

SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH + YORKVILLE

February 4, 2024

Newsletter no. 203

In last week's newsletter I gave a brief overview of a recent controversial papal document entitled *Fiducia Supplicans* (Latin for "Supplicating Trust"), with the subtitle "On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings." The controversial character of the document stems from the fact that it allows for the blessing of couples in irregular and same-sex relationships, although it permits this only in very restricted circumstances—namely, the couple itself has to request a blessing, which the priest must not offer on his own; the blessing should be spontaneous, brief and informal; it should not in any way look like a wedding ceremony or be part of one; and, finally, it must not be taken to mean an approval or a legitimization of the irregular or same-sex relationship that is being blessed. In this week's newsletter I wish to comment on the document.

It is important to know that *Fiducia Supplicans* (hereinafter FS) is called a declaration, meaning that it has a high level of authority and that it is approved by the pope. Why did Pope Francis publish this declaration? It is well known that he wants the Church to reach out to persons who are on the margins and who have felt neglected or demeaned, whether by the Church itself or by the world at large. Included among the marginalized are gay and lesbian people, to whom the pope seems have shown a particular sympathy over the years. From that perspective, FS is a praiseworthy attempt to demonstrate the Church's care for them.

However, while appropriately distinguishing between the blessing of a traditional marriage and the kind of blessing that is offered to people in non-traditional relationships, FS gives the appearance of tiptoeing around the issues that these relationships raise within the context of Christian tradition. Thus, a blessing is permitted, but it is circumscribed by so many conditions which have to be met that the permission comes close to looking reluctant, even stingy. And so, although many are pleased that an official document from the Vatican has gone as far as it has, there are still others who are angry because, to them, it hasn't gone far enough. After all, a blessing bestowed in these circumstances is not the same thing as a marriage, and marriage is the ultimate goal for many.

But the most heated criticism comes from those who think that FS has gone much too far. The objections can be summed up as follows: 1) Despite its insistence on the particular character of traditional marriage, which is between a man and a woman, FS has intentionally or unintentionally opened the door to a discussion of same-sex marriage by the Church. Indeed, the transition from a blessing to actual marriage now seems inevitable to many. 2) Inasmuch as the blessing is bestowed on a non-traditional couple precisely as a couple, rather than as one or two individuals who also happen to be in a relationship together, it is hard not to view the blessing as the legitimization of a relationship that the Church considers sinful. Many people in fact already see it that way. 3) If the Church considers non-traditional relationships sinful, why is there no unambiguous mention in FS of that sinfulness, such that the priest giving the blessing might be encouraged to say to the couple, in these or other words (like those of Jesus), "Go, and sin no more"? 4) Finally, in an organization that values precedent and tradition as much as the Church does, there is no precedent for this kind of blessing, and no attempt is made to find such a precedent.

Would it have been better if FS had never been published? Clearly, the Church needed to say a kindly and welcoming word to the LGBTQ population, not all of whom—it should be noted—engage in sexual activity or conform to the stereotype of an LGBTQ lifestyle, not even all of those who live together. But FS does not confront the legitimate problems that the declaration raises and that the pope should have foreseen, like how it fits into the Church's 2000-year tradition. Additionally, it is convoluted and very open to misinterpretation. All in all, by way of summary, it is a shame that the pope's good intentions about reaching out to LGBTQ people were so poorly presented.

This coming Saturday, February 10th, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick will be offered at the 12:15 pm Mass to all who desire it and are qualified to receive it. Qualified persons are those who have a chronic illness, whether physical or psychological, who have a serious sickness or are recovering from a debilitating accident, who are facing a major operation, or who are over the age of 65 and experiencing the burdens of age. Additionally, prospective recipients should be practicing Catholics and free of serious sin.

Father Boniface

Mass intentions for the period from February 3rd to 11th

Saturday-Sunday, February 3rd-4th

4:00 pm: Jimmy Quinn (D)
8:00 am: Megan, Matt, Sarah and Ryan (L)
10:00 am (German):
12:00 noon: Johnny Clemente (D)
2:00 pm (Hungarian): Franciska and Ferencz Harangozo (D)
6:00 pm: St. Joseph's Parishioners

Monday, February 5th

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: The Living and Deceased Members of the Chambers Family

Tuesday, February 6th

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: Edward LaFranchi (D)

Wednesday, February 7th

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: Senan Green (D)

Thursday, February 8th

7:00 am: Anthony Sclafani (D)
12:15 pm: Roger Dacanay (D)

Friday, February 9th

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: Odilio Rodriguez (D)

Saturday, February 10th

8:00 am:
12:15 pm: Flor and Nicole Florio and Family (D)
4:00 pm: John A. Martin (D)

Sunday, February 11th

8:00 am: St. Joseph's Parishioners
10:00 am: William Sams, Jr. (D)
12:00 noon: Frank J. D'Anna (D)
2:00 pm (Hungarian): Antal and Anna Csonka (D)
6:00 pm: Katherine Folz (L)