

The Indissolubility of Marriage: What Does the Bible Say?

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together let no man put asunder.' 'for your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful), and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery.' 'His disciples said to him, 'If that is the case between a man and wife, it is better not to marry.'" (Mt. 19:5-10, Mk. 10:2-12). We see from the disciples comment that they understood the full magnitude of Jesus' statement marriage is indissoluble. This teaching has caused many people to leave the Church, such as Henry VIII who took the Church of England away from the Pope so he could grant himself a divorce, and in the end he beheaded his wives, and martyred Saint Thomas Moore and many others. To see this tragedy, rent the movie "A Man For All Seasons".

The indissolubility of marriage is the physical symbol of the spiritual reality of God's fidelity to His Chosen People. The violation of this covenant is a destruction of the most powerful symbol of the love of God for us, Christ for the Church. "This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church..." (Eph. 5:15-33, Rev. 21:2). The Bible also says: "For I hate divorce, says the Lord the God of Israel." (Mat. 2:13-17). "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) and that the husband should not divorce his wife... A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord." (1 Cor. 7:10, 11, 39).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1649) teaches "Yet there are some situations in which living together becomes practically impossible for a variety of reasons. In such cases the Church permits the physical separation of the couple and their living apart. The spouses do not cease to be husband and wife before God and so are not free to contract a new union. In this difficult situation, the best solution would be, if possible, reconciliation." A divorce is a civil dissolution of a legal marriage bond. An annulment is not a divorce, but is a declaration that a necessary element for a valid marriage was lacking at the time of consent, which means a true marriage never occurred.