



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
BIRMINGHAM *in* **ALABAMA**

**Bishop Steven J. Raica releases statement regarding the
Declaration on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings (*Fiducia supplicans*)**

Birmingham, AL (December 19, 2023) On Monday, December 18, 2023, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith released a Declaration on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings entitled *Fiducia supplicans*. I am grateful that Pope Francis continues to find ways to demonstrate pastoral concern for those desiring to remain close to God on their faith journey. While much will be made of the Declaration and its significance, particularly here in the U.S., please know that, after a preliminary review, the document presents no change to any doctrine of our faith, especially marriage. Rather, I find the Declaration to be a careful elaboration and a reflection of the charity, mercy, and accompaniment we should offer to all people under our pastoral care, especially those seeking the Lord's will in their lives.

Our English language sometimes lacks the technical nuance for clarity regarding blessings in certain situations today. Although it is not spelled out, pastoral blessings are better understood after carefully considering their intended meaning. When some individuals, couples and/or families request a blessing, we, as priests/deacons, should willingly impart one for the good of an individual, a couple, or a family, particularly as they seek to open their hearts and minds to understanding God's will while imploring the grace to observe it. The reception of a sacramental, like a blessing, may help a person deepen their walk as a disciple of Jesus.

Nonetheless, our desire is for all to grow on their spiritual journey. As I understand the intention of this document, it is to emphasize the generous distribution of blessings to all who rightfully request it with the purpose of fostering spiritual growth and openness to God's will.

To understand the declaration more completely, I invite you to [read](#) the Declaration and prayerfully consider the indications Pope Francis is asking us to consider.

+ *Steven J. Raica*

Most Reverend Steven J. Raica
Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama