

*Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!*

December 21, 2023

To the Faithful in the Archdiocese of San Antonio,

*Fiducia Supplicans* (FS), *On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings*, issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) on December 18, highlights the rich tradition of the Church in offering pastoral blessings. Scripture itself cites blessings of various types.

Blessings, as stated in the declaration, are celebrated by virtue of faith and are ordered to the praise of God and the spiritual benefit of his people: “*To seek a blessing in the Church is to acknowledge that the life of the Church springs from the womb of God’s mercy and helps us to move forward, to live better, and to respond to the Lord’s will*” (FS 20). It was issued to respond to Pope Francis’ proposal to develop a broader understanding of blessings (FS 13).

While this declaration remains firm on the perennial doctrine of the Church regarding marriage, and ensures that blessings to those in irregular unions or same-sex couples are not to be mistaken for a sacrament or liturgical rite, it affirms what the Church has done for centuries: offering pastoral blessings to those who seek closeness to God and the assurance of his love and accompaniment.

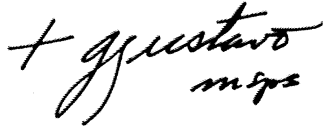
As stated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB): “*The Declaration issued today by the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) articulated a distinction between liturgical (sacramental) blessings, and pastoral blessings, which may be given to persons who desire God’s loving grace in their lives. The Church’s teaching on marriage has not changed, and this declaration affirms that, while also making an effort to accompany people through the imparting of pastoral blessings because each of us needs God’s healing love and mercy in our lives*”.

This declaration should not invoke scandal nor confusion for the people of God. It is issued to ensure that all of God’s children know they are loved and accepted. Ask any priest and they will share how often people seek a spontaneous and informal blessing from them. It is one of the many joys of priesthood! Those requesting such blessings seek God’s closeness, healing, and strength. Therefore, the declaration is quite specific in noting that such blessings are never offered in concurrence with the ceremonies of a civil union or in connection with them, nor are they given with any vestments or words proper to a sacrament or a liturgical rite.

Read *Fiducia Supplicans* ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)). Do not allow others to interpret for you what might very well be a misinterpretation. As found in the introduction: “*This Declaration is ... intended as a tribute to the faithful People of God, who worship the Lord with so many gestures of deep trust in his mercy and who, with this confidence, constantly come to seek a blessing from Mother Church*”.

May we be enriched by the blessings Christ offers us through his Church. I impart my blessings upon all of you.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gustavo" on the top line and "MSpS" on the bottom line. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MSpS  
*Archdiocese of San Antonio*