

DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Surreal communiqué on *Fiducia supplicans*, Tucho is a disgrace

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No, we are not on Candid Camera; nor are we facing the operation of a prankster hacker. Yet, this is the impression gained from reading yesterday's surreal [press release](#) which bears the signature of Cardinal Victor M. Fernández and Msgr. Armando Matteo,

Prefect and secretary of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith; this time without any ex audientia on the part of the Pope. The communiqué circulated with the hypothetical objective of "helping to clarify the reception of **Fiducia supplicans**" instead achieves the certain consequence of confusing the faithful even more, further humiliating the Catholic Church and totally ridiculing the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

One has to sit down, take deep breaths and have ammonium carbonate on hand, before reading it, in case one feels faint. Faced with the uprising of numerous bishops' conferences on the peripheries of the Church, to which it would be ridiculous to address the convenient accusation of not being pastoral, Tucho attempts to backtrack, while at the same time trying not to displease those bishops, clearly concentrated in the German-speaking area, who in turn are far from willing to obey a 'countermand, comrades'!

Tucho resembles those learner drivers (sometimes not quite 'learners') who want to park a car that is too long in a space that is too small, and who, engaged in continuous manoeuvres, eventually manage to crash both in front and behind!

And in fact, faced with the African bishops, who do not want to hear about the unions of irregular or homosexual couples, and faced with the Germans, who instead want to bless exactly those couples, Fernández manages to write in black on white a masterpiece of contradiction. In section 2 (Practical reception), he writes (bold ours): "The Declaration contains a proposal for **short and simple pastoral blessings** (neither liturgical nor ritualised) of **couples in irregular situations** (but not of their unions)". In section 4 (The real novelty of the document) he states exactly the opposite: "The real novelty of this Declaration, the one that requires a generous effort of reception and from which no one should declare themselves excluded, is **not the possibility of blessing couples in irregular situations**". So, the proposal is to bless irregular couples, but the novelty of the document is not to bless irregular couples. Does it make sense? Not at all!

So what explanations could possibly justify this delirium? Hypothesis 1: Fernández suffers from some conflict with logic; hypothesis 2: the two paragraphs were written by different authors, who had each understood the 'very clear' Declaration in their own way (and obviously there was no final revision); hypothesis 3: the first statement was written in the document addressed to the German bishops, the second in the one addressed to the African bishops, but in the end some under-secretary put it all together. Any other ideas?

In any case, we now find ourselves in the paradoxical situation whereby not only

has the dicastery contradicted itself in two different documents (Responsum of 2021 and FS Declaration), but even in the same document. And since there is no end to misery, we await a forthcoming 'Clarification Note on the FS Declaration', in which the contradiction is also highlighted in the same paragraph.

The second tragicomic aspect of this comical Communiqué lies in Tucho's attempt to "distinguish between two different forms of blessings: 'liturgical or ritualised' and 'spontaneous or pastoral'". Note the "explanation": "Since some have raised the question of what these blessings might look like, let us look at a concrete example: let us imagine that in the midst of a large pilgrimage a divorced couple in a new union say to the priest: "Please give us a blessing, we cannot find work, he is very ill, we have no home, life is becoming very difficult: may God help us!". Before we get to the 'solution', let us remind the reader that this is neither an off-the-cuff interview with Tucho, nor a letter explaining 'pastoral blessings' to nursery children, but an official document from a Dicastery of the Roman Curia.

So, "in this case, the priest can recite a simple prayer like this: 'Lord, look upon 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'. And he concludes with the sign of the cross on each of the two persons. Something that lasts about 10 or 15 seconds'. Perhaps depending on the language spoken. But, does it make sense? No! The pastoral blessing is a quick blessing, a Speedy Gonzales version of a blessing: 10-15 seconds, no more.

Therefore, according to the Dicastery, the difference between the two blessings lies in the fact that 'they are blessings in a few seconds, without Ritual and without Blessing'. But the time taken, as well as the "scenic apparatus" that should not make one think of a wedding, or the place where these blessings are given, do not concern the essence, what a blessing is, but accidental elements. And therefore, the pastoral blessing, being a blessing, is a sacramental to all intents and purposes, no more and no less than the ritual or liturgical blessing. And it is precisely for this reason that it is not possible to bless an irregular or homosexual couple; and thus FS falls into open contradiction with the Responsum and the logic of a sacramental.

Moreover, the alleged distinction between union and couple is simply specious. Never, in fact, in the text is the term couple used as a synonym for couple (similar discourse for other translations: couple and not pair, couple and not paire), which would allow one to think of the simple fact that it is two persons who present themselves, not necessarily united by sexual ties. It goes without saying that, in the case of two

homosexual persons, it is not even possible to speak of 'couple', since couple requires sexual complementarity.

But, as if that were not enough, Tucho manages to confuse the ideas even more and prove to the world that the Declaration is a hodgepodge of contradictions. Immediately after the sample oration in the Press Release, we find written: "And he [the minister] concludes with the sign of the cross *on each of the two*" (italics ours). To recapitulate: according to the Communiqué, FS proposes the pastoral blessing of irregular couples; immediately afterwards, however, it states that it is not a question of blessing the irregular couples; and at the end, it asks to bless each of the two. So each one individually. But what was the need to make a document to say that the priest can bless individuals, even if two, three or a hundred present themselves?

One wonders, then, with what courage Tucho, faced with the reactions to this document, admits "different ways of applying it, but not a total or definitive denial of this course being proposed to priests"; with what pretence he demands "due respect for a text signed and approved by the Supreme Pontiff himself, seeking in some way to accommodate the reflection contained therein". The first person to disrespect a document that bears the Pope's signature is himself, displaying a total inability to achieve simple logical coherence and an even more marked theological incompetence. What assent can he demand from the faithful if one does not even understand what one is supposed to assent to? Couples yes, couples no, couples, but one at a time: Fernández is humiliating the Church before the eyes of the whole world and justice and respect would like him to be removed from the post of Prefect of the DDF. As soon as possible.