

16. August 2019
„To remain in truth“
Part 1

Mat 19:3-12

Some Pharisees approached him, and to put him to the test they said, 'Is it against the Law for a man to divorce his wife on any pretext whatever?' He answered, 'Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female and that he said: This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh? They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide.' They said to him, 'Then why did Moses command that a writ of dismissal should be given in cases of divorce?' He said to them, 'It was because you were so hard-hearted, that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but it was not like this from the beginning. Now I say this to you: anyone who divorces his wife -- I am not speaking of an illicit marriage - and marries another, is guilty of adultery.' The disciples said to him, 'If that is how things are between husband and wife, it is advisable not to marry.' But he replied, 'It is not everyone who can accept what I have said, but only those to whom it is granted. There are eunuchs born so from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs made so by human agency and there are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.'

Today's subject is somewhat explosive and therefore deserves a slightly longer interpretation. That is why two considerations have arisen from this, which can only be a first aid to this important topic. Tomorrow, this subject will continue without the Bible text being read out again.

When we look into the life of the Church, we find in the above text an important topic, which is sometimes controversial in relation to pastoral care and unfortunately causes some confusion among the faithful!

How should the Church deal with those who are sacramentally still married but live in a new relationship and, in order to bring the matter to the great point of the debate: is there, in certain circumstances, access to Holy Communion for those who are in a second connection, while the first marriage is still officially valid?

This consideration cannot be the place where these questions can be discussed in all necessary differentiation. There are moral theologians and canon lawyers for that.

But there are some basic lines that need to be observed, which point to the path to be taken on this issue.

First of all, it is the word of Jesus himself on which we have to orient ourselves. It leaves no doubt that with the coming of the Lord the original intention of God to connect man and woman is to be restored. If God temporarily allowed a divorce - for the hard-heartedness of the man - this was not his original will.

The Lord's reasoning is clear here. It is clear from God's will to create that man and woman are arranged towards each other and become one flesh in their union. But if man and woman have become one, then a second connection cannot be "a flesh" at the same time, if the bond of the first marriage is still valid.

You can't be "one flesh" with two people at the same time! It is possible to be with many people "one spirit", but not "one flesh".

This points to the peculiarity of marriage, which is unmistakable because it represents a body-soul union from which new life can emerge. From this point of view it becomes understandable why, for example, a practised homosexual relation cannot be a marriage, but caricatures the marriage in a certain way, because neither one can be "one flesh" with the same sex, nor can children emerge from it. Those relations are therefore a distortion of God's intentions!

This great good of marriage, which is indissoluble for us Catholics, must be protected, as it is the natural cell of the human family. Their existence is a testimony of God's love, which is vividly reflected in the love of the spouses and in the love to the children creating a new community.

However, we all know that marriage and the family are subject to many attacks, especially in this days, and that, despite the grace of the matrimonial sacrament, there may be greatest difficulties in coexistence which, for some people, subjectively cannot be more to bear. A community that was supposed to be a witness of love can even turn into the opposite! We do not talk now of the sin of adultery, which is an immensely profound violation of marriage, but of other serious divisions and conditions that justify a so-called separation of table and bed.

But it should be noted for our topic: the marriage bond remains inspite of such a separation. The spouses cannot therefore enter into a new relationship involving sexual acts, for this would be an adultery according to the words of Jesus and according to the doctrine of the Church.

The marriage bond expires only with the death of the spouse.

In canon law we know the process of annulment of a marriage. This is not a divorce, but a recognition that certain conditions for a valid marriage were not present at the time of marriage. The Church can, if clear, invalidate such a covenant. In this case the marriage was never valid.

If we now see that, according to the Lord's words - and the Church has followed the words of the Son of God - a marriage bond can only be dissolved by death or declared not had been a valid marriage by a ecclesiastical marriage court.

From an objective point of view it is not possible for a Catholic to enter into a second marriage if the first one is still valid.

What paths can there be for those who are objectively in a state of separation from God, but who long to live in unity with Him and the Church? Tomorrow's meditation will take this question into account.