

## **THE ARCHBISHOPS' GUIDELINES**

The ideal of Christian marriage remains “the voluntary union for life of one man with one woman to the exclusion of all others”. This model is central to Jesus’ teaching both about the purpose of God in creation, and to St Paul’s teaching about the self-giving relationship between Christ and his Church. Great care must be taken, therefore, when exceptions are made to the general rule in Canon 4.3, to ensure that that the Christian ideal itself is not obscured.

The Archbishops will apply the following guidelines when considering applications for faculties under Canon C4.

### **Distance in time, relationship and place.**

- i. There should be distance in time between the separation in the previous marriage and engagement of the partners of the subsequent marriage. Neither party in an ensuing marriage should have been involved in the breakdown of the other’s former marriage. For example a man who marries a woman who was divorced before he met her is distant from her divorce in terms of involvement.
- ii. If involvement between the parties was the causal factor in the earlier breakdown, then there should be ample distance between the divorce and the present. The passage of time may heal the wounds, but it will need to be shown that the wounds on all sides have healed sufficiently for a faculty to be granted.
- iii. A candidate who converts to Christianity after a divorce may be said to be distant from the divorce in terms of Christian commitment and self-understanding. This will need to be approached with care, to avoid any suggestion of subterfuge.
- iv. It may be helpful for a remarried candidate to live at some distance from his former marital home and the scene of his divorce. Issues of blame and hurt are eased by geographical distance.

### **Scandal**

- v. The circumstances of a divorce and remarriage should be free of scandal (σκάνδαλον: discredit to religion occasioned by the conduct of a religious person or perplexity of conscience occasioned by the conduct of one who is looked up to as an example). A former spouse should not be angered by an ordination, nor should it bring the Church into contempt or ridicule. It will be particularly important to know whether the circumstances of an ordination are expected to be of interest to the press.

### **Obligations to a former spouse and family**

- vi. A remarried candidate should have fulfilled all obligations to a former spouse and family. Any capital settlement should have been properly discharged. Care should be taken to assess whether a permanent loss of income during training or after ordination may result in a candidate defaulting on maintenance payments for the former spouse or any children of the family. There should be a consistent pattern of co-operation with regard to contact arrangements with children from a former marriage.

### **Stability of the current marriage**

- vii. The current marriage should be stable and well established.

- viii. Addendum: Lately there have been some applications for faculties under Canon C4.3A in which the current marriage is very recent. The Archbishops' Guidelines say that the current marriage should be stable and well established. The Archbishops have sought to clarify this guideline and have decided that they will not normally consider an application for a faculty where the current marriage is less than three years old. (Circulated to DDOs and bishops. March 2004)