

Same-Sex Blessings as Superstitions

[Michele McAloon](#)

This summer, my husband and I had the great pleasure of witnessing two of our three sons marry. As I scrambled to help my oldest son gather his sacramental documentation – not an easy feat for a kid who was baptized in California, made his First Communion in Azerbaijan, and was confirmed in Belgium – I realized **the walk to the marital altar is the result of a lifelong catechesis of word and deed.**

Nothing less should be expected of an institution meant to be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence in our human lives. Scripture reminds us that marriage is not a mere blessing, but the entering of a new reality created by God, Himself. **In the sacrament of marriage, Christ communicates His grace so that we can flourish in a world of love, family, and community – the places and situations where we are our best human selves.**

Blessings, sometimes called “sacramentals,” prepare us to receive the grace of the sacraments and help us to grow to be more like Christ. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1670) **A blessing is not a warm fuzzy moment, but a call to action. To be like Christ who endured, suffered, and sacrificed His very life.**

In what seems a moment of pique, Pope Francis has answered the questions posed by retired Cardinals who are rightly concerned about the blessings of same-sex unions within the context of the Magisterium of the Church. He has laid his theological cards on the table – suggesting that such blessings may now be possible in the Universal Church.

If a blessing is the preparation for a sacrament, for which sacrament are same-sex unions preparing? If blessings are not the preparation for sacraments, then the practice of blessings, one of the spiritual treasures of the Church, has

been reduced to a good luck charm – perhaps even a superstitious practice.

The rich dignity that is truly worthy of every human person is found in the sacraments of marriage, ordination, and the vocation of celibate lay life. **The blessing of same-sex unions, no matter how “pastorally” discerned, is a tacit message from the Church to homosexuals: Take your blessing, persist in sin, walk away from Christ, but at least we all feel good – for the moment.**



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How can a Church condone a practice for homosexuals that it does not condone for single or ordained heterosexuals? **The weak argument about sexual self-control (“might as well bless it since they are going to do it anyway”) falls on deaf ears in an institution where men and women for centuries have ordered their lives around celibacy to grow closer to Christ.**

Rather than deal with homosexual acts as disordered, as it is described in Scripture and the Magisterium, **it’s actually easier, in a sense, to abandon someone’s soul to the ways of evil. Catechesis and the hard work of spreading Christ’s salvific message just does not seem to have the same power to grab our attention.**

In the last year, I have witnessed **the blessings of same-sex unions in Mainz, Germany. These were sad affairs for people desperately seeking something.** The blessings I witnessed were not requested by regular churchgoers, but rather people off the street who were searching for dignity and recognition from an institution about which they really knew very little.

The priests who conducted the blessings seemed more interested in burnishing their progressive reputations, and proudly proclaiming their rejection of Catholic teaching on sacramental marriage, than in the care of souls. In the end, there was a lot of showmanship but absolutely no thought given to the future of the lives of these couples. It was all very transactional, sadly secular, one party using the other. Christ wept.

The Church through the ages has recognized the inherent difficulties of two heterosexual human beings living together in matrimony. Dioceses around the world provide Christian marital counseling to couples in trouble. Canon law provides a means of examining marital consent to determine whether or not a sacrament really took place.

What do same-sex couples receive when their union has ended, and they are enduring heartbreak and seeking solace? Is this the time when the injured party finds out that the blessing, they received didn’t really mean anything to the institutional Church? **The good luck charm did not work after all?**

Without an ecclesiastical, legal, or sacramental foundation to these relationships, there is no justice. Christ warned us about building a house on sand. **The Church** tells heterosexual couples to build their house on the rock of a Christ-centered life, but **is willing to idly sit by to watch homosexual couples build a house in the surf of sin.**

St. Thomas Aquinas defined justice as the virtue that consists of a constant and firm will to give God and neighbor their due. Justice is supposed to guide and perfect our actions in relation to others. How does the blessing of a union founded on the sin of sex outside marriage perfect us as the living body of the Church of Jesus Christ towards those who engage in homosexual acts?

An even more important question is how we are actually serving individuals who need our love and honesty – and deserve so much more than just a slap on the back and a blessing for the road.

At this pivotal moment in the midst of the synodal journey, we must remember that **the Church is not made by humans, it is made by God, and as Pope Benedict XVI writes “is continually formed by Him.”**

The sole mission of the Church is to bring people into an encounter with Jesus Christ and into His presence through the sacraments. A blessing of the union of two people living in objective sin is a sad facsimile for sacramental grace. Homosexual persons deserve better and so do the People of God.

Image: *Christ Carrying the Cross by Giorgio Vasari, c. 1562–1565 [Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Kansas]

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