

MYTHS ABOUT CATHOLIC MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

By Fr Hugh Thomas C.SSR

Some Catholics believe false stories about the Church's rules on Marriage. A woman came up to me at a wedding and asked if she could receive Holy Communion. She explained that she was a divorcee and had stayed away from the church for many years because she thought she was excommunicated. Of course I told her she could confess her sins and receive. Then I gave her the following information:

There are myths about divorced Catholics who have not remarried. The first is that they are excommunicated automatically and should no longer consider themselves Catholics. **ABSOLUTELY FALSE.**

So too are the following **FALSE** myths about divorced Catholics who have not remarried:

- That they may not serve as sponsors at Baptism or Confirmation*
- That they may not receive the Eucharist or the Sacrament of Penance.*
- That they are not allowed Christian burial in the Catholic Church.*

It is difficult to believe in this day and age that anyone would still believe these things, but they do, and suffer needlessly as a result. The church is against divorce because it hurts so many men, women and children. The church is not against victims of divorce. In fact, the Church tries to minister to them in every way possible.

We know that sometimes it becomes moral duty to terminate a sick or abusive marriage, but we try to do everything possible to save marriage as long as there is any hope at all. Everyone knows that self-preservation and concern for well-being of the children can at times force good people to take drastic measures. We always pray for their future happiness and peace of mind whenever a divorce becomes necessary. Life is a long-distance race, and everyone needs God's help to make it through. What about divorced Catholics who have remarried outside of the Church?

Here are some **FALSE** myths about divorced Catholics who have remarried without an annulment:

- That they are automatically excommunicated*
- That they may not attend Mass and are not welcome at Parish activities.*
- That they should no longer consider themselves Catholic.*
- That they may not have their children baptised in the Catholic Church.*
- That they are not allowed Christian burial.*

No one is excommunicated for marrying outside the Catholic church. There was a time when the penalty of excommunication did exist for this, but the law was changed retroactively a long time ago. There fore, no one is excommunicated merely on the basis of his or her marital status. A persons state of soul before God is another matter. The legal presumption of the validity of your first marriage will stand until it is overthrown by an ecclesiastical annulment.

If you have any questions, don't be afraid to talk to a Priest about it. He will no doubt steer you in the right direction and urge you to trust in God's mercy. And remember, just because someone is divorced, doesn't mean that he or she is an outcast.

