered not legal.

This situation is one which we will have to deal with more and more, in my opinion, because as we become more adept at the sciences of psychology and psychiatry we will be better able to discern when a person is capable of entering a valid contract of that serious a nature. The fact is, if a person enters a marriage and is mentally or emotionally incapable of entering a true valid contract, that marriage is, by that very fact, not a marriage at all, regardless of what the Church or anybody else outside of God might say about it.



THE SLOT MAN
Carmen Viglucci

An odd thing occurred to me. A figure from the world of sports, and from one of the most primordial — prizefighting, has personified all that has been happening in the United States for the past 10 years or so.

Take all the names that come to mind, from Berrigan to Jessel, from Fonda to Nixon, from Cleaver to Wallace, from Groppi to Graham, and one name surpasses them all in keeping close to the erratic national pulse-beat during the latest tumultuous decade. Even his name is historical — Muhammed Ali, ne Cassius Clay.

As a still-growing youngster, Ali already felt he had the talent to become the heavyweight champion of the world. He mouthed off early and long and eventually proved his point. But Ali had something other than pugilistic skills. Whether for psychological, emotional, mercenary, or purely jump-up-and-dance reasons, he wanted to be more than the greatest fighter in the world.

No one can deny that his blatant self-promotion made his bouts loom as infinitely more adventurous than they were, thus dragging suckers into arenas and auditoriums to watch Ali clown with the latest threat to his sovereignty. It should be noted that Ali's fiscal legerdemain rubbed off, not only on his immediate opponents but on all those others struggling to become future foes.

Ali ranks high among those (including politicians) who have penetrating insight into the gut-workings of the American people. He never talked race, realizing that it wasn't necessary. His appearance alone engendered the "great white hope" syndrome in the pale, fluttering breasts of all those who begrudge blacks even the primitive stature of boxing champion. He also realized that his braggadocio translated into "come, pay, watch

me, tonight I may get my head knocked off . . ."

Though he knew his technique naturally and honed it to perfection it is not really new to the sports world. Joe Namath, among others, has capitalized on it to a certain extent.

When Ali decided that he could not in conscience go to war, things began to take a disturbing turn. All of his shenanigans took on a new context. Those who had judged Ali lightly, appreciating his particular brand of oneupmanship and savoring his "putting it on," had to take a new look. He became an enigma, defying and daring solution.

Some saw him as a cowardly draft-dodger, some as sincerely religious. Some figured it was the latest act. But nonetheless it cost him his crown, a few bags of money, and respectability, in many quarters. To others it was most of all worrisome. Could this commercial puncher of men have more inner conviction than those of us who watched him from the stands?

Like many people, I have mixed emotions about Ali. His taunting of opponents in the ring seemed bordering on cruelty, such as when he claimed to avoid knocking out opponents so he could keep them on their feet to administer more punishment. This hardly befits the image of pacifist. But then that is my point. America has been a difficult place to make judgments recently and Ali represented an archtypical case.

Finally, it is eery that a man of his personal history should not only suffer ignominious defeat but have to face the verbal insults and taunts of his unaccomplished conqueror on the way, at last gladdening the hearts of Ali-haters. One further irony — upon his defeat a broken jaw rendered him speechless before the national microphones he had used so expertly.

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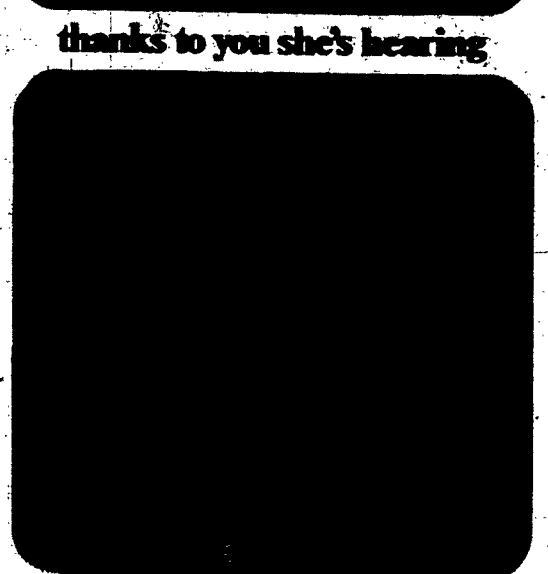
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