

802/2021  
20 August 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

His Holiness, Pope Francis, in his apostolic letter *motu proprio*, *The Gentle Judge*, *Our Lord Jesus*, motivated by the “zeal for the salvation of souls” and “with due regard for the need to protect the principle of indissolubility of the marital bond,” called for the reform of the judicial process regarding the nullity of marriage. In his apostolic letter the Holy Father noted a need for specialized ministers to assist people in ascertaining their marital status in the Church (see *Mitis Iudix Dominus Iesus: The way of proceeding regarding cases of nullity of marriage*, artt. 2-4). I have reviewed and discussed with canonists a proposal coming from the staff of the diocesan tribunal as a response to the call of Pope Francis. I am pleased to approve the implementation of an initiative to train Case Specialists to submit cases of nullity of marriage to the diocesan tribunal.

I encourage priests, deacons, and lay ecclesial ministers of the Diocese of Cleveland to request admission to a training program to serve as a Case Specialist. I hope that each one of you will prayerfully reflect on whether the people entrusted to your care will benefit from your generous response to this invitation to serve those who wish to clarify their marital status in the Church. Those who discern they are not called to this ministry at this time are encouraged to continue to provide pastoral care to those who have experienced divorce.

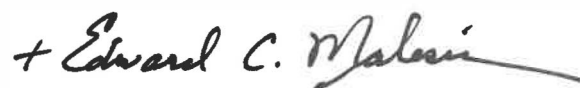
The training program will begin in the spring of 2022 and will include six, three hour sessions. Those successfully completing the training program will be recommended to me for approval for this ministry. Continuing education throughout their ministry will be provided for those approved as Case Specialists.

The aim of the tribunal staff is to implement fully the change in the process by July 2022, after which it will be required that cases be submitted to the diocesan tribunal only by those approved as Case Specialists. The exception is that all those preparing couples for marriage will continue to be able to submit administrative petitions for nullity of marriage due to lack of canonical form. The diocesan tribunal will maintain a list of Case Specialists on its website.

If interested or for more information, please contact the tribunal at 216-696-6525, x4000.

May Almighty God continue to bless you in your generous service to the people of God of the Diocese of Cleveland.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



The Most Reverend Edward C. Malesic, J.C.L.  
Bishop of Cleveland