

## Families' Doubts Letter

**Dear Holy Father,**

**Your Eminences and Excellencies, Honourable Cardinals and Bishops,**

We are grateful for your putting a lot of effort into helping divorced people to return to the sacraments. We also make an appeal for developing solutions which would protect both sacramental matrimonies and the priests.

We truly appreciate the beauty of *Amoris laetitia*. However, we express our fears about the liberal interpretation of this document, as well as about the rules of receiving Holy Communion applied, in some countries, for the divorced people living in new relationships.

So far, the Church has employed the rule of treating both sacramental spouses with respect, as the Code of Canonic Law provides them both with *an equal duty and right to those things which belong to the partnership of conjugal life* (Can. 1135 CCL). Also, in the marriage processes, in cases to declare the nullity of marriage, even if they are proceeded at the request of one of the spouses only, both parties must be summoned to define their stand (1508 CCL), have the right *to be present at the examination of the parties, witnesses, and experts*, as well as *to inspect the judicial acts, even those not yet published, and to review the documents presented by the parties* (Can. 1678 CCL), and *have the right to appeal the sentence to a higher judge* (Can. 1628 CCL). The effects of the sentence are almost identical for both. As the marriage is declared null by the ecclesiastical court and no other obstacles exist, both are free to get married once again, with the sacramental bonds of matrimony. The guarantees provided by the Canon Law let the couple diagnose their legal situation and enable them to predict the consequences of their actions.

In contrast to that, the letter of Buenos Aires region bishops, allows for absolving divorced people living in new relationships and receiving the Holy Communion by them, even if they reject the resolution of chastity. In this case, the rule of equal treatment of both spouses is broken. This creates new possible situations in which other people can be hurt, which is explained below.

1. Absolving divorced people living in new relationships not only allows them to receive the Holy Communion. By doing this, the Church clearly suggests that there is no evil or anybody's harm in the situation of a new relationship, that this situation can and is recommended to be continued and that there is no need to return to the sacramental spouse. Thus, the marriage vows of martial fidelity and not leaving the sacramental spouse are not binding any more. The excuse and confirmation in infidelity are obtained by one spouse only, while the other is still bound by the marriage vows.
2. The absolved one is exempted from the obligations assumed within the sacrament of marriage; however, he or she does not gain the right to get married in Church once again because of the former sacrament of marriage which is still binding anyway. Thus, the sacramental obligation of martial fidelity and not leaving the spouse is still valid and binding but no one needs to obey it. The whole situation becomes internally hypocritical. The vows of fidelity and not leaving the sacramental husband or wife is binding and not binding at the same time.
3. Benefits to the people living in post-divorce relations are only the superficial ones. What they obtain is merely a marriage stopgap and caricature; additionally, they can be left by their partners easily. They stay in a relationship in which the other partner

avoids any obligations.

4. As one of the spouses becomes confirmed in his/her infidelity, the chance that the valid church marriage will be restored drops dramatically. While it is very uncertain that the other spouse will be given analogical absolution, the way to obtaining it can be very difficult in many cases. He or she must remain alone or prove that he/she lives in an appropriate relationship, consolidated during a long time, and has got children born in this relationship. Otherwise, subsequent relationships may become treated as a cardinal sin.
5. For the factor of children born within the relationship, mentioned in the Buenos Aires bishops' letter (sec. 6 of the letter), the statistics show that it will be more difficult for woman to obtain absolution. Biology is the condition for which women can become parents for a shorter time than men. After divorce, men are more likely to have their own children in another relationship within a younger woman and, consequently, to be given absolution, access to sacraments and eternal salvation.
6. If a man, divorced from his wife, is given absolution in his relationship with another woman, he obtains the right (or even a recommendation) to live in this relationship. On the other hand, he still has some obligations to the wife he has abandoned, anyway. Thus, he is bound with the Church bonds with two women at the same time, which results in a kind of catholic bigamy.
7. Because there are no clear rules of giving absolution and a priest can be far too subjective, it may be enough to find an appropriate confessor in order to gain absolution, which may make this solution widely used. Both saint priests and those who openly or secretly deny the Christian instructions will gain the same right to absolute infidelity and divorce. The spouses who have made marriage vows for life lose the guarantee that, in a case of a crisis, they will be arbitrated according to the Christian rules, not according to the ones from the circles of the Church enemy.
8. The Buenos Aires bishops' letter clearly indicates what questions should be asked by the priest to the people living in a non-sacramental relationship. However, there is no obligation that the priest should contact the abandoned sacramental spouse; his or her situation is assessed according to the declarations of the spouse who wants to gain absolution (sec. 8 of the bishops' letter).
9. The final decision that there is no sin of infidelity is made within the seal of confession, behind the sacramental spouse's back – he or she does not participate in the process and is deprived of the right to appeal or disclaim untrue information.
10. The fact that exemption from the obligation of a sacramental marriage is covered with the seal of confession means in practice that these processes are not controlled by anybody, even by bishops or the Holy Father himself. As these rules are implemented, the Church will not have any tools to verify if they are not abused, to protect people hurt or to guarantee that the rules are used only in exceptional situations, as it is suggested to the faithful.

If any complaints or suspicions of absolution abuse occur, the priests will always explain to their bishops that the details of each case are covered with the seal of confession. Each bishop will have to agree with this argument.

We do not criticise the sacrament of penance itself, we only indicate that it must not be used to confirm one spouse in his/her infidelity in the situation of a valid sacrament of marriage. Unilateral, secret exemption of one spouse from the bilateral obligation does not give the other party an opportunity to defend himself/herself. Thus, the other spouse experiences injustice and harm.

11. If a person living in a non-sacramental relationship has obtained absolution, why should he or she be prevented from becoming a catechist, an organist, an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, an animator, etc.? What argument should be used against this situation since such people will live according to the modified, internally contradictory Church teaching? Thus, churches may become filled with numerous people living in non-sacramental relationships, playing important prominent ministries and casually becoming examples to follow. This way, the Church may become a community which openly encourages its members to cheat and divorce their partners.
12. Even if one spouse approves of the other's absolution, all other married people are suggested by the Church that the marriage vows do not need to be treated really seriously. If one wants to change his/her partner, he or she will be able to "arrange it" in Church, with the use of a carefully selected confessor.
- 13. All the above summed up affects not only the divorced but also those who stay in their marriages and who may, today or tomorrow, experience some kind of a crisis, temptation of divorce or of leaving their families. The liberal approach significantly abates all other married people's motivation to overcome marriage problems. The idea constructed this way may result in not only an increased number of irregular relationships absolved from infidelity but also in an increased number of cases of abandoning families or divorces which would never happen if the rules binding so far were applied.**
14. The engaged has been given an argument to avoid marriage. Many people may be driven away from taking an obligation on the basis of which they may be cheated easily.
15. For those who reject the catholic teaching on sexual ethics and for those who seek a relationship without obligations, the situation after divorce becomes the most profitable, so they may be motivated to aspire to it.
16. Giving absolution to people who have sex without a Church marriage, only because they are divorced, ridicules all those who make the effort and propagate premarital chastity and marital fidelity.
17. We find it dangerous to spread the idea suggesting that sexual abstinence may be impossible (sec. 6 of the bishops' letter). Such a Church teaching may be used as an argument justifying sexual abuse or violence. What is impossible for a hurt human being is always possible for God. Let us not lose the faith that God is able to provide divorced people with a wonderful repair of their sacramental marriage or with a joyful chastity.
18. The whole situation is also dramatic for numerous priests and bishops who feel intimidated or forced to commit cardinal sins. Many fundamental questions have not been answered so far. Does a moral wrong, committed under the pressure of superiors cease to be a sin for which purgatorial (or worse) responsibility will be borne? Does a priest who approves of cardinal sins of a penitent commit a cardinal sin himself? Has the Church got the power to freely cross off acts recognised as the most serious sins by Jesus and the first apostles? What makes us sure that sins of adultery in post-divorce relationships are really absolved in Heaven if two conditions of a good confession are not fulfilled: sorrow of having offended God and a resolution of sinning no more.

To sum up, we support the wonderful idea of helping people in irregular situations. However, the Church has a lot of other methods to help and accompany divorced people.

The currently implemented concept of secret absolution and confirmation in infidelity for one of the divorced spouses, in the conditions of valid sacrament of marriage

and valid commitments of the other spouse, is not a remedy for the problem of divorces. On the opposite, it is an extra poison for families which deepens their crisis. Such an idea encourages married people to get divorced, accelerates the process of marriage breakdowns, increases distrust in God and the Church, provides the unfair with new tools of doing damage to others and is dangerous to bishops and priests.

We humbly ask you to treat our efforts put into writing this letter as an expression of our love to the Church and its shepherds, our care for families and a way of looking for a healthy help to be offered to the divorced. We believe God is greater than the crisis of values in our times and He has prepared new days, when societies will be strong with their families again. We assure you of our devotion to and prayers for the Holy Father and the Church.

Sincerely yours,

Signatories