

Look Who Likes Same-Sex Blessings

Catholic Dissident Groups

Catholics for Choice

Catholics for Choice president Jamie L. Manson, who is a lesbian, said, "Today's announcement from Pope Francis that Catholic priests are now allowed to bless same-sex couples is stunning and historic. While some priests have been secretly blessing same-sex unions for years, to now be able to do it publicly—with backing from the pope's teaching—will be transformative for advancing LGBTQIA+ visibility and inclusion."

DignityUSA

Marianne Duddy-Burke, a "married" lesbian and executive director of DignityUSA, said, "This is going to be remembered as a historic day in the movement towards full equality and affirmation of LGBTQ+ people in our church." She went on to emphasize that this was not the "end point" of the "long journey towards full equality and full affirmation." She went on to say, "It feels like another window in the church has been opened, while we're still waiting for the doors to be thrown wide."

In an op-ed for the *Boston Globe*, Duddy-Burke wrote, "Even with the acknowledgment that this statement falls far short of the ultimate goal of full equality and affirmation of LGBTQ people in the church, this is an important moment for our community, our families, and our church."

National Catholic Reporter

Christopher White, Vatican reporter for the *National Catholic Reporter*, said, "While the Vatican's declaration is very narrow in scope, it represents a tremendous development in both the church's teaching and practice, likely the most concrete pastoral shift on the church's stance toward gay couples in the church's 2,000-year history."

NETWORK

Sr. Simone Campbell issued a statement saying, "The Vatican's shift towards inclusivity and acceptance is a welcome change. It is through love and compassion that we can truly live out the teachings of Jesus and build a more just and inclusive church."

New Ways Ministry

Jeannine Gramick said, "This is the hope that so many Catholic lesbian and gay couples that I know have had. And now their hope is materialized."

Francis DeBernardo of New Ways Ministry said, "The significance of this news cannot be overstated....[T]o say that people should not be subjected to 'an exhaustive moral analysis' to receive God's love and mercy is an even more significant step."

Brian Flanagan, a gay Catholic theologian and senior fellow at New Ways Ministry said, "It's a big, small step forward." He notes, though, that "some of the headlines ran too far too fast because it's a very specific and limited declaration."

We Are Church

Ursula Halligan of We are Church called it "a small step in the right direction." However, she described conditions placed on same-sex couples as "mean, stingy, and grudging." She believes the Vatican "will keep tying itself in knots until it faces core issues around the person and human sexuality."

American Catholic Clergy

Cardinal Blaise Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, issued a statement declaring, "The Declaration is a step forward, and in keeping not only with Pope Francis's desire to accompany people pastorally but Jesus's desire to be present to all people who desire grace and support."

Fr. James Martin said, "The Vatican's new declaration 'Fiducia supplicans' is a major step forward in the church's ministry to LGBTQ people and recognizes the deep desire in many Catholic same-sex couples for God's presence in their loving relationships. It is also a marked shift from the conclusion 'God does not and cannot bless sin' from just two years ago. The declaration opens the door to non-liturgical blessings for same-sex couples, something that had been previously off limits for bishops, priests and deacons."

Fordham University professor Fr. Bryan Massingale said, "This decision by Pope Francis is a significant step towards creating a more welcoming and accepting church. It recognizes the inherent dignity of LGBTQ+ individuals and sends a powerful message of love and inclusivity."

Western Europe

Austria

Austrian Bishop Josef Marketz of the Diocese of Gurk said he was "happy and grateful" for the document and called it "an important step for an open Church."

Archbishop Franz Lackner of Salzburg and president of the Austrian Bishop's Conference told the nation's public broadcasting network that priests "can no longer say no" when asked by any couple for a blessing.

Belgium

Antwerp's Bishop Johan Bonny, who encouraged participants in Germany's synodal way to endorse a resolution on same-sex blessings, said the declaration "helps us move forward."

Geert De Kerpel, spokesman for the Flemish bishops—who published a text for same-sex blessings in 2022—said, "This is a very big breakthrough because it comes from the highest body of the Church and because it also explicitly says that same-sex couples can therefore have the blessing."

France

Archbishop Hervé Giraud of Sens-Auxerre said, "Pope Francis is trying to move away from the simple 'allowed-prohibited' to place people under God's gaze in order to lead them back to safer paths. A blessing opens these safer paths."

Germany

Bishop Georg Bätzing, Chairman of the German Bishops' Conference, issued a statement saying, "The practice of the Church recognizes a variety of forms of blessing. It is good that this treasure for the diversity of lifestyles is now being unearthed."

Anja Karliczek, president of the Catholic German Women's Federation, called the decision a signal in favor of more diversity and tolerance in the Church.

Mechthild Heil, federal chairwoman of the German Association of Catholic Women called it a "good, but also long overdue step."

Irme Stetter-Karp, the President of the Central Committee of German Catholics, said, "The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is doing something that we can only welcome," adding, "Now, finally, attention can be given through blessing - thank God!"

Gregor Podschun, the federal chairman of the Federation of German Catholic Youth, commented that "it's a step in the right direction that was long overdue." However, he believes the declaration can only be a first step, noting that "the text from Rome also continues to contain an attitude and theology that is discriminatory and anti-queer."

Ireland

Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin issued a statement declaring priests could not refuse to bless same-sex couples. He said, "Prudence and attention to ecclesial context and to local culture" could allow or different types of blessings, but not for "a total or definitive denial."

Spain

Cardinal José Cobo of Madrid said, "We are going to fully apply the Pope's doctrine, and that is why we are going to apply 'Fiducia supplicans' with the intensity that the document deserves and asks for." He went on to admonish the priests in the diocese declaring their actions to be "more driven by ideology and respond more to pressure groups that are not Catholic."

Raul Pena, a spokesman for Crismhom, Madrid's main Catholic LGBTQ+ association, said, "If the priest from your town talks about gays being the devil in his sermons each Sunday, which some priests do, now you have the pope signing a document saying that homosexuals who live as a couple can be blessed. It's a fundamental step for those hierarchies and for those people who are in places where being LGBT is difficult."

United Kingdom

The group LGBT+ Catholics Westminster in London, England, said, "This is a massive step forward in the recognition and acceptance of all who seek a blessing for their loving and committed relationships."

LGBT Activists and Media

Human Rights Campaign

The Human Rights Campaign called it "an important step in achieving visibility and acceptance, particularly in places that have long been at the center of isolation, exclusion and rejection for the LGBTQ+ community."

HRC spokesperson Aryn Fields mentioned there was still much work to be done, adding, "it is encouraging to see the Pope come forward in support of inclusion for same-sex couples and reaffirm the belief that LGBTQ+ people belong within the faith they practice."

GLAAD

Sarah Kate Ellis, GLAAD President and CEO, issued a statement saying, "By removing barriers to priests blessing LGBTQ couples, the Pope accurately recognizes that LGBTQ people and our relationships are worthy of the same affirmation and support in the Church, and this strengthens couples in their faith and to the community."

LGBT Network of NY

David Klimnick, the founder of the NY LGBT Network, said, "It's on the positive side of things, but it still has a long way to go so that LGBT has the same access to celebrations, rituals as our heterosexual friends and family."

San Diego Pride

Jen LaBarbera, interim co-executive director of San Diego Pride, said, "It's a really amazing step, it is just that, it's a step, but it is one in what's been a long and slow line of very small steps that we've seen coming from the Vatican...."

The Advocate

John Casey, a senior editor, notes, "To some, Francis hasn't gone far enough. To others, like me, a lifelong Catholic, his words and missives have been like a bolt of lightning, electrifying a church that has been dormant and dismissive, more worried about exclusion and less about welcoming."

Ryan Adamczeski, a reporter, writes, "Most recently, the pope made a landmark decision in approving blessings for same-sex couples. While it's not the same as marriage — therefore [it's] not truly equal...."

LGBTQ Nation

Greg Owen, a reporter, notes, "In a major development for Catholic LGBTQ+ couples, Pope Francis has approved the blessing of same-sex unions...for the very first time."

Pink News (U.K.)

Ali Condon, a reporter, writes, "Through this declaration, signed by Pope Francis, same-sex couples can now have their unions blessed by the church — through [sic] the blessings may not resemble a marriage rite and will not legitimize same-sex relationships in the church's view. While LGBTQ+ rights within the church are far from perfect, this Vatican ruling is the latest in a number of changes made by Pope Francis...."

Washington Blade (Washington D.C.)

Michael Vazquez wrote in an op-ed, "For decades LGBTQ Catholics labored and organized for change, and now we breathe the rare air of those who taste the fruits of laboring for justice. This moment is the inheritance of a legacy of queer Catholic organizers unrelentingly committed to the possibility of hope."

Bay Area Reporter (San Francisco)

Rev. Jim Mitulski, an openly gay pastor in the United Church of Christ, wrote in an op-ed, "Francis performed a minor miracle by giving permission to priests to bless same-sex relationships. The church has always allowed for the blessing of people, places, and things. But never before has it acknowledged the potential blessings of honoring same-sex love."

MEDIA

New York Times

Maureen Dowd opines, "The declaration—'Fiducia Supplicans'—seems like a narrow gesture, designed to be delivered in a furtive way.... If the pope wants to move beyond the suffocating stranglehold and hypocrisy of the conservative cardinals so the church survives and grows, he must be bolder."

Slate

Molly Olmstead writes, "There's no evidence that the pope had a major epiphany or change of heart....The declaration this week emphasized that priests cannot bless couples in official liturgical settings or in any way that could be mistaken for officiating a marriage. The church still doesn't condone same-sex relationships....Still, for the Catholic Church, it's an extraordinary gesture, and one Francis knew would infuriate his conservative opposition."

Salon

Joy Saha notes, "Despite its limitations, the recent announcement marks a significant change of stance for the Catholic church."

Washington Post

David Von Drehle, deputy opinion editor, opines that "the path of inclusion has led him to a place where American Catholics stand ready to greet him. Support in the pews for same-sex marriage has grown robustly, like the winds of Pentecost, over the past generation. The spirit of tolerance and the sharing of grace are alive among the people of the church, and regardless of whether they are listening to the pope, at last a pope is listening to them."

CNN

In a column for CNN, Celia Wexler writes, "Maybe the pope thinks that this is getting the camel's nose into the tent. But if I were in a same-sex union, I wouldn't be all that pleased by this grudging concession."

The Guardian

Matt Cain wrote in an op-ed, "Well, you can stick your blessing, Pope Francis. It's a fig leaf, a PR exercise, a means of laundering your prejudice to make it seem like a step towards acceptance."

Chicago Sun-Times

The editorial board notes, "While this major shift in church doctrine is welcome, it's sad that same-sex couples still will be treated differently. They can't be married in the Catholic church, and they can't receive this kind of blessing in connection with a civil marriage ceremony — rules that continue to stigmatize and marginalize gay and lesbian Catholics."

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

The editorial board commented, "the limitations of the declaration are significant. The Catholic Church remains an institution that will not officially recognize unions that don't adhere to rigid and exclusionary definitions of legitimate marriage."

Mother Jones

Katie Herchenroeder, a fellow at Mother Jones, writes, "The message here from the Vatican...is that although the church still thinks that individuals engaging in extramarital sex and 'irregular' unions are living in sin, those individuals should not be barred from having a relationship with God."

San Antonio Express

The editorial board commented that homosexual Catholics have "been shunned by their own church, made to feel unworthy of God's blessings, and instructed that in order to avoid a sinful life, they must either pretend to be straight or opt for celibacy....That's why Monday's announcement from the Vatican was such welcome news. Pope Francis granted his approval to Catholic priests blessing same-sex couples....In a way, it's only a small step."