

HOM 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday 2024 B Jan 14

The most recent Vatican document, *Fiducia Supplicans*, “*Trustful Supplications*”, allows for the blessing of same sex partners under certain conditions. The response to the document has been divided. For example, the bishops of Germany and France and some individual prelates around the world have heartily welcomed it and embraced it. Bishops throughout the continent of Africa, however, have roundly criticized it and in some countries such as Cameroon, they have explicitly prohibited their clergy from imparting such blessings. Our own bishop has issued a directive that priests in the Diocese of Greensburg must first consult him before taking any action to bless persons in same sex unions.

While I would, of course, absolutely obey Bishop Kulick in this matter, I have given some thought to the type of blessing I would propose using with his permission. It would be something like this. First, it would be done privately, out of view and earshot of anyone, in order to avoid scandal, and I would pray: “*May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for Whom all things are possible, come down upon you and grant you perfect chastity in your relationship with each other and give you purity of heart at all times. Amen.*”

I don’t think people would line up asking for this blessing. However, it is similar to the one suggested in the Vatican Document as a sample. The Vatican sample blessing reads: “*Lord, look at these children of yours, grant them health, work, peace, and mutual help. Free them from everything that contradicts your Gospel and allow them to live according to your will. Amen.*”

The main difference between the blessing I have proposed and the Vatican’s sample blessing is that the Vatican’s blessing avoids any explicit reference to sexual morality as a Gospel commandment that is clearly God’s will. Chastity proper to one’s state of being single or married is indeed one of God’s rules for how are to live in order to share in His Blessedness. The silence about this is, I think, the underlying reason for the widespread objections to *Fiducia Supplicans*. It fails to uphold the longstanding maxim, ‘*Love the sinner; hate the sin*’ because it does not plainly disapprove of the sin, and instead, seems to offer assent to it by not definitively calling for chastity as taught in the *Catholic Catechism* where it states:

Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection. (2359)

They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided....(They) are called to fulfill God’s will in their lives, and if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition. (2358)

Today’s second reading of Sacred Scripture applies to all this. In it, St. Paul is very emphatic about avoiding bodily immorality. He even says that it is a special category of sin because while all others sins are outside of the body, sexual immorality, in all its forms, is against a person’s own body which is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Likewise sinful, is bodily mutilation, especially when done to change one’s gender. We are to glorify God in our bodies, and this, St. Paul says, begins with overcoming and avoiding sexual immorality, and now in our day, would also include avoiding the sin of transgenderism.

Bodily morality would even include how we dress. I remember one time when I was about 10 years old, I came home from Crystal Pool in Fayette City in my swimming trunks and T-shirt, and decided to take a ride on my bike dressed that way. As I bicycled down Elwell Street I felt overwhelming shame for what seemed to me like immodest dress; swimming trunks were OK for swimming but not in other places. So,

I turned around, went home, and changed into my regular summer shorts, then cycled down the street again to see if any other kids wanted to play some ball or do something.

That sense of shame that I had was the voice of my conscience. It was the voice of the sisters in the Catholic School I attended who taught me about modesty in dress. It was the voice of my parents, especially my Mom, telling me to always dress properly. And most of all it was the voice of God.

Bishop Robert Barron, in his homily for today, sees God's calling of Samuel in our first reading as like the voice of our conscience. Young Samuel had to be taught by Eli the priest to be attentive to God's voice and to heed it. He told young Samuel that when the Lord calls on him he should respond by saying: *"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."*

Young people today need to be taught what is pleasing to God and what His rules are for our true good, even when it comes to modesty in dress. Like Samuel they need to be taught to be attentive to God's voice – the voice of conscience -- and to heed it. Would that young women today wearing spandex tights in public, be attentive to the voice of God and of Our Blessed Mother and feel like I felt wearing my swimming trunks cycling down the street.

Would that all adults, attentive to the voice of God, would seek purity in thought, word, and deed in all their relationships, and within marriage, would preserve the chastity that is proper to it, including openness to life in all conjugal acts, using Natural Family Planning when appropriate.

This attentiveness to God's will, God's voice, is also what fosters religious vocations. That's what prompted Andrew and the other disciple of John the Baptist to follow Jesus in our Gospel reading when John said to them *"Behold the Lamb of God"* as Jesus walked by. Andrew then got his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus, who looked at him, and said. *"You are Simon...you will be called Cephas i.e., Peter."*

We can all heed the voice of Jesus -- Who commands us to love one another as He has loved us. We can do this by learning to offer ourselves to the Father's will with Him in praise, thanksgiving, and loving obedience unto the Cross and Resurrection for the true good of self and others – for their good health and good intentions and especially for their sanctification and salvation. By doing this, we will help ourselves and others to live chastely and to live by God's will in all other ways, such as by accepting a call to priesthood or consecrated religious life, or by laying down our lives in some other form of service.

By doing this, we will also be heeding the Word of God as He speaks to us in the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans (12: 1) where Paul writes: *"I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship."* In doing this we will be conformed to Jesus and not to this present age. We will be doing, as St Paul says, *"what is good and pleasing and perfect"* (Rom 12: 2), and helping others to do so. We can commit and re-commit to this with each Holy Communion by praying these words silently and sincerely and striving to live by them in-between: I AM ALL YOURS O MOST LOVING JESUS THROUGH MARY YOUR MOTHER WITH THE HELP OF ST. JOSEPH.