



by Fr. Mark Steffl, STL, JCL

Ask a Canon Lawyer

This month's question: What do I say to my son/daughter who is married outside of the Church

make time to visit with a priest about what the decision to get married outside of the Church will mean for them and their relationship to the Church.

Sometimes couples simply don't think of these things in the long term. They need to recognize how it can affect not only themselves but their families. Many times in my ministry I have encountered distraught parents in tears about a decision of an adult child to get married outside the Church. Such parents often worry that they cannot in good conscience go to such a wedding, concerned that their presence would be taken as giving approval to such a decision. That is a painful decision for any Catholic parent to face.

For those who, for whatever reason, have already celebrated their wedding outside of the Church, the Church is always ready to assist them in "validating" their union – exchanging their vows to each

other again so that their marriage can be recognized as such by the Catholic Church. The Church always wants to "regularize" what is irregular, and to help everyone to get to where they need to be.

To begin this process of validating their marriage, a couple meets with their parish priest to discuss the details and circumstances of why their wedding was not celebrated according to "Catholic form" and their desire to be fully involved once again in the sacramental life of the Church. He can guide them through gathering the necessary information and paperwork, and together they will chart out a plan of preparation for a Catholic marriage. After the time of preparation is complete, the bride and groom will exchange their vows before a Catholic priest or deacon with at least two witnesses, that is, according to the Catholic form of marriage. (Usually this is done in a small, often private ceremony, rather than a full-blown wedding.) With

their Marriage recognized by the Church, the Catholic spouse or spouses can once again receive the Sacraments.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) in the Lives of Married Persons
Behind all of this, it is important to highlight what is so often overlooked: that marriage between Christians is a sacrament, and that it is meant to be a channel of new graces and blessings for the married couple.

In preparing a couple for marriage, I always remind them (or the Catholic party if they are not both Catholic) of the importance of receiving the Sacrament of Confession before the wedding, and to continue to do so regularly throughout their married lives. The Lord has an abundance of grace prepared for each married couple, and from a pastoral perspective I see how making use of this Sacrament of Reconciliation is too often missing from both the wedding preparation and the

married life. This omission can potentially deprive the newly married couple of some spiritual aid in making their marriage the happy and holy one that the Lord desires it to be.

NEXT COLUMN: What is required to be a godparent/sponsor for Baptism and Confirmation?

Do you have a question regarding canon law that you would like to see answered here? E-mail [The Prairie Catholic](mailto:cclancy@dnv.org) at cclancy@dnv.org. In the subject area indicate "Ask a canon lawyer."



Editor's note: Fr. Mark Steffl serves as the Diocese of New Ulm's canon lawyer and is the judicial vicar of the diocesan Office of the Tribunal.

Family members should not be afraid to encourage a couple to

OUR LADY'S 15 PROMISES TO THOSE WHO PRAY HER ROSARY



The Holy Rosary is an enormous source of grace and spiritual protection, one of the most powerful sacramentals of the Catholic Church. Sister Lucia dos Santos, one of the children to whom Our Lady appeared at Fatima, once said,

"There is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families ... that cannot be solved by the Rosary. There is no problem, I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary."

After the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Holy Rosary is the prayer most pleasing to Our Lady. In honor of the Blessed Mother, we would like to share her **15 promises to those who pray the Rosary.**

1. Whoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the Rosary shall receive signal graces.

[A signal grace may be a simple sign in daily life that answers a question made in prayer or points towards God's will. For example, seeing a rose after finishing a novena to St. Therese of Lisieux could be considered a signal grace. Signal graces are often subtle or seemingly coincidental.]

2. I promise my special protection and the greatest graces to all those who shall recite the Rosary.

3. The Rosary shall be a powerful armor against hell, it will destroy vice, decrease sin and defeat heresies.

4. It will cause good works to flourish; it will obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God; it will withdraw the hearts of men from the love of the world and its vanities, and will lift them to the desire for Eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means!

5. The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary shall not perish.

[In other words, anyone who faithfully prays the Rosary and asks for Mary's intercession will be saved from hell.]

6. Whoever shall recite the Rosary devoutly, applying himself to the consideration of its Sacred Mysteries, shall never be conquered by misfortune. God will not chastise him in His justice, he shall not perish by an unprovided death; if he be just he shall remain in the grace of God, and become worthy of Eternal Life.

[An unprovided death means dying while not in a state of grace (that is, in dying with unconfessed mortal sin in the soul). The Blessed Mother promises that anyone who regularly prays the Rosary, and earnestly tries to live according to God's will, will be spiritually prepared when their time of death comes.]

7. Whoever shall have a true devotion for the Rosary shall not die without the Sacraments of the Church.

[Our Lady ensures that the soul will receive sanctifying grace through the Sacraments prior to its departure from the body.]

8. Those who are faithful to recite the Rosary shall have during their life and at their death the Light of God and the plenitude of His Graces; at the moment of death they shall participate in the Merits of the Saints in Paradise.

9. I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the Rosary.

10. The faithful children of the Rosary shall merit a high degree of Glory in Heaven.

11. You shall obtain all you ask of me by recitation of the Rosary.

12. All those who propagate the Holy Rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.

13. I have obtained from my Divine Son that all the advocates of the Rosary shall have for intercessors the entire Celestial Court during their life and at the hour of death.

14. All who recite the Rosary are my Sons, and brothers of my Only Son Jesus Christ.

15. Devotion to my Rosary is a great sign of predestination.

[By this the Blessed Mother means that a devotion to the Rosary is a good indication that the devotee is on the path to Heaven.]

It is amazing to realize how much grace and heavenly help we can receive by an act so simple as praying the Rosary regularly. It only takes 15 minutes to pray! Set aside time alone, with your family, or with some friends to start the habit of reciting a daily Rosary. If you don't think you have time, try praying on the way to work in the morning. You will surely notice the grace it brings to your life, as promised by Our Lady!