

Marriage as in civil law and marriage as in sacrament

Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that there is natural marriage (marriage by civil law) and sacramental marriage.

Only the man and woman can give marriage to each other. The law only recognises that they have done this. It thus cannot have any real power to bind a couple in marriage. So the Catholic argument that there must be a ceremony is odd considering that a couple totally dedicated to each other are married without a ceremony and far more married than those who undergo a ceremony. It is commitment that makes a marriage not a rite.

If a Catholic marries an unbaptised person or if two unbaptised persons marry, the result is a true marriage but it is only a natural marriage. If the Church gives you a full Catholic marriage ceremony without realising that you are not baptised then it follows that though it looks like a sacramental marriage has taken place it has not.

A sacramental marriage only happens between two baptised men and women and is blessed in a special way by God who turns it into a means by which the man and wife get closer to God and prepare each other for Heaven. So you have in other words, natural marriage and supernatural marriage.

Catholics teach that sacramental marriage is only ended by death and that if even the Church attempts to end it by divorce, the divorce will be invalid and useless and unreal.

The Church says marriage is holy - that is it must be devoted to God and lived the way he wants it lived. It is also a sacrament - a sacrament is a rite that pictures the life and soul transforming power of God that really does what it pictures. For example, baptism represents God washing away sin and actually does this to those who undergo the rite.

If marriage is as sacred as the Church says, then it is far worse for a blissfully unaware couple in a fake marriage to produce children than for a couple who are just fornicating without any interest in being the centre of a wedding ceremony to do it. Counterfeits of the good are worse than brazen evil - and the Church certainly thinks the latter couple are brazen evildoers. The latter know they can have the sacrament of marriage to take them to Heaven but the former is under the illusion that they have the sacrament already!

The Church likes to say that it believes marriage is the bedrock of society and the Christian society. That is a half-truth. What the Church believes is that only sacramental marriage is the bedrock of society. It should admit this though it does not care to. The Church allows non-sacramental marriages to be annulled or to result in divorce with the right to remarry sacramentally. In other words, the Catholic Church is saying that the Catholic Church is the bedrock of society for it facilitates and regulates sacramental marriage. This is vile intolerance.

The Church believes that you cannot properly or truly love others without loving God and believing in him. Thus a person who doesn't have much faith in God and receives the sacrament of marriage is blocking its power to unite with the wife or husband. They don't understand their obligations well. Thus near-unbelief and unbelief is in the Catholic system a ground for claiming that if a pair wed and they didn't believe or barely believed, then they didn't undertake the obligations of marriage properly. So the Church uses that as an excuse for declaring their marriage invalid if they part ways. Religious believers have no right to tamper with marriage on religious grounds. Society cannot function if all start doing things that hurt others in the name of faith. Such actions may include refusing to pay taxes on spiritual grounds or if men start raping children believing this rape gives them grace etc. In the real world we have to live as if the real world is the only world. With so many different spiritual doctrines and claims abounding we have no choice.

The Church unduly and disastrously encourages marriage with the false notion that marriage is a sacrament – a magical ceremony that fortifies the union. It makes naïve people or people who are not ready for marriage decide to marry for what better helper in marriage could there be than God? The Church says there are three partners in marriage, the husband, wife and Jesus. When a couple want to wed the most important thing is, if marriage is indeed a sacrament, that they ensure that their marriage will be valid and filled with God's grace which is his supernatural help that unifies the woman and man. The grace of the sacrament will not work if the man and woman both stubbornly adhere to mortal sin for mortal sin is the total rejection of God and his ways. So that means it is a sin to marry anybody you suspect is in mortal sin. Though some say you cannot judge, there is nothing that will stop you suspecting – that is human nature. So if you see that a person could be in mortal sin then it is a sin – a mortal sin – to marry them. If you do not know enough about the mortal sins until after the marriage, you would be entitled to an annulment for it means the partner married you while blocking out God who alone can keep you one in marriage. The partner then would have been insincere in making the vows even if he kidded himself that he was genuine. So you can get an annulment then when that happens if your partner approves or believes in tolerating

abortion, contraception, homosexuality, divorce, atheism all of which are considered to be very serious sins by the Church that cut off God's influence and grace.

The idea of marriage being a sacrament is madness for a sacrament requires a symbolic action that really does what it pictures. Marriage is not symbolic. In baptism, water is used to picture God cleansing sins away. In communion, bread and wine are taken as emblems of the body and blood of Christ and give you his body and blood. But God left no fixed form for marriage at all. If the Church so chose it could change the way marriage is done entirely. Marriage then is not a sacrament. Also, no sacrament can bind a man and woman together. They are still two people legally bound together. A sacrament can give them the strengths and influences they need to maintain this union. In that case, there is no power causing the union but only a power helping the union to be maintained. So to speak of marriage as a sacrament is foolish. The union itself cannot be a sacrament. Divine grace may help you be a good employee to your boss but that doesn't mean it causes the union between you and the boss and this union is a sacrament! The Church desired to interfere in marriage and to do that it had to lie that Jesus made it a sacrament and so something the Church must look after.

The Church says that only two baptised Catholics getting married can be sacramentally married. It says there are marriages that are valid but not sacramental and such marriages are not binding under certain circumstances and divorce is permitted. For example, a woman is really married to her husband if both of them were never baptised and if she becomes a baptised Catholic she may remarry and repudiate her marriage.

If marriage is a sacrament it must be a sin for a Catholic to contract a marriage with an unbaptised person even with the permission of the Church. It is turning your back on a sacrament.

The teaching of the Church that divorce is permitted for non-sacramental marriage contradicts the Church teaching that sex in marriage expresses life-long commitment.

A couple who lived together up to the wedding could not be really married in the eyes of God for cohabitation is a serious sin. The Church says that if you are willing to take the Church's word for it that marriage is a sacrament, then logically you should take its word for it that its teaching about what is mortal sin is right. Therefore it would be impossible for the Church to even partly excuse. It would be suspicious and therefore unable to proceed with the wedding until its suspicions are lifted which can only be done if the couple confess to a priest that they lived in sin and get absolution. If you contracted a marriage in mortal sin yourself you would be entitled to an annulment. The Church would have to take your word for it like it does in confession so an annulment should be very easy to get. But this would mean that every marriage could be annulled just because the husband or wife said they married in sin. True. But the Church says conscience is the final guide. The Church says there are many marriages out there that are invalid but there is no evidence for this invalidity just like there are many thieves who are guilty but who have to be let off by the courts. Courts and rules can't deal with everything. The Church would have to let you do your own thing and walk out on your husband or wife and get married again if you believe you did not marry right as long as you do this for godly motives.

A Church annulment need not be recognised by the civil law. If the two agreed it would be. You must decide which of these is to be trusted: the Church or the courts. If the law of the land comes first – and it does for its not the Church that sends the police around and holds law cases and feeds the people - then the Church has no right to annul marriages outside of the law. The Church is obviously laying claim to come first.

If marriage must be taken before God to be valid as the Catholic Church claims then clearly the state has no business annulling marriages at all! It should leave this job to the Church and recognise the annulments granted by the Church as valid.

Sinners cannot contract a valid marriage for they have turned their backs on goodness by rejecting the Lord. To get married, you have to intend to be good to your partner. But when you have set your face against the God who is best for her or him you cannot mean your vows. The Church says that you can really be married in a state of sin but the sacrilege will draw down the anger of God on you (Question 308, A Catechism of Christian Doctrine).

The Church says that if a marriage is contracted in a state of mortal sin then the grace of the marriage will not be activated until the mortal sin is given up. How then could it be a sacrament to take marriage vows? How could there be a real marriage until the mortal sin is abandoned? If you really take your woman as your wife in a strong and lifelong commitment you will not refuse to have God and his grace involved for they are needed to ensure that this commitment has a good chance. The Church doesn't say marriages can only be annulled if at least one of the partners meant nothing he or she said in the marriage vows. It's enough if he or she didn't mean them more than he or she meant them. Obviously such a law enables the Church to annul any marriage it wants.

The Church proclaims itself to be a great protector of marriage and family and yet it likes to conceal its real attitude towards marriage so it follows then that every married couple has been misled and entitled to an annulment. The marriage

cannot be binding when you have a faith in annulments that prevents a valid marriage. A non-religious wedding in a register office would have more hope of validity. It would be more sincere and more respectable. Christian marriage cannot be real which makes its stern condemnation of adultery seem very unfair.

The Catholic Church says the Catholic who gets married contrary to the laws of the Church after he gets a divorce will rot in Hell forever even though this "sin" does no harm at all and what about all the venial sins all Catholics commit that build up to make more damage? It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Church is spiteful regardless of how well it covers it. Venial sinners are invited to communion though one will not repent of them all meaning that taking the communion is a venial sin for Jesus is received with some antagonism towards him in your heart. Publicans are welcome to communion though they provide a service that leads to people getting drunk.

Rather than helping marriage, we see that sacramentalist faith actually destroys it replacing it with something that resembles it. Moreover, there is no reason why the state cannot annul Catholic marriages on the basis that mortal sin prevented the vows from being sincere for even the state cannot recognise a marriage that the vows were made insincerely for. The state should come first and should discourage Catholic belief if it really wants to protect marriage. Religion and supernatural beliefs should not be impinging on marriage or marriage law if marriage is really the foundation of society or at least very important to social cohesion and order. We have to put what we see first and not worry about fairies and gods and angels who we don't see. Nicole Kidman was permitted to marry in a Catholic Church for her previous marriage to Tom Cruise was considered to be void as they were Scientologists at the time. They were not marrying for the Catholic God but for another faith. This contradicts the idea that if you are an atheist and a good person the goodness you touch is really touching God as long as you are sincere. It is totally out of sync with modern attitudes. The liberal theologian would say that Nicole and Tom though they didn't bother with God in their marriage ceremony were still getting in touch with him and finding him in their love for one another though they didn't see it. If this theologian was a liberal Anglo-Catholic or anti-papal Catholic etc he would say they received a sacramental marriage.

If marriage is precious it does not need to be turned into a circus by religious superstition.