

POPE EXPANDS FORGIVENESS PROCESS

Pope Francis has authorized an expansion of the forgiveness process for those who have had an abortion. Traditionally, when it comes to the sin of abortion, the Sacrament of Reconciliation has been the preserve of designated members of the clergy. But when the Jubilee Year of Mercy begins December 8, all priests will be eligible to participate in the reconciliation process. This includes priests who belong to the Society of St. Pius X, a non-canonical group that rejects the teachings of Vatican II. In doing so, the pope is making genuflections in two different directions.

“Since the first century,” the *Catholic Catechism* says, “the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable.” Nothing that Pope Francis recently said changes that reality. Indeed, he referred to abortion as a “profoundly unjust” act. But he emphasized that forgiveness awaits those who repent; he only seeks to make this process more accommodating. Therefore, during the Jubilee Year, he has decided to bestow on all priests “the discretion to absolve the sin of abortion,” as long as “those who have procured it” come to the priest “with contrite heart, seek[ing] forgiveness for it.”

Already there are pro-abortion activists exclaiming that what the pope has initiated is not enough. Catholics for Choice, a rabidly anti-Catholic group with no members—it is funded by elites such as the Ford Foundation and Warren Buffett—have denounced the Holy Father, saying that “this guy” has not changed “the injustice” of the Church’s teachings.

Fortunately, almost all Catholics reject the extremism of this pro-abortion entity. In a Polling Company survey released a couple of weeks ago that was commissioned by the Catholic

League, we found that roughly four-out-of-five Catholics at least partly accept the Church's teachings on abortion, and that only five percent approve of abortion for any reason and at any time (the position of Catholics for Choice).

Pope Francis has not gone "soft" on abortion. He is simply trying to reach out to those who have been a part of it, asking them to seek forgiveness.