

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
MARRIAGE, MATRIMONY, DIVORCE
REMARRIAGE, ADULTERY, EUCHARIST
ANNULMENT, CONVALIDATION & RADICAL SANATION

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Q1: **Where does Marriage fit** into Christian life and teachings?

A: **Marriage is central to Christianity. Marriage is one of the seven sacraments**, all of them basic to a life of following Jesus Christ; and marriage is the main vocational sacrament lived out by the vast majority of Christians - husbands and wives, mothers and fathers. Or, anyway, that's the way it should be! Eph. 5:31-32; and Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1601 ff, esp. 1617, 1659-66, 2364-65.

Q2: **So, must Christians and Catholics marry in the Sacrament of Matrimony?**

A: Surely! We are called by Jesus Christ to “come follow me,” and are called by His Catholic Church to live out our lives in Christ’s seven sacraments. So **all Catholics must marry in the Sacrament** when they attempt to marry. That requires their observing the Church’s canon law on marriage at their wedding: with a Catholic priest or deacon presiding, two witnesses, and the liturgical words of the sacrament, i.e., “**marrying in the (Catholic) church,**” as we are used to saying. Canon Law 1108 ff; and CCC 1630-31.

Q3: Then **who may be the spouse** of a Catholic bride or groom?

A: **Another Catholic.** Even another **non-Catholic Christian** - with the Catholic Bishop’s permission - given on the conclusion that the marriage will not lead the Catholic away from the sacraments and the church; and then this is the sacrament of matrimony – in that two Christians are marrying. And even, with the Bishop’s dispensation, a bride or groom who is **not a baptized Christian**, and on that same conclusion; but then this is not going to be the sacrament of marriage – because the sacrament takes two Christians to minister it to each other. CCC 1633-35. The **non-Catholic is not required to convert** to Catholicism.

Q4: But, suppose a Catholic **attempts to marry “outside the (Catholic) church”?**

A: Then, **that Catholic is not married!** He or she may think that he is married, his spouse also, all the relatives and friends, and the State of SC and the IRS; but, if there is a Catholic involved, the underlying reality, the Christian theological conclusion is that they are not married. To soften the blow a bit, we are used to saying, euphemistically, “not married in the eyes of the church.” But by that we just mean – not in the eyes of Jesus Christ’s Church, and not in His eyes, and not in God’s eyes! Canon Law 1108.

Q5: Could a Catholic, or anyone else, marry in a **second marriage** when the divorced spouse(s) of the earlier marriage(s) are still alive and there has been no annulment?

A: No. **That second marriage could not occur. The first marriage is “indissoluble,” i.e., it cannot be dissolved,** CCC 1614-16, 1638-40, as between husband and wife, till death do them part, like the indissoluble marriage between Christ and His Church, per Pope Benedict XVI, in Sacramentum Caritatis, paragraph 27, “The Eucharist inexhaustibly strengthens the indissoluble unity and love of every Christian marriage. By the power of the sacrament, the marriage bond is intrinsically linked to the

eucharistic unity of Christ the Bridegroom and his Bride, the Church (cf. Eph 5:31-32). The mutual consent that husband and wife exchange in Christ, which establishes them as a community of life and love, also has a eucharistic dimension. Indeed, in the theology of Saint Paul, conjugal love is a sacramental sign of Christ's love for his Church, a love culminating in the Cross, the expression of his 'marriage' with humanity and at the same time the origin and heart of the Eucharist." CCC 1644.

Q6: Does the **Church's understanding of marriage match up with that of the State?**

A: They do not. The **State does not agree with the understanding of Jesus Christ** on what marriage is – an indissoluble unity – a permanent bond between husband and wife until death parts them. So, the State purports, or pretends, to decree divorces - terminations of marriages. The Church of Jesus Christ says divorces do not have their intended effect; in reality, they do not end those marriages. Divorce ends neither the marriages of Catholics, nor the marriages of non-Catholic Christians, nor the marriages of non-Christians. Jesus was teaching Jews, not Christians, about all husbands and wives and their marriages, not just some of us, **when he taught no more divorce!** See Mk 10: 2-16; Mt 5:31-32; Mt 19:3-9; Mk 10:11-12; Lk 16:18; and 1 Cor 7:10-11. See Fr. LeBlanc's "Homily on Marriage, Divorce, Annulment and Re-Marriage."

Q7: **Why is there no divorce** according to Christ's teachings?

A: As Christ teaches, marriage has always been, from the beginning of time and of human life on earth, the union in one flesh of one man and one woman, Gen 2:18-24, come together in an **indissoluble covenant between husband and wife and God**, and thus marriage is not to be separated in any way while both spouses are alive, Mk 10:2-16; Mt 19:6; CCC 1638-40, 2364-65, 2382, 2384, 2397.

Q8: But doesn't Christ allow for **"divorce" at least in some cases?**

A: Only in cases of "porneia," Mt 19:9, which is unlawful marriage, e.g., an incestuous marriage, that is a marriage that is apparent but not real. There, Jesus allows for "divorce;" but **this could more aptly be called "annulment."**

Q9: What happens then to a lawful **marriage in which there is a divorce** decreed?

A: That marriage **still remains a marriage even after the divorce**; the divorce is a legal fiction, in reality, an illusion. Neither party can marry again – in Christ's teaching – and if either one attempts re-marriage he or she will be committing **adultery**, Mk 10:11-12; CCC 1650, 2380-81, 2384; Canon Law 1085.

Q10: Is there **an age limit** beyond which the above no longer applies? Retirement age? Beyond fertility?

A: **No.** The natural law, the ten commandments, and the seven sacraments apply to everyone all life long.

Q11: Is there any **possibility of showing** that earlier marriage(s), since divorced, **did not create permanent bond(s)**, and were, therefore, not actually valid marriages?

A: Yes. Some marriages entered into may give the appearance of being true, valid marriages, but, for one reason or another, are not really marriages, e.g., marriages of underage persons, of persons with no concept what marriage really is, of persons disabled from making the marriage decision and commitment, between persons with earlier marriages and still living ex-spouses, and, of course,

marriages of Catholics (either one or both) “outside the Church.” There may be other situations, besides these, that would lead the Bishop through his **Tribunal to conclude that a marriage was null** from the start, i.e., never really a marriage, at least not in the Christian understanding of marriage, and therefore to issue a decree of nullity in that case. Canon Law 1073 ff.

Q12: After the annulment of all previously divorced marriages (or proofs of deaths of all ex-spouses), so that there are, thus, no earlier valid marriages outstanding, nor any thing else preventing, could **Catholics married “outside the church,” get married in the church’s sacrament** of matrimony?

A: Sure. See your pastor. Right now! If they are ready to be married till death do them part, they would now marry each other by exchanging their consents to be husband and wife in true and lawful marriage, by **“convalidation”** with reference back to their earlier wedding. They would “marry in the Catholic Church.” See the Catholic Update, “Bringing Your Marriage Into the Church.” Canon Law 1156 ff.

Q13: Suppose only one of the two current spouses would consent to be married in a Catholic Church wedding now, but that both of them continue to consent to be husband and wife?

A: See your pastor about a **radical sanation**, which means “healing in the root,” a Catholic Bishop’s radical remedy for validating marriages in which both persons continue to consent to be spouses but one of them will not consent to a convalidation wedding. Canon Law 1161 ff.

Q14: If a Catholic is **married “outside the church,”** not in the Sacrament of Matrimony, may that Catholic **receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion** in the Eucharist?

A: No. It is a contradiction in terms to be living in the one sacrament but not in the other. If that Catholic is not living in communion with the church on Marriage, then neither is he or she living in communion with the church on Holy Communion; and, therefore, he or she **must not receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion** at Mass. CCC 1650, 1665.

Q15: **Who says so?**

A: **Pope Benedict XVI**, in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, paragraph 29: **“The Synod of Bishops confirmed the Church’s practice, based on Sacred Scripture (cf. Mk 10:2-12), of not admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments, since their state and their condition of life objectively contradict the loving union of Christ and the Church signified and made present in the Eucharist. Yet the divorced and remarried continue to belong to the Church, which accompanies them with special concern and encourages them to live as fully as possible the Christian life through regular participation at Mass, albeit without receiving communion, listening to the word of God, eucharistic adoration, prayer, participation in the life of the community, honest dialogue with a priest or spiritual director, dedication to the life of charity, works of penance, and commitment to the education of their children.”**

Q16: Could **Confession** free the Catholic who is married “outside the church” to receive Holy Communion?

A: Yes, but only if the confession included the resolution to sin no more, specifically the sin of adultery, i.e., if the spouses resolve to live no longer as if husband and wife in a marriage outside the church, but, rather, **to live as if they were brother and sister.**

Q17: If that Catholic is married “outside the Church,” **is he or she excommunicated?**

A: No. That is not our Canon Law. **That Catholic is still a Catholic, and still must attend Sunday Mass on the weekly Lord’s Day;** but must not receive Holy Communion, CCC 1650-51, 1665.

Q18: **What happens if that Catholic receives Holy Communion** while married “outside the Church”?

A: That Catholic commits the grave sin of **sacrilege** against the sacrament of the Eucharist; and he or she also causes **scandal**, i.e., leading others to live not in accordance with the Catholic faith and life, CCC 2284. He or she gets not grace, but condemnation, per St. Paul in 1 Cor 11:27, “whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord.”

Q19: **What needs to be done** in order to return that Catholic to receiving Holy Communion rightly, in the state of grace?

A: The sinful state is what keeps (or should keep) the Catholic “married outside the Church” from receiving Holy Communion. So, **stopping the sinful activity, and the confession of that sin along with the sin of sacrilege**, will put that person back into God’s grace and back into full communion with Christ and His Church. Separation from the spouse of the attempted marriage ends the adultery. So does divorce; so does death. **Of course, convalidation, or radical sanation, of the marriage as a true marriage, either after the death of the divorced first spouse or after the proof of the nullity of the first marriage, ends the adultery.** CCC 1650-51.

MARRIAGE SACRAMENTAL STATUS SURVEY

Q20: Marriage Analysis: Are you:

- a. Married now according to the civil law?
- b. Married more than once? Or married now to someone who has been married more than once?
- c. Either of you divorced or widowed previous to this marriage? How many times for each?
- d. Either of you have former spouses divorced and now still living?
- e. Either of you have previous marriages that are divorced and not annulled?

Q21: If it is possible:

- a. to further analyze your situation to determine your exact status
would you wish to pursue that? Yes No
- b. to bless your current marriage in the Catholic church by simple convalidation without any
annulments needed
would you wish to pursue that? Yes No
- c. to seek to obtain annulment(s) of your earlier marriage(s) to progress towards convalidation of
your current marriage
would you wish to pursue that? Yes No