



Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Rockford

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Dear Monsignor/Father,

On Monday, December 18th, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a Declaration entitled *Fiducia Supplicans*. That Declaration addresses the pastoral meaning of blessings.

Fiducia Supplicans states that blessings can be given in formal established liturgical moments. But they can also be spontaneous pastoral moments “such as during a visit to a shrine, a meeting with a priest, a prayer recited in a group or during a pilgrimage.” (FS, N. 40). Drawing from the teaching of Pope Francis, the Declaration highlights the nature of any request for a blessing as “expressing a petition for God’s assistance, a plea to live better and confidence in a Father who can help us live better.” (FS, N. 21).

The Declaration touches upon situations involving those involved in extra-marital unions, be they heterosexual or homosexual. It reaffirms the faith and teaching of the Gospel that marriage is the “exclusive, stable and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to the generation of children.” (FS, N. 4). No blessing can be given that might contradict this conviction or lead to confusion. (FS, N. 5). Consequently, the Church cannot confer its blessing when that would offer moral legitimacy to unions presuming to be marriage or those involving extra-marital sexual practice. (FS 11 and Francis, *Respuestas a los Dubia propuestos por dos Cardinales*, Q.2E).

The Declaration affirms, however, that anyone can spontaneously seek from an ordained minister an informal blessing as a means of reaching out for God’s mercy and for the strength to move forward, to live better and to respond to the Lord’s will. (Cf. FS, N. 20). Such an informal blessing would be in response to the desire to draw closer to God and to the Church and could not be understood as legitimizing what is sinful. Such a blessing may never be given liturgically and so should only be done informally and in a manner that avoids both scandal and confusion (FS, N. 30).

In this way, the Declaration reminds us, “not only by charity, example, and works of penance but also by prayer does the ecclesial community exercise a true maternal function in bringing souls to Christ.” (FS, N. 42). The full Declaration can be found on the Vatican website:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dof_doc_20231218_fiducia-supplicans_en.html

With prayerful best wishes and thanks for your priestly ministry, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford