

# Spiritual Work of Mercy To Admonish Sinners

(Admonish the Sinner – A Reflection on the First Spiritual Work of Mercy)  
excerpts from Msgr. Charles Pope – April 15, 2015



St. Ignatius of Loyola  
1491 – 1556  
Feast Day – July 31

## Catechism of the Catholic Church

*“Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right, by the admission of faults to one’s brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one’s cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance.” - (CCC 1435)*

## Sacred Scripture

*“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained a brother.” - Matthew 18:15-17*

To admonish the sinner is not to belittle or humiliate him, but rather to alert him to the danger of a sinful course of action. It is rooted in love, not pride.

The obligation remains for us believers both to **admonish sinners** and to **accept admonishment ourselves**. We must remember that the goal is not to tell others how terrible they are; this is, after all, a work of mercy. Neither is the goal to win an argument or to feel superior. Rather, the goal is to win the sinner back from a destructive path, to announce the forgiveness of sins available to all who repent. The goal is salvation. As such, to admonish sinners is to call lovingly to those in danger and draw them back from the edge of the abyss.

With all this in mind, **how can we say we love others if we see them running toward the edge of a moral and eschatological cliff and fail to cry out in warning?** And *why* do we fail to cry out? Usually because we want our own lives to be more pleasant; we cannot bear the backlash that sometimes comes when we warn people who do not want to be warned. But if we yield to this fear, we are showing that we love ourselves too much and do not love God and others enough. I want to take this opportunity to say how grateful I am to my parents and others who endured my backtalk, admonishing me anyway.

*Lord, give me the courage and humility to admonish sinners and the grace to do it in love. As well, help me to have the courage and humility to accept correction myself, and grant me the grace to see it as an act of love, even if it is not always artfully done.*

*The word “admonish” comes from the Latin verb **monere** meaning to warn, advise, or alert someone to a threat or danger. As such, its purpose is the good of another; it is an act of love and concern.*

# Admonish Sinners

## St. Ignatius of Loyola

### Fast Facts:

Born	•October 23, 1491 in Azpeitia, Spain
Feast Day	•July 31
Canonized	•March 12, 1622 by Pope Gregory XV
Patron Saint of	•Military, Spiritual Exercises & Retreatants



### His Life:

- Because his mother died shortly after his birth, Ignatius was raised by the local blacksmith's wife Maria de Garin.
- In his childhood, Ignatius became the page of the treasurer of the Kingdom of Castile, Juan Velazquez de Cuellar.
- A young aristocrat, Ignatius greatly desired fame as a distinguished soldier in the military.
- Ignatius joined the military of the Duke of Najera's court.
- In 1521, while attempting to storm Pamplona's fortress, a cannonball struck Ignatius in his legs.
- During his time of recuperation, Ignatius experienced a conversion while leading the lives of the saints and the life of Christ.
- He redirected his ambition for fame to an ambition to saintliness and resolved to devote himself to conversion.
- In 1523 he traveled to Jerusalem as a pilgrimage.
- After his pilgrimage, Ignatius returned to Spain with his companions and occupied the University of Alcala before moving on to study at the University of Paris.
- By 1534, Ignatius had well-established himself intellectually and spiritually,

and with his six companions he took vows and founded the Society of Jesus.

- Ignatius is remembered as a devout spiritual director and developed the *Spiritual Exercises*, which are still used today.
- Ignatius died on July 31, 1556
- He was beatified and then canonized and received the title of Saint on March 12, 1622 by Pope Gregory XV.

### How is St. Ignatius of Loyola a model for living out the Spiritual Work of Mercy – To Admonish the Sinner?

The Society of Jesus was approved by Pope Paul III in 1540 and thus became an official Catholic religious order. Ignatius was elected their first leader. He declined after the first vote. He felt unworthy for the position because of the vanity and licentiousness of his earlier life and because he felt that others were more theologically knowledgeable. After much discernment, he accepted the position and served until his death sixteen years later.

As the Superior General, he sent companions all over Europe and around the world. He called them to "hurry to any part of the world where...the needs of the neighbor should summon them." And he counseled them to serve "without hard words or contempt for people's errors." He wrote nearly 7,000 letters. He wrote to high and low in church and state and to women as well as men. But most of these letters were to his Jesuit companions, thus forming a vast communication network of friendship, love, and care.

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## *Practices to Foster growth in Admonishing the Sinner*

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- **Read a passage of Scripture that give examples of *Admonishing the Sinner*. Re-read the passage and pick a word or phrase that stood out for you.**
  - Matthew 18:15-18
  - Galatians 6:1-2
  - James 5:19
  - Leviticus 19:17
  - 2 Thessalonians 3:14
  - Colossians 3:16
- **Memorize the *Suscipe* and pray this prayer each morning.**
  - Receive, O Lord, all my liberty. Take my memory, my understanding, and my entire will. Whatsoever I have or hold, You have given me; I give it all back to You and surrender it wholly to be governed by your will. Give me only your love and your grace, and I am rich enough and ask for nothing more. Amen.
- **Catechetical Texts that speak to *Admonishing the Sinner*:**
  - “The *fruits* of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion.” (CCC 1829)
  - “Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right,<sup>33</sup> by the admission of faults to one’s brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one’s cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance.” (CCC 1435)
  - “A true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers with a view to leading them to faith, or to the faithful with a view to instructing, strengthening, and encouraging them to a more fervent life.” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Second Vatican Council)
- **Name some people from the Bible or saints who lived out the Spiritual Work of Mercy, *To Admonish the Sinner*.**
  - Examples: (St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Catherine of Siena, etc.)
- **Ask the Lord how he is calling you to live out the Spiritual Work of Mercy, *To Admonish the sinner?***