



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, New York 14624
(585) 328-3210

June 24, 2014

Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist

My dear brother priests, deacons, religious and faithful of the Diocese:

I am writing to inform you that after consultation with the Diocesan Presbyteral Council, the Diocesan Finance Council (Stewardship Council) and the Diocesan Tribunal Staff, there was unanimous support that ***diocesan fees*** attached to the process for petitioning for an annulment of a marriage no longer be required. In the past, these needed revenues contributed significantly in allowing the Diocesan Tribunal for Marriage to accomplish its work. However, in prioritizing the areas of mission within the Diocese, with a particular emphasis upon evangelization, the aforementioned consultative bodies agreed that it would be opportune to offer this ministerial service without charge. **It should be noted that it has always been the policy of the Diocesan Tribunal to adjudicate cases even when parties were unable to pay the stated fee; this was never an obstacle for petitioning for an annulment of marriage.**

In order to effect this policy, namely discontinuing all *diocesan fees* attached to cases submitted to the Diocesan Tribunal seeking an annulment of marriage, in the most just way possible and in accordance with the already established budget for the forthcoming fiscal year July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015, this policy will become **effective July 1, 2014.**

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 gratitude. Please be assured that you have helped many of your sisters and brothers to be healed, reconciled and to find peace. You have assisted our Diocese in reaching a new level of ministerial outreach. As you can well understand, those petitioning for an annulment are at a very sensitive moment in their lives and should find in the Church a place to receive counsel, advice and support. The attaching of a fee to this process can deter some from seeking the Church's guidance in this matter. It is my hope that diocesan resources raised through the Catholic Ministries Appeal (CMA) will be able to support this ministry and, even more importantly, that this policy will cause those who previously may have been hesitant to approach the Diocesan Tribunal due to concerns about the cost to avail themselves of the Tribunal services.

Allow me, also, to take this opportunity to recommend to all our faithful that they pray for all married couples and ask that the Lord sustain them in their love for each other. Let us also pray for those experiencing trials and difficulties in their marriages and

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for those whose marriages, despite the best of efforts, have not endured. May the Lord be their support and help them to bear this burden and ease their pain and hurt.

Information about the Diocesan Tribunal for Marriage and the process for seeking an annulment may be obtained from the Diocesan Website at www.dor.org, or by writing to the Tribunal at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York, 14624 or by telephoning the Tribunal at (585) 328-3228, extension 1223.

Renewing my promise to keep you all in prayer, I remain

Devotedly yours in Christ,

+ *Salvatore R. Matano*
The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Rochester