

**Pastor's Notes: Tribunal of Knoxville**

July 19, 2020

On July 1st, we officially began the new Tribunal for the Diocese of Knoxville. A tribunal serves the ministry of justice in the Church. Bishop Stika has named me as the Judicial Vicar for the Diocese, which means I'm sort of the Chief Justice for matters pertaining to canon law. This is something that has been in the works for the past four years, but the history goes longer than that. When the Diocese of Knoxville was established in 1988, we petitioned for and obtained the permission to utilize the services of the Tribunal in Nashville, our mother diocese. That arrangement has been very useful to us in that it got us through our infancy as a diocese, especially considering the lack of resources we've had as we've grown into the diocese we are today. But now, with more than thirty years under our belt, Bishop Stika considered it appropriate that we would have our own Diocesan Tribunal, in which matters such as petitions for a declaration of nullity and other processes laid out in the Code of Canon Law can be accomplished on a local level. This is obviously a monumental undertaking. But by the grace of God and the cooperation of our staff, we have been able to successfully begin. Bishop Stika has asked us to temporarily house the Tribunal here at the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul. It is an honor for the city of Chattanooga to host one of the offices of the Diocesan Curia. We have managed to find space for us here by utilizing the Msgr. George Schmidt conference room, that many of you will recall was the garage of the rectory before the renovations.

We also have hired staff for the Tribunal. One is a brand new canon lawyer, Mr. Tyler Ross, JCL, who is a native of Chattanooga, having attended St. Jude School and Notre Dame High School. He got his Theology degree at Aquinas College in Nashville and then obtained a license in canon law (JCL) at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C. He began working for the future Tribunal last fall. He is serving as Judge and Coordinator of Case Sponsors. We also have obtained the services of a religious Sister from Africa, who will also be a Judge on the Tribunal, Sister Catherine Ngozi Okoye, JCD. She just recently finished a doctorate in canon law at the Lateran University in Rome and was scheduled to come to Chattanooga in March, but she has been detained there in Italy due to the travel restrictions. Sr. Catherine has been working remotely, thanks to modern means of technology, and will continue to do so until she is able to come to Tennessee. We also have hired the Moderator of the Tribunal, Ms. Jenny Morris. She obtained a Bachelor's degree in Theology from Aquinas College also and received her Master in Theology from St. Meinrad College. Jenny will serve as the Ecclesiastical Notary, whose job is to organize, certify, and archive all of the documents of the Tribunal.

If you ever come to the parish office and you run into them, hope you say hi and pray for the success of our new tribunal. If you want to know more, you can go to [www.dioknox.org/tribunal](http://www.dioknox.org/tribunal).

*Rev. J. David Carter*



*Mr. Tyler Ross, JCL  
Judge and Coordinator of Case Sponsors*



*Ms. Jenny Morris, M. A.  
Moderator of the Tribunal and Ecclesial Notary*



*Sr. Catherine Ngozi Okoye, JCD, SJGS, Judge*