

## Rules for Interfaith Marriage

At the beginning of 1971, new regulations went into effect regarding interfaith marriages, i.e., marriages of Catholics to non-Catholics. The regulations were issued by Pope Paul VI and were implemented by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops at their November 1970 meeting.

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

### Dispensations from Canonical Form

The legislation states that Catholics may, for serious reason, be dispensed from the obligation of marrying before a Catholic priest. When there are sufficient ecumenical and pastoral reasons, the Bishop of the Roman Catholic party or the Bishop of the place where the marriage is to occur may dispense the Catholic from the observance of this Form. An

### State Laws On Marriage

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

Blood tests must be made in laboratories recognized by the State.

The blood test expires 30 days from the date on which the specimen was taken. The license must be obtained during these thirty days.

The marriage ceremony cannot be performed until the blood test is ten days old.

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

exhaustive list is impossible, but the following are the types of acceptable reasons for dispensations: to achieve harmony or to avoid family alienation; to obtain parental agreement to the marriage; to recognize the significant claims of relationship or special friendship with a non-Roman Catholic clergyman; to permit the marriage in a church that has particular importance to the non-Roman Catholic.

Ordinarily this dispensation is granted in view of the proposed celebration of a religious marriage service. In some exceptional circumstances (e.g. certain Roman Catholic-Jewish marriages) it may be necessary that the dispensation be granted so that a civil ceremony may be performed. In every instance a public ceremony that is civilly recognized for the celebration of marriage is required.

No matter where the couple gets

The marriage license expires 60 days from the date of issue. The fee for the marriage license varies from place to place.

In the case of minors (males and females under 18) consent to the marriage must be attested by the personal appearance of both parents or by a notarized statement of consent.

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 the license, provided that ten days will have elapsed between the date of the blood tests and the date of the marriage ceremony.

All applicants must present proof of age.

married, a Roman Catholic priest or deacon has the responsibility to be sure that the couple has received adequate preparation for marriage and to see to all necessary documents and permissions.

### Religious Education of Children

The promise that was required for the non-Catholic partner, to baptize and raise the children as Catholics, has also been reworded, and is now required only of the Catholic spouse. The Catholic in an interfaith marriage, according to the new regulations, must promise to do all in his or her power to share the Catholic faith with the children. He or she must have them baptized and reared as Catholics.

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

### The Marriage Ceremony

Ministers and rabbis may offer prayers at a Catholic wedding, 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. Because of our general discipline concerning intercommunion, it seems preferable to discourage celebrating interfaith marriages at Mass. Celebrating the Lord's Supper but excluding half the congregation from communion only dramatizes the disunity of the Church at a celebration which should speak of love and unity. Catholic priests, with approval, may perform the Catholic wedding in a Protestant Church.

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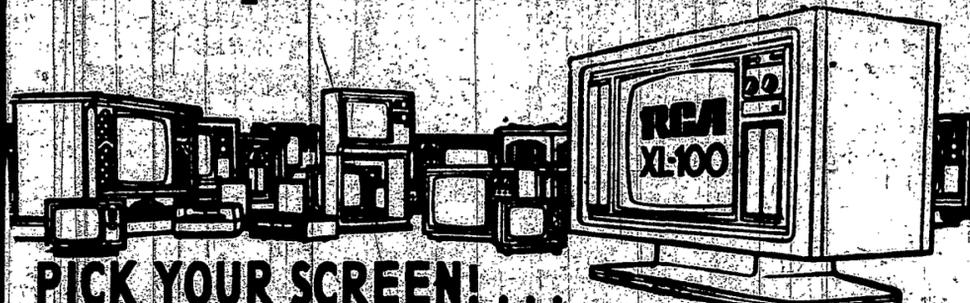
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