



Da Joseph Ratzinger sagde ja til gengiftes modtagelse af kommunion

I 1960'erne og i begyndelsen af 1970'erne var Joseph Ratzinger blandt de mere nytænkende teologer. Senere som ærkebiskop i München, præfekt for Troslærerkongregationen og pave var det så som så med progressive udtalelser. Fra da af drejede det sig for ham udelukkende om at bevare og forsvare kirkens traditionelle læremæssige synspunkter, idet han før frem med brask og bram mod teologer, der vovede at komme med afvigende meninger. Ja, blot det at ville debattere deres nutidige relevans, var galt nok.



Derfor er det befriende at se, at han selv engang kunne tage traditionelle synspunkter op til overvejelse og fremkomme med løsningsforslag, der rokkede ved de fra fortiden nedarvede regler. Et af dem var spørgsmålet om kommunion til fraskilte, som havde giftet sig igen uden at have opnået en kirkelig annullering af deres første ægteskab. Det var, hævdede han dengang, i visse tilfælde og under visse betingelser i overensstemmelse med den kirkelige tradition at lade gengifte modtage kommunionen. Forudsætningen var, at deres andet ægteskab var stabilt og havde bestået årenes prøve, samt at de opdrog deres børn moralsk og katolsk og selv var aktive katolikker.

Vi bringer her en artikel derom, som har været lagt ud på Vatican Insider's hjemmeside.

Den er skrevet af den italienske journalist og Vatikankender Andrea Torielli.

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The year Ratzinger said “yes” to communion for remarried divorcees

In 1972, while he was teaching in Regensburg, five years before he was created cardinal, Ratzinger wrote a theological essay in which he expressed an open approach to remarried divorcees. But in a volume of his Opera Omnia published in Germany, the former Pope has decided to remove a statement previously made

In 1972, less than five years before his nomination as bishop and cardinal, when he was still a member of the international theological commission set up by Paul VI, Joseph Ratzinger expressed himself in favour of admitting remarried divorcees to the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was on the condition that a couple's second union was based on a solid bond that had stood the test of time. The couple had to respect its moral obligations towards their children and actively practice the faith. Admission to the Eucharist would be through extrajudicial means, with the parish priest and members of the community as witnesses. According to Ratzinger, this solution was backed by tradition.

The future Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and future Pope expressed these thoughts in a scientific essay that has been published in a collection of Christological reflections (pp. 35-56 of *Zur Frage nach der Unauflöslichkeit der Ehe. Bemerkungen zum dogmengeschichtlichen Befund und zu seiner gegenwärtigen Bedeutung*; in: *Ehe und Ehescheidung. Diskussion unter Christen*, edited by F. Henrich and V. Eid, published by Münchener Akademie-Schriften 59, Munich 1972).

Now this essay has been published again in Ratzinger's Opera Omnia, published by Herder and edited by Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller. But having carried out a thorough review of the text, Ratzinger has decided to make significant changes to the conclusion, removing the bits in which he took an open approach toward remarried divorcees back in 1972: it is important to remember that as Prefect of the former Holy Office, with John Paul II's approval, Ratzinger rejected the possibility of readmission proposed in a pastoral letter he received from three German bishops, one of them being the future cardinal Walter Kasper. The volume of the Opera Omnia that contains the new version of the essay is about to go on sale in German bookstores. Meanwhile, German magazine *Herder Korrespondenz* has published an article quoting key passages from both texts.

What did Joseph Ratzinger write 42 years ago? Here are some key passages from that text:



“The Church is the Church of the new Alliance but it exists in a world where the “hardness of heart” (Matthew 18:9) of the Old Alliance remains.” The Pope-to-be therefore believed that “in clear emergency situations, in order to avoid the worst”, the Church could “allow for certain limited exceptions”. This proposal did not intend to question Jesus’ words and what the Scriptures say regarding “the exceptional nature of the proposal, its regulation and its purpose which is to provide help only where strictly necessary.”

“With utmost prudence,” the theologian-come-Archbishop-of-Munich wrote, “I wish to attempt to formulate a proposal which I believe fits into” the category of situations where making an exception is strictly necessary. “In cases where both spouses see their first marriage as having been irretrievably destroyed a long time ago; and when a second marriage follows and proves to be a moral union and filled with the spirit of the faith, especially with regard to children’s education (where the destruction of this second marriage would lead to the destruction of a moral greatness and would cause moral harm), in this case, those who have contracted a second marriage of this kind should be allowed to approach the sacrament of communion, through extra-judicial means and with the parish priest and members of the community as witnesses.” Joseph Ratzinger believed this “rule” to be “supported by tradition in two ways”.

The first is to do with the marriage annulment process. “It is important to stress that the annulment process is subject to the discretion of the individual. This factor, as well as the difference in possibilities open to individuals depending inevitably on their level of education but also on their financial situation, should steer us away from the idea that this route is an irrefutably just one.” In any case, besides this, “a great deal of what cannot be judged is nevertheless real.” “The marriage annulment process is necessarily limited to what can be demonstrated legally and yet this is precisely how certain decisive facts can be neglected. Most importantly, this means that formal criteria (such as defects of form or ecclesiastical form which is intentionally overlooked) are attributed disproportionate importance which leads to injustices.” Hence, Ratzinger concluded that “the annulment process ... does not solve the problem” and “it cannot be given such strict exclusivity”.

The second way is linked to the details of the proposal Ratzinger made in 1972, which he claimed was supported by tradition. He pointed out that “a second marriage” in which a certain “moral greatness” grows over a long period of time in the spirit of the faith “in fact corresponds to the kind of indulgence we find in Basil’s writings: a person who enters a second marriage can be granted communion after a long period of penance without the second marriage being abrogated, trusting in God’s mercy who does not turn his back on penance.”



“When moral obligations toward children, the family and the wife result from a second marriage,” Ratzinger wrote in 1972, “and there no such obligations toward the first marriage; when for moral reason, renouncing the second marriage is unacceptable and continence is not a realistic possibility (*magnorum est*, as Gregory II says), then it seems only fair that after a trial period, the person in question should be allowed to join the community of faithful who receive communion and it would be fully in line with Church tradition.”

In this essay, the theologian Ratzinger, did not consider abstention from sexual intercourse to be “a realistic possibility” for everyone. He observed that access to the sacrament could not depend on an act which is either immoral (when a second marriage is ended, affecting children, *Ed.*) or unfeasible (abstention from acts which are a normal part of married life, *Ed.*)”

The Pope-to-be did not intend to call the principle of indissolubility into question by making this proposal: “Marriage is a *sacramentum*, it remains an irrevocable and fundamental expression of a commitment made. However, this does not mean that the Church cannot extend communion to those who recognise this doctrine and principle of life but find themselves in an emergency situation of an exceptional nature in which they are particularly in need of full communion with the Body of the Lord.”

The 1972 proposal has been left out of the new version of the article published in the German edition of Ratzinger’s *Opera Omnia*. The author no longer considers it feasible, partly because of the widespread “relativism” found in today’s secularised society. The only route mentioned – in keeping with the statements he made during his pontificate – is to verify the circumstances of an annulment. “If the Church annuls a marriage on the grounds of psychological immaturity, a new marriage would be accepted,” the new text says. “Even without this procedure, a divorcee could still be an active member of the ecclesiastical community and be a Godfather at a baptism.”

It is not at all surprising that a theologian has decided to change his mind after 42 years. St. Augustine’s *retractationes* are a case in point. Nevertheless, those pages Ratzinger wrote back in 1972 seem significant. The ideas presented in said pages are interesting because they were published in a scientific journal, when the author was no longer a young theologian said to form part of the so-called progressive wing of the Church; he was no longer the outsider who had participated in the Second Vatican Council as an expert advisor to the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Josef Frings. By 1972, Joseph Ratzinger had already spent a number of years criticising certain theological currents of thought that formed after the Council: in 1966 he had given his speech at the Katholikentag in Bamberg which distinguished the “progressive” Ratzinger from the Ratzinger we know today.



The Bavarian theologian had in fact left the troubled University of Tübingen where he had worked as Hans Küng's colleague and had begun teaching in Regensburg where things were quieter. Also, on 1 May 1969 he had joined the international theological commission established by Paul VI after the Synod discussions which presented it as a useful instrument for encouraging theological research based on the magisterium. In March 1977, four and a half years after the essay was published, Pope Paul VI chose this 50-year-old theology professor – who was a part of those circles that respected the magisterium following the Council – as Archbishop of the Diocese of Munich. Then, weeks later, he joined the College of Cardinals. What we can deduce from all this, is that the question of the admission of remarried divorcees to the sacrament of communion in certain circumstances and under certain conditions, was and still is a subject that can be studied further and discussed in light of the changes in family life today. And the issue can be discussed without making it appear as though the foundations of the Catholic faith are being called into question

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