

What We Believe... Why We Believe It

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The Husbands' Survival Guide

Part II

In last week's installment we introduced the escalating divorce rate throughout the twentieth century, which continues to this day. I promised you we would examine the causes of that escalation, and that's what we'll begin doing today.

As noted last week, prior to World War II the divorce rate was only about 1.5%. The primary causes of divorce in the pre-war era were family abandonment (usually by immature and narcissistic men who wouldn't accept their responsibilities as husbands and fathers), adultery (again, usually men), and public scandal caused by one spouse (usually men) sentenced to prison for a crime.

Contrary to popular belief, the Church *does not* teach that divorce is a sin, despite that the marriage vows were taken as a life-long commitment. The Church teaches that divorce and *remarriage* is a sin. In actuality, it's not possible to affect a remarriage, so it's more correct to say that divorce and an *attempted* civil re-marriage is sinful—adultery. You see, the reason this isn't possible is because Jesus said so (Matthew 19:6).

People argue with me all the time about this. They say that the Church doesn't see this as a big deal anymore, because all a divorced person has to do is get a Church annulment to remarry. This shows a definite lack of understanding in what actually takes place. No one gets an annulment; they get a decree of nullity, which is vastly different. To obtain an annulment is to obtain a civil decree from the state that it no longer recognizes the marriage as valid, so this has nothing to do with the theology of marriage. A decree of nullity, on the other hand, is a determination by a bishop (done by his designees in a marriage tribunal) that there were impediments to the marriage in the first place, so the sacrament of Matrimony was never really received by the couple. In other words, the marriage is determined to be null, non-existent.

Not everyone who applies for a decree of nullity gets one. The Church can't undo what God has done. There has to be evidence of a nullifying impediment that existed prior to attempting marriage. For example, if one spouse finds out that the other spouse has never had any intention whatsoever of having children (or artificially limit the number of children), the sacrament was never affected in the first place and the couple will get their decree of nullity, leaving them free to marry. In a diocese where the tribunal is properly trained, decrees of nullity are very rare and almost impossible to obtain.

Would any of you invite a homicidal maniac to use a chain saw to spilt you in half from your groin to your head? Unless this is your idea of a really good time, I'd think the answer to that

question would be in the negative. But that is essentially what you are trying to do with divorce, because Jesus said the two people became one person when they married.

After World War II, the divorce rate jumped to an unprecedented rate of 5%. What caused this? Well, initially the federal government was the culprit, albeit unintentionally. Since the vast majority of working age men were away at war, there weren't enough people to build the arms and materiel required by the war effort, so Uncle Sam gave us Rosie the Riveter to offset the shortage of men.

The origins of the radical feminist movement are found in the women's suffrage movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The reason our founding Fathers didn't include women in the right to vote had nothing to do with seeing women as inferior, but rather from practicality.

Since men and women understood in those days that the husband had to be the family provider and that wives were to devote themselves to the care of their homes and families, the framers' intention was that a man was voting on behalf of his entire household—himself, his wife and his children. But that intention had been forgotten and abandoned by 1870, so the suffrage movement began. It culminated in the 19th amendment to the Constitution, legalizing a woman's right to vote. This was the beginning of so-called "womens' independence", which was really the beginnings of the breakdown of the family, albeit subtly.

It was the introduction of Rosie the Riveter when radical feminism and the destruction of the family made their first big advancements. After the war, the men came home from a victory over Facism, ready to get to work to begin supporting their families again. But many women discovered that they really didn't need their husbands for support. Never mind that in order to work they had to pawn off their God-given responsibilities for their children to other people, they liked the good money they were earning and the new found freedom to make family decisions without their husbands. This abandonment of responsibility for selfish reasons began an incredibly destructive force on the family. It is one reason that Pius XII said of the post-war era that we had lost our sense of sin.

What women bought in to with their war time experiences was a lie right out of the bowels of hell. Whereas women were always most revered and respected as mothers and wives who worked as partners with their husbands, they suddenly became competitors with their husbands. And their husbands viewed it this way.

A woman, under genuine Judeo-Christian teaching, has always been held in the highest esteem. Indeed, they are actually held in higher esteem than the husband, because the function of the husband is largely seen as utilitarian—the provider of food, clothing, shelter and medical care. The wife/mother, on the other hand, has a much greater role.

You've heard the adage that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Fewer adages have been more true. Children get the bulk of their formation from their mothers until about age eight. Even then, the majority of their formation comes from their mothers. As wives and mothers, women are cherished and given priority by both husbands and children. Sure, we joke about marriage sometimes (I jokingly call my wife "The Warden"), but when the rubber meets the road, a husband always puts his wife first when she accepts the responsibilities God intended for her.

We'll continue next week by examining why the divorce rated has soared to 50%.