



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE COURSE PROMOTED
BY THE TRIBUNAL OF THE ROMAN ROTA**

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 12 March 2016*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning.

I greet all of you who took part in the course of formation sponsored by the Roman Rota on the new marriage [annulment] process and the procedure *super rato*. I acknowledge the efforts of Msgr Pinto for his efforts in bringing about these formational courses and I thank him for his words.

During the recent proceedings of the Synod on the family, there emerged strong expectations for an increased celerity and efficaciousness in procedures for the declaration of marriage nullity. Indeed, many faithful suffer on account of the end of their marriages and are often burdened by the doubt as to whether or not the marriage was ever valid. These individuals wonder if there were something in the intention or in the facts to impede the effective realization of the sacrament. Yet these faithful have in many cases encountered difficulty in accessing the ecclesiastical juridical structures and have signaled the need for the process to be simplified.

Love and mercy, beyond being a reflection of experience, urge the Church to move closer to these individuals who are also her children, and she has thus heard their legitimate desire for justice. Last 15 August, the documents *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* and *Mitis et Misericors Iesus* were promulgated. They were the fruit of the special commission established on 27 August 2014: nearly a year of work. These developments have an eminently pastoral objective: to demonstrate the Church's concern for those faithful who await a swift assessment of their respective marital situations. In particular, the standard of double conforming sentences has been abolished and the so-called rapid process has been enacted, placing the role of the diocesan Bishop, or Eparch in the case of Eastern Churches, front and centre as judge of the cause. The role of the Bishop or Eparch in the matter of marriage [nullity] has recently been emphasized. Indeed, apart from

verification through the administrative track — *rato et non consumato* — the Bishop once again has the main responsibility of the judicial track that concerns the validity of the bond.

It is important that the new norms be adopted and further developed, in merit and in spirit, especially by those working in ecclesiastical Tribunals, in order to render the service of justice and love to families. For many people who have experience an unhappy marriage, verification of the presence or lack of validity of the bond represents an important possibility. And these people must be helped along this road in the swiftest manner. Thus the value of the course you have just attended. I encourage you all to treasure what you have learned during these days and work with your gaze ever fixed on the *salus animarum*, which is the supreme law of the Church.

The Church is mother and seeks to show to all the face of God faithful to his love, merciful and always able to renew the gift of strength and hope. What also remains close to our heart regarding separated individuals living in new unions is their participation in the ecclesial community. Yet, while we tend to the wounds of all those who seek assessment of the truth of their failed marriages, let us look with admiration to those, who even in difficult conditions, remain faithful to the sacramental bond. These witnesses to marital fidelity are to be encouraged and held up as examples to follow. So many women and men endure heavy and arduous burdens so as not to destroy the family, so as to be faithful in sickness and in health, in hardship and in a life of serenity: that is fidelity. And they are good!

I thank you for your commitment to justice and I urge you to live it out not as a profession, or worse a power, but as a service to souls, especially those most wounded. May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady protect you. Please, remember to pray for me.