

‘IS IT LAWFUL FOR A MAN TO DIVORCE HIS WIFE?’

(his only remarks that have come down to us). Henry based his divorce on the equally flimsy grounds that the lack of a male baby proved God’s displeasure at the marriage. It seemed very simple, open and shut; except that Clement VII ignored and dithered over Henry Tudor’s petition because Katherine’s nephew, Charles, The Holy Roman Emperor, was engaged in a 3 month long pillage of Rome (1527), cannonading the Pope who cowered in Castle San Angelo. Clement became Charles’ prisoner.

It was a very sad, corrupt papacy and bishops with feet of clay leading a very sad, corrupt church. Here are some random examples:

(1) Leo X, besides granting Mary Rose’s marriage to Duke Charles, in 1511 had taken over Julius II’s already shaky Church treasury. He savaged it with 69 course dinners and other luxuries. Leo’s fiscal irresponsibility bankrupted the papacy in just two years. He then tried to raise money by selling the ticket-to-Heaven Indulgences that shocked Luther into the Reformation.

(2) Leo’s cousin’s (Clement VII’s) cowardice in the 1520’s and Henry’s arrogance assured that England would choose to join the Reformers.

(3) In 1532, Henry’s new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer’s, first act was the divorce. He immediately married Henry to the pregnant Anne Boleyn.

(4) Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth I and her people in 1570, but only after the failure of the armed attack on England that he had paid for.

A very sad time, to which all Western Christians are the unfortunate heirs.

Note: This article was adapted from William Henry Scott., *A Missionary Prophet*, Forward Movement, 1989

Please prepare Saint Mark 10:17-31 for next Sunday

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A Noted Royal Divorcee

*Tomb of Henry II and his (once-divorced) wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine,
Fontevraud Abbey, France.
From Shirley's Royal Ancestors site*

Eleanor

Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122 - 1204) was the consort of Louis VII of France, then of Henry II of England. Two of her sons (Richard and John) went on to become kings of England. Eleanor was first married to Louis VII of France. The marriage was not happy. She once said that she had married a monk. Disappointment over the birth of two daughters and no sons further endangered the marriage. Worried about being left with out a male heir, facing substantial opposition to Eleanor from many of his Barons and recognizing his wife's own desire for a divorce, Louis finally bowed to the inevitable. Eleanor's first marriage was annulled (!) March 21, 1152. Four archbishops, with the approval of Pope Eugenius, granted an annulment for the usual Medieval pretext of consanguinity, this time within the fourth degree (third cousins-once-removed) and she married Henry, then duke of Normandy. They had eight children¹. They each brought land and power to the marriage, but she

¹ Eleanor also raised some of the children born to Henry's many mistresses!

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threatened Henry's power and even urged three of her sons into an unsuccessful revolt in 1173. Henry stuck Eleanor in prison for fifteen years. In 1189 she helped her son Richard ("The Lion-Hearted") to the throne, and for many years ruled in his absence as he fought in the Crusades.

Henry

Henry II (1133 - 1180) was born in Le Mans, France. His father, Geoffrey V of Anjou (Geoffrey Plantagenet), was Count of Anjou and Count of Maine. His mother, Empress Matilda, was a claimant to the English throne as the daughter of Henry I (1100–1135), son of William the Conqueror. He spent his childhood in his father's land of Anjou. Where he was nine, Robert, 1st Earl of Gloucester took him to England where he received an education from Master Matthew at Bristol. On May 18, 1152 at Bordeaux Cathedral, at the age of 19, Henry married Eleanor of Aquitaine. The wedding was "without the pomp or ceremony that befitted their rank," partly because only two months previously Eleanor's marriage to Louis VII of France had been annulled.

Today's Gospel Saint Mark 10:2-16

✠ SOME PHARISEES CAME, AND TO TEST HIM THEY ASKED, ‘IS IT lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ He answered them, ‘What did Moses command you?’ They said, ‘Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.’ But Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female.” “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’ Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.’ People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them. [© NRSV]

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Gospel Comment: Divorce and Church History

Divorce has always proved embarrassing to Episcopalians. We often act as if we believed that Henry VIII was the only medieval King or commoner to divorce ², a belief urged on by our critics (For example, in 1898, *Libertas*, a Dominican daily published by the Philippine University of *Santo Tomás*, referred to Henry as “...that fornicating Father of Protestantism”.)

Granting a divorce -- or *annulling a marriage* as Roman Catholic canonists call it -- was an act committed by *every* Pope in the 16th century. For example, one of Henry's sisters and three of his brothers-in-law were divorcees whose marriages had been annulled by the Popes before Henry requested divorce from Katherine of Aragon. For example: In 1527 Henry's wanton older sister, the widowed Queen Margaret of Scotland, had fallen out of love with her second husband, the Earl of Angus, and legally married Henry Stewart, the first Lord of Methuen Earlier, Henry's younger sister, Mary Rose, was married off at 17 for cash and a peace treaty to doddering 52 year old King Louis XII of France, himself a widowed divorcee, with the understanding that as soon as he died, as he did in less than three months (January, 1515), she could marry the man of her choice. She spent a few months of chaste widowhood dodging the incestuous intentions of her royal stepson, (now King), Francis I. In the spring of 1515 her choice was a widowed divorcee, Duke Charles of Suffolk, whose second wife was still living.

These Tudor marital anomalies were ratified by Leo X (1511-1522), (a Medici, Lorenzo the Magnificent's son, who had been made a *Cardinal at age 14*), and by Adrian VI (1522-1523), and by Clement VII (1523-1534), another Medici, Leo X's cousin.

What had been easy for his sisters was not easy for Henry. He had married his dead brother Arthur's wife. Such a marriage was considered incestuous. In this case the Church permitted the marriage on the flimsy grounds that there was no incest since Katherine swore that the marriage had never been consummated. This testimony flew in the face of massive palace gossip and Arthur's celebrated crude and tasteless post wedding-night boasts

² History students remember another divorce that does **not** seem to embarrass us. 400 years before Henry VIII, the flirtatious Eleanor of Aquitaine had her marriage to France's Louis VII annulled by Pope Eugenius III. She then married Henry II in 1152. Their tomb picture graces our cover. The marriage gave much of France's land to England for 400 years.