

### When did this happen?

On Ash Wednesday 2016, while addressing his “Missionaries of Mercy,” Pope Francis said: “If someone comes to you and feels something must be removed from him, but perhaps he is unable to say it, but you understand ... it’s all right, he says it this way, with the gesture of coming. First condition. Second, he is repentant. If someone comes to you it is because he doesn’t want to fall into these situations, but he doesn’t dare say it, he is afraid to say it and then not be able to do it. But if he cannot do it, *ad impossibila nemo tenetur* [no one is held to do the impossible]. And the Lord understands these things, the language of gestures. Have open arms, to understand what is inside that heart that cannot be said or said this way ... somewhat because of shame ... you understand me. You must receive everyone with the language with which they can speak.” Unfortunately, Pope Francis’ admonition is contrary to infallible Catholic doctrine.

### How is this contrary to doctrine?

All Sacraments are composed of matter and form. The Council of Trent teaches that there are three acts required by the penitent for valid confession: contrition, *confession* and satisfaction. The actual confessing our sins to the priest constitutes the proximate *matter* of the Sacrament, while the formula of absolution constitutes the *form*. Pope Francis effectively claims that in some circumstances, it is permissible to reduce confession to the form only, and dispense with or “reinterpret” the matter by means of a vague “language of gestures.” Such a proposal is unheard of in Church history, and opens the door to invalid Confession.

### Why does Pope Francis do this?

Once again, this is an error by excess in the name of Mercy. In his book, *The Name of God is Mercy*, Pope Francis encourages priests to be as generous as possible in granting absolutions. He recounts a scene from a novel where a priest hears the confession of a German soldier sentenced to death who indulged in sins against the sixth commandment. The soldier indicates that he probably cannot be granted absolution because he is attached to these sins and is not sorry for them. The priest then asks, “But are you sorry that you are not sorry?” The soldier says he is, and the priest absolves. Pope Francis relates this by way of instruction, encouraging priests to be as benevolent as possible in the confessional. Whatever one may think of this story, Pope Francis extends his zeal for mercy beyond the bounds of Catholic doctrine when he goes on to suggest that a priest may absolve without even knowing what are the penitent’s sins.

Also, as a quick aside: In both his Papal Bull and his book on Mercy, Pope Francis never alludes to the worldwide crisis of Faith as a topic of concern, nor does he ever mention the danger of hell.

### Are there any more examples of anomalies?

The examples are numerous. So much so that on March 11 *Reuters* noted: “Three years after the election of Pope Francis, Roman Catholic conservatives are growing increasingly worried that he is quietly unraveling the legacy of his predecessors ... Conservatives worry that behind the gentle façade lies a dangerous reformer who is diluting Catholic teaching on moral issues like homosexuality and divorce while focusing on social problems such as climate change and economic inequality.”

The liberal Cardinal Kasper, a friend and admirer of Pope Francis (and who knows Francis’ mind), recently published a book titled, *Pope Francis’ Revolution of Tenderness and Love*, where he explains this “revolution of mercy” may lead to a less rigid and more “creative” exercise of various Catholic practices. Yet in the name of “inclusiveness,” “mercy,” “encounter,” and “going out to the peripheries,” Pope Francis exceeds some of the bounds of what Catholic doctrine and discipline permit. This exacerbates today’s worldwide crisis of Faith, and is a shocking means of subversion. What could be more cynical than to use the beautiful virtue of mercy as a means to cloak more modernist revolution?

### How do we judge what is right?

Genuine Catholic doctrine must always be the ultimate standard for all Catholic activity, whether it be works of mercy, moral discipline or the priest in the confessional. Once we shift our basis from immutable doctrine to a “from the heart” approach, which over-emphasizes mercy, compassion and inclusiveness, we lose our grip on the universal, binding, immutable norms of morality. We drift into an evolutionist situationism wherein various aspects of Church practice will change from age to age – or even from decade to decade.

This instability is evident in Pope Francis’ reign, for Francis has always belonged to the progressivist faction within the post-Conciliar Church. On March 29, 2015, Cardinal Ludwig Müller, Prefect for the Vatican’s Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, told *La Croix* that Pontificates such as John XXIII and Pope Francis are lacking in “theological structure.” Likewise Cardinal Raymond Burke, former head of the Roman Rota, lamented the Church under Pope Francis is like a “ship without a rudder.”

### What do we do?

We must first keep the Catholic Faith “whole and entire,” as we are commanded by the Athanasian Creed, without any change of novelty. St. Pius X, enemy of Modernism, insisted that love of novelty must be foreign to the priest as well as to the layman.

We recall the great 16th Century Dominican theologian, Francisco de Vitoria, who taught along with St. Robert Bellarmine, Francisco Suarez, and other great doctors of the Church: “[The Pope] does not have the power to destroy. Therefore, if there is evidence that he is doing so, it is licit to resist him. The result is that if the Pope is destroying the Church by his orders and actions, he can be resisted and the execution of his mandates prevented.” These and similar points were often reiterated by Father Nicholas Gruner.

We also follow the Fatima mandate to “pray a great deal for the Holy Father.”

### And what of Genuine Mercy?

Look to Our Lady as the model of mercy: *Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope*. She is indeed our model for the practicing of the Corporal and Spiritual works of mercy. Was not Her spectacular Miracle of the Sun at Fatima a dramatic means of instructing the ignorant and counseling the doubtful?

At Fatima, She stressed mercy for sinners, along with the need for the daily Rosary, Five First Saturdays of Reparation, prayer and sacrifice. “Many souls go to hell,” lamented Our Holy Mother, “because they have no one to pray and make sacrifices for them.”

She presented Her message of mercy not as a means to change Catholic practice in any way. Rather, She consistently reaffirmed the traditional doctrine of the Church, understood as Vatican I teaches, “in the same meaning and in the same explanation” of what the Church always taught throughout the centuries.

Our Lady’s words and actions of Fatima present a remedy to the defects of our sinful world and demonstrate genuine compassion to souls, especially to those “most in need.”

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# Genuine Mercy & Counterfeit Compassion



Picture Depicts Four of the Spiritual Works of Mercy  
Clockwise from the top: Instruct the Ignorant; Comfort the Afflicted; Pray for the Living and the Dead; Counsel the Doubtful.

Some questions with answers in  
relation to the “Year of Mercy”

## How do we regard the virtue of mercy?

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that Charity is the greatest virtue. “But of all the virtues which relate to our neighbor,” he explains, “mercy is the greatest.” Yet mercy understood in a sentimental manner, which does not encompass the totality of Catholic doctrine and morals, is a counterfeit mercy detrimental to souls.

## Where do we find the model of true mercy?

We find it in Our Lord, and exemplified in a special way in Our Blessed Mother. The *Hail Holy Queen* names Our Lady as “Mother of Mercy.”

## Can you elaborate?

Writing on the *Hail Holy Queen*, Saint Alphonsus de Liguori notes the title of Queen of Mercy “implies kindness to the poor and solicitude for them. It is different from the title of empress, which usually denotes severity and rigor.” St. Alphonsus continues: “The greatness of kings and queens consists in helping the unfortunate. Tyrants have their own good in view; kings should look to the good of their subjects. That is why kings, when they are consecrated, have their heads anointed with oil. Oil is a symbol of mercy, and signifies that when a king governs, he should, before all else, be kind and compassionate to his subjects.”

## What is true mercy?

The eminent moralists Fathers McHugh and Callan teach: “Mercy is an inclination of the will to relieve the misery of another; it follows from charity ... for he who loves his neighbor as a friend in God must grieve over the latter’s sorrows as if they were his own.”

Mere natural pity or sensible distress at another’s suffering does not constitute the virtue of mercy in its fullness. Rather, *supernatural* mercy arises from the love of charity for one suffering. Within this supernatural context, the exercise of mercy consists first, of pity for our neighbor suffering some defect; second, actions on our part to remedy defects and heal wounds.

## What then is a work of mercy?

The Church has taught throughout the centuries there are seven Corporal Works of Mercy and seven Spiritual Works of Mercy.

## What are the Corporal Works of Mercy?

The Corporal Works of Mercy are: 1) To feed the hungry; 2) to give drink to the thirsty; 3) to clothe the naked; 4) to harbor the stranger; 5) to visit the sick; 6) to ransom the captive; 7) to bury the dead.

These works must always be exercised according to reason and prudence. One is not expected, for example, to harbor the stranger if it would result in a serious disruption to family life, or if one has reason to believe the stranger constitutes any sort of danger.

## What are the Spiritual Works of Mercy?

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are: 1) To instruct the ignorant; 2) to counsel the doubtful; 3) to admonish the sinners; 4) to bear wrongs patiently; 5) to forgive offenses willingly; 6) to comfort the afflicted; 7) to pray for the living and the dead.

These too must be exercised according to the virtue of prudence. For example, with respect to *admonishing the sinner*, the eminent catechist Father Francis Spirago teaches: “We must admonish our neighbor with gentleness and charity. The greater the gentleness and tact wherein a correction is administered, the more effect it produces.”

## Is a true work of mercy a kind of remedy?

Yes. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy conform to what is said above: mercy includes true pity and an effective remedy for the defect. The works of feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty clearly demonstrate this aspect of “remedy.” Likewise, with the spiritual works, we *remedy* the defect of ignorance when we instruct the ignorant and we *remedy* the confusion of uncertainty when we instruct the doubtful. A true work of mercy consists in a genuine cure, not a counterfeit remedy.

## What do you mean by counterfeit remedy?

A counterfeit remedy is manifest when the so-called work of mercy fails to remedy the principal defect, but addresses a substitute defect that leaves the principal defect intact. Modernist churchmen, even at the highest level, who wish to change established Church discipline to accommodate those living in sinful lifestyles, exhibit the counterfeit. This aberration was on display at the 2014 and 2015 Synods on the Family, wherein radical prelates – such as Cardinal Walter Kasper – proposed that divorced and remarried Catholics be allowed to receive the Eucharist while remaining in their adulterous union. This proposal is advanced under the false notion of a more compassionate (more “merciful”) pastoral approach.

## Why is this a counterfeit mercy?

A counterfeit is something that resembles the real thing but is not the genuine coin. The alleged “new pastoral solution” for those living sinful lifestyles has the appearance of mercy, as it does seek to remedy defects and

heal wounds. The problem, however, is that it seeks to heal the wrong wounds.

Rather than help those in irregular lifestyles recognize the seriousness of their condition and heal the wound of sin, the new approach seeks to heal the wound of the sinner’s hurt feelings. The divorced and remarried Catholic feels “marginalized” by a Church that cannot accept his moral choices. Thus it is the Church that must seek a creative pastoral solution that is more tolerant and inclusive by finding a way to grant such a Catholic readmission to the sacraments. This approach does not remedy the defect of the irregular marriage, but leaves the soul in grave sin, and further leads him to sacrilegious Communion.

## From where does this thinking come?

Since the time of Vatican II, modernist theologians, who run rampant due to deficiencies in Church leadership, advance a new structure that effectively elevates the subjective rights of the person over the objective moral law. In simple terms, it is a system that places human will over human nature. It places “what I want” as higher than what God decrees.

The progressivist Redemptorist Father Bernard Haring, sometimes called the “Father of Modern Moral Theology,” a key drafter of the Vatican II document *Gaudium et spes*, advanced this “person over absolute moral norms” approach, which gave rise to a kind of situation ethics inside the Church. This subsequently manifested itself in the “follow your own conscience” advice given by priests to Catholic couples who practice birth control in defiance of natural and Divine Law.

From the time of the Council to the present, countless radical moral theologians such as Father Joseph Fuchs and Father Richard McCormick advanced a kind of “consequentialism,” which effectively placed the subjective choice of the person as higher than the objective moral norm. Genuine Catholic moral teachers who insisted on the supremacy of absolute moral norms, over the subjective choices of the person, were denounced as “legalists” and “rigorists.” Traditional Catholic morality, it is claimed, puts “rules over people,” whereas a merciful and loving morality will be flexible according to the individual’s circumstances.

## Is there an example of this improper “flexibility” that eclipses true discipline?

We already alluded to what is called the “Kasper Proposal.” At the Consistory of Cardinals of February 2014, Cardinal Walter Kasper proffered that divorced and remarried Catholics, after an undefined period of

penance, be admitted to the Eucharist while remaining in their adulterous union. This was advanced in the name of “situationism” and “mercy.” Kasper claimed his “solution” was necessary “to give witness in a credible way to the Word of God in different human situations, as a message of fidelity, but also as a message of mercy, of life and of joy.”

## Did Pope Francis correct Cardinal Kasper?

This is the most disturbing part of the story. The day after Kasper’s speech, Pope Francis singled out Kasper for praise before the entire Consistory, lauding him for his “serene theology,” and rhapsodized, “this is what I call doing theology on one’s knees. Thank you. Thank you.” In April 2014, the Catholic world was further stunned to learn that Pope Francis had personally telephoned Jacqueline Sabetta Lisbona, an Argentine woman who had written to him complaining that her pastor denied her Communion because she was married to a divorced man. Lisbona reportedly said the Pope had “absolved her,” and told her she was free to receive Holy Communion, even though she promised no amendment of life.

The Vatican Press Office, to this day, does not deny the conversation occurred, but only said at the time, “the magisterium of the Church is not defined by personal phone calls.” In October 2014, Vatican journalist Sandro Magister reported that when Pope Francis was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he had “authorized the ‘curas vileros,’ the priests sent to the peripheries, to give Communion to all, although four-fifths of the couples were not even married.”

Modernist Catholics such as Hans Kung, Cardinal Kasper, and even ex-priest Leonardo Boff, praise these novel actions of Pope Francis as gestures of “inclusiveness,” and “meeting people where they are.”

Thus in the name of a counterfeit mercy, Pope Francis displays a “people over doctrine” anomaly that is foreign to the Catholic Faith of all time and opens the door to sacrilegious Communion. These actions fail to live up to the spiritual works of mercy to “instruct the ignorant,” and “admonish the sinner.”

## Are there other instances of bending of Church doctrine to accommodate the person?

Yes, serious ones. Within the context of the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis encourages Catholics to go to Confession – all well and good. Tragically, however, he undermined the very nature of the Sacrament when he recently counseled priests to, in some circumstances, grant absolution even when the person does not confess his sin.