

# SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH + YORKVILLE

January 28, 2024

Newsletter no. 202

In the middle of this past December the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, one of the bureaus of the Vatican formerly known as the Holy Office, published a several-page document that immediately aroused heated debate. The document, which was published with the pope's approval, goes by the Latin title *Fiducia Supplicans*, meaning "Supplicating Trust"; its subtitle is "On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings." *Fiducia Supplicans* (hereinafter FS) is an attempt to broaden the understanding of blessings by expanding the notion of who can be blessed, and why. The controversy over the document springs from the fact that FS allows for the blessing of persons in irregular unions (for example, persons who have been divorced and remarried without an annulment of the previous marriage, or unmarried persons who are living together) and in same-sex relationships.

Since FS has been featured in the media more than any other recent Vatican statement, and since it has met with determined resistance from numerous bishops in different parts of the world, I thought it would be helpful to lay out summarily in this week's newsletter what the document says, especially since probably few people have actually read it in its entirety, or even any part of it. The impression of many Catholics is that, while it is true that FS has taken an unprecedented stand on a difficult issue, it represents a total break from traditional church teaching and endorses gay marriage, which is erroneous. Then, in next week's newsletter, I hope to offer a short commentary on the text.

First of all, FS is a pastoral document. In other words, it is intended to apply the Church's teachings to concrete human situations—in this case to situations in which people of all sorts ask for blessings from a priest. May a priest respond positively to such requests when a positive response would seem to acquiesce in something sinful? Thus, when a couple in a non-traditional relationship asks for a blessing, what may a priest do?

Before offering an answer to this question, FS affirms that marriage, in conformity with the Gospel and with Catholic tradition, is solely between a man and a woman: "It is only in this context that sexual relations find their natural, proper and fully human meaning. The Church's doctrine on this point remains firm." Hence, the blessing of a marriage that takes place with this understanding is entirely distinct from any other blessing that might be given to two people. FS will return to the particulars of this distinction when it discusses the blessing of a non-traditional relationship, but meanwhile it turns to the nature of blessings, which it defines as twofold: blessings either ascend from the believer to God, as when a believer praises and thanks God, or descend from God to the believer, as in the sacraments and in non-liturgical pious practices (for example, when a parent blesses a child with the sign of the cross or a priest blesses a parishioner with the same gesture). According to FS, the bestowal of a blessing that descends from God does not necessarily demand a certain degree of morality. In the words of FS: "When people ask for a blessing, an exhaustive moral analysis should not be placed as a precondition for conferring it, for those seeking a blessing should not be required to have prior moral perfection." Indeed, the very fact of asking for a blessing is an indication of an openness to God that can be present even in those who are in a state of sinfulness.

With all of this as a kind of preliminary, FS then proceeds to the decisive point—namely, that in certain circumstances it is pastorally acceptable for a priest to bless a couple in a non-traditional relationship. The circumstances, which are crucial, are as follows: 1) The couple itself must request a blessing; the priest must not suggest it to the couple. 2) The blessing should have a spontaneous tone and be brief and informal. 3) It must not be given so as to imply that it is the equivalent of a wedding ceremony, and it may not be included, for example, as part of a civil wedding ceremony; hence, the priest who is imparting the blessing must not wear priestly vestments or use words or gestures that are associated with a wedding. 4) The blessing must not be performed in such a way that it could be taken as a legitimization or approval of the non-traditional relationship.

FS concludes with a few pious words about the world's need both to bless and to be blessed. In next week's newsletter, as mentioned, I will offer a brief commentary on this important and controversial document.

This coming Saturday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, is the feast of St. Blase and the traditional day for blessing throats. Throats will be blessed that day after each of the Masses.

Father Boniface

## Mass intentions for the period from January 27<sup>th</sup> to February 4<sup>th</sup>

### Saturday-Sunday, January 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>

4:00 pm: John A. Martin (D)  
8:00 am: St. Joseph's Parishioners  
10:00 am: Johnny Clemente (D)  
12:00 noon: Rose and Frank Christoforo (D)  
2:00 pm (Hungarian): Istvan and Gizella Soltesz (D)  
6:00 pm: Sinead Ochinero (L)

### Monday, January 29<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am: James Arteaga (L)  
12:15 pm: Doreen Brevolsh (L), 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday

### Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>

7:00 am:  
12:15 pm:

### Wednesday, January 31<sup>st</sup>

7:00 am:  
12:15 pm: Jason Olivencia (D)

### Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup>

7:00 am:  
12:15 pm:

### Friday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> (The Presentation of the Lord; First Friday)

7:00 am:  
12:15 pm: Kevin Kirby (D)

### Saturday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> (Blessing of Throats)

8:00 am:  
12:15 pm: Josephine Mancini (D)  
4:00 pm: Jimmy Quinn (D)

### Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup>

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