



Diocese of Cheyenne

Office of the Bishop

November 9, 2015

Feast of the Dedication of St. John Lateran

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write to you in joyful anticipation of the upcoming Jubilee Year of Mercy. I wish to share with you my recent decision to waive all fees associated with petitioning the Tribunal of the Diocese of Cheyenne for a declaration of invalidity of marriage.

In the past, the ministry of our Diocesan Tribunal has been funded through the collection of modest fees and through donations received to the annual *Living and Giving in Christ Appeal*. I have been considering for some time no longer asking for a fee, and thought we might make this effective July 1, 2016. Pope Francis issued a *motu proprio*, *Mitis Index Dominus Iesus*, on August 15, 2015, which was announced on September 8, 2015, in which he has modified the process for processing an annulment. In this document, Pope Francis requested that, if possible, no fee be charged for matrimonial cases before a tribunal. In the light of his request, I have decided to hasten my decision to no longer collect fees.

Effective October 21, 2015, I directed the Tribunal to no longer accept fees for any new cases received, and to forgive any outstanding balances on cases already accepted. The only fees that will continue will be the ones charged by the appellate tribunals and the person making the appeal will be responsible for paying these fees.

I believe that the generosity of the People of God in our Diocese through their support of the *Living and Giving in Christ Appeal* will be able to make up for the loss in fee revenues. Although no one was denied the ability to present a case before our Tribunal due to the inability to pay the fee, some may have been hesitant to ask for the fee to be waived. My sincerest hope is that this change in fee policy will encourage those who had previously been reluctant to approach the Church to begin the annulment process due to concerns about the cost will now come forward.

To those who have contributed to the cost of maintaining the Diocesan Tribunal over the years through the payment of fees, I wish to express my sincerest gratitude. Please be assured that you have helped many to be comforted, reconciled, and to find healing. At the same time, you enabled the Tribunal to waive fees for those who could not afford to pay.

I express my heartfelt appreciation to all those who have and will continue to assist in this ministry by your contributions to the *Living and Giving in Christ Appeal*. Your contributions enable the Tribunal to reach out in mercy to those in need of guidance and assistance.

In closing, I ask for your prayers for all married couples and ask that the Lord bless them in their love for each other and their families. Please remember in prayer all those who struggle in their marriages and those who have endured the painful realities of divorce. May the Lord bless them, ease their pain, sustain them in their faith, and help them to know the love and support of the Church. I remain,

In The Heart of Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul D. Etienne".

The Most Reverend Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Bishop of Cheyenne

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol DeLois".

Carol DeLois,
Chancellor