

Regular Irregularity

Or: how a Prefect of the Faith squares the circle

His Eminence, the Prefect of the Dicastery of the Faith, Víctor Manuel Fernández, responded this afternoon with a press release to the numerous forms of rejection that the document *Fiducia Supplicans* has provoked. Although further statements were initially ruled out in FS 41, a new statement, hereafter *StIn*, now deals with various key points of the original document in six sections. One thing is certain: there is now considerably more clarity for all sides as to what the dicastery actually wants to see permitted - although this does not seem to correspond with what FS itself states. "Within the horizon outlined here lies the possibility of blessings for couples in irregular situations." (No. 31) Now we read that the priest should pray in the blessing: "Lord, look upon these your children; [...] free them from everything that contradicts your gospel [...]" and then make the sign of the cross over each one individually (*StIn* No. 5). The question now arises: where is a couple being blessed here? Certainly, he is talking here about a couple in cohabitation, the so-called divorced and remarried, but such a blessing has always been possible for two people in need of help. The difference, for example, between the blessing over an engaged couple and the blessing described in the *StIn* lies in the object: in the first case, the two are blessed as a couple (qua their past and future union), in the second case as individuals despite their union.

After the first paragraph of the statement rejects any accusations of heterodoxy by citing various passages from FS, No. 4 deals with "what is actually new" in it: the new category of blessings, which H.E. Cardinal Müller places alongside the prayers or blessings in the sacraments on the one hand and the sacramentals on the other in his analysis. According to the FS, there is a difference between traditional, "liturgical or ritual" and "spontaneous or pastorally motivated" blessings. But a non-liturgical blessing is about as meaningful as a non-legal contract, in a word, a *contradictio in adjecto*. Liturgy always takes place where a cleric acts in the name of the church. But, if a priest does not give a blessing in the name of the Church, in whose name is he giving it? If the

accusation of heterodoxy is true, then it is precisely in the idea of such a separation of priestly and ecclesial activity. Note: A comparison with the blessing of parents over their child does not apply, since these blessings do not derive from the divine authority that Christ bestowed on His Church. They derive from the natural structure of the family, and they should actually be described as blessings in an analogous sense.

To sum up: the emphasis on the blessing of individuals, which has always been possible even in the context of liturgical blessings, regardless of the life situation, is welcome. But, stating that an “irregular” couple would be blessed, and then using a blessing formula explicitly only for individuals, is confusing. There is still a need for clarification here.

Maria 1.0 is an initiative of Catholics, especially young women, who live the one universal faith of the Church in different spiritualities. The initiative sees itself as a mouthpiece for all Catholics who profess the beauty and truth of the Catholic faith as formulated by the Magisterium of the Church and would like to make this faith known through the media.