



ARCHDIOCESE OF HALIFAX

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Halifax, July 7, 2006

Rev. Fr. Denis Laprise, offm
Spiri-Maria
626 route du Sanctuaire
Lac-Etchemin, QC
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Reverend Father Laprise,

The Church is really grieved when its sons reject its solicitude for the salvation of souls. The norms established and promulgated by Pope John Paul II are there to guide the ecclesiastical community with a view to the salvation of souls, which is the “suprema lex” of the Church.

You went ahead with the marriage of your nephew, Jean-Gabriel Michaud, with Marie-Hélène Têtu at Spiri-Maria last June 10, in spite of the canonical monition I had imposed on you the preceding June 8.

The formation you have received and the protestations of fidelity to Rome and to the Pope bar you from any excuse of ignorance of what the Church requires for the validity of a sacramental marriage. The canonical form – that is to say, a canonical marriage celebrated in the presence of the Church’s official witness (a cleric provided with the power of jurisdiction or a cleric having received canonical delegation) and two witnesses – is necessary not only so that the marriage be licit but also that it be valid. In fact, as the Code of Canon Law points out:

Canon 1108 – 1. Only those marriages are valid which are contracted in the presence of the local Ordinary or parish priest or of the priest or deacon delegated by either of them, who, in the presence of two witnesses, assists, in accordance however with the rules set out in the following canons, and without prejudice to the exceptions mentioned in cann. 144, 1112 §1, 1116 and 1127 §§1-2.

These norms have been governing the life of the Church since the Council of Trent and the decree *Tametsi*.

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Consequently the marriage that was celebrated at Lac-Etchemin in your presence is invalid and the spouses are not married, either in the eyes of God or in the eyes of the Church, because you did not receive, to my knowledge, official delegation.

Even if the young spouses acted in all liberty, you have abused their good faith since they do not have the appropriate formation permitting them to evaluate that situation correctly. You have placed them in a situation in contradiction to the teaching of the Church and you have done them a grave injustice. You have deliberately disobeyed a legitimate order from your ecclesiastical superior, in this case the Pontifical Commissioner, even though what the Church declares is very clear:

Canon 1371 – The following are to be punished with a just penalty: ... 2. a person who in any other way does not obey the lawful command or prohibition of the Apostolic See or the Ordinary or Superior and, after being warned, persists in disobedience.

So, in obedience to the Church, I must take cognizance of your actions and send to Cardinal Marc Ouellet and to the Holy See the information relative to your case.

It is your duty – and I earnestly exhort you to do it – to make known the whole truth of their situation to the young spouses so that they may be able to take the decisions necessary to remedy it, for the good of their souls and their peace of mind. I am prepared to ask Cardinal Ouellet to intervene for the salvation of souls, especially those of the spouses, in order to set right this marriage tainted with nullity.

You have the right to provide explanations for your actions that have led to an illicit and invalid marriage. Consequent upon our meeting of June 30, you will have to give these explanations in writing. I am giving you a time limit of twenty-eight days as of the date of this letter, and failing an answer I will judge that you have renounced your right to be heard.

Sincerely in the Lord,



Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Pontifical Commissioner

cc: Cardinal Franc Rodé, C.M., Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of
Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Archbishop of Quebec