

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED BY A TRIBUNAL

Advocate: an individual who gives canonical assistance and advice, examines and assists in drawing up documents, and assists in preparation of the testimony to be presented to the Tribunal. The advocate does not have standing before the Tribunal and therefore may not seek updates or other information from the Tribunal Staff.

Affirmative Decision: the Tribunal has determined the evidence provided demonstrates the marriage was null and void from the beginning.

Assessor or Auditor: a Tribunal official who assists in the evaluation of the evidence for the Presiding Judge rendering a decision on the case presented.

Case Name: the last name of the man and the maiden name of the woman define the name of the case.

Case Number: the control number that identifies the case by year and the number of cases.

Caution (*Monitum*): a Judge may determine there are issues that need to be discussed during marriage preparation should the Petitioner or Respondent seek to enter a marriage in the future. This simply conveys that information to the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister preparing the parties for marriage.

Code of Canon Law and *Dignitas Connubii*: the two major sources of law in the Catholic Church and define how the Tribunal processes cases.

College of Judges (Collegiate Court): a panel of at least three; a Presiding Judge and two Associate Judges, who will render a decision in an ordinary case. A College of Judges is used for contentious cases and marriages over twenty years.

Declaration of Nullity: the final stage in the process is the definitive decision declaring that the Petitioner and/or the Respondent have proven the marriage to be null and void from the beginning.

Defender of the Bond: a Tribunal official who is entrusted with defending the validity of the marriage.

Ecclesiastical Notary: a Tribunal official who authenticates all Tribunal documents. This person also manages correspondence and contacts.

Expert Witness (*peritus*): a counseling professional who is assigned to review a case and instruct the Judges on psychological matters regarding a case.

Grounds: reasons a Tribunal may declare a marriage null and void from the beginning.

Judicial Vicar: a priest who is delegated by the Bishop to serve as the chief Judge in the Diocesan Tribunal.

Libellus: the canonical document by which the Petitioner and/or Respondent begin the process of examining a marriage for validity.

Mandate: the document by which a Petitioner and/or Respondent appoints a person to serve as his/her procurator and advocate.

Ordinary Process: the procedures by which the Tribunal examines a marriage for validity.

Petitioner: the party who petitions a Tribunal to have his/her marriage examined for validity.

Procurator: the person who acts on behalf of the Petitioner or Respondent. This individual has full standing before the Tribunal and may make contact for case updates and other forms of support on individual cases.

Prohibition (*Vetitum*): a restriction placed on the Petitioner and/or Respondent prohibiting a future marriage until certain requirements are met.

Respondent: the spouse who responds to the Petitioner's request to the Tribunal to examine the marriage in question for validity.

Second Instance Tribunal: the Tribunal to which appeals are directed. The Second Instance Tribunal of the Diocese of Grand Rapids is the Metropolitan Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Sole Judge: the Tribunal official who serves as the only Judge on a case.

Tribunal: the ecclesiastical court of the Catholic Church in a diocese.

Witnesses: individuals named by the parties who are knowledgeable of and truthfully testify about the parties and the marriage. The testimony from these parties is obtained by the Tribunal. Please note that parents, siblings, members of the wedding party, childhood friends make strong witnesses.