



# DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**The Diocese of Grand Rapids' Office of Communications issues the following statement from Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak, bishop of Grand Rapids, in response to the publication of "Fiducia supplicans" issued by the Vatican.**

Christmas reminds us of God's unchanging, immeasurable love for us. Likewise, today's declaration, "Fiducia supplicans," reminds us that the Spirit is always drawing us closer to the Lord. Many people respond to that call by asking the Church's ordained ministers to offer a prayer to God for them with a blessing.

These spontaneous, private prayers and blessings are given routinely. They are nothing new. The declaration reaffirms an appropriate pastoral response to people who express a request for these prayers. "Pope Francis urges us to contemplate, with an attitude of faith and fatherly mercy, the fact that 'when one asks for a blessing, one is expressing a petition for God's assistance, a plea to live better, and confidence in a Father who can help us live better.'" (FC 21)

The declaration does not provide, nor does it allow, liturgical blessings (which are public, regulated, and formally approved by the Church) for couples in irregular situations and same-sex couples. It does, however, encourage private prayers for such persons seeking God's grace and the ability to follow him faithfully. "It is precisely in this context that one can understand the possibility of blessing couples in irregular situations and same-sex couples without officially validating their status or changing in any way the Church's perennial teaching on marriage." (FC Presentation) Pope Francis reminds us that these private blessings are "... simple gestures that provide an effective means of increasing trust in God on the part of the people who ask for them..." (FC 36) We should all stand ready to pray for one another and encourage greater confidence in God's merciful love.

*The Diocese of Grand Rapids serves more than 175,114 Catholics, 79 parishes and 31 schools in an 11-county area of West Michigan. For additional information visit our website [grdiocese.org](http://grdiocese.org). Connect with the diocese on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/DioceseofGrandRapids) (Diocese of Grand Rapids), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/GRDiocese) (@GRDiocese), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/GRDiocese) (@GRDiocese).*

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