

# James's Street Parish

01-4531143 - Working with Francis Street and Meath Street Parishes



Feast of the Holy Family – 31 December 2023

## POPE'S DECLARATION ALLOWING PRIESTS BLESS SAME SEX COUPLES



Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said he was "very encouraged" by Pope Francis's declaration allowing priests to bless same-sex couples. "While there is no change in doctrine, I really feel the pope's pastoral approach is making the Church a warmer place for so many people who may have felt unwanted or excluded in the past," the Taoiseach said. Mr Varadkar said he was also "grateful for

the pope's leadership on the issues of war and climate change". Former president Mary McAleese felt that, while the declaration was "nowhere near enough", it did signify "a massive climbdown by Pope Francis and the DDF [Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith]". Their comments followed publication by the Vatican of the declaration *Fiducia supplicans*, issued by the DDF and approved by Pope Francis, that "when two people request a blessing, even if their situation as a couple is 'irregular', it will be possible for the ordained minister to consent. However, this gesture of pastoral closeness must avoid any elements that remotely resemble a marriage rite." Ms McAleese described the declaration as "surely the biggest and hastiest change of teaching ever" in the Catholic Church, noting that in March 2021, the Vatican "banned such blessings in perpetuity because God, according to DDF, cannot bless sin, and gay married Catholics are, in its view, incapable of receiving or expressing God's grace". The language, she said, was "vile, homophobic and preposterous, but Francis freely signed it. There was uproar around the world and both Belgium and Germany moved to offer priestly blessings to gay married couples." The declaration was "not a complete U-turn", she said. It was a case of Pope Francis "reluctantly and very tentatively following the lead of the wealthy German Church and the influential Belgian Church, both of whom have shown determination to face down outmoded, untenable Church teaching and practices which are draining the Church of its lifeblood... faithful people". Ursula Halligan of the We are Church group felt the declaration was "a small step in the right direction", but was so circumscribed by conditions that it was "mean, stingy, and grudging" in ways that blessings from God would not be. Same-sex couples in committed loving relationships were expected to go "skulking around a corner" where a priest could offer a blessing. The Vatican, she said, "will keep tying itself in knots until it faces core issues around the person and human sexuality" and takes on board the insights of science, psychology and theology. LGBT Ireland welcomed the declaration as a "step forward", but felt "LGBTQI+ people are still not equal in the eyes of the Vatican, and the blessings come with many terms and conditions that effectively 'other' same-sex unions". It hoped for "further moves to enact changes to fully welcome those members of the LGBTQI+ community who are interested into the Church". Theologian Gina Menzies noted how "the German Church has been doing these blessings for some time and some clergy here too". Besides, "the Church has been blessing animals, houses, all sorts, for centuries", she said. The Association of Catholic Priests welcomed the declaration as "a major shift by the church in response to same-sex couples and to couples in irregular unions". It commended "the bravery of Pope Francis." Fr Tim Hazelwood, of the ACP leadership team, said it would be "a great relief and support to priests who are sensitive and supportive to the pastoral and spiritual needs of same-sex couples and couples in irregular unions". Fr Tony Flannery, co-founder of the ACP, was "very happy" at the declaration, which was consistent with the general approach of Pope Francis, "in that he constantly emphasises the pastoral rather than the dogmatic". He noted how, increasingly, issues for which he himself had been removed from ministry in 2012 "are becoming official Church positions - and yet nobody in authority in the Church seems interested in doing anything about my situation".

*Courtesy Patsy McGarry, - Irish Times*

## Whitefriars Greening Strategy

An ambitious masterplan to 'green' the urban blocks between Bride Street and Aungier Street has been unveiled by Dublin City Council Parks, Biodiversity & Landscape Services. The Whitefriars Greening Strategy follows on the heels of a similar plan in The Liberties, which has seen new parks, street tree planting and new public spaces developed in recent years. The initial projects in the Strategy focus on streets such as Whitefriars Place, Bishop Street and Peter Street and Peter Row. The measures includes street tree planting, landscape features, vertical greening. The ambition is also to improve amenity, by adding seating; creating opportunities for incidental play; and also marking heritage and local archaeological features.



## Eucharistic Service and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

On Fridays there will be a Eucharistic Service at 10am followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament till 12noon, here in James's Street Parish.



## Free Walking Tour Guide

The Liberties Weavers have created and published a new free walking tour of The Liberties that celebrates the area's rich weaving and textile tradition. It features three interconnected routes and over 30 points of interest. The map can be downloaded [here](#).

## FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

### 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 and 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

### Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

The Lord honours the father in his children, and upholds the rights of a mother over her sons. Whoever respects their father is atoning for their sins, they who honour their mother is like someone amassing a fortune. Whoever respects their father will be happy with children of their own, they shall be heard on the day when they pray. Long life comes to those who honour their father, those who set their mother at ease are showing obedience to the Lord. My children, support your father in his old age, do not grieve him during his life. Even if his mind should fail, show him sympathy, do not despise him in your health and strength; for kindness to a father shall not be forgotten but will serve as reparation for your sins.

### Colossians 3:12-17

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful. Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Alleluia, alleluia!

May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, let the message of Christ find a home in you. Alleluia!

### Luke 2:22-40

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now

in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: 'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.' As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.' There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

### Prayer of the Faithful

Loving God, you stepped into time to become one of us, and one with us. We praise you. Lord hear us

Lord Jesus, you are our guiding star, our light in the darkness of our lives. We praise you. Lord hear us

Holy Spirit, you call us to be God's Family. You guide us to new beginnings and challenging ways of living. We praise you. Lord hear us

As we remember those who have died, we are reminded of the cycle of life, beginning in God's love and ending in God's love. May we be united again in your Kingdom. Lord hear us

May the Church be accepting of all people and especially those families who are different. Lord hear us

In silence we remember those who need our prayer and support.....Lord hear us

### Reflection

Look to this Day, for it is Life - the very Life of Life. In its brief course lie all the truths and realities of our existence: the Bliss of Growth, the Glory of Action, the Splendour of Beauty.

For yesterday is already a dream  
and tomorrow is only a vision;  
but today, well-lived,  
makes every yesterday a dream of happiness  
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.  
Look well, therefore, to this Day.