

Inside this issue:

In view of the current debate on divorce, Connection has been dedicated to this highly important issue.

The Editor

Message from Archbishop

Do we really need divorce in Malta? And were we to introduce it, what effect would this have on the whole of society?

This is the issue that is currently hotly debated on the media, in our families, clubs, streets, shops and places of work. From my own experience in this parish for the past eleven years, I can say that the situation of our families has not deteriorated as some are claiming. I am hopeful that after all the debating and argumentation, people will come to understand that while divorce may be beneficial for some, **it however causes more harm than good to the society at large.** People must be ready to see the whole picture and the consequences that their vote in the referendum will have for future generations... Much harm has already been caused by affecting the mentality of our youths and I hope that this will be undone in the coming years.

Moreover, I still cannot understand why certain people who claim to be Catholics are not giving weight to **what God wants.** Studies and statistics all prove that God is right in this regard. And yet they still keep their blindfold.

Fr. Daniel Cardona

Connection

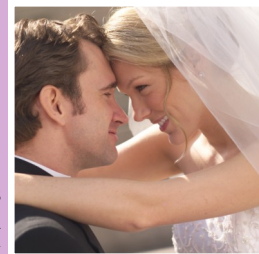
Connecting you to the parish

SPEAKING FRANKLY ABOUT DIVORCE by Fr. Brendon Gatt

During these last few months, I've given talk after talk concerning divorce, visiting parishes and prayer groups, trying as best I can to explain the Church's position on this subject. And we must admit: it is a delicate one. These are the lives of real people that we are talking about, not mere hypothetical situations. Whenever the Church explains her position, she risks appearing insensitive; furthermore, those who disagree with the Church will be quick to accuse her of fundamentalism. Some of us – including Church leaders – have tried to steer away from these two pitfalls: insensitivity and fundamentalism and have consequently been accused of a third: that of not taking a clear position, of not giving the guidance which people need and deserve.

Here, therefore, are my thoughts. However do not think that I am insensitive to the plight of those persons whose marriage has irremediably broken down. My heart goes out to them, and how I wish I had some magic solution for them! But magic solutions do not exist; we live in a real world where relationships are often messy and painful, and where the decisions we take today can, and inevitably will influence future generations.

The Church is against divorce, quite simply, because God is against Divorce. We read, in Malachi 2,16: **"I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel,** "because the man who divorces his wife covers his garment with violence." Jesus too, repeated this sentiment when he overturned the accommodations which had crept into the Law of Moses, saying: "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." (Mt 19,8) Now I'm sure that an answer like this will not satisfy most people. Non-religious people won't care what God is supposed to have said, whereas many Christians will need more information. Perhaps in other times, people might have been content with such an answer, and it's easy for us to accuse them of being uneducated and naive, expecting the Church to do their thinking for them; I, however, suspect that they had a well-defined sense of the primacy of God's will in their lives, and therefore



God's will was enough for them.

But since we live in complicated times and are a little more cynical about those who claim to speak in God's name, I'll explain: God, and Jesus, and consequently the Church, are

divorce just for the fun of it. When God said "I hate divorce" he wasn't saying this capriciously. It wasn't a question of taste, but a question of principle: When God created humanity He intended that the spousal bond between husband and wife – **an image of His own love for us** – should be permanent. The

same applies to Jesus. **When he said "what God has joined together, let no one separate"** (Mt 19,6) he had good reason. He didn't oppose divorce simply to differentiate his followers from others.

The issue is sometimes confused by certain people when they say that divorce is bad because Jesus prohibited it. Actually I believe it's the other way round. Jesus prohibited divorce BECAUSE it is bad. It wasn't good, OK, or at least neutral before he prohibited it. It was bad to begin with! Divorce is bad, full stop, and that is why Jesus opposes it.

And this is where objections start cropping up. Proponents of divorce say things like: *"No one is forcing Catholics to accept divorce. But Malta isn't the Vatican. What about non-Catholics? Therefore even Catholics should vote in favour of divorce, because they shouldn't deprive others of this right."* Many Catholics also give a variation on this theme when they say *"I'm happily married, my-*



Divorce will weaken this Concept: "Love for a Lifetime"



“Marriage makes sense only if it is permanent and stable.”



“The very concept of marriage will be forever tarnished, weakened and endangered by divorce.”



Easter Activities

Palm Sunday 17th April

12:00pm Mass in English with Olive branch blessing at 'Our Lady of Angels Chapel'

Maundy Thursday 21st April

7:00pm Solemn Mass & Remembrance of The Last Supper with washing of the Apostles' feet. After Mass the Blessed Sacrament is taken to the altar of repose where it remains for adoration till Friday afternoon.

Good Friday 22nd April

3:00pm Reading of the Passion of Christ, Adoration of the Cross,

Liturgy & Eucharist

4:30pm Representation of the entry of Christ in Jerusalem followed by

Roman Soldiers Parade

5:30pm Good Friday Procession

Holy Saturday 23rd April

8:15pm Easter Vigil Blessing of the new fire, liturgy of the word, liturgy of Baptism, and liturgy of the Eucharist

Easter Sunday 24th April

9:00am: Procession of The Risen Christ

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SPEAKING FRANKLY ABOUT DIVORCE

Continued

self and *I would never consider divorcing. However I know people who would benefit from divorce.*”

First of all, a reminder: if we're saying that already at Creation God wanted marriage to be permanent, then it follows that he wanted all marriages to be permanent: After all in the beginning there weren't Christians, Catholics or Jews: there were just human beings! Marriage is meant to be permanent in itself, already in its natural form, not only when it becomes a Sacrament (as happens when it is celebrated by two Christians). As Pope Benedict told us on the 17th April 2010 upon his arrival in Malta: **“Your Nation should continue to stand up for the indissolubility of marriage as a natural institution as well as a sacramental one, and for the true nature of the family.”** This argument isn't only valid on a religious level. There is a natural law which shows that marriage makes sense only if it is permanent and stable. Remember that even civil marriages are contracted “until death.”

Yet if people are comfortable putting such considerations aside, then there are also other extremely significant points backed up by solid statistics. If divorce is allowed into Malta, **it will affect everyone**, in the same way that pollution doesn't affect only the polluters. Christians will not be walking around with a sort of shield around them protecting them from the harmful effects of divorce. When young parents choose a school for their children, they cannot specify in the application form: “Please shelter my child from pro-divorce schoolmates, teachers and ideas.” No parent is going to sit down

with prospective girlfriends or boyfriends for his teenage son/daughter and grill them about their views on divorce.

You may object that our children are already mixing with people of different opinions. Currently we are viewing marital breakdown as a tragic possibility; but if a divorce law is enacted, marital breakdown will go from ‘tragic possibility’ to ‘acceptable option’. The State will indirectly be facilitating marital breakdown because anything that is legal inevitably becomes socially acceptable. And the effects of this are not irrelevant: eventually, the possibility of obtaining divorce works its pernicious way into the consciousness of people and causes them to stop thinking of marriage along the lines of **“Until death do us part” but rather “until _____ do us part”** (and in that space feel free to include any problem you can imagine). That is why even secular writers write about the ‘Divorce mentality’. When divorce is available, generation after generation sees a gradual but steady weakening in the sense of commitment which people associate with marriage. As our Archbishop pointed out, instead of being a springboard



to growth and greater understanding, every argument and difficulty will become a moment in which the couple chooses whether to renew their matrimonial commit-

ment or not.

That is also why practically all countries which have divorce laws have seen an increase in the rates of cohabitation and of children born outside of marriage (those same societal ills which the proponents of divorce in Malta are offering as reasons for introducing divorce in the first place): if marriage is viewed not ‘until death’ but ‘until problems crop up’, then many people will simply conclude that it is not worth the financial and emotional hassle of getting married in the first place. They will simply go for the equivalent and cheaper option: cohabitation.

I have not gone into the psychological damage inflicted upon the children of divorcees, nor have I mentioned the fact that very often the weaker party in a difficult marriage is further penalised by the divorce proceedings and at times rendered destitute; I have not gone into the financial consequences which the multiple divorces, increase in cohabiting couples and children born out of wedlock will inevitably wreak on the taxpayer. I have limited myself to a consideration of how divorce impacts the very idea of marriage.

Christians are obviously free to make up their own mind, having ensured beforehand that their conscience is enlightened by God's Word. In making their decision they can't ignore those persons in Malta today whose marriages have failed. However they will also want to bear in mind the generations, present and future, for whom **the very concept of marriage will be forever tarnished, weakened and endangered by divorce.** When I hear people describing divorce as a sort of cure or solution for the social problems we have today, I'm reminded of the old moral principle enshrined in par. 1756 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: **“One may not do evil so that good may result from it.”**



Mass in English At 12:00pm

Palm Sunday 17th April & Sunday 15th May 2011

At Our Lady Of Angels Chapel Haż-Żebbuġ

Welcome Guests