

PROTESTNOTE

from the Initiative Neuer Anfang on the
'Guidelines ... for the practice of blessing ...',

Homepage of the German Bishops' Conference
dated 23 April 2025

Pope Francis has not yet been buried, nor has his successor been appointed, and yet we feel compelled to draw the attention of the universal Church once again to the local Church in Germany. On 23 April 2025, two days after the passing of our Holy Father, a 'Guidance for Pastoral Ministers on the Practice of Blessing Couples Not Married in the Church' behind which stands a 'Joint Conference of Members of the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK)'. The text gives the impression of being an official directive. Although it claims to be a non-binding guide, in fact it aims to legitimise a practice with episcopal approval. This is being done in the name of bishops who are apparently not prepared to stand by this regulation with their names. This is happening on an issue that sparked worldwide debate after the publication of 'Fiducia supplicans'. This document was obviously already finished and waiting in a drawer. They were probably just waiting for the Pope to die and for the interregnum to begin in order to take advantage of the weakened ecclesiastical legal authority and introduce precisely what was expressly prohibited in *Fiducia supplicans* (FS). It states that, beyond *Fiducia supplicans*, 'no further answers should be given on possible ways of regulating details or practical aspects relating to blessings of this kind' (FS 41). The guidelines contradict this instruction. They thus undermine the authority of the Church in an unacceptable manner.

FS distinguishes between everyday blessings and liturgical blessings. A spontaneous blessing, such as that given by parents to their children when they leave the house, may (and must) also be given by a priest to people who 'ask that everything that is true, good and humanly valid in their lives and relationships be enriched, healed and elevated by the presence of the Holy Spirit' (FS 31). This blessing is a discreet interpersonal gesture; it is unspecific, takes place without ritual, without conditions and without inquisitorial questions about the respective circumstances of life. It is a prayer for helping grace for the good (*bene dictio*). This is to be distinguished from the public liturgical act of blessing, in which people in 'irregular situations' (AL 301) might seek 'legitimation for their own status.' (FS 31) The Church explicitly rejects such a liturgical act. The Church cannot – *lex orandi, lex credendi* – ritually 'pray well' or approve before the community what is described in Sacred Scripture (especially Rom 1) as a sign of a creation that has fallen away from the truth. Therefore, the blessing 'must not become a liturgical or semi-liturgical act resembling a sacrament.' (FS 36) And it must not be given within the context of a liturgical service. (FS 23). 'Therefore, the blessing of couples in irregular situations should neither be promoted nor provided for in a

ritual, but neither should the Church prevent or prohibit its proximity to any situation in which God's help is sought through a simple blessing.' (FS 38)

Now, in Germany, the creation of new rituals is being legitimised! People are being encouraged to create liturgies, practical advice is being given, and the legitimacy of church invitations to services is being insinuated, etc. In doing so, the present document presumes to speak for 'the Church'. It refers to decisions that are not binding on anyone. It distorts what the Church truly teaches. It presents itself as philanthropic, dresses itself in 'vestments of salvation,' speaks in pseudo-orthodox sophisms, and appropriates the deceased Pope for the opposite of his declared intentions. It coerces in a subtle way. It is indecent. It is a document of disobedience (supported by a number of German bishops). It shows the strategic brutality with which Rome disregards unity with the universal Church, undermines the teaching of the Church through new 'practices,' ingrains falsehood through habit, invites priests and pastors to commit liturgical abuse, and leads the faithful astray. No 'sacramental rite' can be 'changed or manipulated at the discretion of the minister or the community. Even the highest authority in the Church cannot change the liturgy at will, but only in obedience to faith and in reverence for the mystery of the liturgy.' (CCC 1125)

In memory of our late Pope Francis, who sought to combine mercy with unambiguous teaching, we formally protest against this irreverent act, against the manifest violation of canon law and against the ecclesiastical encroachment of German church officials. We are lodging an objection with the German Bishops' Conference and the competent authorities in Rome and demand the immediate withdrawal of this paper. Since the issue is also of interest to the universal Church, we are bringing it to the attention of bishops and church members throughout the world, as well as to the cardinals present at the conclave in Rome.

For the Initiative 'Neuer Anfang':

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