

## Ask Mason & Teo



### Do I get a divorce first and then an annulment?

Dear Mason & Teo,  
I was married in the Catholic Church and have two children. My wife wants a divorce because she is seeing someone else. I have been raised by devout Catholic parents who have encouraged me to get an annulment. I have heard about annulments, kind of like a "Catholic divorce," right? I heard that divorce is a sin and we can get excommunicated from the church. Is there a difference between an annulment and a divorce? Do I get a divorce and then an annulment? (Duped into Divorce)

Aloha Duped into Divorce,  
It is always sad to hear about the demise of a family and marital infidelity. Our prayers go out to you and your family. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, God established a permanent and exclusive bond between a baptized man and woman. "What God has joined together, no human being must separate" (Mark 10:9), thus, only God can dissolve the marriage through the death of one party.

The relationship of husband and wife becomes truly sacramental when God is the third party in the union.

Divorce says that you were once married, but now you aren't. Divorce is a matter of civil law. Annulment says you were never truly married in the first place. Something necessary for a valid marriage was missing. Annulment is a matter of church law.

Simply, a divorce destroys something that was and an annulment recognizes that something never was. The term "annulment" is actually a little misleading. It sounds like the church is actively cancelling, or nullifying, the marriage. The proper term is "declaration of nullity" in which the church declares that the marriage never was valid in the first place.

An annulment does not deny that a relationship, maybe a long and serious one, existed between the parties, nor does it imply that the parties were "living in sin" or that the children are illegitimate. It simply states that after a thorough investigation, the church has decided that a marriage, as the church understands marriage to be, was not valid.

A marriage can be declared invalid for several reasons relating to the ability of one or both parties to understand and consent to the Catholic comprehension of marriage before the wedding ceremony. The church has guidelines to help determine whether a marriage is valid or not. Our diocese has a tribunal, an office that helps with these marriage cases.

In the U.S., most tribunals require a civil divorce before considering a case for annulment because if one plans to remarry, a civil divorce is going to be necessary. If all hope of salvaging your marriage has been exhausted and you're interested in the annulment process, it is best to begin by getting help from your parish priest.

In Mark 10:11-12, when the Pharisees asked Jesus if it was permissible for a man to divorce his wife, he answered, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." This quote has

led some to think that getting a divorce is grounds for excommunication.

In fact, divorced Catholics who have not remarried remain in good standing with the church. They are not excommunicated. But those individuals who are divorced and remarried without an annulment are not permitted to receive Communion unless they agree to live as brother and sister. Still, they are encouraged to remain in the church, to attend Mass, and to raise their children in the Catholic faith.

Marriage between a man and a woman in the Catholic Church is a sacrament. It is a sign of the love between Christ and his Church and a participation in that love. Through marriage, God channels his grace of faithfulness and love to our broken world.

The church knows that the world isn't perfect and sometimes marriage fails — even valid marriages. It does not say that a couple should always stay in a failed marriage. The church encourages couples to reconcile, especially if children are involved. But sometimes it is necessary to separate for serious reasons and get a civil divorce, especially if one spouse is abusing the other.

Still, it does not change the fact that the couple is still married. God has joined them together, and that bond cannot be broken. Civil divorces, which settle child custody and divide marital property, are permitted to Catholics, but they do not end the marriage. In the eyes of the church, divorced Catholics are still married to each other, just living apart, and neither may marry someone else until the other spouse dies.

An annulment is not a "Catholic divorce." An annulment means that a couple was never married in the sacramental sense. God did not create that unbreakable bond between them because the sacrament of marriage was not actually fulfilled.

When we marry, we vow to stay together through thick and thin and to remain faithful because we promise to be a sign to the world of God's love and fidelity to us. Our marriage is a visible sign of the love between Christ and his church. Even when we fail, God remains faithful to us.

We pray that you will find peace in your struggles and healing for your pain. For "God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength" (1Corinthians10:13).

*Mason and Teo Matsuda are parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Ewa Beach and have served in youth and young adult ministries for years. Write to them at yaadvice@yahoo.com.*



HCH graphic

## From stone tablets to Kindle: Is it still the Bible?

By Angela Cave  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON

When his friend knew someone who was using drugs, Andrew Carlson opened his laptop and navigated his browser to encouraging Bible verses.

Carlson said he likes to search online for certain words in the Bible and switch to different translations in one click. His younger brother uses an iPod touch Bible application all day, but still dusts off his print Bible right before bed.

Carlson, a 19-year-old non-denominational Christian from Coral Springs, Fla., doesn't know many others who read the Bible online.

Though book publishers face an uncertain future because of the Internet, digital reader devices and cell phones, Bible publishers and readers told Catholic News Service there is still something worthwhile about reading it in print.

"For me, it's so much more personal," said Stephanie Hart, an evangelical Christian from Keene, N.H. "It feels more like the love letter God has written

us, you know? The Internet is a fabulous tool for research and for quick references, but, for me, sitting down with my little Bible somewhere quiet, without the distractions of a computer or other electronic devices, is the best feeling."

For some, it's about ownership and sentimentalism: Bibles are often given as gifts for first Communions, confirmations and weddings.

Alex Neu, a 17-year-old from the Diocese of Helena, Mont., said using Web sites such as Facebook is a good idea to expose people to the Bible, but he would never switch from his four leather-bound Bibles to a computer screen. His weekly Bible studies wouldn't be the same.

And Mass wouldn't be the same, either.

"I can't imagine a priest reading from a teleprompter," said Benedictine Father Joseph Jensen, executive secretary of the Catholic Biblical Association, adding that the book is used to take oaths. "It's such an important and deeply ingrained aspect of our culture. People will always want to pick it up and read it."

Father Jensen admits that search features on Bible Web sites are more sophisticated and adaptable than concordances. But he said this should not re-

place serious Scripture reading.

There also is still a digital divide in many parts of the world, whereas books are relatively inexpensive, said Cliff Knighten, director of the Catholic Book Publishers Association. His 60 publisher-members have been working through the technological changes and the possibility that digital devices may eventually outweigh print in sales.

"I don't think that any of us are convinced that ink-on-paper Bibles and books are going to go away completely," Knighten said.

For the American Bible Society, ceasing publication is still a foreseeable option, spokeswoman Autumn Black said. The society publishes 3.5 million Bibles annually and has been a pioneer in new technology, starting with a line of CD-ROMs in the early 1990s and recently incorporating MP3 player products, an RSS reader, online devotionals, a daily e-mail passage and cell phone text messages. The society also manages Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Still, Black said, company surveys show that even the most technologically savvy — teenagers and young adults — want to read the Bible in book format.

"Some people really just want to simplify it back to having it in their hands," she said, adding that

*Continued on page 23*

Movie Reviews



CNS photo/Weinstein Company

**Inglourious Basterds** (Weinstein/Universal): Provocative World War II fantasy in which a team of ruthless Jewish-American commandoes led by a hard-bitten Southern officer (Brad Pitt) and a young French Jewish woman (Melanie Laurent) passing as a gentile cinema owner in occupied Paris plot independently to assassinate key Nazi leaders during a gala film premiere, even as the German officer (Christoph Waltz) who killed her family threatens both schemes. Between episodes of graphic bloodletting, writer-director Quentin Tarantino weaves a suspenseful, though somewhat lurid, alternate history, but the Americans' systematic brutality toward enemy soldiers can only be accepted within a genre far removed from reality and on the supposition that all Teutonic combatants were Holocaust enablers. Strong violent content, including torture and mutilation, complex moral issues, a few uses of profanity, and much rough and some crude language. L (R)

**The Final Destination** (New Line/Warner Bros.): Repellent horror sequel in which a young man's (Bobby Campo) premonition of impending death saves him, his girlfriend (Shantel VanSanten), two of their pals (Haley Webb and Nick Zano) and a number of strangers from perishing in a speedway accident, but the Grim Reaper is not to be cheated, and the survivors begin to die off in a series of horrifically gruesome misadventures. Director David R. Ellis' utterly callous fourth installment in the franchise amounts to little more than an exercise in gross-out special effects, with a gratuitous scene of debased casual sex tacked on for bad measure. Conventional and 3D formats. Pervasive gory violence, including mutilation, brief graphic nonmarital sexual activity, a couple of uses of profanity, and some

rough and much crude language. O (R)

**Shorts** (Warner Bros.): Clever children's fantasy about a rain-bow-colored rock that grants the wishes of anyone holding it, and the chaos its misuse wreaks on the lives of a bullied schoolboy (Jimmy Bennett), his parents (Jon Cryer and Leslie Mann), his chief persecutor (terrific newcomer Jolie Vanier), her tycoon father (James Spader) and their suburban community in general. Told in a series of nonsequential episodes, writer-director Robert Rodriguez's lively yarn, which carries messages about the dangers of power and the isolating effects of contemporary technology, generally makes for appealing family entertainment, though perilous special effects may overwhelm the most sensitive viewers, while some par-

ents may find a story line about a mucus monster unpleasant. Occasional menace and mildly gross humor. A-II (PG)

**Halloween II** (Dimension): Writer-director Scott Zombie creates a horror film so boring and predictable, even Michael Myers (Tyler Mane) looks embarrassed to be put through his desultory homicidal paces. Deborah Myers (Sheri Moon Zombie, the director's wife), is Michael's semi-spooky, cliché-spouting ghost of a mother, and Scout Taylor-Compton reprises her scream-queen role as Michael's disturbingly foulmouthed sister Laurie, with whom he longs to have a violent, delusional reunion. Strong violent content, including multiple stabbings, a strangling and a fatal stomping, fleeting upper female nudity, pervasive rough and crass language and occasional

Ratings

Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications: A-I – general patronage; A-II – adults and adolescents; A-III – adults; L – limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O – morally offensive.

Motion Picture Association of America ratings: G – general audiences, all ages admitted; PG – parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 – parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R – restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 – no one 17 or under admitted; NR – no rating.

- District 9 .....L (R)
- The Final Destination .....O (R)
- Funny People .....L (R)
- G-Force.....A-I (PG)
- G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra.....A-III (PG-13)
- The Goods: Live Hard, Sell Hard.O (R)
- Halloween II .....O (R)
- Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince.....A-II (PG)
- Inglourious Basterds .....L (R)
- Julie & Julia .....A-III (PG-13)
- Ponyo .....A-I (G)
- Post Grad .....A-III (PG-13)
- Shorts.....A-II (PG)
- Taking Woodstock .....O (R)
- The Time Traveler's Wife .....A-III (PG-13)

sexual banter. O (R)

**Taking Woodstock** (Focus): This fact-based slice of psychedelic history sees the young manager (Demetri Martin) of a failing Catskills motel owned by his down-trodden immigrant parents (Henry Goodman and Imelda Staunton) inadvertently becoming a crucial player in the staging of the iconic 1969 music festival when he uses a legal permit to ease the way for the event's organizer (Jonathan Groff) and introduces him to the owner (Eugene Levy) of the dairy farm that would serve as the concert's setting. Along with the flower people's fondness for disrobing and drug-taking, director Ang Lee's gently rambling adaptation of Elliot Tiber's 2007 memoir portrays its protagonist's public avowal of his homosexuality as a positive step toward emotional maturity. Benign view of homosexual acts, group sex and transvestism, nonsexual full frontal nudity, drug use, a half-dozen uses of profanity, and frequent rough and some crude language. O (R)

Tablets to Kindle

Continued from page 24  
it boils down to speaking the "heart language" of a reader. "The question is, is the heart language of our youth the Internet?"

For Hope Valloney, a college junior from the Diocese of Providence, R.I., the answer is not really. She Googles passages and would consider reading the Bible on a reader like Amazon Kindle if she ever bought one, but she likes to highlight and mark up her book.

Cindee Case, director of the youth and young adult ministry office in the Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio, said she has called up the Bible online more than in print for the last three years. She still enjoys reading it in print for personal reflection and retreats, but goes online if she knows where a passage is or wants to search for one.

Case said she can only foresee the complete disappearance of the printed Bible if Catholic schools stop using them to teach or schools stop using textbooks. Even then, she said, there will always be families passing down Bibles as heirlooms. They just might not buy a new one.

Sales of print Bibles coming out of Saint Mary's Press, the Minnesota-based Bible publisher geared toward Catholic teenagers, are actually increasing, thanks in part to the awareness that the Internet builds.

"I think it's on every publisher's mind that more and more of society is moving toward digital," said John Vitek, the company's president. "We recognize that we're at the tail end of the Gutenberg era," he said, in a reference to the first Bible printed with movable type.

Recognizing the need to deliver any way the customer wants it, Saint Mary's Press offers a searchable server to Catholic schools and an online training program for young people who want to lead Bible studies and faith-sharing groups.

But at the end of the day, the Bible is different from any other book, Vitek said.

"Print is lasting, meaningful, powerful. In that sense, having a physical hard copy of the Bible — there's still a great value out of reverence," he said. "I wonder if Moses ever thought the stone tablets would disappear," he mused.

What will Vitek's ancestors say about it 100 years from now?

Twenty Something



Christina Capecchi | Double blessings, showered down: how a family grows

This is it. This is the month that set the orbit for our entire year. We are gearing up for two events, which will happen in the span of a week, the blink of an eye: My younger brother, Tony, is getting married and my older sister, Angie, is having a baby.

The countdown we launched last winter, the number that felt so big and distant, is rapidly dwindling. Now we are scurrying around, setting things in place, whitening our teeth and watching our waistlines — especially Angie's.

There is a headcount to finalize and a nursery to complete, plus final check-ins with the de-

jay and the doctor. We will try to keep it all together, but it is all so tightly wound: steamed dresses and high hopes, shined shoes and tangled nerves.

My final wedding task — scanning old photographs and arranging them into a slideshow — has made me aware of the swift passage of time. There is Tony, with all those freckles and the dimples in his upper cheeks. He is a ring bearer, a prom date, now a groom. There is Jodie, with those round brown eyes and that button nose, riding in a Huggies box, visiting Santa, traveling to South Africa, walking down the aisle. The snapshots play out just as the years did, in fast forward.

But my nostalgia isn't wistful; it is tinged with cheer, a sense that these two people belong together and that this growing baby belongs in our family. What looks like change, in many ways, is a continuation of what has been: the same traditions, the same sacraments, the same stories and songs.

I was reminded of that last weekend, when my dad took Angie's firstborn, 2-year-old Isaac, to the zoo we visited every summer as kids. Dad is still a superb guide, whistling at the orangutans and pointing out the tigers. Sparky the Seal performed the same tricks, and Isaac clapped from Dad's lap.

We revisited the carousel we used to adore. Isaac looked timid on the big painted horse, but after making several rounds and finding us waving from the same spot each time, he finally broke into a smile. The band organ hummed Cat Stevens' "Another Saturday Night," and Dad sang along.

The next day the aunts threw Jodie a bridal shower, where we supplied her with towels and blankets and Tony trivia. I watched everyone greet her with genuine affection, and I knew, as Teresa wrote in her card, that Jodie already has become a part of our family, just like that little baby, whose face and name we long to know.

Isn't that how life goes, that God showers down double blessings, and our thirsty souls are not only quenched, they are doused? We blink and quiver, stunned by how much the human heart can

hold.

Pope Benedict XVI says our families provide "living images of God's love" — flesh-and-blood examples of divine mercy and undeserved kindness. When we learn to share bedrooms and bathrooms, attention and dreams, we serve as a "sign and instrument of unity for the entire human race."

This month my family will be thrilled by new additions and comforted by their familiar forms. We are building on what has come before, blessed and ordained by the same everlasting God.

Soon we'll enter into a flurry of camera flashes and Hallmark cards, hugs and toasts, and somewhere between the chicken dance and the contractions, there will be grace pouring down.

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn. Email her at christina@readchristina.com.