

Living the Gospel through the Annual Pastoral Appeal

Diocesan Ministry

SNAP-SHOT

Through the Annual Pastoral Appeal (APA), the People of God in the Diocese of St. Petersburg support over 50 ministries, programs and services to thousands across 5 counties.

Our appeal is truly an invitation for each and every Catholic household to be part of a joyful community of disciples, proclaiming the Good News and inviting all people to encounter the love and mercy of Jesus Christ.

THE TRIBUNAL: IN SERVICE OF JESUS THE GENTLE AND MERCIFUL JUDGE

The Tribunal accompanies the Catholic Faithful who wish the Church to examine a prior marriage, attentive to the teaching of Jesus. Petitioning for a declaration of nullity is a spiritual journey which is undertaken when a person who has remarried wants to return to the Sacraments, or a person who has been divorced wants to remarry in the Church.

The Tribunal process has a particularly narrow focus. The only question for the Tribunal is whether the marriage bond was genuinely formed according to the laws of the Catholic Faith. It is not the task of the Tribunal to assign blame for the break-up of the marriage. Rather, looking to the knowledge and freedom of the parties as they approached marriage, it is possible to see if the essential goods of marriage were truly exchanged.

Recalling all that led to a wedding (often after many years), recounting the difficult moments of a couple's partnership, and naming the reasons for the eventual end of the common life, can be painful. However, the Tribunal encourages people to consider the spiritual good that comes when the Church pastorally exams a prior union. It is always our prayer that petitioning the Tribunal will be a healing process and will bring a comforting resolution to one's prior marriage.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Tribunal assists priests, deacons, seminarians and other appointed ministers and trains them to walk parishioners through the process of seeking a declaration of nullity.
- Our Tribunal can process petitions in English and Spanish (other languages will require the help of translators for the petitioner).
- The Tribunal also assists with marriage preparation by assuring that any dispensations/permissions have been obtained and that marriage files are ready and delivered when a wedding will be in another diocese.
- According to new norms, any person who resides within the diocese can approach our Tribunal which is competent to deal with their case. This includes those who were married in other places and even other countries.
- The Diocese of St. Petersburg decided in 2015 that the services of the Tribunal should be **free to parishioners**. The Tribunal is funded completely by the Annual Pastoral Appeal, and no fees are charged.
- In the United States Church a decree of nullity has *no civil effect*, it does not impact the legitimacy of children or custody arrangements. Therefore, a person must wait for at least one-year after a civil divorce to petition for an annulment.
- The Tribunal helps with petitions for people even if one or both parties were not Catholic when they were married. This is particularly important for those in the RCIA who want to have their marriage recognized by the Catholic Church.

"ALL YOUR HARD WORK FOR BOTH OF US HAS CHANGED OUR LIVES FOREVER. NOW WE HAVE A COMMON RELIGION IN OUR HOME, WE NOW TAKE COMMUNION TOGETHER AND AFTER THE TRIBUNAL'S APPROVAL WE WERE FINALLY MARRIED IN A CATHOLIC CHURCH."

Grateful Petitioner

"HEALING WOUNDED SPIRITS REQUIRES HEARTS ROOTED IN COMPASSION. THE DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH ADVOCATES IN LOCAL PARISHES AND A TRIBUNAL STAFF WHO UNDERSTANDS SOME OF THE CHALLENGES PEOPLE FACE AS THEY LIVE THROUGH THIS PROCESS."

Feedback from a Parish Advocate

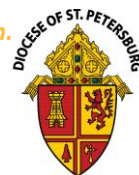
"THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR ALL THE HELP I RECEIVED TO PROCESS THE ANNULMENT OF MY MARRIAGE. YOU HAVE BEEN VERY NICE, I WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL. GOD BLESS YOU."

Spanish-Speaking Petitioner

The courteous and competent Clergy and Staff of the Tribunal are always ready to help. At the Tribunal we always keep in mind that the salvation of souls is the supreme law of the Church.

Be Courageous-make your gift today!

This information has been provided by the Diocesan Office of Stewardship & Development. To learn more about ministries, programs and services funded by the Annual Pastoral Appeal, visit www.dosp.org.



COURAGEOUSLY
Living the Gospel