

S E Y M O U R I N S T I T U T E  
F O R B L A C K C H U R C H A N D P O L I C Y S T U D I E S

O N *F I D U C I A S U P P L I C A N S*

Beloved Pope Francis, our dear Brother:

May Jesus Christ be greatly praised!

We, your black Pentecostal brothers in the United States, standing in solidarity with our Catholic brothers in Africa and the diaspora, greet you in the spirit of Paul approaching Peter. Consistent with the Lord's word of instruction through the prophet Micah, to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, we are compelled to both condemn your decision to bless homosexual unions and commend your recent denunciation of the egregious violence carried out by Hamas on Oct 7 and now being continued by the nation of Israel in Gaza.

According to the 2020 edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, there are 230 million Pentecostals in Africa and perhaps as many as 554 million people of color worldwide who are Pentecostals. As black American Pentecostals we identify with our brothers in Africa and black and brown Pentecostals around the world as we speak out.

We are in complete agreement with the Roman Catholic Bishops of Cameroon, when they affirm "the sacredness of the sexual identity of man and woman created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), [and] the dignity of their sexuality and of marriage which is the foundation of the family." Furthermore, we agree that, "The human person is created male and female: 'Male and female he created them' (Gen. 1 :26). This immutable difference which is the foundation of their relationship and

complementarity, is fulfilled in the bonds of marriage.” The bishops are right when they conclude that “to speak well of a homosexual couple by an act of blessing would be to encourage a choice and lifestyle that cannot be recognized as objectively ordered to God’s revealed purposes.”

Therefore, it is with alarm and anguish that we received the document *Fiducia Supplicans*. It is not that what is stated therein about the blessing of same sex couples—we note that it is *couples*, not individuals—directly and explicitly contradicts the truths of the Holy Bible. Rather, it is that the message conveyed by the authorization of the blessing of *couples* whose sinful conduct is central to their relationship is easily interpreted in ways that contradict the biblical principle of the complementarity of male and female. The decision is already almost universally being interpreted as approving the blessing of sexual sin; indeed, it invites the inference that it was meant to be interpreted thus.

We are well aware, dear Brother, that the document explicitly states that Christian teaching on marriage and the reservation of sexual activity to husband and wife is in no way altered. And we thank God for that. And yet, we cannot but observe that by authorizing the blessing of two men precisely as *partners* (i.e., as a “couple”) in a same-sex relationship, there is a recognition of the validity of the partnership—a partnership that is, on the “couple’s” own self-understanding, sexual. (Were it otherwise, the participants would be presenting themselves and requesting a blessing not as a *couple*, but merely as friends.)

Lest you suppose, beloved Peter, that we misunderstand the document or propose an unreasonable construal of it, we note that Fr. James Martin, SJ, a high profile priest of the Catholic Church who ministers to what it pleases him to call the “LGBTQ community,” and who welcomes *Fiducia Supplicans* as a development of Catholic teaching in the direction of honoring same-sex sexual partnerships, *interprets and understands the teaching of the document exactly as we do*. The

difference is that Fr. Martin approves same-sex sexual partnerships and desires that the Church of Jesus Christ recognize and honor them; we, in the name of the Holy Bible and our Lord Jesus Christ, most emphatically disapprove of homosexual conduct and relationships that are centered on such conduct.

However, even as we strongly disagree with *Fiducia Supplicans*, we must, as the sons of the great Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, join you in condemning the terrorist actions of both Hamas and Israel in their current conflict in the Middle East. We agree that both sides have been guilty of terrorism, especially in the murders committed at Holy Family Parish in Gaza. As Dr. King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Like him, we act on the exhortation of the prophet Amos, "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" So, we join you in calling for peace in that region as soon as possible. Indeed, we call for a cease fire and for exponentially increased humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people.

We therefore humbly request in the name of the Lord Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, tomorrow, and forever, that you, Peter, withdraw *Fiducia Supplicans* and abrogate its recognition of same-sex sexual partnerships and its authorization of the blessing of such partnerships or any other type of disordered relationship.

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