

CONTROVERSY

Another Royal Marriage Has All England Astir

By Robert Nowell
London (NC) -- When Prince and Princess Michael of Kent exchanged marriage vows in the Catholic Church July 29, Pope John Paul II's dispensation for the marriage stirred up almost as much controversy as Pope Paul VI's refusal of such a dis-

penation did five years ago. In 1978 the couple married civilly after they unsuccessfully sought a Catholic wedding.
 English Catholics confused by the apparent reversal of the Church's position on the marriage were not helped by the fact that there was no

official statement by the Holy See explaining why a dispensation was now granted.
 Britain's largest-circulation Catholic weekly, The Universe, protested editorially that "Catholics have a right to a public explanation...in order to avoid confusion and scandal."

Cardinal Defends Church Position

London (NC) -- Cardinal George Basil Hume of Westminster defended the Church's decision to let Prince and Princess Michael of Kent regularize their marriage, saying that "it would be an injustice to withhold this permission any longer."

paper interview as saying, "I think it is a question of who is head of the family and in this case the head of the family happens to be an Anglican. I would clearly make an effort to allow my children to understand about my religion, and I think Prince Michael would not be averse to them choosing my religion if they wanted when they come of age."

In reporting the pope's decision to validate the Kent marriage, The Universe said that bishops immediately began receiving complaints from people whose requests for validation had been turned down.

The Anglican prince and Austrian-born Catholic princess married civilly in 1978 after Pope Paul VI refused to grant them a dispensation to marry in the Catholic Church. On July 29 of this year the couple exchanged vows before a priest after Pope John Paul II gave a dispensation for them to have their marriage validated.

Cardinal Hume said that the prince's 1978 promise "and other indications were judged at that time to exclude any realistic expectation that the princess would be able to make the efforts still required by the Church's law."

The Catholic Information Office in London issued a statement which stressed that it was the couple's pastoral situation, not Church policy, which had changed between 1978 and 1983.

In his Aug. 4 statement, released through the Catholic press, Cardinal Hume confirmed what had been widely assumed, that the central issue in both the 1978 and 1983 decisions concerned evidence of the princess' will to raise the children in the Catholic faith. A promise to make such an effort is required of the Catholic partner before the Church will give a dispensation for a mixed marriage.

"It is now clear," he continued, "that the competent authorities in Rome have been satisfied, and indeed impressed, by the evident and consistent efforts of the princess over the years to convey to her children a genuine love and knowledge of the Catholic faith."

Prince Michael, an Anglican, was barred from succession to the British throne in 1978 when he married Austrian Baroness Marie-Christine von Reibnitz, a Catholic.
 They could not be married in the Anglican Church because the baroness' 1971 marriage to merchant banker Thomas Troubridge had ended in a civil divorce in 1977, and Anglican law did not allow church weddings involving a divorced partner.

"It is the will to make the effort which counts, even if that effort does not necessarily lead to success," the cardinal said.

"Furthermore, it has now become clear that, should the children of the marriage wish to become Catholics of their own volition in the future, then no obstacles would be put in their way, except of course that they would be deprived of the right of succession to the throne."

Although her previous marriage had also been declared null by the Catholic Church, leaving her free to marry again, Pope Paul refused to grant the baroness dispensation to enter a mixed marriage. The pope was involved because of a provision of Church law that reserved all such cases involving royalty to the pope.

He noted that before their 1978 marriage Prince Michael promised to have his children baptized and raised as Anglicans. His bride-to-be, then Baroness Marie-Christine von Reibnitz, was quoted in a news-

The couple's two children, four-year-old Lord Frederick and two-year-old Lady Gabriella, are 19th and 20th in line of succession to the throne. Prince Michael, who was 16th in line of succession in 1978, had to give up that right when he married the Catholic baroness.

The Holy See said publicly only that the dispensation was denied because the couple was unable to satisfy the conditions laid down. It did not elaborate on what condition or conditions were not met.

Pope to Pilgrims

Vatican City (NC) -- Here is the Vatican text of the talk in English by Pope John Paul II during his weekly general audience July 27 in St. Peter's Square.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
 I wish to welcome all the English-speaking visitors who are present at the audience this morning.
 In the reading from Scripture which we have listened to, St. Paul exhorts us with the words: "Let us cast off deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us live honorably as in daylight." In the mystery of the redemption, we have received the grace to "cast off deeds of darkness" and to walk in the light of Christ. For the fruit of the redemption is the interior freedom and ability to fulfill the commandments of God. We are no longer slaves to sin. Our redeemer has won for us the freedom to live the truth in love.

I extend a special word of welcome to the pilgrim groups from the Holy Land: the boys and staff of Terra Santa High School in Nazareth, and the pilgrims from Galilee led by Archbishop Maximos Salloum. I assure you of my prayers for you and your loved ones. May the peace of God reign in your hearts and in your land.

I am also pleased to greet the pilgrims from India: those coming from the Diocese of Irinjalakuda and the Diocese of Trichur. And it is a joy to welcome the Don Bosco pilgrimage from Japan, and the group of Chinese pilgrims who are accompanied by Bishop Wang. As you visit the holy places of this city during this jubilee Year of the Redemption, I pray that you will be renewed in faith and in hope.

May God bless you all.

It was widely accepted, however, that the couple did not meet the Church's requirement that the Catholic partner must undertake to do all in his or her power to ensure that the children are brought up as Catholics.

Prince Michael had stated in writing his intention to have the children baptized and raised in the Church of England, and press reports at the time indicated that his prospective bride was prepared to go along with this.

Britain's Catholic Information Office said at the time, "It may be reasonably assumed that in this particular case the future religious baptism and education of the children was the central problem" behind the denial of the dispensation.

In fact, it can safely be said that if the dispensation had been granted to the royal couple in 1978, it would have become difficult if not impossible for the Catholic Church in Britain to continue saying that ordinary Catholics seeking to enter mixed marriages must promise to raise their children as Catholics.

The recent decision to recognize the Kents' marriage, however, has raised that issue again.

M. Teresa: On the Road Again

Rome (NC) -- Mother Teresa of Calcutta left Rome for East Berlin Aug. 1, less than a month after she was released from a Rome hospital where she had been treated for exhaustion.

The 72-year-old foundress of the Missionaries of Charity was expected to go to Poland after visiting members of her religious congregation in East Berlin. She was scheduled to return to

India later in the month.

Mother Teresa, winner of the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, spent most of June in Rome's Salvator Mundi Hospital, suffering from exhaustion

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