



**THE VETITUM &
MONITUM: STOP, IN
THE NAME OF LOVE!**

You are working with a couple preparing for marriage, one of whom needs an annulment. Knowing that you cannot proceed with any marriage preparation, much less the marriage itself, without the annulment, you shift gears and work with the person through the annulment process. Completing that process, at the end of which the person receives an affirmative decision, which is not appealed, you can now proceed with marriage preparation without any further ado, right?

Maybe. Whether the person is free to marry or not depends on if, as part of the annulment decision, you see that the tribunal has imposed a *vetitum* or *monitum* on the person. If so, the person is not free to marry unless and until the prohibition is lifted. In this month's issue, we will look at what these terms mean and how you can help people resolve the issues involved.

A *vetitum* is a prohibition, forbidding the person on whom it is placed from marrying in the Church. A tribunal normally takes this step when a person's prior marriage has been declared null for psychological reasons. Since psychological issues serious enough to invalidate a person's marital consent (severe personality disorders, for example) are typically permanent in nature, the person is prohibited from marrying again because any future marriage will also be invalid for the same reason, unless and until the person seeks appropriate treatment to manage his or her condition.

That is why, in order to lift the prohibition, the person must receive a favorable evaluation from a psychological professional, assuring the tribunal that the issues that caused the prior marriage to be invalid have been successfully dealt with by the person and are not an obstacle to a new marriage. Normally, this means that the person and his or her intended spouse will make an appointment with Catholic Charities Counseling Services for a series of three sessions, at the end of which the counselor who has evaluated them will send the tribunal a report. If it is favorable, the tribunal will lift the *vetitum*, and the person will then be free to marry.

A *monitum* is a warning to the priest or deacon preparing a person for marriage that the person's prior marriage was declared null because he or she excluded something essential to marriage from his or her consent, what is known as simulation. This could happen, for example, if the person did not intend for his or her first marriage to be permanent but simply wanted to see if it would work out and, if not, he or she intended to leave the marriage. In such a case, the priest or deacon must make sure that the person now fully understands and intends marriage and all that it includes. Having done so, the priest or deacon will write to the tribunal, assuring us that this is the case, at which point we would then lift the *monitum*, and the person would be free to marry.

People have a right to marry, but only if they are properly disposed to do so validly. The *vetitum* and *monitum* help ensure that is so. That's it for now. Until next time, keep the faith, love God's people, and always honor the code!

Couldn't make the *Canon Law Update* class last month, or you liked it so much you want more? No worries! The notes are now available on the tribunal website. Feel free to download them and share them with others. Special thanks to the pastors and parishes who hosted!