

Father Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R. was one of the most eminent moral theologians in the United States. He was a regular contributor to the monthly journal *The American Theological Review*, under the editorship of Msgr. Joseph Clifford Fenton.

Each month, Father Connell answered questions that priests would send to the journal, particularly on moral and pastoral matters. Below is a question and response published in the February 1960 edition of the *American Theological Review* that concerns an invalidly married teacher at a Catholic school.

Father Connell delivers the genuine Catholic answer.

Unfortunately, Pope Francis appears to not understand these rudimentary Catholic principles, and [laments](#) regarding Catholics who are divorced and remarried, “But they cannot be godfathers to any child being baptized, mass readings are not for divorcees, they cannot give Communion, they cannot teach Sunday school, there are about seven things that they cannot do, I have the list over there. Come on! If I disclose any of this it will seem that they have been excommunicated in fact! Thus, let us open the doors a bit more... Why can’t they be godfathers and godmothers ? ... Things need to change, our standards need to change.”

As we will see from Father Connell’s correct response, it is actually Francis who “needs to change.” He needs to liberate himself from the humanistic domination of his new orientation and set his thinking back on track of genuine Catholic moral theology.

From *American Ecclesiastical Review*:

An Invalidly Married Teacher at a Catholic School

Question: *One of the instructors in a Catholic girls’ school (the athletic director) is a Catholic woman who has been divorced from her lawful husband and has subsequently contracted a civil marriage. Should she be allowed to retain her post?*

Answer: I cannot see how such a person can be retained as an instructor in a Catholic school – at least if her marital status is publicly known. For to permit a woman involved in so sinful a situation to remain in a post of responsibility, in which her example will surely have some influence on the pupils, is necessarily a source of grave scandal.

The pupils are likely to receive the impression that it is a very minor fault for a married woman to obtain a divorce and to attempt another marriage – and this impression may have a bad effect on the lives of some of them in future years.

Perhaps a slight change in the way of proposing this case will confirm this solution.

Suppose that the woman was one who had simply deserted her husband (without obtaining any civil divorce) and was living in open concubinage with a man. Would the Catholic school then employ her as an instructor? I am sure that the authorities of every Catholic school would refuse to employ such a woman.

Yet in the eyes of God and of the Catholic Church the woman described in the question is substantially in the same situation as the other. The fact that she has had a civil divorce and a civil marriage does not alter the fact that she is living in open concubinage.

– *Father Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., American Ecclesiastical Review, February, 1960*