



Pastoral Letter on *Fiducia Supplicans*

January 5, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the debate and furor surrounding the release of *Fiducia Supplicans* on December 18, 2023 by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Church leaders on all levels need to clearly affirm our rich magisterial teaching regarding the gift and sanctity of marriage, as the Lord constituted it from the beginning of the human race. The sinful nature of any human sexual expression outside of a valid marriage remains the case, for any such expression falls short of what the Lord intends for us as embodied human persons, both in our sexual complementarity and fertility. Therefore, any blessing offered by a minister of the Church cannot sanction or be interpreted as sanctioning a sinful situation.

I would suggest that this moment of such intense debate over the meaning of pastoral blessings gives all of us an opportunity to go deeper in our concern and outreach to individuals who are living in irregular/sinful relationships. Transcending the vexed question of whether to offer a blessing to such a person/couple or not is the more important need to engage such persons in conversation, prayer, support and accompaniment, towards an understanding and living of the Church's beautiful and necessary teachings on sexuality and marriage. Offering someone a blessing or not does not truly get to the heart of the matter at hand. Can we invite, engage, and befriend folks who are not living according to the doctrines of the Church, in order to allow the Holy Spirit to move them in a different and saving direction? Giving or withholding a blessing in a spontaneous moment are easy and immediate responses which require little from us, whereas pastoral engagement, evangelization and catechesis are long-term commitments to the happiness and salvation of our brothers and sisters.

A goal of our diocesan Go Make Disciples initiative is certainly the engagement and evangelization of people who live in relationships which are contrary to Church teaching. How do we actually do that, unless we take the time and effort to know such persons, to build a friendship of trust and to share the good news of the Catholic Church's teachings on marriage, family and sexuality? Could such outreach and conversations be a priority for all of us in this new year? Who are the people in our lives who could truly benefit from our loving and honest spiritual engagement? The Church's teachings are truly good news, and we want everyone to know the joy, peace, and fulfillment of living as the Lord desires.

Yours in Christ,

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