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Fr. Williams Apologizes for Nature of Same-Sex Couple Blessing

Chicago, Ill.—Fr. Joseph Williams, C.M., Pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Chicago, Ill., is offering an apology for the nature of a blessing he performed for a same-sex couple at his church on April 21. A video of this event began circulating online shortly thereafter. Specifically, he said he regrets the language of the blessing and the use of vestments and the church itself, which he now recognizes were a violation of the norms approved by the Church.

While Pope Francis in December formally approved the blessing of couples in irregular situations and same-sex couples, he specified that such blessings do not equate to a wedding and should not employ the clothing and gestures that accompany a wedding. Fr. Williams stated that he performed the blessing after being approached by the couple and explained to them at the time it would merely be a blessing and not a wedding itself.

“The shape that the blessing took as portrayed in the video came about due to my attempt to provide for them a meaningful moment of God’s grace,” Fr. Williams said. “I wanted to do it well. A week or so after the fact, I viewed the video. I immediately realized that I had made a very poor decision in the words and visuals captured on the video.”

Fr. Williams said that the experience has been a valuable learning experience for him.

“I am deeply sorry for any confusion and/or anger that this has caused, particularly for the People of God,” he said.

Fr. Williams is a member of the Congregation of the Mission Western Province, which is headquartered in St. Louis, Mo.

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