



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,
This is a difficult Gospel.

Jesus invites us to look at our lives and go beyond just the surface. We are called to conform our hearts, not just our actions, to His Heart. St. John Paul II refers to this as the difference between *ethics* and *ethos*. Ethics govern external actions. Ethos is the desire of the heart. When our ethics meet up with our ethos, then our hearts are with almighty God. Then we won't need a law saying "You shall not kill," but, for love of God, we won't even be angry, insult or ridicule the people around us. We won't need a law saying, "You shall not commit adultery" for our hearts won't ever want to use another for our own selfish pleasure.

These are difficult only because our hearts are not yet conformed to Christ. He invites us to invite Him into our disordered lives, hearts, and desires so that He can soften our hardened hearts to become hearts of flesh; hearts after His Heart.

Jesus says, **"It was also said, *Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce. But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife – unless the marriage is unlawful – causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery*"** (Matthew 5:31-32). This one is very hard in today's culture. Our ethics are not united to our ethos! Since no-fault divorce has become rampant, many try to avoid this call from Jesus. Yet, He does call us, as Christians, to follow Him higher than the rest of the world.

So where does this leave us? A reminder that the Church has a process for getting an annulment. An annulment, though, is not "Catholic Divorce." Divorce says that the marriage was there, but it broke apart. An annulment looks back to see was consent ever really formed. If true consent was not really formed, then there *was no* marriage, since consent makes the marriage. We can turn to the Church to help us discern when a relationship has broken up, whether there really was a sacramental bond there – the sacrament of Matrimony.

Why is the Church strict on this? Because Jesus was. He reminds us that God's plan for marriage is life-long. God's plan for marriage is to be a sacrament – an outward sign of God's love – and so reveal to us the inner mystery of God – that He *is* ever-lasting, faithful love. Everyone who enters into marriage must accept this – and that is what they all want. On the wedding day, the couples say, "As long as we both shall live" or "Until death do us part." The presumption is that they are freely choosing to say this – they *want* this – and the Church (and God) take them seriously.

All that being said, I have helped many people through the annulment process so that they could get married in the Catholic Church. If you are Catholic and in a marriage that is not blessed by the Church, *I want to help you* get this blessing. Please contact me so that we can begin this process.

May we allow Jesus to help us conform our hearts to His Heart, so that our ethics may align with our ethos.