

Online Catechism Lesson 16: Marriage, divorce, mixed marriages, and polygamy

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1. According to the pre-1130 laws of the Catholic Church, the matter of the sacrament of matrimony is the spouses and form is their consent in the present tense to marry one another; this is what makes the marriage valid, a true marriage. And this is at least an ordinary magisterium dogma.
2. However, for Catholics to get legally married they must get married before a Catholic priest if possible. If they do not when it is possible, they commit mortal sin and must be punished by the Church, but they are nevertheless married because their marriage rite was valid even though it was illegal.
3. The Catholic Church alone has the right from God to judge which Catholic or non-Catholic marriages are valid and legal.
4. Persons who are not responsible enough to be married or have children, such as certain retarded persons, must not be allowed to marry or have children.
5. Divorce and remarriage while both spouse are alive is not intrinsically sinful, as God allowed it during the Old Covenant era.
6. It is an allowable opinion to believe that Jesus also allowed divorce and remarriage during the New Covenant era, such as for fornication: *“And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.”* (Mt. 19:9) But Jesus greatly limited the reasons for allowing divorce and remarriage because divorces were given for frivolous reasons during the Old Covenant era. One proof that this is an allowable opinion is that some popes, Church Fathers, bishops, and Catholic theologians held it; and, more importantly, some popes and bishops have allowed divorce and remarriage for fornication and other reasons.¹
7. As a general rule Catholics are banned from marrying non-Catholics. And if they do, they must get a dispensation from an authorized Catholic superior in order to get validly married.
8. It is not intrinsically sinful for a man to have several living wives, known as polygamy, as God allowed this during the Old Testament era. However, it is intrinsically sinful for a woman to have several living husbands.

For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men

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¹ For detailed information, see article *Brief of Divorce and Remarriage*.