

## Mixed Marriages

✦ **What is a 'Mixed Marriage'? ✦ If a Catholic Marries Another 'Christian', is This Considered a Mixed Marriage? ✦ What is the Church's Traditional Teaching on Mixed Marriage? ✦ Does the Church Ever Allow Mixed Marriages?...**

*Note that the term "mixed marriage" may be used herein as a synonym for "disparity of cult" [although there is technically a difference between the two terms ("disparity of cult" may strictly refer to marriages between Catholics and unbaptized non-Catholics)].*

### What is a 'Mixed Marriage'?

'Mixed Marriage' refers to a marriage wherein one party is Catholic and the other party is not.

### Does a 'Mixed Marriage' Have Anything to do with Race?

No. This is a common misconception. As indicated above, a 'Mixed Marriage' refers to a marriage wherein one party is Catholic and the other party is not. It has nothing to do with either party's race. If a white person and a black person marry and both are Catholic, there is no mixed marriage.

### If a Catholic Marries Another 'Christian', is This Considered a Mixed Marriage?

Those who call themselves Christian, but are not members of the true Church of Christ, the Roman Catholic Church, have always been considered by the Church to be heretics or schismatics. Not only do most of them reject the authority of the Church, but they usually reject at least some of the sacraments, they often reject certain dogmas of the Church (e.g. the Real Presence, papal infallibility, Marian doctrines, necessity of faith and works, etc.), and they often see nothing wrong with engaging in sinful actions condemned by the Church (e.g. birth control, abortion, divorce, etc.). The marriage of a Catholic to a heretic or schismatic, even if the non-Catholic party considers himself/herself 'Christian', is a mixed marriage. *[Note: For important information related to this topic (including the Church's infallibly defined dogma of 'No Salvation Outside the Church'), see filer: "The Importance of Being Catholic: Combating Religious Indifferentism"]*

### What is the Church's Traditional Teaching on Mixed Marriage?

From earliest times, the Church has strongly warned against and forbidden mixed marriages. The Church has always considered such marriages dangerous to Catholics and their offspring, and has even used such references as "detestable marriages which Holy Mother Church has continually condemned and interdicted" (Pope Benedict XIV) to refer to mixed marriages. The following examples may help illustrate the traditional teaching of the Church regarding mixed marriages:

"Christians shall not marry heretics. They shall neither take them nor their children in marriage, nor shall they give their sons or daughters in marriage to them, until they promise to become Christians [that is, Catholics]." (Council of Laodicea, 365 A.D.)

"Can. 1060 Most severely does the Church prohibit everywhere that marriage be entered into by two baptized persons, one of whom is Catholic, and the other belonging to a heretical or schismatic sect; indeed, if there is a danger of perversion to the Catholic spouse and children, that marriage is forbidden even by divine law." (1917 Code of Canon Law)

"Further remind them that even for the gravest of reasons it is not permitted to enter into marriage with Christians who are not Catholics; those who do so without the authority and indulgence of the Church sin before God and the Church." (Pope Leo XIII, "Quod Multum", 1886)

"Since We must diligently safeguard the integrity of sound doctrine and practice, We cannot help but be displeased with whatever might imperil them. And yet what the Church has always thought about marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics is more than abundantly clear. Indeed she has always considered such marriages to be illicit and destructive both because of the disgraceful sharing in sacramental matters involved and because of the ever present danger of the Catholic spouse and improper upbringing of offspring. And this is the tenor of most ancient canons severely prohibiting such marriages and more recent sanctions of supreme pontiffs." (Pope Gregory XVI, "Quas Vestro", 1841 A.D.)

### Why Has the Church Always Objected to Mixed Marriage?

There are many reasons the Church has always objected to mixed marriages. In addition to the biblical admonitions...

St. Paul, Ti. 3:10-11: "After a first and second warning, break off contact with a heretic, realizing that such a person is perverted and sinful and stands self-condemned."

St. Paul, 2 Cor. 6:14-18: "Do not be yoked with those who are different, with unbelievers. For what partnership do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? What accord has Christ with Beliar? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said: 'I will live with them and move among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore, come forth from them and be separate,' says the Lord, 'and touch nothing unclean; then I will receive you and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.'"

And also...

St. John, 2 Jn.1:10-11: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him in your house or even greet him; for whoever greets him shares in his evil works."

St. Paul, Eph. 5:6-7: "Let no one deceive you with empty arguments, for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the disobedient. So do not be associated with them."

Our Lord Jesus Christ, Mt. 18:17: "If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector."

St. Paul, Rom. 16:17-18: "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles, in opposition to the teaching that you learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent."

St. Paul, Gal. 1:8-10: "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach (to you) a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, let that one be accursed! Am I now currying favor with human beings or God?"

The Church also has concern that...

"When two do not agree about religion, it is nearly always futile to hope for agreement in other things." (Pope Leo XIII)

"[D]isparity of worship is contrary to marriage in respect of its chief good, which is the good of the offspring." (St. Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church and "greatest theologian in the history of the Church")

"Catholic truth and Church doctrine which forbids mixed marriages as disgraceful because of the communion in holy things and because of the serious danger of the perversion of the Catholic spouse and the perverted education of the future children." (Pope Gregory XVI, "Commissum Divinitus", 1835 A.D.)

"Such marriages, in fact, as is clear to you from wide experience, are rarely happy and usually occasion grave loss to the Catholic Church. A very efficacious means for driving out such grave evils is that individual Catholics receive a thorough training in the Divine truths and that the people be shown clearly the road which leads to salvation." (Pope Pius XII, "Sertum Laetitiae", 1939 A.D.)

"Other reasons also proving that persons should turn with dread from such marriages are chiefly these: that they give occasion to forbidden association and communion in religious matters; endanger the faith of the Catholic partner; are a hindrance to the proper education of the children; and often lead to a mixing up of truth and falsehood, and to the belief that all religions are equally good." (Pope Leo XIII, "Arcanum", 1880 A.D.)

"Whence it comes about not infrequently, as experience shows, that deplorable defections from religion occur among the offspring, or at least a headlong descent into that religious indifference which is closely allied to impiety. There is this also to be considered that in these mixed marriages it becomes much more difficult to imitate by a lively conformity of spirit the mystery of which We have spoken, namely that close union between Christ and His Church. Assuredly, also, will there be wanting that close union of spirit which as it is the sign and mark of the Church of Christ, so also should be the sign of Christian wedlock, its glory and adornment. For, where there exists diversity of mind, truth and feeling, the bond of union of mind and heart is wont to be broken, or at least weakened. From this comes the danger lest the love of man and wife grow cold and the peace and happiness of family life, resting as it does on the union of hearts, be destroyed." (Pope Pius XI, "Casti Connubii", 1930 A.D.)

"This religious character of marriage, its sublime signification of grace and the union between Christ and the Church, evidently requires that those about to marry should show a holy reverence towards it, and zealously endeavor to make their marriage approach as nearly as possible to the archetype of Christ and the Church. They, therefore, who rashly and heedlessly contract mixed marriages, from which the maternal love and providence of the Church dissuades her children for very sound reasons, fail conspicuously in this respect, sometimes with danger to their eternal salvation. This attitude of the Church to mixed marriages appears in many of her documents, all of which are summed up in the Code of Canon Law: 'Everywhere and with the greatest strictness the Church forbids marriages between baptized persons, one of whom is a Catholic and the other a member of a schismatical or heretical sect; and if there is, add to this, the danger of the falling away of the Catholic party and the perversion of the children, such a marriage is forbidden also by the divine law.'" (Pope Pius XI, "Casti Connubii", 1930 A.D.)

"Strive to eradicate these slithering errors with all your strength. Inspire the populace...to keep the Catholic faith and unity as the only way of salvation with an ever more ardent zeal, and, thus, to avoid every danger of forsaking it. Once the...faithful [understand] this necessity of maintaining Catholic unity, admonitions and warnings to them against joining in marriage with heretics will certainly not be in vain. If on occasion some grave cause should suggest such a mixed marriage, they will then apply for a dispensation from the Church and observe the conditions We mentioned above. You and their parents and others who have care of them are responsible for teaching them what the judgment of the canons is in this matter. They must be warned lest they should dare to break these canons and, thus, jeopardize their souls. Hence if the circumstances suggest it, it may be necessary to remind them of that well-known precept of the natural and divine law, which commands us to avoid not only sins but the near occasion of sin as well. Remind them also of the other precept of the same law

which enjoins parents to rear their children in the discipline and admonitions of the Lord (Eph. 6.4). Therefore, they must instruct them in the true worship of God, which is unique to the Catholic religion. Hence, exhort your faithful to weigh seriously how great an offense they commit against the supreme Deity and how cruelly they act toward themselves and their future children when, by rashly contracting a mixed marriage, they may expose themselves and their children to the danger of perversion. So that the gravity of such danger may appear more clearly, recall for them those salutary admonitions of the Apostles, of the Fathers, and of the canons, which warn that familiar association with heretics is to be shunned." (Pope Gregory XVI, "Summo Iugiter Studio", 1832 A.D.)

Other negative considerations of mixed marriages may include:

► A constant influence leading the Catholic party away from the Church (even if not intentional by the non-Catholic). Since a valid marriage is "till death do you part", this influence may last until your (or their) dying breath.

► Most likely, the non-Catholic party may reject the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist - the very center of our faith, our strength, and the Bread that gives us life. The consequences of this are legion. For example:

- They may eventually chide you for your belief and cause you to question it.
- They may discourage you or prevent you from Eucharistic Adoration.
- They may discourage you or prevent you from attending Mass.
- They may blaspheme the Eucharist.
- Day to day life may become intolerable for a good Catholic. How can a Catholic patiently endure living with [and creating children with] a person who has a horror of or distaste for the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist (not to mention the Church that Christ founded)?
- The non-Catholic spouse may hinder the Catholic spouse from obeying the laws of the Church concerning the Eucharist (e.g. not receiving Holy Communion without fasting or receiving Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin - e.g. by using contraceptives, etc.)
- If the non-believing spouse doesn't consider the believing Catholic an idolater, he/she is being inconsistent. The believing Catholic worships the Holy Eucharist, whereas the unbeliever may see it as "bread". If a non-believing spouse considers their spouse an 'idolater', how can they live with them? How can they agree to raise their children to believe this way? Are they so lukewarm as to not care about (supposed) idolatry?
- Etc.

► The Catholic party may be prevented or discouraged or otherwise not aided in living out their faith (e.g. Lenten practices, Advent practices, etc.)

► Holidays and other important events (e.g. baptisms, confirmations, etc.) will probably always be an issue when one party is not Catholic.

► Since the other party is not Catholic and may fail to accept that marriage is "till death do you part", they may eventually seek a civil divorce. If you were validly married, you could NEVER marry again during that person's lifetime, even though he/she had engaged in another civil 'marriage'.

► The other party may encourage you to worship with them. By participating in defective worship ('worship' outside Christ's one and only true Church - an act always held to be sinful), you offend God and may ultimately lose your faith. In any event, you will probably end up religiously indifferent.

► The Catholic party may be unable to receive the sacraments either because of the marriage itself (e.g. if proper dispensation is not received) or because of the practices of the marriage (e.g. use of contraceptives).

► Your efforts to convert the non-Catholic party (or theirs to convert you), may lead to disquiet within the family.

► The non-Catholic may fail to get you the last sacraments at your death (or when you are gravely ill). And, after your death, no Masses or prayers may be said for you. The non-Catholic may not even honor your burial or funeral arrangements consistent with Catholic tradition.

► The Catholic party may be encouraged to sin (e.g. miss Mass, use contraception, ignore penitential rules, etc.) since the other party may not see these actions as sins.

► There may be arguments, bad feelings, and pressure related to disagreement over religion or religious practices.

► The non-Catholic family may put pressure on your family. Even if the non-Catholic spouse consented to certain conditions before marriage, it is unlikely that the non-Catholic relatives did the same.

► Catholic religious practices that are excellent for a couple to do together (e.g. praying the rosary, attending Mass, reciting novenas, reading stories of the saints, attending Church functions, etc.) may become solitary events. Or, even sadder, they may not occur at all.

► The non-Catholic party may not have respect for the Catholic's religious needs (time for confession, not working on Sunday, penitential works on Friday, etc.)

► Since "[we] cannot help conforming ourselves to what [or whom] we love" (St. Francis de Sales), the Catholic may find that they lose their faith, or at least fail to practice it. As Scripture warns, "A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough." (Gal. 5:9)

► A non-Catholic spouse may prevent a Catholic from living as a good Catholic [e.g. by discouraging/rejecting a large family, rejecting the proper role of men and women, not securing the proper religious education of children (including rejection of necessary homeschooling), etc.]

► The non-Catholic may have had a very different upbringing and may have a very different value system. When problems occur, their solutions may be wildly different from those of a good Catholic. Also, their idea of what is important in life may be very different from what is important to a faithful Catholic. As time goes on, these issues may become more manifest and more troublesome.

► Failure to carefully follow Church laws (e.g. on contraceptives, penitential practices, Mass attendance, etc.) may result in a danger to your soul.

► As a Catholic, you no doubt have different friends and role models than a non-Catholic. Non-Catholics may reject (or belittle or at least not give proper honor to) Mary and the saints. They may disparage your praying to Mary or the saints and may try to dissuade you from it. They may also attempt to stop your children from doing so.

*Continued on reverse...*

