



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
SPONSORED BY THE FACULTY OF CANON LAW
OF THE PONTIFICAL GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY**

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 24 January 2015*

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Dear Brothers,

I extend my cordial greetings to all of you who are participating in the international congress on the 10th anniversary of the publication of the Instruction *Dignitas connubii* on the treatment of the causes of marriage nullity in diocesan and interdiocesan tribunals. I greet the Fathers of the Faculty of Canon Law of the Pontifical Gregorian University who organized the congress with the sponsorship of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts and the *Consociato internationalis studio iuris canonici promovendo*. I greet all of you who have come from local Churches in various parts of the world and have actively participated and shared the experiences of your local tribunals. Your large number and qualifications are of great consolation: it seems to me to be a generous response to the solicitations that every authentic ministry of the Church's tribunals receives for the good of souls.

Such widespread participation in this meeting is an indication of the importance of the Instruction *Dignitas connubii*, which is not meant for the specialists of the law, but rather for those who work in the local tribunals. It is in fact a modest but useful *vademecum* that truly takes the ministers of the tribunals by hand through the unfolding of a process that seeks to be simultaneously certain and swift. It is a certain undertaking inasmuch as it marks and explains with clarity the substance of the process itself, thus the moral certainty: it requires that on the whole there be no shred of prudent, positive doubt of error, even if the mere possibility of the contrary cannot be utterly excluded (cf. *Dignitas connubii*, art. 247 § 2). It is a swift undertaking inasmuch as — and common experience

teaches us this — he who knows the road well travels and moves quicker. Knowledge, and I might add custom, in conjunction with this Instruction will also be able to help the ministers of tribunals in the future to shorten the procedural stage, which the spouses themselves perceive as long and arduous. Thus far there has not been an examination of all the resources that the Instruction has made available for an expedited process, one stripped of all formalism as an end in and of itself. Nor can further legislative acts with the same scope be ruled out for the future.

Among the moments of solicitude manifested in the Instruction *Dignitas connubii*, I have already seized the opportunity to mention the proper and primary contribution of the defender of the bond in the marriage process (cf. *Address to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura*, 8 November 2013, AAS 105 [2013], pp. 1152–1153). The presence of the defender of the bond and the faithful fulfillment of his or her task does not condition the judge. Rather, it allows for and facilitates the impartiality of his judgment insofar as the judge is faced with arguments both in favour of and contrary to a declaration of nullity of a marriage.

To Mary Most Holy, Seat of Wisdom, I entrust your continued work and reflection on what the Lord wants today for the good of souls, which he has obtained with his blood. Upon you and your daily responsibilities I invoke the light of the Holy Spirit and impart to all my blessing and please pray for me.