



20th Sunday Ordinary Time – 20 August 2023

SAME SEX BLESSING DIVIDES CATHOLIC CHURCH IN GERMANY



Catholic priest Herbert Ullmann spent most of July on a cycling holiday around Lake Constance in southern Germany. Throughout it all, he had a nagging feeling that something was brewing back home. Returning a fortnight ago to his western German parish in Mettmann, half an hour east of Düsseldorf, Fr Ullmann found out he was headline news. The reason? The response of his church superiors

to his “mass of blessing for all loving couples” last March. It was a ceremony with a “concentrated, calm, warm atmosphere”, he recalls, with one obviously same-sex couple among around 25 heterosexual couples attending. “It was about blessing and showing respect for all forms of responsible partnerships among people of goodwill,” he told *The Irish Times*. While other German Catholic bishops have turned a blind eye to similar services in their dioceses, many widely reported in the media, things worked out differently for Fr Ullmann. Someone attending the ceremony in March tipped off the Vatican, he believes. How is so he sure? “Rome knew details about the ceremony that were in no newspaper report,” said Fr Ullmann. “There is always a small number of people in any parish with their ‘deep concerns’ who creep to Rome. It’s less than five per cent, but they are very spiteful.” Exactly a month after the March ceremony, the Holy See intervened through the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacrament - the oversight body for Catholic liturgy and sacraments. It contacted the archdiocese of Cologne, responsible for the parish of Mettmann. In turn the archdiocese general vicar Guido Assmann reminded Fr Ullmann of Catholic teaching, renewed in 2021, which excludes same-sex couples from any blessing or sacraments because homosexual acts - with no prospect of procreation - are “intrinsically disordered”. “Individuals can always be blessed regardless of disposition and life status,” added the general vicar in a letter. Catholic priests should stay clear of any such blessing services as they were likely to “cause confusion among the faithful about the teachings of the church”. For Fr Ullmann his service, agreed with the local parish committee, was a pilot project that responded to the real needs on the ground of his parishioners. The priest told his superiors he hoped that such outreach events might even help lessen departures from the church. A record 522,000 left Catholic Church in Germany last year. With 20.9 million members, the Catholic Church has lost more than a tenth of its following - nearly 2.4 million people - in the last decade. After the story became public this month, Fr Ullmann said his vow of obedience to his local archbishop, Cardinal Woelki of Cologne, precludes him from carrying out such blessing services in the future. But he promises that “this issue isn’t over yet”. His parish is working on new plans and “they know they can count on me pastorally and theologically”. The campaign group #OutinChurch has accused Cardinal Woelki of operating a “church of fear”, breaking a promise he made in March not to sanction anyone for such blessing ceremonies. Cardinal Woelki is a leading opponent in Germany of liberal Catholics’ reform demands - including an end to celibacy, the ordination of women and blessing services for homosexuals. Pope Francis has so far pushed back against German reform efforts and, in October, will open a gathering of world church representatives to discuss reform and renewal in a so-called “synod on synodality”. In a statement, the archdiocese of Cologne said Cardinal Woelki was “aware of the deep desire of same-sex couples for a church blessing and has great understanding for their struggle”. If the world synod changes its position on same-sex couples, a spokesman said, Cardinal Woelki “would of course follow suit”. For Fr Ullmann, a trained historian, the row over his blessing service reveals less about him and much more about senior Catholic clergy. “We have bishops and cardinals, many of whom with little or no pastoral experience and no grounding in people’s real concerns,” he said. “And the bureaucracy in Rome . . . is increasingly saying ‘it’s immaterial who the pope is under us because our system functions as it is’. They have a panicked fear of any kind of synodal understanding of Catholicism.”

Courtesy Derek Scally –The Irish Times

Change in Sunday Masses

From Sunday 3rd September there will be one Sunday Mass in each parish.

James’s St: 10am

Meath St: 11am

Francis St: 12 noon

There is a 6.30pm mass on Saturday in James’s Street and a 6pm Mass on Saturday in Francis Street. These will remain in place until the beginning of December when we re-assess the situation



Meath Street Revamp

A step forward for council plans to revamp Meath Street, widening footpaths, adding trees, reducing parking. Dublin City Council has started a public consultation as part of the process of applying to itself for planning permission.



Free Concert

It’s the final performance of the season by St George’s Brass Band this Sunday 20th August at 2:30pm in St Audoen’s Park. Come and join us for some chilled out classics and favourites from the movies. Free.



Care for Creation

1st of September is the annual day to pray, reflect and act to care for God’s creation. Established by Pope Francis in 2015.

20TH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Penitential Rite

As we begin our celebration, let us remember the inclusive love of God.

For our lack of compassion and welcome.
Lord have mercy

For our willingness to exclude those who are different.
Christ have mercy

For our failure to see you in the poor & marginalised.
Lord have mercy

May our great and gracious Lord, who has conquered selfishness, have mercy on us, forgive us our sin and bring us to life everlasting. Amen

Isaiah 56:1. 6-7

Thus says the Lord: Have a care for justice, act with integrity, for soon my salvation will come and my integrity be manifest. Foreigners who have attached themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love his name and be his servants - all who observe the sabbath, not profaning it, and cling to my covenant - these I will bring to my holy mountain. I will make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their holocausts and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.

Romans 11:13-15. 29-32

Let me tell you pagans this: I have been sent to the pagans as their apostle, and I am proud of being sent, but the purpose of it is to make my own people envious of you, and in this way save some of them. Since their rejection meant the reconciliation of the world, do you know what their admission will mean? Nothing less than a resurrection from the dead! God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice. Just as you changed from being disobedient to God, and now enjoy mercy because of their disobedience, so those who are disobedient now - and only because of the mercy shown to you - will also enjoy mercy eventually. God has imprisoned all men in their own disobedience only to show mercy to all mankind.

Alleluia, alleluia!
The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice, says the Lord, I know them and they follow me. Alleluia!

Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus left Genesaret and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, 'Sir, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a

devil.' But he answered her not a word. And his disciples went and pleaded with him. 'Give her what she wants,' they said 'because she is shouting after us.' He said in reply, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel'. But the woman had come up and was kneeling at his feet. 'Lord,' she said 'help me.' He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the house-dogs'. She retorted, 'Ah yes, sir; but even house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table'. Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again.

Prayer of the Faithful

God our Father and Mother, your love gives meaning to our lives. We bless you. Lord hear us

Lord Jesus, you are the Living, Prophetic Word of God. You challenge us to live beyond our own hopes and dreams. We bless you. Lord hear us

Holy Spirit of God, you draw us together as the People God. May we as church, embrace diversity and welcome all. Lord hear us

In a broken world, where violence, hatred and greed seem to triumph, may we have the courage to reject such thinking, and instead, live by the values of the Gospel. Lord hear us

Lord, in our personal lives, help us to proclaim your compassion, in particular for those whom society and our Church would rather forget. Lord hear us

We remember, with joy and thanksgiving, all those who have died and look to the day when we will be united again in the kingdom of God's love.
Lord hear us

In silence we call to mind, all who need our prayer and support.....Lord hear us



Reflection

The best feeling in the world is to feel wanted, part of something and valued. Being included and able to comfortably participate can really do wonders for our mental health and is something that I have really appreciated in friendships and other parts of my life. Sometimes, the little things can make all the difference to those of us who find the world just that bit more challenging to wade through.

Anonymous