

## **SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH**

### **Letter regarding the indissolubility of marriage**

This Sacred Congregation, which is responsible for defending the doctrine regarding faith and morals throughout the Catholic world, has been examining with careful attention the dissemination of new opinions which seek to deny or to put in doubt the doctrine regarding the indissolubility of marriage constantly proposed by the Magisterium of the Church.

These opinions are widespread, not only in books and newspapers, but also beginning to circulate even in seminaries, in Catholic schools, and even in the practices in some ecclesiastical tribunals of this or that Diocese.

Furthermore, these opinions, together with other doctrinal or pastoral explanations, have been advanced here and there as a pretext to justify abuses against the current discipline regarding the administration of the Sacraments to those who live in an irregular union.

Therefore, this Sacred Dicastery examined this problem during its Plenary Meeting of 1972, and issued its mandate, approved by the Supreme Pontiff, exhorting the Bishops to attentively insure that all those entrusted with teaching religion in schools or institutes of any grade, as well as those who serve as officials in ecclesiastical tribunals, remain faithful to the doctrine of the Church on the indissolubility of marriage and act in accord with this doctrine in their ecclesiastical tribunals.

Regarding the administration of the Sacraments, local Ordinaries should strive, on one hand, to encourage the observance of the discipline in force in the Church, and on the other hand, to act so that pastors of souls show particular solicitude toward those who live in an irregular union, seeking to resolve these cases through the use of the approved practices of the Church in the internal forum, as well as other just means.

Communicating these things to you with devoted respect, I remain yours,

+ **Franjo Cardinal Seper**  
*Prefect*

+ **Jérôme Hamer, O.P.**  
*Secretary*

Rome, April 11, 1973.