

Sentence first; verdict afterwards.

Dalrock | 8 January, 2018 | by Dalrock

SkylerWurden scoffed at my [assertion](#) that the 70 fold increase in RCC annulments in the US after the 1960s* represents a important shift in RCC thinking on the permanence of marriage. He revised his calculations several times, but he seems to have finally landed at an estimate that around 7% of Catholic marriages end up being annulled. Yet the crux of his argument remained the same. There are simply too few annulments in the US to have a meaningful impact:

This is one of the dumbest things I've ever read period and easily rhe dumbest thing Dalrock has ever written.

1.2 billion Catholics worldwide. In 2007 there were 58,322 annulments, worldwide.

Round that up to 60 thousand.

60 thousand is .00005% of 1.2 billion.

So the scourge of 'Catholic divorce' currently affects .00005% of worldwide Catholics yearly.

It's an epidemic! A terrible tidal wave sweeping across Catholicism! Look at those numbers and weep in despair!

Seriously, this is retarded.

...

Yes, it is definitely retarded.

Also, another correction!!!!

Catholic "divorce" (Annulment) rate is actually closer to 7%

Leaving the question of the actual percentage aside, the problem with his argument is that the US annulment tribunals have by decades of practice taught all American Catholics that a very large percentage of what they *think* are marriages aren't actually binding. More specifically, the lesson that has been taught is that your own marriage might not actually be a marriage at all, and your vows are only binding if you *think* they are binding. This of course fits right in with our divorce revolution, as nearly every divorcee will be quick to assure you that her divorce wasn't a "real" divorce, because her marriage was never a "real" marriage in the first place.

Even worse, the RCC teaches that annulments merely are a formal recognition that the marriage never was binding. They aren't "granting" an annulment, they are investigating and then declaring what was always true. Getting an annulment is merely a formality. As others pointed out on the same post, many divorced Catholics simply marry again outside the RCC. The explosion in annulments hasn't just destabilized the marriages of 7% of Catholics. It has destabilized the marriages of *all* Catholics.

But SkylerWurden [denies](#) this as well:

That's just poor theological understanding. The marriage is assumed valid until "proven" otherwise. The divorcee can say they don't think marriage is permanent all they want now, what matters is what they thought about it on the day of their marriage. If a person never intended to keep the vow, then God didn't consecrated the vow. That seems pretty simple and straightforward to me. That doesn't destroy the Catholic marriage or add instability, it just recognizes the destruction that already occurred: if people treat marriage like a 7-year shack-up then God isn't going to call it marriage and neither is the Church. Nor should they.

Technically he is correct, the *stated* position of the US tribunals is that a marriage is presumed valid until it is proven otherwise**. But in *practice* (in the US and [most countries](#)) the tribunals betray the opposite belief. If one party to a marriage believes the marriage isn't valid, the tribunal insists that the first thing to be done is to get a divorce. Only then, after the required divorce, will the tribunal take up the question of whether the marriage was really a marriage. As Robert J. Kendra explains in [Defending Families Against Forced No-fault Divorce: American Annulment Mills](#) (emphasis mine):

A worse problem for the Church is complicity in promoting divorce. A conscientious petitioner (the party seeking the annulment) would first seek an annulment to be assured that no valid sacramental marriage existed, prior to seeking a civil divorce. However, faced with this request, tribunal officials respond that a divorce is required prior to accepting an application for annulment, allegedly to assure that the marriage is irreconcilable. But Jesus clearly condemned divorce even without remarriage, "Therefore, what God has joined together let no man put asunder" (Mk 10:9), and canon 1060 stipulates, "in doubt the validity of a marriage must be upheld until the contrary is proven." **Therefore, a tribunal must prejudge the marriage to be invalid prior to judging its validity, in order to justify a divorce preceding an annulment.** Assurances of obtaining an easy annulment, given by the pro-annulment pastoral tribunals to perplexed petitioners (little or no effort is made toward reconciling the couple), actually precipitates the divorce. Once divorce is granted, which is a given with no-fault divorce laws, the tribunal is programmed to grant an annulment.

Getting an annulment is rather like registering your purebred puppy. It is a formality only required in specific circumstances. For puppies registration is required to show or breed the dog. For divorced Catholics an annulment is only required if you want to marry again in the RCC. In both situations, it is a formality that in nearly all cases merely confirms what you already thought was the case. Not surprisingly, after the initial explosion of annulments taught American Catholics the reality of the RCC's new (practical) view of the permanence of marriage, over the decades US Catholics have become less and less inclined to go through the formality of requesting an annulment after divorcing:

The result has been an increase from 338 annulments in 1968, to 5,403 in 1970, to a peak 61,945 in 1991. Since then, the explosion has stabilized at around 40,000 U.S. annulments per year. However, these commonly quoted statistics implying a recent decline are deceiving. Tribunals are not getting tougher on granting annulments. They are getting fewer petitions for annulments, probably due to divorced Catholics cohabitating and not bothering with annulments. Since 1964 the tribunals have consistently ruled for annulment in about 97 percent of the cases they accept. Seventy percent of annulments worldwide are accounted for by American marriage tribunals though the U.S. has a mere six percent of the world's Catholic population.

*Using the data presented in the original post from the Archdioceses of Boston showing that the Boston tribunal had gone from issuing 10 declarations in 1968 to 700 in 1996. The national data presented above shows that the jump for all of the US was an even larger 183 fold from 1968 to 1991 (338 to 61,945)!

**Just like the stated position of the family courts is that the whole process is about what is best for the child, and is not [biased against fathers](#).

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