



## Newsletter – March 2024

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### Clarification on the Latest Vatican Declaration “On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings”

With reference to media reports on the Vatican’s recent Declaration “On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings”, approved by Pope Francis, the Archdiocese wishes to correct the misimpression that the Church has changed its stance on its traditional doctrine about marriage.

His Eminence, Cardinal William Goh, wishes to point out that “the focus of the Declaration is not on the blessing of the unions of same-sex couples. Rather, **it provides guidance in making a distinction between the Church’s official blessings, and a pastoral blessing for all occasions outside the liturgical and sacramental setting.** Unlike the official blessings of the church, which require the use of approved prayers in addition to conditions to be met, pastoral blessings are ad-lib prayers offered spontaneously for the person.”

His Eminence emphasises that the Church “wants everyone, without exemption, to receive God’s blessings for good health, loving relationships, financial security, and most of all their spiritual growth in understanding, discerning, and accepting the will of God in their lives as taught in scripture and by the Church. We hope that through encountering God’s love and mercy, they will be transformed by His grace and become the person that God has meant them to be.”

Hence, he clarifies that “We are not blessing the unions of same-sex couples. We are blessing couples who are in irregular situations such as those who are divorced and remarried, individuals struggling to be faithful to God’s commandments, and those who aborted their babies, just as we bless the sick, the elderly, and those who request spiritual and temporal blessings. We do not bless the sins of the person, but rather, the individual who is always loved by God, even when he or she is a sinner.”

Indeed, the document notes in particular that those who ask for a blessing show themselves “to be in need of God’s saving presence” in their lives by expressing “a petition for God’s assistance, a plea to live better.”

This Declaration, therefore, rather than endorsing the blessing of irregular marriages and same-sex unions, sets out the rules and boundaries for priests as to how they should bless these couples without having these blessings mistaken by others as the Church's approval of such unions.

Instead, this Declaration is the Church's way of showing mercy, love, and compassion for those struggling through difficult situations and coming to terms with the demands of the Gospel. It is a prayer for these people – that they will come to know that truth is love, without which, love is compromised, and that there will be peace in their lives only when love and truth meet.

We are grateful that the Holy Father has authorised this Declaration so that Church ministers will not act in a way that gives others the wrong impression that the Church endorses same-sex unions. At the same time, it shows the Church's mercy and love for all sinners, and that we are all sinners endeavouring to grow in authenticity and perfection.

We further advise the faithful to be aware of media headlines and articles that may sensationalise official documents released by the Church, and to refer instead to the original source of the content, or one close to it, for accurate representation.

To understand the official position of the Church on this matter, we encourage you to read the original [Declaration Fiducia supplicans \(On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings\)](#) in full and a [comprehensive article by Vatican News](#).

### See

1. What reactions did you have when you heard or read the Declaration Fiducia?
2. How did others around you react or respond to the declaration?
3. Were there further reactions from you and or those around you when the archdiocese of Singapore sent the clarification to the media?

### Judge

1. How does this declaration affect you, your understanding, your faith in any way?
2. How might you be able to explain your understanding of the declaration to people around you? Your own family? Your friends?

## **Act**

1. How do you give/ share blessings to others (your family, your friends, your neighbours)?
2. How do we exercise charity to those who belong to the faithful, in particular couples in irregular situations and same-sex couples?