



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on December 23, 2023

Conservative Bishops Reject Pope's Pro-LGBT Edict

Some local leaders within the Catholic Church feel the pope's latest decree regarding same-sex couples has gone too far — and they're pushing back with outright noncooperation.

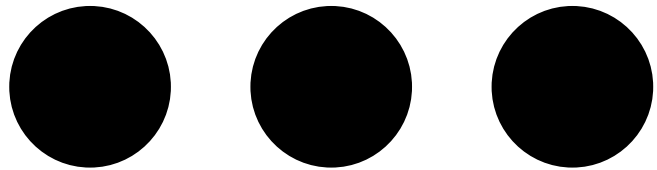
Opposition to Pope Francis' edict allowing for the church's blessing on homosexual couples has arisen in countries as diverse as Africa and Eastern Europe. As [The Wall Street Journal](#) reports, despite the direction from the papacy, bishops in Malawi and Zambia, along with Kazakhstan's principal archdiocese, banned their priests from bestowing blessings on couples of the same sex. And bishops in Ukraine are raising concerns that the wording of Francis' declaration could make it seem as though the church approves of homosexuality.

The bishops in Zambia offered three arguments for their refusal to go along with the edict: theological, legal, and cultural. They said they will prohibit same-sex relationship blessings in order 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."

This is a departure from the stance of bishops in the West. In Germany, for example, bishops voted in March to implement formal ceremonies for blessing homosexual pairings. The leader of the German Bishops' Conference, Bishop Georg Bätzing, said that he is thankful for the new guidelines, adding that the homosexual blessings should be spontaneous, not part of an official liturgy.

In the United States, opinion is divided from region to region, although the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has emphasized that the directive allowing blessings does not change the fact that Catholic doctrine still maintains marriage to be only between one man and one woman. In Chicago, Cardinal Blase Cupich declared that the pope's declaration "will help many more in our community feel the closeness and compassion of God."

Some Catholic leaders are worried that this edict will cause a fracture in the church. These voices point to the schism developing in the Anglican church over the issue of homosexuality. As [Newsmax](#) reports:



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Conservative Anglican churches, which include some in Africa where nearly half of the world's estimated 100 million Anglicans worship, have broken with sister churches that back liberal teaching and views on homosexuality. This includes the Episcopal Church in the United States.

Further, a dozen leading Anglican archbishops, mainly from the global South, called to break with the Church of England after it decided to allow blessings of gay relationships.

In publishing the edict on Monday, Pope Francis said that while the blessing of same-sex couples is now allowed, this does not mean the church endorses or encourages such relationships.

The [declaration](#) contains the following language, among other passages, justifying the decision to allow the homosexual blessings while still maintaining a pretense of devotion to man-woman marriage as the only acceptable definition of marriage ordained by God:

In order to help us understand the value of a more pastoral approach to blessings, 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.” This request should, in every way, be valued, accompanied, and received with gratitude. People who come spontaneously to ask for a blessing show by this request their sincere openness to transcendence, the confidence of their hearts that they do not trust in their own strength alone, their need for God, and their desire to break out of the narrow confines of this world, enclosed in its limitations.

... The Church, moreover, must shy away from resting its pastoral praxis on the fixed nature of certain doctrinal or disciplinary schemes, especially when they lead to “a narcissistic and authoritarian elitism, whereby instead of evangelizing, one analyzes and classifies others, and instead of opening the door to grace, one exhausts his or her energies in inspecting and verifying.” Thus, when people ask for a blessing, an exhaustive moral analysis should not be placed as a precondition for conferring it. For, those seeking a blessing should not be required to have prior moral perfection.

On Thursday, during his Christmas address to officials of the Vatican, the pontiff, without mentioning the edict directly, warned against “rigid ideological positions that often, under the guise of good intentions, separate us from reality and prevent us from moving forward.”

Francis has taken action against some of those who have criticized his declaration. Following the release of the proclamation, Cardinal Raymond Burke [said](#), “It’s unfortunately very clear that the invocation of the Holy Spirit by some has the aim of bringing forward an agenda that is more political and human than ecclesial and divine.”

Bishop Joseph Strickland, meanwhile, [wrote on X](#): “I believe Pope Francis is the Pope but it is time for me to say that I reject his program of undermining the Deposit of Faith. Follow Jesus.”

In retaliation, Francis relieved Bishop Strickland of his post as bishop of the Diocese of Tyler in Texas, and kicked Cardinal Raymond Burke out of his Rome apartment while simultaneously cutting off his salary.



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For Pope Francis, the acceptance of homosexual relationships appears to be an issue on which he is loath to tolerate disagreement.



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