

Marriage's Indissolubility Is a Dogma

Cardinal Müller Clarifies

by Andrea Gagliarducci

VATICAN CITY — In a book-length interview, Cardinal Gerhard Müller underscored that the indissolubility of marriage is no mere doctrine, but a dogma of the Church, and he stressed the need to recover the sacramental understanding of marriage and family. Cardinal Müller, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, granted the interview in June to the Spanish journalist Carlos Granados, director of the Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos in Madrid.

The book is titled *The Hope of the Family*, and it will be released in English, Italian and Spanish. It will be published shortly by Ignatius Press. In the book, Cardinal Müller corrects misunderstandings about the Church's teaching on family; underscores the dramatic situation of the children of separated parents; and stresses that more education is needed and how that education should start from the reality of the love of God.

The book can be considered Cardinal Müller's definitive contribution to preparations for the next synod of bishops, dedicated to the family, which will take place in Rome Oct. 5-19; he has chosen to give no further interviews for the time being. The synod's theme will be "Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization," and numerous outlets have speculated about a possible change in Church teaching regarding the reception of Communion by those who are divorced and remarried, as well as a more lax discipline regarding annulment.

Despite such speculation, Cardinal Müller underscored that "the total indissolubility of a valid marriage is not a mere doctrine; it is a divine and definitive dogma of the Church."

'Radically Mistaken'

Cardinal Müller also addressed discussions on the possibility of allowing spouses to "start life over again" and that the love between two persons may die. "These theories are radically mistaken," the prefect said. Cardinal Müller explained, "One cannot declare a marriage to be extinct on the pretext that the love between the spouses is 'dead,'" because "the indissolubility of marriage does not depend on human sentiments, whether permanent or transitory. This property of marriage is intended by God himself. The Lord is involved in marriage between man and woman, which is why the bond exists and has its origin in God. This is the difference."

Cardinal Müller identifies the mistakes in society's understanding of marriage. These mistakes are a result of the contemporary world's individualistic society, he says, and proposes the initiative of a new announcement of the word of God to overcome these mistakes. "In a world that is angrily individualistic and subjectivist, marriage is not perceived anymore as an opportunity for the human being to achieve his completeness, sharing love," Cardinal Müller lamented.

He then stressed: "Someone is called to announce once again God, the loving Trinity! We should announce the revealed God, who calls all of us to be part of his relational being." Cardinal Müller asks for a more in-depth education on marriage and maintains that "remote preparation for marriage — from infancy and adolescence — should be a major pastoral and educational priority."

The Vatican's doctrinal chief emphasized that "life has sense only when it becomes a concrete gift to another in daily life." Life "is given in the mystery of marriage, which becomes the privileged place where the definitive and unconditioned self-gift is made," a gift that "gives sense to our life," said Cardinal Müller.

According to the cardinal, the reason the modern world's sense of marriage is mistaken is rooted in a misguided anthropology that "leads to disaster," because true humanism "is theocentric. As a shepherd, I say to myself: It can't be! We must tell people the truth! We should open their eyes, telling them they have been cowardly tricked through a false anthropology, which can only lead to disaster." Responding to this, he suggested that pastor's "tools may

vary,” but “we should above all speak about the authentic love and the concrete project which Christ has for every person.”

Misunderstandings About Pope Francis

Cardinal Müller also addresses misunderstandings that have sprung up around Pope Francis. Addressing the media frenzy around his description of the Church as a field hospital, Cardinal Müller said the image is “very beautiful. Nevertheless, we cannot manipulate the Pope by reducing the whole reality of the Church to this image. The Church in itself is not just a hospital: The Church is also the house of the Father.”

Cardinal Müller also tackled the issue of the poor, so pivotal in Pope Francis’ teaching. The prefect said that, “among the poor of the Third and Fourth World,” those relegated to the “existential peripheries,” there are “the children who must grow up without their parents,” the “orphans of divorce,” who are perhaps “the poorest of the poor of the world.”

These poorest of the poor, these orphans of divorce, are most often found, not in materially impoverished nations, but in Europe and North America — some of the world’s wealthiest places. “These orphans of divorce, sometimes surrounded by many goods and with much money available, are the poorest among the poor, because they have many material goods yet are deprived of the fundamental good: the self-giving love of two parents who deny themselves for their children.”

The Hope of the Family also features a preface written by Cardinal Fernando Sebastian Aguilar, archbishop emeritus of Pamplona and Tudela, who wrote, “The main problem present in the Church with regard to the family is not the small number of the divorced and remarried who would like to receive Eucharistic Communion. Our most serious problem is the great number of baptized who marry civilly and of sacramentally married spouses who do not live marriage or the marital life in harmony with Christian life and the teachings of the Church, which would have them be living icons of Christ’s love for his Church present and working in the world.”

Other Cardinals Speak Out

The book-interview of the German cardinal is his latest contribution to the preparations for the upcoming synod. He has been joined in his defense of marriage by a number of other prominent cardinals, including Cardinals Caffarra, Brandmüller, Bagnasco, Sarah, Re, Ruini, De Paolis and Collins.

On Oct. 7, Ignatius Press will also release *Remaining in the Truth of Christ*, a work of five cardinals responding to the controversial remarks about marriage made by Cardinal Walter Kasper last February, “[challenging] the premise that traditional Catholic doctrine and contemporary pastoral practice are in contradiction.”

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Cardinals Collaborate on Book to Defend Church Doctrine on Divorce, Remarriage

by Elise Harris

VATICAN CITY — Five members of the College of Cardinals have joint-authored a book defending Church doctrine regarding divorced-and-remarried Catholics, affirming that it is the most merciful approach. Set to be published in English this October, the book is entitled *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church*. It offers a response to Cardinal Walter Kasper’s call for the Church to open its doors to allow divorced-and-remarried Catholics to receive the Eucharist.

According to publisher Ignatius Press, the book will outline both biblical arguments in support of current Church doctrine as well as the teachings and practices of the early Church. In its online summary, Ignatius Press explains that the book “traces the centuries-long history of Catholic resistance” to the reception of Communion by divorced-and-remarried Catholics and reveals “serious theological and canonical difficulties inherent in past and current orthodox Church practice.”

“In neither of these cases, biblical or patristic, do these scholars find support for the kind of ‘toleration’ of civil marriages following divorce advocated by Cardinal Kasper,” they observed. During a two-hour address to a consistory on the family in February, Cardinal Kasper, president emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, discussed marriage and family life, devoting the last section of his speech to “the problem of the divorced and remarried.”

In that portion he asked, “Is it not perhaps an exploitation of the person” when a person who has been divorced and remarried is excluded from receiving Communion, and he suggested that, for “the smaller segment of the divorced and remarried,” perhaps they could be admitted to “the sacrament of penance and then of Communion.”

He echoed the same sentiments in a May interview with *Commonweal*, during which he discussed his proposal that divorced-and-remarried persons might receive Communion, suggesting that Christians aren’t called to be heroic when he said that living together as brother and sister is “a heroic act, and heroism is not for the average Christian.”

Referring to the conclusion drawn by the cardinals, Ignatius Press explained that the various studies examined in the book “lead to the conclusion that the Church’s long-standing fidelity to the truth of marriage constitutes the irrevocable foundation of its merciful and loving response to the individual who is civilly divorced and remarried. The book therefore challenges the premise that traditional Catholic doctrine and contemporary pastoral practice are in contradiction.”

The five cardinals authoring the book are Cardinals Gerhard Müller, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; Raymond Burke, prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura; Walter Brandmüller, president emeritus of the Pontifical Committee of Historical Sciences; Carlo Caffarra, archbishop of Bologna and one of the closest theologians to St. John Paul II in questions of morality and the family; and Velasio De Paolis, president emeritus of the Prefecture for Economic Affairs of the Holy See.

In addition to the cardinals, four theologians and professors have also made contributions to the book: Robert Dodaro, the editor, John Rist and Jesuits Paul Mankowski and Archbishop Cyril Vasil.

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