

DIOCESAN TRIBUNAL

The judicial authority of the Diocesan Bishop is ordinarily exercised through the Diocesan Tribunal (church court). The officers who constitute this court are:

- Judicial Vicar – appointed by the Diocesan Bishop who, by this office, has the ordinary power to judge.
- Judge – clerics or lay persons appointed by the Diocesan Bishop. These persons are to be of unimpaired reputation and doctors or at least licensed in canon law. Judges render the decision based on the merits of the case and write the sentence.
- Defender of the Bond – clerics or lay persons appointed by the Diocesan Bishop whose role is to propose and clarify everything which can be reasonably argued against the nullity or dissolution.
- Auditor – appointed by the Judge to collect and present evidence to the Defender of the Bond and Judge.
- Assessor – consultor or advisor to a single judge. Assessors often assist with the instruction of the case.
- Advocate – a person approved by the Diocesan Bishop but appointed by the party themselves. The Advocate’s role is to provide technical assistance, offer advice and safeguard the rights of the party during the process.
- Notary – authenticates judicial documents, as well as draws up the acts, files them and keeps them safe.

The Diocesan Tribunal is governed by the Code of Canon Law, most especially procedural law. While the function of the Diocesan Tribunal is primarily in relationship to questions which concern the validity of a particular marital union, the Tribunal is also the ordinary forum for other church legal processes. These processes include procedures for canonization cases, examination of the validity of sacred orders, and cases which involve church sanctions (penalties).

Tribunal Officials of the Diocese of Dodge City:

Judicial Vicar:	Rev. John V. Hotze, JCL
Judge:	Rev. James E. Baker, JCL
Defender of the Bond:	Rev. David H. Kraus, JCL
Advocates:	Several parish priests, deacons and pastoral ministers
Notaries:	Amy Seachris Janice Grochowsky, CSJ, JCL