

# The Paulus Institute

for the Propagation of Sacred Liturgy

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## “THE UNCHANGEABLE TRUTH ABOUT MARRIAGE”

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word and the eternal Truth in person, restored the original dignity of the human nature in a most wonderful manner (“*Qui dignitatem humanae substantiae mirabiliter reformasti*”), also regarding the sexuality of the human being, which was created in a wonderful manner in the beginning (“*mirabiliter condidisti*”). Through the fall in sin there had been wounded the dignity of human sexuality. Because of the hard heartedness of the fallen man there was introduced by Moses even the divorce, and this contrary to the absolute indissolubility which God had commanded. Although the Pharisees and Scribes had known the Divine truth about the beginning of the marriage, they nevertheless endeavored to receive from Jesus as from a well-known and recognized teacher the legitimation of the practice of the divorce, a practice which was already widely adopted in those times perhaps out of “pastoral reasons”.

The first liars about the possibility of a contradiction between the doctrine and the pastoral practice were exactly the Pharisees and the Scribes. They asked Jesus about the basic legitimacy („*quaecumque ex causa*“) of the divorce (cf. Mt 19: 3). Jesus proclaimed to them and through His Gospel He still proclaims to the men of all times the ever valid and unchangeable Divine truth about the marriage with these words: „In the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away, commits adultery“ (Mt 19: 9). Jesus restored in all its seriousness and

beauty the Divine truth about marriage and human sexuality. Regarding this Divine truth which Christ authoritatively proclaimed, He does not admit any sophisms (e.g. annulment of the guilt because of psychological reasons) and any exemptions with reference to an alleged pastoral practice (perhaps restricted to the individual case), as the Pharisees and the Scribes it had practiced.

In His teaching Jesus is going even so far as to proclaim: „Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart“ (Mt 5: 28). This commandment of Christ is universally valid and means: any lustful sexual desire of a person who is not the own legitimate spouse, is in the intention in the eyes of God already a sin against the sixth commandment. Christ thus condemned each deliberate mental sexual act and all the more each corporal sexual act outside marriage as being against the will of God.

Jesus did not present His words as His own teaching, but as the teaching of the Father: „My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me“ (John 7: 16) and „These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.“ (John 14: 24). Jesus told to the Apostles and through them to all holders of the office of the ecclesiastical Magisterium in all times: „He who listens to you listens to me“ (Lk 10: 16) and „Teach all nations to obey everything I have commanded you“ (Mt 28: 20).

2. Christ has restored solemnly the primordial truth about marriage and human sexuality notwithstanding the hard heartedness of many of His contemporaries and of the „pastoral“ sophisms of the Pharisees and Scribes. He entrusted this truth to the Apostles and to their successors so that they may transmit and administer it faithfully as a patrimony which was not made by men and which does not depend on their decisions. The Apostles were luminous and faithful guardians („*episcopi et pastores*“, cf. Act 20: 28) and stewards (“administrators”, cf. 1 Cor 4: 1; Tit 1: 7) of this deposit of faith also in the area which concerns marriage and human sexuality, mindful of the words which Jesus directed to them: „Who is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?“ (Lk 12: 42).

During the past two thousand years there have been in the life of the Church again and again attempts to reinterpret the crystal-clear and uncompromising teaching of Christ on the indissolubility of marriage and on the iniquity of any sexual act outside marriage, being such acts against the will of God. In the beginning of the Church there were the gnostic and dissipate doctrines of „Jezabel“ and of the „Nicolaites“, which the Apostle John has reprimanded in the churches of Pergamon and Thyatira, cf. Rev. 2: 14-24.

A radical contradiction to the doctrine of Christ and to the teaching of the Apostles on marriage established Martin Luther, calling the marriage a mere „worldly thing“ („weltlich Ding“). By this there was opened in the Christian Occident in the theory and in the practice for the first time basically the door to the divorce (cf. the case of the double marriage of Philipp of Hessen). In the Christian Orient there have been also often a circumvention of the doctrine of Christ on marriage under the abuse of the concept of mercy („oikonomia“ as it is named in the Orthodox Church) or out of fear and servilism towards the adulterous will of the powerful of this world. A few examples: the Greek episcopate since the reign of Emperor Justinian I, the Frankish episcopate in the case of the double marriage of the German Emperor Lothar II, and a particularly blatant manner almost the entire episcopate of England in the time of King Henry VIII, furthermore a part of the college

of the Cardinals in the case of the invalid second marriage of the Emperor Napoleon I, however some courageous cardinals protested, whereupon Napoleon forbade them to wear the purple soutane and confiscated their wages, contrary to the politically correct cardinals dressed in purple, the these courageous cardinals had to dress the black soutane, thus they were called the “black cardinals”.

3. Over the past several years there emerged within the Church a party, mainly composed of priests and even of some bishops and cardinals. This party has the aim to achieve a change in the practice of the Roman-Catholic Church, in a practice which is already two thousand years old and according to which the reception of Holy Communion on behalf of divorced who live with a new partner and are civilly remarried is not possible, because this would be against the will of God, since the word of God says: „The adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God“ (1 Cor 6: 9). The mentioned party uses different arguments. The arguments which they use remind the typical attitude of the early Christian Gnostics, for whom there could be definitely a contradiction between doctrine and practice. Furthermore, their arguments remind the theory of Martin Luthers concerning the salvific power of the faith regardless of the lifestyle and even regardless of the repentance and true amendment; the Council of Trent condemned such an opinion as heresy (cf. sess. 14, can. 4).

In addition, the above mentioned party tries eventually to justify by means of sophistic and cynical trickery the sin of homosexual acts that shriek to heaven. Good qualities of a homosexual couple are adduced as a justification of the objectively sinful acts of their sodomitic cohabitating. Nevertheless the truth of the word of God in the Holy Scripture remains fully valid in the same manner in our days as it was valid in the time of Jesus and the Apostles: „Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders“ (1 Cor 6: 9) and: „For God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral“ (Hebr 13: 4).

The crystal-clear doctrine of Christ about the absolute prohibition of divorce and hence of the grave sinfulness of re-marriage after divorce, the Magisterium of the Church kept faithfully throughout two thousand years in the same understanding and applied it consequently in the practice or in the pastoral life. The Council of Trent solemnly defined this Divine teaching of Christ as a dogma of faith: "If any one says, that the Church has erred, in that she has taught, and does teach, in accordance with the evangelical and apostolic doctrine, that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved on account of the adultery of one of the married parties; and that both, or even the innocent one who gave not occasion to the adultery, cannot contract another marriage, during the life-time of the other; and, that he is guilty of adultery, who, having put away the adulteress, shall take another wife, as also she, who, having put away the adulterer, shall take another husband; let him be anathema." (Session 24, Canon 7). The First Vatican Council taught definitively: "If anyone says that it is possible that at some time, given the advancement of knowledge, a sense may be assigned to the dogmas propounded by the church which is different from that which the church has understood and understands: let him be anathema" (*Dei Filius*, 4. *De fide et ratione*, can. 3).

No Catholic who still takes seriously his baptismal vows, should allow himself to be intimidated by these new sophisticated teachers of fornication and adultery, even though – sad to say – these teachers hold the office of a bishop or cardinal. Such teachers in ecclesiastical offices are certainly no disciples of Christ, but rather disciples of Moses or of Epicurus. This new doctrine and purported pastoral of marriage and sexuality take the Christians again back to the time before Christ, to the attitude of hard heartedness and of blindness of the heart towards the original, holy and wise will of God; they take the Christians back to an attitude similar to that of the pagans, who don't know God and His will. The Holy Spirit teaches us in the Holy Scripture in this way: „It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God“ (1 Thess 4: 3-5). Alone the life according to the original Divine truth regarding marriage and sexuality and their practice, i.e. the "truth in Jesus" (*veritas in Iesu*: Eph 4: 21), which Christ has restored and the Church had unchangingly transmitted, will bring the new life, and that alone matters.

In the 19th century the famous Italian poet Alessandro Manzoni warned against the danger of a pagan attitude in receiving sacraments, that means to receive sacraments without a radical renounce to sin, basing oneself only on the exterior ceremonies. He wrote: "Every Catholic will repeat with the Council of Trent, " If any one denies, that for the entire and perfect remission of sins, three acts are required of the penitent as the matter of the sacrament of penance, namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction, let him be anathema. (Conc. Trid. sess. XIV, can. IV). Moreover, to receive this sacrament without these dispositions, is a sacrilege and an additional heinous sin. According to the Church, the first and indispensable step to every degree of sanctification is to return to God, to love justice, and to hate sin. There is in man a superstitious tendency, which induces him to confide in mere external forms, and to recur to religious ceremonies in order to stifle remorse, without repenting and atoning for the sins he has committed or renouncing his passions: Paganism. And exactly Paganism accommodated itself to this tendency." (*Osservazioni sulla Morale Cattolica* [A Vindication of Catholic Morality], 1819).

4. To maintain the beauty of a life in marriage and family according to the will and the wisdom of God, it was necessary in all times to resist to the spirit of the world and of the flesh. Pope Paul VI said in a homily during the last session of the Second Vatican Council: "The Church is always the same and she remains immutable according to the will of Christ in opposition to the profane culture" (Homily, 28.10.1965). The Second Vatican Council warned the Catholics of our days against the scandal of a lifestyle which is contrary to the professed faith: "If the Catholic faithful fail moreover to respond to that grace in thought, word and deed, not only shall they not be saved but they will be the more severely judged" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 14) and "This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age" (*Gaudium et spes*, 43).

Pope John Paul II spoke about the current danger of a separation between faith and morality in the life of a Catholic “The attempt to set freedom in opposition to truth, and indeed to separate them radically, is the consequence, manifestation and consummation of another more serious and destructive dichotomy, that which separates faith from morality. This separation represents one of the most acute pastoral concerns of the Church amid today’s growing secularism” (Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, n. 88).

Formal and ritual re-marriage of divorced signifies ultimately a kind of superstition. Indeed such persons want to justify their new sinful union with an exterior performance of a ritual. With perspicacity G.K. Chesterton detected the very root of the evil and of the contradiction of the re-marriage of divorced: « While free love seems to me a heresy, divorce does really seem to me a superstition. It is not only more of a superstition than free love, but much more of a superstition than strict sacramental marriage; and this point can hardly be made too plain. It is the partisans of divorce, not the defenders of marriage, who attach a stiff and senseless sanctity to a mere ceremony, apart from the meaning of the ceremony. It is our opponents, and not we, who hope to be saved by the letter of ritual, instead of the spirit of reality. It is they who hold that vow or violation, loyalty or disloyalty, can all be disposed of by a mysterious and magic rite, performed first in a law-court and then in a church or a registry office. There is little difference between the two parts of the ritual; except that the law court is much more ritualistic. But the plainest parallels will show anybody that all this is sheer barbarous credulity. It may or may not be superstition for a man to believe he must kiss the Bible to show he is telling the truth. It is certainly the most groveling superstition for him to believe that, if he kisses the Bible, anything he says will come true. It would surely be the blackest and most benighted Bible-worship to suggest that the mere kiss on the mere book alters the moral quality of perjury. Yet this is precisely what is implied in saying that formal re-marriage alters the moral quality of conjugal infidelity” (*The Superstition of Divorce* II, 1920).

A ritual re-marriage of divorced people represents a kind of sacrilege, as it was pointed out by G.K. Chesterton in this short sentence: “The broad-minded are extremely bitter because a Christian who wishes to have several wives when his own promise bound him to one, is not allowed to violate his vow at the same altar at which he made it” (*The Tragedies of Marriage*, 1920).

The divorce of a valid marriage contains in itself frivolity and generates a spirit and a culture of frivolity. G.K. Chesterton described this phenomenon as being proofed by human realism: “The obvious effect of frivolous divorce will be frivolous marriage. If people can be separated for no reason they will feel it all the easier to be united for no reason. A man might quite clearly foresee that a sensual infatuation would be fleeting, and console himself with the knowledge that the connection could be equally fleeting. There seems no particular reason why he should not elaborately calculate that he could stand a particular lady’s temper for ten months; or reckon that he would have enjoyed and exhausted her repertoire of drawing-room songs in two years. The old joke about choosing the wife to fit the furniture or the fashions might quite logically return, not as an old joke but as a new solemnity; indeed, it will be found that a new religion is generally the return of an old joke” (*The Vista of Divorce*, 1920).

When clergy stand up for the admittance of divorced and civilly remarried Catholics to Holy Communion, they in fact solemnize their adultery and their sin against the Sixth Commandment. They give to such faithful the message that their divorce and the continuous violation of their sacramental bonds can become ultimately a positive reality. In other words, such clergy are liars. However in order to cover their evident lie and contradiction to the Word of God, they protect themselves with the masque of using the concept of “Divine mercy” and sentimental expressions like: “to open a door”, “to be pastorally creative”, “to be open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit”. To such a theoretical and practical behavior one can apply the following statement of Georges Orwell: “Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind”.

Saint John Paul II taught: “If acts are intrinsically evil, a good intention or particular circumstances can diminish their evil, but they cannot remove it. They remain “irremediably” evil acts; per se and in themselves they are not capable of being ordered to God and to the good of the person. “As for acts which are themselves sins (*cum iam opera ipsa peccata sunt*), Saint Augustine writes, like theft, fornication, blasphemy, who would dare affirm that, by doing them for good motives (*causis bonis*), they would no longer be sins, or, what is even more absurd, that they would be sins that are justified?” (*Contra Mendacium*, VII, 18). Consequently, circumstances or intentions can never transform an act intrinsically evil by virtue of its object into an act “subjectively” good or defensible as a choice.” (*Veritatis splendor*, n. 81).

Pope John Paul II left to the Church this most clear teaching regarding the authentic meaning of the merciful motherhood of the Church towards the sinners: “The Church’s teaching, and in particular her firmness in defending the universal and permanent validity of the precepts prohibiting intrinsically evil acts, is not infrequently seen as the sign of an intolerable intransigence, particularly with regard to the enormously complex and conflict-filled situations present in the moral life of individuals and of society today; this intransigence is said to be in contrast with the Church’s motherhood. The Church, one hears, is lacking in understanding and compassion. But the Church’s motherhood can never in fact be separated from her teaching mission, which she must always carry out as the faithful Bride of Christ, who is the Truth in person. “As Teacher, she never tires of proclaiming the moral norm... The Church is in no way the author or the arbiter of this norm. In obedience to the truth which is Christ, whose image is reflected in the nature and dignity of the human person, the Church interprets the moral norm and proposes it to all people of good will, without concealing its demands of radicalness and perfection” (*Familiaris consortio*, 33). In fact, genuine understanding and compassion must mean love for the person, for his true good, for his authentic freedom. And this does not result, certainly, from concealing or weakening moral truth, but rather from proposing it in its most profound meaning as an outpouring of God’s eternal Wisdom, which we have received in Christ, and as a service to man, to the growth of his freedom and to the attainment of his happiness.” Still, a clear and forceful presentation of moral truth can never be separated from a profound and heartfelt respect, born of that patient and trusting love which man always needs along his moral journey, a journey frequently wearisome on account of difficulties, weakness and painful sit-

uations. The Church can never renounce the “the principle of truth and consistency, whereby she does not agree to call good evil and evil good” (*Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, 34); she must always be careful not to break the bruised reed or to quench the dimly burning wick (cf. Is 42:3)” (*Veritatis splendor*, 95). The same Pontiff affirmed: “When it is a matter of the moral norms prohibiting intrinsic evil, there are no privileges or exceptions for anyone. It makes no difference whether one is the master of the world or the “poorest of the poor” on the face of the earth. Before the demands of morality we are all absolutely equal.” (*Veritatis splendor*, 96).

The new Gnostic clerical party strives in our days in order that sexual acts outside a valid marriage (divorced remarried) and even sexual acts against the nature (homosexual behavior) may be ultimately in some cases practically accepted by the Church. They invoke a “welcoming pastoral style”, abusing hereby in a sentimental manner this expression. The following luminous words of Saint Pius X are fully applicable to this topic: “Catholic doctrine tells us that the primary duty of charity does not lie in the toleration of false ideas, however sincere they may be, nor in the theoretical or practical indifference towards the errors and vices in which we see our brethren plunged, but in the zeal for their intellectual and moral improvement as well as for their material well-being. Any other kind of love is sheer illusion, sterile and fleeting” (*Notre charge Apostolique*, August 15th 1910).

Robert Benson wrote: “The Catholic Church then is, and always will be, violent and intransigent when the rights of God are in question. She will be absolutely ruthless, for example, towards heresy, for heresy affects not personal matters on which Charity may yield, but a Divine right on which there must be no yielding. Yet, simultaneously, she will be infinitely kind towards the heretic, since a thousand human motives and circumstances may come in and modify his responsibility. At a word of repentance she will readmit his person into her treasury of souls, but not his heresy into her treasury of wisdom. She exhibits meekness towards him and violence towards his error; since he is human, but her Truth is Divine” (*Paradoxes of Catholicism*, chap. 11).