

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
April 9, 1956

From The Mail Bag

Query: Doesn't the Church forbid civil marriage ceremonies? How is it that Miss Kelly and the Prince of Monaco are going through civil ceremonies?

Reply: Some governments demand a civil ceremony for every marriage. Hence, this is not a special provision for Grace Kelly nor for the Prince of Monaco; but a matter which the Church has to face in her relationship with civil powers, and for which she provides in her Canon Law. We are not familiar with the requirement in our country; but in places where this is the case, the Church provides that Catholics are not forbidden to comply with the demands of the civil law. They must go through a civil ceremony in order to give the marriage civil effects.

They do not contract a valid marriage with the civil ceremony alone; hence they will also go to the Cathedral for the religious ceremony. In this provision of her Canon Law, the Church is not ceding a right to the civil government. The Church insists on her independent right to regulate the marriage ceremony for her faithful, because it is a Sacrament. But the Church recognizes the competency of civil government to legislate for the civil effects of marriage -- such as dowry, inheritance, support, right of succession, etc. The Church merely permits conformity to the civil law where it is demanded.

Query: Recently, a divorced Catholic friend of mine re-married before a Justice of the Peace, and I was a witness at the ceremony. Did I do wrong?

Reply: Yes. He sinned by attempting marriage; you sinned by cooperation. You may also have been guilty of a sin of scandal. And even in the case of two non-Catholics entering marriage, you must get permission from either your pastor or your Bishop to act as a witness at the ceremony.

Query: What about Daylight-Saving Time and the Eucharistic Fast?

Reply: With Daylight-Saving Time, you may eat solids until 1 a.m. by the clock, because it is not yet midnight according to the natural (sun) time.

You may even use Daylight-Saving Time in two different ways on the same day. For instance: you may eat meat on Friday night after 12, considering Friday is over -- and then fast from 1 a.m. in order to receive Holy Communion on Saturday morning.

Why? Because the obligation to abstain from meat on Friday and the obligation to fast before Communion are two distinct obligations, the observance of which can be attended to separately. The thing to remember about the Friday abstinence is this: that the law obliges us to abstain from meat for a 24-hour period. Therefore, for one to eat meat after 12 (D.S.T.) on Friday, his abstinence must have begun on Thursday at 12 midnight (D.S.T.). If one ate meat on Thursday night up to 1 a.m. (D.S.T.), he is obliged to abstain from meat on Friday night until 1 o'clock.

But the computation of time for the eucharistic fast has nothing to do with the law governing abstinence. Therefore, one who terminates a 24-hour period of abstinence at midnight Friday, may eat meat because that obligation has been fulfilled. He may then consider the provision of the law which permits him to take advantage of the Daylight-Saving Time hour and begin his eucharistic fast at 1 a.m.

PRAYERS - Deceased: Lt. (J.G.) Lawrence P. Ash, '54 (Navy plane crash); James Carmody, '32; Don Carillo, '52; Bartholomew O'Toole (Sr.) father of 6 N.D. men; brother of Bro. Kenan, CSC; James Dineen; Norman Cass; James Jones, '33; cousin of Jim Swift of Fisher Hall; friend of Pat Bradford of Sorin. Ill: grandmother of Steve Johnson of Dillon.