



## DIOCESE OF METUCHEN

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Issue Date: September 11, 2015

### Statement Regarding New Marriage Nullity Process

As reported in various media outlets, on September 8, 2015, His Holiness Pope Francis issued two major documents reforming the judicial system of the Catholic Church in the area of the marriage law. One of the documents, *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* ("The Lord Jesus, Clement Judge") applies to tribunals of the Latin Rite, and so affects the Diocese of Metuchen.

Among the reforms introduced by *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* are four changes that address the desire of the Pope and many bishops to accelerate the process in processing cases involving an allegation of marriage nullity:

1. The removal of the requirement of two affirmative decisions before the parties can enter a new marriage in the Church. Under the new norms, an affirmative decision rendered by our Tribunal is sufficient. Only if an appeal is made by the responding party will a decision be examined by our appeals tribunal, the Metropolitan Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Newark.
2. All diocesan tribunals in the Church can now utilize a single judge in marriage cases. (This permission has been in effect in United States since 1984 and our tribunal uses a single judge on many cases.) The new norms also allow for two of the three collegiate judges on a marriage case to be non-clerics. Formerly, only one lay judge could serve on a college of three judges.
3. Certain cases can now be decided directly by the diocesan bishop through an expedited process (*processus brevior*). The evidence of nullity in such cases must be abundant and *both parties* firmly convinced their union was null. This expedited process reflects Pope Francis's commitment to sharing responsibility with the diocesan Bishops around the world.
4. Under the new norms, the tribunal of a petitioner is fully competent to accept his or her petition. Previously, respondent's judicial vicar had to give consent and the parties had to live in the same episcopal conference if the marriage did not take place in the petitioner's diocese.

These reforms instituted by Pope Francis take effect on December 8, 2015, the beginning of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. However, parishioners are encouraged not to wait until December 8 to submit a petition.

The ministry of our diocesan Tribunal is sensitive to the fact that each petition for nullity it receives is unique and represents the pain and anguish experienced by individuals whose marriage unfortunately resulted in a civil divorce.

Please feel free to contact the Tribunal (732.562.1990, extension 1200) if you have any questions or wish to submit a petition to the Tribunal for consideration.