

Mixed Marriages

Here Are the Rules

At the beginning of 1971, new regulations went into effect regarding mixed marriages.

The regulations were issued by Pope Paul VI and were implemented by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops at their November, 1970 meeting.

The new legislation states that Catholics may, for serious reasons, be dispensed from the obligation of marrying before a Catholic priest.

The promise that was required for the non-Catholic partner, to baptize and raise the children as Catholics, has also been rewarded and is now required only of the Catholic spouse.

The reasons cited by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops which could dispense a couple from marrying before a priest include the following: to achieve family harmony, to avoid family alienation, to obtain parental agreement to a marriage, to recognize the significant claims for relationship or special friendship with a non-Catholic minister, and to permit the marriage in a church that has particular importance to the non-Catholic.

At the same time the bishops stressed the list of reasons serve only as guidelines and are not intended to be exhaustive.

The Catholic in a mixed marriage, according to the new regulations, must promise to do all in his or her power to share the Catholic faith with his children. He must have them baptized and reared Catholics.

The priest's role has also changed. Previously, a priest, in

State Marriage Laws

—Each applicant must present a State Pre-Marital Blood Test Form, duly signed by physician and applicant. Physician's statement must show the date on which the blood specimen was taken, date test was completed, date of physical examination, name and address of laboratory making test, but the results must not be shown.

—Blood test must be made in laboratories recognized by the state.

—The blood test certificate expired 30 days from the date on which the specimen was taken and cannot be used thereafter.

—The marriage ceremony can not be performed until the blood test is 10 days old.

—Both parties must appear in person when applying for the marriage license.

—The marriage license expired 60 days from the date of issue.

—In the case of minors (males under 21 and females under 18) consent to the marriage must be attested by the personal appearance of both parents or by a notarized statement bearing the county clerk's seal.

—Applicants 21 years and over must present proof of age.

—Licenses issued in New York State may be used anywhere in the state.

—No period of residence is required for out-of-city or out-of-state applicants.

—The wedding may take place 24 hours after issuance of license, provided that 10 days will have elapsed between the date of the blood tests and the date of the marriage ceremony.

submitting a dispensation, would sign a statement that read in part: "I declare that from my knowledge of the parties I am morally certain that these promises will be faithfully kept."


The priest now signs a statement which reads: "I am morally certain that the declaration and promise (of the Catholic party) have been sincerely made."

It is still required that both parties accept marriage as permanent, open to children and requiring faithfulness.

Ministers and rabbis may now offer prayers at a Catholic wedding, when a dispensation has been received, and a priest may do the same at a non-Catholic ceremony. Dual ceremonies, however, in which a priest and minister or rabbi officiate, or successive ceremonies in which the marriage vows are performed twice, are still not permitted.

Catholic priests, with approval, may perform the Catholic wedding in a Protestant church.

The new regulations are not retroactive. However, marriages that have already taken place outside the Church may be validated provided the Catholic party makes the promise to baptize and educate his children in the Catholic faith.



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