

[ENGLISH TEXT] The Catholic Case for Civil Divorce

Title: DEFENDING THE SACRAMENT,
PROTECTING THE SPOUSE

Subtitle: Why a Civil Divorce Law strengthens the sanctity of marriage by ending the mockery of abusive unions.

1. The Theological Distinction

- Church vs. State: The Catholic Church has its own legal system (Canon Law). The State has the Family Code. A "Civil Divorce" only dissolves the civil contract (the license), not the sacramental bond.
- The "lesser of two evils": The Church has long taught that separation is permitted when a spouse becomes a danger to the soul or body of the partner (Canon 1153). Civil divorce provides the legal protection for this separation that "Legal Separation" currently fails to provide.

2. The Reality of "Legal Separation"

- In the Philippines, "Legal Separation" allows abuse victims to live apart but forbids them from remarrying. This often forces victims into

illicit, unblessed cohabitation with new partners—a state of permanent "living in sin" created by the lack of divorce.

- Civil Divorce would allow these victims to regularize their new unions, potentially marrying again in a civil rite, which is a more orderly and moral outcome than indefinite adultery.

3. Compassion for the Abandoned

- Pope Francis (in *Amoris Laetitia*) calls for "pastoral discernment" for the "irregular" situations of the divorced.
- Denying civil relief to an abandoned wife does not save the marriage; the marriage is already dead. It only punishes the victim.