



POPE FRANCIS' LEGACY OF INCLUSIVITY: THE 'DECLARATION FIDUCIA SUPPLICANS' AND THE AFRICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH'S OPPOSITION TO BLESSING SAME-SEX COUPLES

CHANDA ARMSTRONG

MPIKA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, MPIKA, ZAMBIA

chandarmstrong@yahoo.com

*Pope Francis's inclusive approach to pastoral care, including the declaration of blessing same-sex couples, sparked controversy and various reactions from the church in different parts of the world. The study examines the **Fiducia Supplicans** and three pastoral statements from Zambian, Malawian, and Cameroonian episcopal conferences in Africa that responded in opposition to Pope Francis' declaration of blessing homosexual couples and the declaration of **Fiducia Supplicans** as a reflection on Pope Francis' inclusivity legacy. African Catholic bishops' negative responses, along with those of episcopal conferences, to the Pope's blessing of same-sex couples created a complex and controversial issue impacting Church communication. The **Fiducia Supplicans** underscores the relevance of protecting the Church's traditional doctrine, particularly regarding marriage, while considering pastoral care and Pope Francis' teachings. Through document analysis, this paper analyses the African Catholic Church's reaction to the declaration of blessing for same-sex couples and addresses the confusion surrounding blessing same-sex couples by using responses from African bishops in Zambia, Malawi, and Cameroon as examples. The study has argued that the opposition from these African churches is anchored upon African cultural, social norms, political, and religious positions as convictions of Africa and Africans against same-sex unions. Church unity, authority, mission, and theology are affected by disapproval of the declaration; reconciliation is recommended. This study emphasises the importance of dialogue, understanding, and pastoral sensitivity in addressing challenging issues within the global church community. It recommends a reflective and inclusive approach to address the disagreements and nurture inclusivity in the church.*

Keywords: African Culture, Fiducia Supplicans, Politics, Same-sex, Inclusivity

Copyright:

Online: EBSCO, DOAJ. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License © 2025.

Print: Philippine Copyright © September 2025 San Beda University

How to cite this article:

Chanda, A. (2025). Pope Francis' Legacy of Inclusivity: The 'Declaration Fiducia Supplicans' and the African Catholic Church's Opposition to Blessing Same-Sex Couples. *Scientia - The International Journal on the Liberal Arts*, 14(2), 15-31. <https://doi.org/10.57106/scientia.v14i2.200>

Dates:

Received: April 8, 2025

Revised: July 26, 2025

Accepted: August 8, 2025

Published(Online): Sept 30, 2025

Read online



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online





INTRODUCTION

Pope Francis can be believed to have left a legacy of inclusivity in his pastoral care approach. He welcomed everyone, reconciled the church with diverse and differing religious movements and political figures, and this reached the pinnacle in his declaration to the church to bestow common blessings on same-sex couples and those in complicated unions as individuals seeking God's blessings and grace. However, this invitation was received with mixed views, reactions, and responses. This phenomenon was observed globally, though this study focuses on some examples from the African continent for their unique responses in denial of the declaration from the pontiff. It is important, however, to note that the official reaction of the Catholic Church towards same-sex relations has remained unchanged over many decades. While the Church continues to condemn same-sex relationships, the reasons it provides for this stance have considerably evolved. On 18th December 2023, 'the dicastery for the doctrine of the faith' of the Roman Curia issued a declaration named "*Fiducia Supplicans*", which means "Supplicating Trust", on the meaning of blessings from the pastoral context. Giving the likelihood of blessing same-sex couples without any form of ritualisation, indicating the impression of a marriage.¹

The document addresses Pope Francis' reply to the questions posed by certain Cardinals of the Dubia by acknowledging the relevance of the Pope's clarifications in shaping the reflection on blessings within the Church, emphasising the significance of maintaining the long-standing doctrines of the Church regarding marriage

¹ Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops ZCCB, "Pastoral Statement of the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB) Following the Publication of the Declaration 'Fiducia Supplicans' by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.," December 20, 2023. <https://zambianobserver.com/zambia-catholic-bishops-clarifies-on-same-sx-blessings/>.

and abstaining from performing any rituals or benedictions that might lead to confusion. It also acknowledges the possibility of a more comprehensive interpretation of blessings within a pastoral framework. The document's declaration integrates the response of Pope Francis to the Cardinals into its theological reflection on blessings, demonstrating a commitment to harmonising the Church's perennial teachings with the pastoral dream of the Pope.²

The dicastery's declaration concerning the faith doctrine holds significant importance for the meaning of blessing marriages from a pastoral context in the Church. This document offers a unique and original contribution to the understanding of blessings, allowing for extending and enriching the traditional concept of blessings. The document reflects a pastoral vision aligned with Pope Francis' approach, indicating a development in the Church's understanding of blessings beyond what was previously articulated by the *Magisterium* and official Church texts.³ The document also clarifies that while it allows for blessings of couples in unusual settings and same-sex couples, it does not alter the Church's traditional teaching on marriage or endorse any liturgical rites that could lead to misunderstanding.⁴

The declaration has significantly influenced the pastoral approach to blessings in the Church by balancing tradition with a contemporary understanding of pastoral care and the reception

² USCCB, "Pope Responds to Cardinals on Blessings for Homosexuals, Female Priests | USCCB," www.usccb.org, 2023, <https://www.usccb.org/news/2023/pope-responds-cardinals-blessings-homosexuals-female-priests>.

³ Dicastery for Doctrine of Faith, declaration, "Declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings (18 December 2023)," www.vatican.va, December 18, 2023, http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20231218_fiducia-supplicans_en.html.

⁴ Tyler, J.T. (2024). "How can I Receive the Blessing? US Catholic", 89 (4), 17-18, 2024.





of the Holy Father's guidance.⁵ The document has kindled extreme debate and confusion due to its lack of clarity.⁶ This Vatican document explores the importance of blessings in a pastoral setting; however, it could contain various deficiencies that might result in misunderstandings about the interpretation of blessing same-sex couples. Arguably, it has created confusion about the theological significance and pastoral implications of blessing same-sex couples within the Church's teachings on marriage. This further creates a gap in understanding and dialogue, potentially hindering efforts to nurture pastoral care and inclusivity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Queer and other (LGBTQ+) individuals seeking blessings within the Church.⁷ To promote a more all-encompassing and understanding approach within the Catholic community, it is necessary to address these gaps through further dialogue, theological reflection, and pastoral engagement. Only through an open and compassionate dialogue can the Church's position itself as it wishes for blessings for couples in same-sex relationships, be clarified, and a more inviting and inclusive atmosphere for LGBTQ+ individuals be nurtured.

Declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* and the Meaning of Blessings from a Pastoral Perspective

The document puts a great deal of emphasis on the value of safeguarding the traditional doctrine of the Church, especially for marriage, while also taking into consideration pastoral care and the teachings of Pope Francis. It strongly emphasises the need to avoid confusing liturgical practices, particularly about marriage and

same-sex couples, to maintain clarity and faithfulness to Church teachings. Moreover, the document inspires a more comprehensive understanding of blessings, one that is grounded in pastoral care and the unconditional love of God, while also respecting the Church's teachings on marriage. It underscores the extensive process of preparing the document, which included consultation with experts, discussions with the Pope, and his final approval, highlighting the importance of adhering to Church authority. The declaration seeks to maintain doctrinal integrity and demonstrate pastoral charity, contemplating Pope Francis' principles on mercy and inclusion. These points accentuate the necessity to retain doctrinal fidelity, promote pastoral sensitivity, and ensure clarity in the liturgical practices of the Catholic Church.⁸

Declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* on the Church's Position on Marriage and Liturgical Rites

The Declaration "*Fiducia Supplicans*" emphasises several key points regarding the Church's stance on marriage and liturgical rites. Church doctrine traditionally defines marriage as between one man and one woman. The declaration explores the pastoral implications of the Church's teachings on marriage, emphasising the importance of avoiding recognising something, not marriage as marriage. It underscores the need to maintain clarity and fidelity to Catholic doctrine in marriage-related pastoral practices. The document accents the significance of not allowing liturgical rites or blessings to offer a kind of moral validity to unions that do not align with God's designs for marriage as understood by the Church.

⁵ USCCB, "Pope Responds to Cardinals on Blessings for Homosexuals, Female Priests | USCCB," [www.usccb.org](https://www.usccb.org/news/2023/pope-responds-cardinals-blessings-homosexuals-female-priests), 2023, <https://www.usccb.org/news/2023/pope-responds-cardinals-blessings-homosexuals-female-priests>.

⁶ James McTavish, "Fiducia Supplicans—a Bag of Mixed Blessings?," *Ethics & Medics* 49, no. 1 (January 1, 2024): 3–4, <https://doi.org/10.5840/em20244912>.

⁷ Emeфу, C. C. 2024. *Fiducia Supplicans* and Same-Sex Union: A Canonical Appraisal. *SIST Journal of Religion and Humanities*, 4(1).

⁸ Dicastery for Doctrine of Faith, declaration, "Declaration Fiducia Supplicans on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings (18 December 2023)," [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dff_doc_20231218_fiducia-supplicans_en.html), December 18, 2023, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dff_doc_20231218_fiducia-supplicans_en.html.





The document highlights the Church's inability to deliberate on her liturgical blessing on relationships that presume to be marriages but do not adhere to the Church's understanding of marriage. The declaration supports the Church's traditional teachings on marriage while promoting a wider comprehension of blessings in pastoral care. It stresses the worth of aligning with the teachings of the Pontiff and fostering an empathetic understanding of the Church's perennial doctrine alongside the reception of Pope Francis' guidance. It outlines a standpoint that supports the conventional doctrines of the Church regarding marriage, while also accommodating a more comprehensive pastoral comprehension of blessings consistent with the pastoral perspective of Pope Francis.⁹ The study focuses on Pope Francis's announcement of blessing same-sex couples, which was explained in the declaration, aimed to provide a deeper understanding of its context and implications.

The study reflects on the following questions: How are blessings for same-sex unions perceived within the African Catholic Church, and what cultural, theological, and political factors influence these perceptions? What are the primary concerns and objections raised by African bishops regarding same-sex blessings, and how do these reflect broader societal norms and religious laws? In what ways do the responses from African bishops impact Church harmony and the exercise of Church authority regarding marriage and pastoral care? What practical recommendations can be made to reconcile differing perspectives on issues related to *Fiducia Supplicans* within the Church? By exploring the pastoral implications of blessings, marriage, and liturgical rites, the research sheds light on how these aspects are perceived within the Church and bridges the knowledge gap by

⁹ Dicastery for Doctrine of Faith, declaration, "Declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings

offering insights into pastoral considerations for marriage, especially in Africa. Addressing the controversy surrounding same-sex blessings and examining negative responses from African bishops who represent the Catholic membership, the study highlights regional perspectives. It investigates them through the lenses of the cultural, theological, religious, political, and social influences. Some conferences of African Catholic bishops opposed the document and cautioned their priests from conducting such blessings, referencing mostly the religious laws of the church, cultural norms and local laws against homosexual acts.¹⁰ The research explores the consequences of these responses for Church harmony and authority and aims to provide practical recommendations for reconciling differing perspectives on *Fiducia Supplicans* in the Church, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive and inclusive church environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Church's perspective on whether to authorise same-sex couples to receive blessings has ignited intense debate. There have been a variety of viewpoints and arguments presented by scholars and theologians on the matter. Although the Christian marriage ideals have evolved, should the church seriously consider blessing same-sex unions? In contrast, the cultural change and legal acknowledgement of same-gender companionships have created divisions in the church.¹¹ Altogether, these studies highlight the intricacy and importance of the discussion in the Church and the necessity of carefully considering all perspectives involved. Opponents of gay marriage often confuse simplified notions of

¹⁰ O'loughlin, M.J. 2024. "Vatican Decree on Blessing People in Same-Sex or Irregular Relationship Gets Mixed Global Response." *America* 230 (2), 12-15, 2024.

¹¹ Jeffrey Weeks, "Same-Sex Partnerships," *Feminism & Psychology* 14, no. 1 (February 2004): 158-64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353504040318>.





marriage with historical realities. In recent years, the push for lawful acknowledgement of same-sex unions has been a prominent issue in non-heterosexual communities, and this has become the dominant claim in such communities.¹² However, some oppose this idea, particularly conservative Christians who view same-sex marriage as political correctness gone too far. For the Catholic Church, the issue of same-sex marriage is not a straightforward one.¹³

The Church's position is not uniform. Despite this, the Church has remained a vocal advocate for its stance, relying on its resources and influence to shape public opinion on the matter.¹⁴ The Church has had a role in the public domain, and it has adapted to changing times.¹⁵ Despite the Church's efforts, the argument against same-sex marriage may not be convincing to a majority of its members. Younger members, in particular, are more likely to view the Church's stance as non-probative.¹⁶ This indicates the need for the Church to adapt its approach to remain relevant to its members. The global response to Pope Francis' recent announcement of blessing same-sex couples and the *Fiducia Supplicans* has been varied. Conflicting stances on sexual minorities have been highlighted by the Pope, particularly through his request for forgiveness from the Church for the mistreatment they have endured.¹⁷ The Holy See's response to

blessing same-sex unions from an argumentative perspective can be seen from dependence on and the embrace of both reasons and emotions.

Pope Francis' comments about same-sex marriage being a threat to God's plan reflect the Catholic Church's traditional stance on marriage and sexuality.¹⁸ The conviction of the Church is that marriage is between a male and a female, which is a long-standing teaching. Persons who are clergy and those who are married should be prepared to make sacrifices and dedicate themselves completely to their respective callings. This shows the selflessness required to serve God and the community in either role.¹⁹ Despite Pope Francis embracing a more empathetic tone on issues of inclusivity, the Church's traditional teachings on sexuality remain unchanged.²⁰ Arguably, it is crucial to maintain doctrinal integrity while showing pastoral care and understanding for all individuals and situations.

Theologians and bishops in countries such as Germany, France, Austria, Italy, South Africa, Belgium, and Argentina have taken innovative and inclusive approaches.²¹ These approaches intend to accommodate diverse circumstances and accept not only remarried and divorced couples but also individuals seeking greater communion with the Church. This reflects a more pastoral stance. There has been a historical perspective on the churches' reaction to modern homosexuality, which indicates the evolution of identity and action in this context. This development underscores the complication and diversity of approaches taken by Christian denominations

¹² O'loughlin, "Same-Sex or Irregular Relationship Gets Mixed Global Response."

¹³ Andrew K.T. Yip, "Same-Sex Marriage: Contrasting Perspectives among Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Christians," *Feminism & Psychology* 14, no. 1 (February 2004): 173–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353504040320>.

¹⁴ Elżbieta Kuźelewska and Marta Michalczyk-Wlizo, "Same-Sex Marriage and the Catholic Church in Europe. Any Chance for Understanding?," *Studies in Logic, Grammar and Rhetoric* 66, no. 2 (December 1, 2021): 267–81, <https://doi.org/10.2478/slgr-2021-0015>.

¹⁵ M. T. Cunningham, "Catholics and the ConCon: The Church's Response to the Massachusetts Gay Marriage Decision," *Journal of Church and State* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 19–42, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/47.1.19>.

¹⁶ Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman, "Pope Francis, Civil Unions, and Same-Sex Marriage: Theological Reflections," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (January 20, 2022): 3–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002114002111060630>.

¹⁷ Kapyra Kaoma, "The Vatican Anti-Gender Theory and Sexual Politics: An African Response," *Religion and Gender* 6, no. 2 (February 19, 2016): 282–92, <https://doi.org/10.18352/rg.10180>.

¹⁸ Kaoma, "The Vatican Anti-Gender Theory and Sexual Politics: An African Response."

¹⁹ Brian Mullady, "Pope Benedict XVI on the Priesthood and Homosexuality," *The Linacre Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (August 1, 2011): 294–305, <https://doi.org/10.1179/002436311803888311>.

²⁰ Jorge Aquino, "No Queer Aggiornamento this Time: Resubscribing to the Philosophy of Natural Law, Pope Francis Forecloses Reforms of Catholic Teaching on Sexuality," *Pope Francis and POLITICS* 11, no. 2 (November 13, 2017): 217–33, <https://doi.org/10.54561/prj1102217a>.

²¹ James F. Keenan, "Receiving Amoris Laetitia," *Theological Studies* 78, no. 1 (March 2017): 193–212, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563916681995>.





towards homosexuality and reflects ongoing dialogues and shifts in societal attitudes.²² This literature highlights that the declaration by Pope Francis on same-sex blessings has been subject to various interpretations and critiques.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research method to investigate the resistance from the African Catholic Church to Pope Francis' declaration of blessing same-sex couples and its implications. The study employs document and content analysis designs to examine the *Fiducia Supplicans* follow-up document to the Pope's declaration of the likelihood of offering blessings to same-gender couples and the pastoral response statements following the declaration and the release of the *Fiducia Supplicans*, from Zambia's, Malawi's, and Cameroon's episcopal conferences denouncing the Pope's declaration. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the African Catholic Church's position on same-sex blessings, the factors that contributed to their resistance to the declaration, and how this is implied for Pope Francis' inclusive pastoral approach, the global church, and the African church. Document analysis was engaged in the assessment of the documents. The information contained within these documents went through an exhaustive and highly analytical approach of three-fold document analysis. First, sentiment analysis was carried out to assess the emotions and tones in-depth; then, a deep understanding of the text was achieved with a fine-grained impression of the feelings. Secondly, some text mining techniques that were applied excavated the data systematically for finding patterns

²² Frederick S. Roden, "Queer Christian: The Catholic Homosexual Apologia and Lesbian/Gay Practice," *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 6, no. 4 (2001): 251–65, <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1012213024402>.

and trends within it, letting hidden insights be revealed that might otherwise be unnoticed. Finally, text categorisation was done to arrange the classified information extracted in the form of homogeneous themes and concepts, thus easily clarifying and providing for further opening of the data.²³ Through thematic analysis, the data were coded, and the recurring themes emerged and were presented in this study.

FINDINGS

Responses from the African Bishops of Zambia, Malawi, and Cameroon. Response from the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB). Members of ZCCB contended that the Vatican's declaration had caused uncertainty among the faithful. Although there is no explicit support for same-sex unions in the declaration, the conferences believe it has led to discussions about the prospect of blessing same-sex marriages.

The ZCCB argued that its agreement with the document should not be interpreted as support for same-gender relationships but as a contemplative reaction to many inquiries regarding whether a blessing can be given to same-sex couples.²⁴ The ZCCB recognises that the declaration probes into the subject of blessings, distinguishing between two types: "ritual and liturgical blessings" *On one hand, and 'spontaneous' or 'simple' blessings on the other hand*" (ZCCB Pastoral Statement, 2003: 2).²⁵ The bishops observed that the document is contemplating the possibility of granting

²³ Bowen, Glenn A. 2009. "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method." *Qualitative Research Journal* 9 (2): 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>.

²⁴ Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops ZCCB, "Pastoral Statement of the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB) Following the Publication of the Declaration 'Fiducia Supplicans' by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith," December 20, 2023. <https://zambianobserver.com/zambia-catholic-bishops-clarifies-on-same-sx-blessings/>.

²⁵ Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops ZCCB, p,2





blessings to individuals who did not adhere to the Christian moral doctrine but request them without any pretence. However, the ZCCB pastoral statement retaliated by saying;

To avoid any pastoral confusion and ambiguity as well as not to break the law of our country which forbids same-sex unions and activities, and while listening to our cultural heritage which does not accept same-sex relationships, the Conference guides that the Declaration from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith of December 18th, 2023 concerning the blessing of same-sex couples be taken as for further reflection and not for implementation in Zambia.²⁶

The bishops argued, *“The conference reaffirms the traditional teaching of the church that declares, ‘homosexual acts to be intrinsically disordered and contrary to natural law,’ hence under no circumstances can they be approved.”²⁷* The ZCCB reaffirmed its strong statement against the declaration in the clearest terms.

Response from the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM)

The Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) issued a pastoral statement dated December 19, on the Vatican’s declaration on blessing same-sex couples and other couples in irregular situations. The bishops of the Malawian Catholic Church, therefore, forbade the execution of the Vatican’s declaration of blessing of same-sex unions and in other situations. They have stated, *“We direct that, for pastoral reasons, blessings for same-sex unions of any kind are not permitted in Malawi.”²⁸* The bishops found it to be their moral and sworn obligation to guide the followers on the declaration, they stated, *“Having noted certain erroneous interpretations of this declaration*

that have generated interest, fears, and worries among Catholics and people who look up to the Catholic Church for moral, spiritual, and doctrinal guidance.”²⁹

The bishops stated that the Vatican declaration emphasised that the Church’s doctrine of marriage, which is defined as a union between a male and a female that is exclusive, stable, and indissoluble, and which inherently leads to procreation, remains unchanged. The declaration also asserts that rites and supplications that might generate a mix-up between what comprises marriage and what opposes it should not be permitted. The bishops added that the same declaration indicated how the Church regarded only sexual relations within marriage as morally legitimate. The ECM members stated that standard blessings, which can be bestowed on people, objects used in worship and devotion, sacred images, places of work, fruits of the earth, and so on, should be given to anyone or anything, bearing in mind that the greatest blessing of God is Jesus Christ.

The ECM cautioned that same-sex couples or those in irregular unions could request and obtain non-liturgical standard blessings, which the Church gives to anyone who asks for them, in permitting such blessings, referring to the Vatican declaration:

We should be careful that such blessings should not be construed as a liturgical or semi-liturgical act, similar to a sacrament, and that such decisions that may be part of pastoral prudence in certain circumstances should not necessarily become a norm for the Church [and] does not have the power to confer its liturgical blessing when that would somehow offer a form of moral legitimate union that presumes to be a marriage or to an extra-marital sexual practice.³⁰

²⁶ Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops ZCCB, p,2

²⁷ Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops ZCCB, p,3

²⁸ Episcopal Conference of Malawi ECM, “Episcopal Conference of Malawi Clarification on the Declaration on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings Fiducia Supplicans ,” December 19, 2023.p,1. <https://katholisches.info/2023/12/20/malawis-bischoefe-lehnen-fiducia-supplicans-ab/>.

²⁹ Episcopal Conference of Malawi ECM, p,1

³⁰ Episcopal Conference of Malawi ECM, p,1





This indicated a great fear by ECM of a sway to accommodate the very blessing the church has been refusing for many years.

Response from the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC)

The Cameroonian bishops affirm their strong support for the church's teachings that prioritise the sacredness of sexual identity. According to them, sexuality and marriage are essential foundations of the family, and their dignity must be maintained. The bishops argued that homosexuality complicates, distorts human nature, and devalues the significance of sexuality, marriage, and family, which are crucial components of society. They believe this sexual orientation is inconsistent with African culture and its family and social values, as it goes against the heritage handed down by ancestors and has never contributed to societal evolution. Instead, it is a sign of the declining state of civilisation. The bishops concluded that homosexuality could create discord within humanity and ultimately lead to its destruction. The bishops contended that homosexuality was not a human right, "*It is an alienation that seriously harms humanity because it is not based on any value proper to the human being: it is a dehumanisation of love, 'an abomination.'*" They argued that its rejection did not mean discrimination; it was an authentic safeguard of the continuous values of humanity before a vice that has developed into the topic of a right to legal recognition and the subject of blessing.³¹

In resistance to the statement on blessing same-sex couples from the Vatican, the Cameroonian bishops further argued:

³¹ National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon. NEEC, "Declaration of the Bishops of Cameroon on Homosexuality and Blessing of 'Homosexual Couples'." December 21, 2023. P.2. <https://www.fromrome.info/2023/12/22/cameroon-bishops-conference-rejects-fiducia-supplicans-as-sign-of-downfall-of-the-west/>.

*Literally, "to bless is to speak well of". And to 'Speak well of' to gain grace through the gesture of blessing a 'homosexual couple' would be tantamount to encouraging a choice and a practice of life that cannot be recognised as being objectively ordered to the revealed designs of God. What is more, differentiating between liturgical and non-liturgical contexts to apply the blessing to same-sex 'couples' is hypocritical. The act of blessing, whether performed in a liturgical assembly or in private, remains a blessing. We, therefore, declare non-compliant any form of blessing, public or private, that tends to recognise 'same-sex couples' as a state of life.*³²

The bishops stood with the ecclesial traditions on sexuality by arguing, "*Faithful to the constant teaching of Ecclesial Tradition, which declares acts of homosexuality intrinsically disordered and contrary to the natural law.*"³³

DISCUSSION

The Response to *Fiducia Supplicans* Concerning Blessing Same-Sex Couples

A comprehensive and critical examination of the consistency with doctrine, specificity in culture, and the respective pastoral implications in ministry responses by ZCCB, ECM, and NECC to the Vatican's declaration on same-sex unions is to be made. First, on the cautious approach of the ZCCB acknowledging the Vatican declaration but stressing the need to avoid pastoral "mix-ups" and respect the legal and cultural landscape of Zambia, one begins to ask the extent to which this may dilute doctrinal clarity. The bishops state alignment with the Church but seem more concerned about "further discernment" rather than enactment against blessings that, practically, could be taken as endorsement. Again, tying the decisions to the legal framework of Zambia and its cultural heritage rather seems to speak of political expediency rather than with the fidelity

³² National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon. NEEC, p,2

³³ National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon. NEEC, p,2





of doctrine, which in turn puts the Church at risk of blurry prophetic communication and moral clarity. However, the ZCCB communication could at the same time be taken as a directive to the clergy not to act upon the declaration or enact the declaration.

On the other hand, ECM's affirmation of traditional marriage amid *Fiducia Supplicans* assumes a more doctrinally robust position, yet challenges arise wherein grounding the resistance to blessings of same-sex unions on natural law may obscure the spiritually pertinent pastoral needs of LGBTQ+ individuals. With a notation of distinguishing marriage based on inherent procreation from blessings of individuals or objects, their decision then creates a hard-and-fast dichotomy that affords no pastoral compassion or thinking about inclusive pastoral approaches. Furthermore, the ECM establishes blessings as acts that may border on approval of unions contrary to doctrine, thereby itself perpetuating an even more restrictive view that will marginalise those who may seek spiritual approval without endorsing union practice, thus forming an exclusionary pastoral setting.

The Cameroonian bishops' outright rejection of any blessings for same-gender couples, resting upon the defence of traditional values and African cultural heritage, would perfectly stand as an example of religio-cultural resistance to changing moral paradigms. The Cameroonian bishops, thus, regard homosexuality as one that "distorts human anthropology" and "threatens civilisation," and this calls for a critical interrogation of the ethnocentric assumptions deeply embedded in their stance. Such thinking may dangerously confuse cultural identity with an equally unchanging religious doctrine, thereby reinforcing cultural essentialism and hurtful stereotypes against LGBTQ+ communities. Terms like "threat" prove detrimental to a

constructive dialogue around the lived realities of sexual minority groups, identifying the cultural conservative agenda that dominates the discourse.

Such episcopal responses indicate a tension between orthodox teaching, broadly understood, and a contemporary clamour for pastoral inclusion. Valid as these responses might be within their claims to orthodoxy, they raise serious questions about how the Church has been and can be flexible in different cultural environments. These responses, as they stand, reinforce a largely doctrinal barricade that may well provide less in the form of pastoral care and thereby promote an environment of marginalisation that can work against the Church's mission in engagement with social reality today.³⁴

Major Factor for the Refusal of the Declaration in Africa

The papal declaration was met with widespread criticism globally. It received backlash from the Church in Africa and other countries.^{35,36,37} The denial of homosexual couples and marriage in African countries such as Zambia, Malawi, and Cameroon, and other countries can be attributed to a combination of factors. One significant factor is the bearing of religion on societal beliefs and political decisions regarding same-sex marriage.³⁸

³⁴ Kapya Kaoma, "The Vatican Anti-Gender Theory and Sexual Politics: An African Response," *Religion and Gender* 6, no. 2 (February 19, 2016): 282–92, <https://doi.org/10.18352/rg.10180>.

³⁵ L. Coppen, "African Bishops v. *Fiducia Supplicans*," <https://www.pillaratholic.com/>, December 21, 2023, <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/african-bishops-v-fiducia-supplicans>.

³⁶ Emefu, C. C. 2024. *Fiducia Supplicans* and Same-Sex Union: A Canonical Appraisal. *SIST Journal of Religion and Humanities*, 4(1).

³⁷ USCCB, "Pope Responds to Cardinals on Blessings for Homosexuals, Female Priests | USCCB," www.usccb.org, 2023, <https://www.usccb.org/news/2023/pope-responds-cardinals-blessings-homosexuals-female-priests>.

³⁸ Darren E. Sherkat, Kylan Mattias de Vries, and Stacia Creek, "Race, Religion, and Opposition to Same-Sex Marriage," *Social Science Quarterly* 91, no. 1 (March 2010): 80–98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2010.00682.x>.





Cultural Factors

Many African societies have deeply embedded cultural beliefs and traditions that admonish same-sex relationships as the norm.³⁹ Gender is viewed as antithetical to these cultural norms, leading to resistance or rejection of the idea of blessing such institutions. For instance, ZCCB recognises Zambia's cultural heritage, which does not recognise gay and lesbian individuals. The bishops reiterate the importance of respecting the country's cultural values and avoiding pastoral confusion and ambiguity. The ZCCB's decision not to accept the Vatican declaration to bless these couples in Zambia was influenced by a cultural climate that does not accept same-sex relations. The Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) supported traditional Malawian norms and values that are incompatible with the idea of gender equality. Malawi's bishops prohibited the practice of blessing same-sex unions, considering the country's culture. The ECM's decision to prohibit the application of the Vatican's declaration on same-sex unions reflects its respect for Malawian culture and traditions. Similarly, the Cameroonian Bishops strongly emphasised that sexuality in question was incompatible with African culture and its family and social norms. This, they argued, contradicted the inheritance of their ancestors and never helped social progress. The bishops saw homosexuality as a corruption of human nature, which trivialised the importance of sex, family, and marriage, which are considered essentials of society. They believed that acknowledging this sexuality and its acts was symbolic and commemorative of the deteriorating state of civilisation in African culture.

³⁹ L Coppen, "African Bishops v. 'Fiducia Supplicans,'" <https://www.pillaratholic.com/>, December 21, 2023, <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/african-bishops-v-fiducia-supplicans>.

Political Factors

The political climate and societal perspectives in Africa on gay and lesbian marriage facilitate the denial of same-sex couples the right to marry. Acceptance or rejection of same-gender unions in a society is influenced by factors like political determination, prevailing public sentiment, and the existing legal structure. In African countries where there is little political will to advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) rights and where social attitudes toward homosexuality are particularly negative, they will continue to reject same-sex couples and marriage. Most African countries have laws interdicting same-sex relationships, creating a hostile environment for LGBTQ+ individuals. For instance, ZCCB considered Zambia's legal framework in response to the Vatican Declaration, banning same-sex unions and activities. The bishops directed that this declaration be adopted for further consideration but not for execution in Zambia in line with national law. This decision reflected a careful approach to legal boundaries and avoided potential conflicts with gender-based legislation. While ECM's pastoral case aligned with Malawi's legal framework, which does not acknowledge same-sex unions.

Malawi's decision to ban the introduction of the blessing of these couples influences the political climate and legal provisions for such unions. Cameroon's bishops opposed the idea of blessing same-sex couples, saying it promoted ungodly lifestyles. They believed that any blessing in the church or non-church setting that recognised same-sex couples as a condition of life was viewed as inconsistent with their beliefs. This attitude reflects their commitment to tradition and the values and sexual traditions of the church that have dominated the church. The political climate, combined with social characteristics, can pose challenges to discussions about





blessing same-sex couples in these contexts. Arguably, the absence of gender-recognition legal frameworks perpetuates a social stigma and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals.⁴⁰ For instance, laws that permit gay and lesbian couples to be excluded from employment can cause significant stress and psychological distress among minorities of same-sex adults, further marginalising this population.⁴¹

Social Perspectives

The ZCCB acknowledged the scepticism and discussion among the faithful raised by the Vatican on gay unions. Bishops accentuated the need to avoid pastoral misunderstanding and uncertainty when engaging in reflective negotiations about blessing these couples. ZCCB's response reflects an awareness of the broader social context in Zambia and the importance of clarity in addressing social concerns related to gender relations. While the ECM responded to the Vatican's declaration on concerns and fears raised by Catholics and individuals seeking moral and spiritual guidance from the Church. For the bishops, the declaration did not imply the authorisation or recognition of these unions as married couples, but aimed at addressing concerns and uncertainties in life. The pastoral guidance provided by the ECM considered social implications and responses within the Malawian community. The bishops underlined the negative effects of homosexuality on society, as something that could lead to conflict and ultimately destroy humanity. The bishops voiced their apprehension about the perceived threat to civilisation posed by homosexuality and have emphasised the importance of upholding the

sanctity of sexual identity, family, and marriage as the foundation of society. Certainly, their attitudes reflect a social ideology that values the family structure and traditional social norms.⁴²

Religious and Theological Factors

Religious beliefs significantly contributed to the opposition toward same-sex marriage, with faith shaping attitudes toward it. In African nations where religion holds more sway, opposition to same-gender marriage is deeply ingrained in religious convictions, which might have further fueled marriage. Same-sex relationships in these religious communities are often viewed as sinful or depraved, based on traditional religious teachings, which can affect views of blessing couples. For example, ZCCB reaffirmed the Catholic Church's traditional teaching that this behaviour was necessarily abnormal, and vice versa affirmed natural law. Although the bishops agreed with *Fiducia Supplicans*, they clarified that this was not to be interpreted as a validation of these unions. The decision not to execute the declaration of the Vatican was based on religious teaching and the church's universal position on same-sex issues.⁴³ Similarly, the ECM reaffirmed the Catholic Church's traditional teachings about marriage as exclusively for a union that is open to procreation. The bishops stressed that the church's teachings on marriage had not changed despite the Vatican Declaration, pointing to the religious basis for the decision. The ECM distinguished between standard blessings and ecclesiastical blessings and ensured that the Church never gave blessings that conflicted with traditional marriage doctrine based on religious principles.

⁴⁰ Julia Raifman et al., "Association of State Laws Permitting Denial of Services to Same-Sex Couples with Mental Distress in Sexual Minority Adults," *JAMA Psychiatry* 75, no. 7 (July 1, 2018): 671, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2018.0757>.

⁴¹ O'loughlin, M. J. 2024. "Vatican Decree on Blessing People in Same-Sex or Irregular Relationships Gets Mixed Global Response." *America* 230 (2), 12-15, 2024.

⁴² Don Bosco Onyalla, "Catholic Bishops in Africa Consult 'to Provide Unequivocal Clarity' on *Fiducia Supplicans*," *ACI Africa* (EWTN, December 21, 2023), <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/9878/catholic-bishops-in-africa-consult-to-provide-unequivocal-clarity-on-fiducia-supplicans>.

⁴³ Emeñu, C. C. 2024. *Fiducia Supplicans* and Same-Sex Union: A Canonical Appraisal. *SIST Journal of Religion and Humanities*, 4(1).





Cameroonian bishops associated their position on homosexuality with traditional church teachings, saying that this behaviour was intrinsically violent and against natural law, emphasising the duty of the church as traditional guardians of values and the sacredness of sexual identity, family, and marriage. The bishops viewed homosexuality as a violation of African cultural heritage, arguing that it undermined social norms. Their attitudes reflected religious influences that led to the prioritisation of traditional church teachings on sexuality and marriage. ZCCB, ECM, and NECC agreed that the Vatican declaration created doubt and discussion about the blessing of same-gender marriage. While not explicitly supporting same-sex unions, they stressed the importance of clear pastoral guidelines, compliance with rules prohibiting same-sex unions, and respect for African cultural values. They reaffirmed traditional Catholic teaching on homosexual behaviour, pointing to their serious moral potential and conflicting natural laws. The bishops recommended a rethink of the Vatican Declaration, taking legal, cultural, and doctrinal aspects into account and presenting them with caution. These responses indicated the importance of clarity, adherence to values, and alignment with traditional teaching while encouraging reflective dialogue and advocating for a thorough and objective scrutiny of the declaration.

Indicatively, while doctrinal fidelity is central to these episcopal responses, they reveal how the traditional values, cultural values, and legal values would present a dilemma in the tension between theological and orthodox doctrines and a pastoral caring attitude. More critically engaged approaches would investigate the diversity of experience within LGBTQ+ communities and pursue avenues for, albeit, inclusive pastoral responses considering doctrine, rather than imposing pat orders of condemnation that leave

vulnerable groups even more alienated from the Church's life and witness.

The Implications of the Opposition to the Declaration

The resistance from the African Church is a controversial issue that has implications for the communication protocols within the Universal Church.⁴⁴ Disagreements on same-sex relations and blessings create unnecessary divisions and strife within the Church community in Africa. Discrepancies and resistance to declaration exhibited by some African Churches and some Western Churches alike call for a dialogue and discernment on this very sensitive pastoral issue. The negative responses might prevent the promotion of dialogue, understanding, and inclusivity of the Church on behalf of LGBTQ+ individuals. However, such negative responses may often come with missed opportunities for constructive engagement, education, and dialogue on LGBTQ+ issues within the Church.⁴⁵

The rejection of the declaration may, in some cases, support the stigma and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in African societies. The differences within the African Catholic Church on the question of same-sex couples indicate a need for reconciliation, mutual understanding, and respectful dialogue on these sensitive issues. Some implications will need addressing with sensitivity that offers a fair respect to different views, but at the same time also upholds the values of compassion, inclusivity, and dialogue

⁴⁴ Charles J. Reid, "Same-Sex Relations and the Catholic Church: How Law and Doctrine have Evolved, 1820–2020," *Journal of Law and Religion* 34, no. 2 (August 1, 2019): 210–44, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2019.32>.

⁴⁵ Jorge Aquino. A, "No Queer Aggiornamento this Time: Resubscribing to the Philosophy of Natural Law, Pope Francis Forecloses Reforms of Catholic Teaching on Sexuality," *Pope Francis And Politics* 11, no. 2 (November 13, 2017): 217–33, <https://doi.org/10.54561/prj1102217a>.





within the African Church.⁴⁶ The denial of the Papal declaration by a sizable segment of the African Catholic Church raised questions regarding the question of how much power and infallibility the Pope might exercise, especially in instances of dissenting views emanating from different regions of the Church. The African Church's denial of the Papal declaration may equally infer the fact that there seems not to be a uniform thought across the given issues of social and moral worldview within the global Church. The response from the African Catholic Church seems to call for the Papacy to take into consideration several diverse cultural and theological perspectives on both sides relative to such sensitive issues as same-sex relationships.⁴⁷

Denial of the Papal declaration underlined the standing of ongoing dialogue and engagement between the Papacy and different regions of the Church. The African Catholic Church's rejection of the Papal declaration could potentially impact the credibility and authority of the Pope in the eyes of some believers, especially those who align closely with the dissenting views within the African context. However, navigating these implications requires a subtle balance between maintaining the authority of the Papacy and respecting the diversity of perspectives within the Catholic Church. There is a need for dialogue, understanding, and pastoral sensitivity in addressing challenging topics that impact the Church community worldwide.⁴⁸ Misinformation, misconceptions, and stereotypes about LGBTQ+ individuals can also fuel negative attitudes towards blessings

for same-sex couples. Lack of education and awareness about sexual inclination and gender character diversity may also contribute to resistance to inclusive practices within religious communities.

Moreover, the lack of legal recognition and support for same-sex relationships can lead to minority stress among LGBTQ+ individuals, impacting their mental health and well-being.⁴⁹ In environments where same-sex marriage is not legally recognised, individuals may face discrimination, stigma, and a lack of social support, contributing to increased psychological distress within the LGBTQ+ community.⁵⁰ LGBTQ+ individuals in Africa often face discrimination, stigma, and violence due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The unacceptance and protection for LGBTQ+ individuals in these societies can contribute to negative responses towards the idea of blessing same-sex couples. Also, limited opportunities for open dialogue, education, and engagement on LGBTQ+ issues within African communities can hinder understanding and acceptance of different sexual preferences and gender expressions, leading to negative responses towards blessing homosexual couples.^{51,52}

⁴⁶ John G Culhane, "Same-Sex Marriage: The Depth of the Opposition and the Importance of Victory.," *Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association* 3, no. 3 (September 1, 1999): 103-8, <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1022296229405>.

⁴⁷ Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman, "Pope Francis, Civil Unions, and Same-Sex Marriage: Theological Reflections," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (January 20, 2022): 3-21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002114002111060630>.

⁴⁸ Kapyia Kaoma, "The Vatican Anti-Gender Theory and Sexual Politics: An African Response," *Religion and Gender* 6, no. 2 (February 19, 2016): 282-92,

⁴⁹ Stefano Verrelli et al., "Minority Stress, Social Support, and the Mental Health of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Australians during the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey," *Australian Psychologist* 54, no. 4 (January 23, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12380>.

⁵⁰ Gilbert Herdt and Robert Kertzner, "I Do, but I Can't: The Impact of Marriage Denial on the Mental Health and Sexual Citizenship of Lesbians and Gay Men in the United States," *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 3, no. 1 (March 2006): 33-49, <https://doi.org/10.1525/srsp.2006.3.1.33>.

⁵¹ Herdt and Kertzner, "I Do, but I Can't."

⁵² Gilbert Herdt and Robert Kertzner, "I Do, but I Can't: The Impact of Marriage Denial on the Mental Health and Sexual Citizenship of Lesbians and Gay Men in the United States," *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 3, no. 1 (March 2006): 33-49, <https://doi.org/10.1525/srsp.2006.3.1.33>.





RECOMMENDATIONS

A reflective and inclusive approach is needed to address the disagreements that may have arisen from the opposing reactions to the papal declaration, the *Fiducia Supplicans* in the African Church, and the Universal Catholic Church. This study, therefore, makes the following recommendations:

For the African Catholic Church

- i. The church must constitute a forum for dialogue within the African Church to create a pathway for diverse perspectives on the declaration. By engaging different perspectives through open dialogue and open-mindedness.
- ii. The church's cultural sensitivity surrounding discussions is crucial for the inclusion and understanding of documents and other issues. Recognising and respecting cultural points of view within the African Church will provide opportunities for the warmth and account of the entire Church family.
- iii. It is imperative to give the African clergy and laity educational foundations and opportunities for the actualisation and deepening of their grasp of church doctrine, papal authority, and pastoral implications emanating from the document. This will empower them to interrelate with the statement and thus deeply value its meaning, as well as engage in responsible discussions and decisions.
- iv. It is essential for pastoral care and support for all church members to be given priority, for all to feel valued, respected, and included in the church's mission of love and compassion. With the spirit of care, the church will, therefore, create a caring and supportive space for all its members.

For the Universal Catholic Church

- i. The Church should promote an inclusive dialogue that includes representatives from different regions, including Africa, to build solidarity with each other. While it may seem that many communities have different views and opinions

concerning a certain pastoral issue based on their culture, the very least that can be done is acknowledge and reiterate such cultural diversities within the Church.

- ii. Cultural differences must be recognised and the unity of the Catholic Church must be declared strong by faith and values, and commitment to the Gospel. Greater unity of understanding and harmony, notwithstanding differences of approach to pastoral matters, must be feasible between the African Church and the universal Church.
- iii. Working towards establishing a truly united and inclusive church community, the Church should emphasise dialogue, respect for diversity, pastoral ministry, and a common commitment to the Church's mission.

CONCLUSION

This study has emphasised the relationship between theological beliefs and actual experiences within the Catholic Church, particularly concerning the declaration of *Fiducia Supplicans*. It has shed light on the pastoral ramifications of blessings, marriage, and the different views held in the Church, especially contrasting African bishops' views. But it has also opened deeper issues that seem to transcend mere doctrinal differences. The results show that cultural, social, and, equally importantly, theological contexts shape responses to contemporary concerns so that there is an urgent requirement for a deeper understanding of church unity. The regional disparities illuminated in this study are not glimpses into the varying faith opinions of the Church but hints of larger existential questions the Church faces as it reconciles modernity with an accent on inclusivity with the LGBTQ+ community and other minority groups. Even as this study offers a plethora of solutions aimed at reconciling the differences, for genuine dialogue to emerge, institutional goodwill must be matched with civil society support. The study's





findings must be implemented while remaining conscious of the local cultural realities, ensuring that the Church hears and regards even the weakest of voices in society. In the end, the real challenge is to balance fidelity to the teachings of the Church and a pastoral approach that appreciates the dignity and experiences of individuals. It is only by doing so that the Church will be able to perform its mission in this increasingly challenging world. Further research might be conducted to ascertain the levels of inclusivity in the church post-Pope Francis' pontificate. Will his legacy remain, be maintained, and be advocated for? These and other questions of reflection await exploration.

REFERENCES

- Aquino, A. J. (2017). No queer aggiornamento this time: Resubscribing to the philosophy of natural law, Pope Francis forecloses reforms of Catholic teaching on sexuality. *Pope Francis and Politics*, 11(2), 217–233. <https://doi.org/10.54561/prj1102217a>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Catholic News Agency (CNA). (2023, February 20). Bishops in Malawi declare “Blessings for same-sex unions of any kind are not permitted.” Catholic News Agency. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/256327/bishops-in-malawi-declare-blessings-for-same-sex-unions-of-any-kind-are-not-permitted>
- Coppen, L. (2023, December 21). African bishops v. “Fiducia supplicans.” *The Pillar*. <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/african-bishops-v-fiducia-supplicans>
- Culhane, J. G. (1999). Same-sex marriage: The depth of the opposition and the importance of victory. *Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association*, 3(3), 103–108. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1022296229405>
- Cunningham, M. T. (2005). Catholics and the ConCon: The Church's response to the Massachusetts gay marriage decision. *Journal of Church and State*, 47(1), 19–42. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/47.1.19>
- Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. (2023, December 18). Declaration Fiducia supplicans on the pastoral meaning of blessings (18 December 2023). Vatican Press. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddd_doc_20231218_fiducia-supplicans_en.html
- Onyalla, D. B. (2023, December 21). Catholic bishops in Africa consult “to provide unequivocal clarity” on Fiducia supplicans. *ACI Africa*. <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/9878/catholic-bishops-in-africa-consult-to-provide-unequivocal-clarity-on-fiducia-supplicans>
- Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM). (2023, December 19). Clarification on the Declaration on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings Fiducia supplicans. <https://katholisches.info/2023/12/20/malawis-bischoefe-lehnen-fiducia-supplicans-ab>
- Emefu, C. C. (2024). Fiducia supplicans and same-sex union: A canonical appraisal. *SIST Journal of Religion and Humanities*, 4(1).
- Frost, D. M., & Fingerhut, A. W. (2016). Daily exposure to negative campaign messages decreases same-sex couples' psychological and relational well-being. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 19(4), 477–492. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430216642028>





- Ganjour, O., & Widmer, E. D. (2019). Macrostructural conditions of early versus late institutional inclusion of same-sex couples in the family: An international comparison. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 15(5), 415–428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428x.2018.1550457>
- Hagan, N., & Civettini, W. (2009). Same-sex unions: Do theories of marriage apply? <https://doi.org/10.17077/etd.93jftpu1>
- Herdt, G., & Kertzner, R. (2006). I do, but I can't: The impact of marriage denial on the mental health and sexual citizenship of lesbians and gay men in the United States. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 3(1), 33–49. <https://doi.org/10.1525/rsrp.2006.3.1.33>
- Hilpert, K. (2021). Same-sex partnership and marriage. In “Who am I to judge?": Homosexuality and the Catholic Church (p. 235).
- Kamazima, S. R., Mbishi, J. V., Saronga, H. P., & Bakar, S. S. (2021, August). Female same-sex legal status and its implications to women who have sex with women's health and well-being in Tanzania: A public health lens. *Current Journal of Applied Science and Technology*, 26–35. <https://doi.org/10.9734/cjast/2021/v40i1931453>
- Kaoma, K. (2016). The Vatican anti-gender theory and sexual politics: An African response. *Religion and Gender*, 6(2), 282–292. <https://doi.org/10.18352/rg.10180>
- Keenan, J. F. (2017). Receiving *Amoris Laetitia*. *Theological Studies*, 78(1), 193–212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563916681995>
- Kuźelewska, E., & Michalczyk-Wliziło, M. (2021). Same-sex marriage and the Catholic Church in Europe: Any chance for understanding? *Studies in Logic, Grammar and Rhetoric*, 66(2), 267–281. <https://doi.org/10.2478/slgr-2021-0015>
- Lawler, M. G., & Salzman, T. A. (2022). Pope Francis, civil unions, and same-sex marriage: Theological reflections. *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 87(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00211400211060630>
- McTavish, J. (2024). *Fiducia supplicans*—A bag of mixed blessings? *Ethics & Medics*, 49(1), 3–4. <https://doi.org/10.5840/em20244912>
- Merch, K. (2022). Exploring homosexuality within Catholicism. *Royal Road*, 6, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.48497/Ajn3-Hz18>
- Mikochik, S. L. 2022. “Pope Francis and Civil Unions.” *Ave Maria L. Rev.*, 20, 96.
- Mullady, B. (2011). Pope Benedict XVI on the priesthood and homosexuality. *The Linacre Quarterly*, 78(3), 294–305. <https://doi.org/10.1179/002436311803888311>
- National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NEEC). (2023, December 21). Declaration of the bishops of Cameroon on homosexuality and blessing of “homosexual couples.” <https://www.fromrome.info/2023/12/22/cameroon-bishops-conference-rejects-fiducia-supplicans-as-sign-of-downfall-of-the-west>
- O'Loughlin, M. J. (2024). Vatican decree on blessing people in same-sex or irregular relationships gets mixed global response. *America*, 230(2), 12–15.
- O'Brien, B. (2015). Reflections on the forthcoming synod. *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 104(415), 292–301.
- Otim, J. (2019, October). Early marriages in Uganda: A comparative assessment of determinants across regions. <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.2.15475/v1>
- Porche, M. V., & Purvin, D. M. (2008). “Never in our lifetime”: Legal marriage for same-sex couples in long-term relationships. *Family Relations*, 57(2), 144–159. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2008.00490.x>
- Raifman, J., Moscoe, E., Austin, S. B., Hatzenbuehler, M. L., & Galea, S. (2018). Association of state laws permitting denial of services to same-sex couples with mental distress in sexual minority adults. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 75(7), 671. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2018.0757>
- Reid, C. J. (2019). Same-sex relations and the Catholic Church: How law and doctrine have evolved, 1820–2020. *Journal of Law and Religion*, 34(2), 210–244. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jlr.2019.32>
- Roden, F. S. (2001). Queer Christian: The Catholic homosexual apologia and lesbian/gay practice. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, 6(4), 251–265. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1012213024402>
- Rostosky, S. S., Riggle, E. D. B., Rothblum, E. D., & Balsam, K. F. (2016). Same-sex couples' decisions and experiences of marriage in the context of minority stress: Interviews from a population-based longitudinal study. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 63(8), 1019–1040. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2016.1191232>
- Sherkat, D. E., de Vries, K. M., & Creek, S. (2010). Race, religion, and opposition to same-sex marriage. *Social Science Quarterly*, 91(1), 80–98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2010.00682.x>
- Tyler, J. T. (2024). How can I receive the blessing? *U.S. Catholic*, 89(4), 17–18.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). (2023). Pope responds to cardinals on blessings for homosexuals, female priests. <https://www.usccb.org/news/2023/pope-responds-cardinals-blessings-homosexuals-female-priests>





- Verrelli, S., White, F. A., Harvey, L. J., & Pulciani, M. R. (2019). Minority stress, social support, and the mental health of lesbian, gay, and bisexual Australians during the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey. *Australian Psychologist*, 54(4). <https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12380>
- Weeks, J. (2004). Same-sex partnerships. *Feminism & Psychology*, 14(1), 158–164. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353504040318>
- Yarbrough, M. W. (2015). Toward a political sociology of conjugal-recognition regimes: Gendered multiculturalism in South African marriage law. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 22(3), 456–494. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxv016>
- Yip, A. K. T. (2004). Same-sex marriage: Contrasting perspectives among lesbian, gay and bisexual Christians. *Feminism & Psychology*, 14(1), 173–180. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353504040320>
- Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB). (2023, December 20). Pastoral statement of the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB) following the publication of the declaration “Fiducia supplicans” by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. <https://infovaticana.com/blogs/cigona/tambien-la-conferencia-episcopal-de-zambia-contrala-fiducia-supplicans>

