

Communiqué of the Congregation for Catholic Education

So as to resolve any doubts arising from the paragraph of the *Instruction on the Study of Canon Law in light of the Reform of the Matrimonial Process* (published by this Congregation for Catholic Education on 29 April 2018) that concerns the competence of the diocesan Bishop to introduce the *processus brevior* (n. 2), the Holy Father, in the Audience granted on 5 June 2018 to the Prefect of the aforesaid Congregation, authorized the relative paragraph to be changed; it is substituted by the following text, which is to be considered definitive and authentic.

The following persons may be mentioned. They either directly or indirectly intervene in the ecclesial judicial sphere, at different levels of activity connected to the canonical processes for the causes of matrimonial nullity:

- The *Bishop*, for whom can. 378, § 1, n. 5 requires that he be “in possession of a doctorate or at least a licentiate in sacred scripture, theology or canon law from an institute of higher studies approved by the Apostolic See, or at least truly expert in the same disciplines”⁸. Such a knowledge of the sacred sciences (even without academic degrees), together with the sacramental grace of episcopal ordination, is sufficient to make every Bishop naturally and fully capable of instructing every matrimonial process, including the briefer one⁹. That does not exclude that prudence may counsel the Bishop to ask assistance from collaborators who are even more expert in canon law; however, that is always left to his full discretion, according to circumstances in the individual cases.

⁸ Cf. can. 180, n. 6 CCEO.

⁹ Although this is certain on the level of formal law, it must not be forgotten that the Bishop, inasmuch as sent by God to be Pastor of his flock, possesses, more than anybody else, the grace and office to understand and pursue the true good of souls and, therefore, is able to unite justice and charity, truth and mercy also in this area of marriage, in which many people experience the fragility of the human condition.