

Pope Warns of Easy Outs for Troubled Marriages

Says Commitment Still Possible, Even in Modern Culture

VATICAN CITY, JAN. 29, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The value of Christian marriage runs the risk of being practically destroyed if the sacrament is declared null because of pretexts, says Benedict XVI.

The Pope affirmed this today when he addressed the Roman Rota at the beginning of the juridical year. In his reflection, he noted that many topics could be considered, but he chose an evaluation of the implementation of two addresses given by Pope John Paul II more than 20 years ago on the theme of marriage impediments due to psychological problems.

Citing the Polish Pope, Benedict XVI lamented that it is still possible to detect the need to preserve the ecclesial community from "the scandal of seeing the value of Christian marriage being practically destroyed by the exaggerated and almost automatic multiplication of declarations of nullity of marriage in cases of the failure of marriage on the pretext of some immaturity or psychic weakness on the part of the contracting parties."

Thus, the Holy Father exhorted the tribunal to "treat the causes with the due depth that is required by the ministry of truth and charity that is proper to the Roman Rota."

Distinctions

Again referring to his predecessor's address, the Pontiff noted the distinction between a "psychic maturity which is seen as the goal of human development" and "canonical maturity which is rather the basic minimum required for establishing the validity of marriage."

He further noted the difference between "incapacity" and "difficulty," recalling John Paul II's assertion that "only incapacity and not difficulty in giving consent and in realizing a true community of life and love invalidates a marriage."

And Benedict XVI looked at the distinction between the "canonical dimension of normality, which based on the integral vision of the human person 'includes moderate forms of psychological difficulty' and the clinical dimension that excludes from the concept of [normality] every limitation on maturity and 'every form of psychic illness.'"

Finally, he enunciated the difference "between the 'minimum capacity sufficient for valid consent' and the idealized capacity of full maturity ordered to a happy conjugal life."

Capable

The Pope stated that it is necessary to rediscover "the capacity that in principle every human person has of getting married in virtue of his own nature as man or as woman."

And he cautioned against the risk of "falling into an anthropological pessimism that, in light of the current cultural situation, considers it almost impossible to marry."

"Besides the fact that this situation is not uniform in the diverse regions of the world," the Holy Father continued, "consensual incapacity cannot be confused with the difficulties that many experience -- especially youth -- coming to consider matrimonial union as normally unthinkable and impractical."

"On the contrary," he said, "the reaffirmation of the innate human capacity for matrimony is

precisely the starting point to help couples discover the natural reality of marriage and the relevance it has in the plan of salvation."

"The capacity should be placed in relation with what matrimony essentially is," the Pontiff added, citing "Gaudium et Spes": "the intimate communion of life and conjugal love, founded by the Creator and structured with its own laws,' and, in a particular way, with the essential obligations inherent to it."

The Bishop of Rome urged the tribunal to a "healthy realism," as John Paul II encouraged, because the capacity to marry "refers to the minimum necessary for the boyfriend/girlfriend to be able to give their being as masculine and feminine person to found this bond to which the great majority of human beings are called."