

**\*\*Title: Social Security System v. Teresita Jarque Vda. De Bailon\*\***

**\*\*Facts:\*\***

- On April 25, 1955, Clemente G. Bailon (Clemente) married Alice P. Diaz (Alice) in Barcelona, Sorsogon.
- By 1970, Clemente filed a petition to declare Alice presumptively dead.
- The Court of First Instance (CFI) of Sorsogon granted the petition on December 10, 1970.
- Clemente then married Teresita Jarque (respondent) on August 8, 1983.
- Clemente passed away on January 30, 1998.
- Respondent filed for funeral benefits with the Social Security System (SSS), receiving P12,000.
- The respondent also applied for death benefits on March 11, 1998, and was granted these benefits on April 6, 1998.
- Cecilia Bailon-Yap, a claimed daughter of Clemente, contested the release of benefits to the respondent, alleging Clemente had two previous marriages and Alice was still alive.
- Several affidavits and testimonies were provided by relatives supporting Cecilia's claim.
- Atty. Marites C. de la Torre recommended cancelling respondent's benefits, refunding received sums, and paying other claimants based on an SSS memorandum dated August 9, 1999.
- On separate occasions in 1999 and 2000, SSS advised respondent to return the payments made to her based on their findings.
- Respondent protested and filed a petition with the Social Security Commission (SSC).
- The SSC ruled in favor of cancelling respondent's benefits and ordered repayment by April 2, 2003.
- Respondent filed for reconsideration, which was denied by the SSC on June 4, 2003.
- Respondent took the case to the Court of Appeals (CA).
- On June 23, 2004, the CA reversed the SSC's decisions, ordering SSS to pay the respondent all due pensions.
- The SSS filed for reconsideration, which was denied, leading to a petition for review on certiorari to the Supreme Court.

**\*\*Issues:\*\***

1. Whether the SSS and SSC have the authority to invalidate a second marriage and declare the first marriage subsistent based on their independent findings.
2. Whether the decision by the Court of First Instance declaring Alice presumptively dead

has attained finality and the subsequent effects on subsequent marriages.

3. Whether the respondent is entitled to death and funeral benefits as a legitimate spouse of Clemente Bailon.

**\*\*Court's Decision:\*\***

1. **\*\*Authority of SSS and SSC:\*\***

- The Supreme Court emphasized that the SSC's role does not extend to reviewing or reversing decisions made by judicial courts. The SSC overstepped its bounds by declaring the CFI order obtained through fraud and disregarding it based on its findings.

2. **\*\*Finality of CFI Order:\*\***

- According to the Civil Code, subsequent marriages are considered valid until annulled by a competent court. The presumption that the first marriage had not been dissolved needs to be proven by the party attacking the second marriage's validity.

- The decision by the CFI declaring Alice presumptively dead stands as long as it wasn't annulled until Clemente's death.

3. **\*\*Entitlement to Benefits:\*\***

- The Supreme Court ruled that, since Clemente's and respondent's marriage was contracted based on valid presumptions under the Civil Code, without subsequent annulment, the respondent remains the rightful spouse-beneficiary.

The Supreme Court upheld the CA decision, denying the SSS petition.

**\*\*Doctrine:\*\***

1. **\*\*Presumption of Continuity of Marriage:\*\***

- A subsequent marriage remains valid under the Civil Code until annulled by a competent court.

- Actions to annul or challenge marriages should be pursued during the lifetime of either involved party.

- Legitimate authority to declare marriages null and void rests solely with judicial courts.

2. **\*\*Administrative Bodies and Jurisdiction:\*\***

- Administrative bodies like the SSC do not have jurisdiction to overturn or disregard decisions made by regular judicial courts.

**\*\*Class Notes:\*\***

- **Civil Code Provisions:**

- Article 83: Subsequent marriages are void unless annulled or dissolved or fall under exceptions.
- Article 87: Annulment actions must be brought by parties within their lifetimes.
- Principle: Annulment of marriage must be pursued directly, not collaterally.

- **Family Code Provisions:**

- Article 42: Subsequent marriages terminate automatically with an affidavit of reappearance unless otherwise judicially determined.

- **Concepts:**

- Presumptive death does not immediately annul a prior marriage; proper legal proceedings must be followed.
- Authority of administrative agencies is limited to their mandate and cannot encroach judicial powers.

**Historical Background:**

This case provides insight into the interplay between administrative authority and judicial determinations concerning marriage validity in the Philippines. It emphasizes the boundaries of administrative bodies like the SSS and SSC in matters usually settled in courts, particularly in family law and marital status disputes. The decision reinforces the principle that presumptions of death facilitating remarriage must rigorously follow legal protocols, protecting the sanctity of judicial orders and due process rights.