

**Homily for Prayers of Supplication and Exorcism
in Reparation for the Sin of Same-Sex Marriage**

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**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are gathered here today in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception for a special Holy Hour before the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament to participate in “Prayers of Supplication and Exorcism in Reparation for the Sin of Same-Sex Marriage.” I wish to preface my reflections by saying that I am conducting this prayer service and am speaking to you now with great reluctance. I did not seek to enter any controversy and I don’t relish being part of one. But I have given this matter a great deal of thought and prayer, which has led me to the conviction that God is calling me to speak out and conduct these prayers.

In our prayers, we must be open to hear where God is leading us and to embrace the path that He offers. That is a much different starting point than beginning with our own wants, desires, and conclusions. That is why we pray every day, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Our prayers at this time are prompted by the fact that the Governor of Illinois today is signing into Illinois law the redefinition of civil marriage, introducing not only an unprecedented novelty into our state law, but also institutionalizing an objectively sinful reality.

It is not hateful to say that an immoral action is sinful. On the contrary, the most compassionate thing we can do is help people to turn away from sin. To ignore another person's wrongful actions is a sign of apathy or indifference, while fraternal correction is motivated by love for that person's well-being, as can be seen by the fact that our Lord Jesus himself urged such correction.¹ Indeed, the call to repentance is at the heart of the Gospel, as Jesus proclaimed, "The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Good News" (Mark 1:15).

The Good News is that God's mercy and forgiveness extend to those who repent. Mercy does not mean approving of something that is sinful, but does absolve the wrongdoer after a change of heart takes place in the sinner through the gift of God's grace. It is not the Church that must change to conform its teachings to the views of the world, but it is each individual who is called to be configured to Christ.

As we heard in the Gospel passage that was just read, Jesus tells His disciples, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation. . . . Signs like these will accompany those who have professed their faith: they will use my name to expel demons” (Mark 16:15-17). Thus it is through the power of Jesus that evil is displaced from our hearts and is replaced by divine love. This change of heart involves a spiritual battle that is not easily won, but in which we receive the assistance of angels, under the leadership of Saint Michael the Archangel (cf. Daniel 12:1-3). We need not fear this battle, for Christ has conquered sin and death, and in Christ rests our hope of final victory.

As such, I do not stand here before you as a self-righteous saint who has achieved spiritual perfection, but as a sinner who has received Jesus into his heart as his Lord and Savior. To acknowledge one’s sinfulness is indeed the starting point of what it means to be a Christian. However, our Christian identity does not end with this admission of sin, but finds its salvation in accepting the saving grace of our Most Holy Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on the cross to forgive our sins and rose from the dead to lead us to the reward of eternal life in His Kingdom. Our

second reading from Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians affirms this: "It is in Christ and through His blood that we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God's favor to us" (Ephesians 1:7).

Pope Francis expressed this essential message in his recent interview published in various Jesuits publications in these words: "The most important thing is the first proclamation: Jesus Christ has saved you. And the ministers of the church must be ministers of mercy above all. The confessor, for example, is always in danger of being either too much of a rigorist or too lax. Neither is merciful, because neither of them really takes responsibility for the person. The rigorist washes his hands so that he leaves it to the commandment. The loose minister washes his hands by simply saying, 'This is not a sin' or something like that. In pastoral ministry we must accompany people, and we must heal their wounds."²

This is a key point which the secularists are missing: they think that stressing God's mercy means that sins are no longer sins. On the contrary, God's mercy is a great gift of grace precisely because sins *are* sins and they call for repentance and forgiveness.

Note from the interview, when he was asked to describe himself, Pope Francis said simply, "I am a sinner." After a brief pause, he amplifies this self-identity in the understanding of a Christian who has been saved by Christ, saying, "I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon."³

This is not the first time that I have offered prayers of repentance here in our Cathedral. On December 12, 2011, I offered a service of "Repentance and Prayer for those Harmed in the Church," at which I said, "I express repentance for the sins of the members of the Church who have harmed others. Sometimes these harms were evil in themselves, such as the sins of racism and the sexual abuse of minors, as well as other forms of unchastity. At other times, the harms may have been done in the context of actions that were in themselves not sinful and may even have been necessary for pastoral or economic reasons, such as the closing of a church or school, but nevertheless were done in a way that was insensitive to the feelings of those who would be affected. Therefore we pray for all those who have been harmed." This prayer service was modeled along the lines of Pope John Paul II's "Day of Pardon" held on the First Sunday of Lent, March 12, 2000, as part of the observation of the Great Jubilee of the new

millennium, in which Pope John Paul II said that the Church “should kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters.”

While prayers of supplication in reparation for sin may be easily understood as our pleas and entreaties to God for forgiveness of sins and deliverance from temptation, the meaning of the term “exorcism” in the title of this prayer service is not so readily apparent and requires some explanation. Indeed, some have ridiculed our Church’s use of this ancient religious practice.⁴ We must remember the encouragement of Pope Saint Leo the Great, who said over 1,500 years ago, “The Church is not diminished by persecutions, but rather increased.”⁵ It should also be noted that the bill that the Governor is signing today is called the “Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act,” which purportedly provides that “the Act does not interfere with any religious beliefs about marriage.”⁶

Perhaps a large part of the negative reaction is because most people don’t know what the Church teaches about exorcism, since they get their misleading information and sensational ideas on this mainly from Hollywood. The fact is that a “minor exorcism” takes place in every

Baptism and Confirmation ceremony when we renounce Satan and all his works and empty promises. This prayer service will be along those lines. I'm not saying that anyone involved in the redefinition of marriage is possessed by the devil, which, if that were the case, would require the remedy of a "Major Exorcism," but all of us are certainly subject to the devil's evil influences and in need of protection and deliverance from evil.

Our prayer service today and my words are not meant to demonize anyone, but are intended to call attention to the diabolical influences of the devil that have penetrated our culture, both in the state and in the Church. These demonic influences are not readily apparent to the undiscerning eye, which is why they are so deceptive. A helpful resource in this regard is a recent book by Father Louis J. Cameli, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, called *The Devil You Don't Know: Recognizing and Resisting Evil in Everyday Life*. While the popular tendency may be to identify the devil only with his extraordinary activity, which is diabolical possession, Father Cameli writes about the ordinary work of the devil: deception, division, diversion and discouragement.⁷

The deception of the Devil in same-sex marriage may be understood by recalling the words of Pope Francis when he faced a similar situation as Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 2010. Regarding the proposed redefinition of civil marriage in Argentina, then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio wrote on June 22, 2010, “The Argentine people must face, in the next few weeks, a situation whose result may gravely harm the family. It is the bill on matrimony of persons of the same sex. The identity of the family, and its survival, are in jeopardy here: father, mother, and children. The life of so many children who will be discriminated beforehand due to the lack of human maturity that God willed them to have with a father and a mother is in jeopardy. A clear rejection of the law of God, engraved in our hearts, is in jeopardy. . . . Let us not be naive: it is not a simple political struggle; it is an intention [which is] destructive of the plan of God. It is not a mere legislative project (this is a mere instrument), but rather a ‘move’ of the father of lies who wishes to confuse and deceive the children of God.”⁸

The Pope’s reference to the “father of lies” comes from the Gospel of John (8:44), where Jesus refers to the devil as “a liar and the father of lies.”

So Pope Francis is saying that same-sex “marriage” comes from the devil and should be condemned as such.

Another major deception or distortion of marriage is the view that it is not ultimately about generating life, but rather is mainly about a romantic relationship designed for individual (not even mutual) fulfillment. That distorted understanding cuts across opposite-sex marriage and same-sex marriage proponents in our culture. We are all summoned to reflect more deeply on the truth of marriage.

It is also a deception to say that there will be no adverse effects on children being brought up in the household of a same-sex couple.⁹

The division brought about by the Devil due to same-sex marriage may be seen in the way our society, our families and our friendships have become so divided and polarized over this issue.

The diversion of the Devil in same-sex marriage may be seen in the fact that so much of our time, energy and resources are being spent in addressing this issue, when there are more pressing needs facing our state and our Church.

The work of discouragement by the Devil in same-sex marriage is apparent in the message being conveyed to defenders of traditional marriage that the universal redefinition of marriage is unstoppable, so we might as well just stop trying. But the legalization of abortion on demand forty years ago did not silence those who believe that abortion is contrary to God's law. On the contrary, *Roe v. Wade* only heightened the need for more concerted efforts to protect all human life from conception to natural death. So, too, the legal redefinition of civil marriage does not put an end to the need for discourse and action to defend natural marriage in accord with God's plan, but only serves to heighten the need for greater efforts in this regard.

The Prayers for "Supplication and Exorcism Which May Be Used in Particular Circumstances of the Church" are taken from the Appendices to the 2004 Latin edition of the Rite of Exorcism, the introduction to which explains, "The presence of the Devil and other demons appears and exists not only in the tempting or tormenting of persons, but also in the penetration of things and places in a certain manner by their activity, and in various forms of opposition to and persecution of the Church. If the

Diocesan Bishop, in particular situations, judges it appropriate to announce gatherings of the faithful for prayer, under the leadership and direction of a Priest, elements for arranging a rite of supplication may be taken from [the texts provided in these appendices].”

Same-sex marriage is contrary to the plan of God, as described in the Bible, when Jesus cites the Book of Genesis in asking the Pharisees, “Have you not read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female and declared, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall become as one?’ Thus they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined.”¹⁰

Since the legal redefinition of marriage is contrary to God’s plan, those who contract civil same-sex marriage are culpable of serious sin. Politicians responsible for enacting civil same-sex marriage legislation are morally complicit as co-operators in facilitating this grave sin. We must pray for forgiveness of these sins and deliverance from this evil which has penetrated our state and our Church. The Church stands ready to extend God’s mercy to those who confess their sins with true repentance and a firm purpose of amendment in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.¹¹

We must also affirm the teaching of the Catholic Church that homosexual persons “must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God’s will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.”¹² The Church loves homosexual persons and looks upon them with compassion, offering assistance through support groups such as the Courage Apostolate to live in accord with the virtue of chastity.¹³ Indeed, all people are called to chastity, which for a man and woman united in matrimony means for the husband and wife to be faithful to each other.

In conclusion, I quote from a homily given in the second century: “Let me say also that when we are given a warning and corrected for doing something wrong, we should not be so foolish as to take offense and be angry. There are times when we are unconscious of the sins we commit because our hearts are fickle, lacking in faith. Futile desires becloud our minds. We need to pull ourselves up, therefore, because our very salvation is at stake. Those who keep God’s commandments will have reason to

rejoice. For a short time in this world they may have to suffer, but they will rise again and their reward will endure for ever. No one who holds God in reverence should grieve over the hardships of this present time, for a time of blessedness awaits him. He will live again in heaven in the company of all those who have gone before him; for all eternity he will rejoice, never to know sorrow again.”¹⁴

May God give us this grace. Amen.

NOTES

¹ Gospel of St. Matthew 18:15: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault."

² <http://www.americamagazine.org/pope-interview>.

³ http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20130919_1.htm.

⁴ <http://voices.suntimes.com/early-and-often/politics/calling-calvin-klein-what-to-wear-to-an-exorcism/>.

⁵ From a sermon by Saint Leo the Great, Pope, *Liturgy of the Hours*, Office of Readings for the Memorial of the Dedication of the Baslicas of Saints Peter and Paul.

⁶ <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocNum=178&GAID=10&DocTypeID=HB&LegId=40195&SessionID=76>.

⁷ Father Louis J. Cameli, *The Devil You Don't Know: Recognizing and Resisting Evil in Everyday Life* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2011).

⁸ <http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2013/03/letter-of-cardinal-bergoglio-to.html>.

⁹ See the New Family Structures Study of the University of Texas, 2011, <http://www.familystructurestudies.com/>.

¹⁰ Matthew 19:4-6, citing Genesis 1:27 and 2:24; cf. Mark 10:6-9.

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, "Confession must be Humble, Complete, and Accompanied by a Firm Purpose of Amendment," letter to Cardinal William W. Baum, Major Penitentiary, dated March 22, 1996, published in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, April 10 1996, available online at: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP960322.HTM>.

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2358.

¹³ <http://www.couragerc.net/>.

¹⁴ From a homily written in the second century, *Liturgy of the Hours*, Office of Readings, Saturday of the Thirty-Second Week in Ordinary Time.