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WHO IS GOD? POPE BENEDICT MEETS POPE FRANCIS

This paper dialogues Pope Benedict and Pope Francis on their particular understanding of God as culled from their respective writings¹. As we know Pope Benedict wrote his first Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) in the beginning of his Pontificate in 2006, while Pope Francis announced in the beginning of his Pontificate with the episcopate motto “Miserando Atque Eligendo” (Because he saw him through the eyes of mercy and chose him) in 2015. From then on, Pope Francis spoke openly and consistently about mercy and compassion in his speeches, homilies, interviews and letters. In this paper, we will concentrate on his interview in the book *The Name of God is Mercy*.

Literary Genre²

Literary theory divides the genre into two great divisions, namely, prose and poetry. Both Pope Benedict’s and Pope Francis’ writings belong to the prosaic category. Structurally, they are written in paragraph forms. However, Pope Benedict’s God is Love is specifically written in a letter form while Pope Francis’ The Name of God is Mercy is written in an interview form. Literally, the letter is structured and formalized, while an interview is more spontaneous and direct. In the Letter, Pope Benedict controls the presentation of his ideas being the author of the work, while in the interview; the interlocutor controls the questions that Pope Francis answers. Moreover, in a Letter, Pope Benedict

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¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *God is Love: Encyclical Letter* (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007). Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy* (New York: Random House, 2016). All quotations or citations are taken from these books.

² Herman, Rapaport, *The Literary Toolkit: A Compendium of Concepts and Methods* (Malden, MA: Willy-Blackwell, 2011). Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1983).

wrote in his solitary room away from the distraction of the rest, while in an interview, the interlocutor and the Pope are exchanging their views in a more personal way. However, it is possible that the questions of the interlocutor were sent or given in advance which Pope Francis will read and answer afterward. In that case, the Pope is given ample time to reflect on the questions and subsequently answer them. During the actual conversation between them, the Pope is then well-prepared to answer the questions in the interview.

However, in the publication, the works underwent the editing process in the preparation of its publication. Depending upon standard and rule of the publishers, the works are subjected to a tedious and rigorous editorial works by those specialists in that area or field. In the editing process, some parts are modified and replaced, some are retained and stylized, and some are edited out and inserted into the texts. The whole process of editing is long and complex and we do not have access and are not privy to that process. We just rely on the final output or the finished product when they come out and distributed in the bookstores as letter and interview. The reader just bought and read those books out of his or her curiosity or out of his or her specialization or out of scholarship. Here I am reading as a scholar and theologian. As a reader, we need to be faithful to the texts (Letter and Interview) of the Popes and fidelity to the texts is a requirement of reading them and drawing meaning from them.

Reading Strategy³

Reading is an interactive or dialogical process. Neither the author nor the text dominate or dictate the reading process. There is the third factor in that equation that we need to factor in in that dialogue or interaction. This third factor is the reader himself or herself. The intention of the author plays in the reading but it does not wholly determine the process. In fact, once the sentences or utterances are printed and published, the author can no longer control the dissemination of the texts. The texts assume independence from the author. In this sense, the author is figuratively or literally dead in the sense that it does not control the generation of meaning. In fact, the death of the author animates the texts because the reader can revive the dead letters printed or written on the pages of the papers. The texts assume an autonomous status since the author detaches himself or herself from his or her works and allows the texts to play and to live. This detachment is not limited to the author but also to the location and to the preference of the author. The text circulates in different places and readers. The reader reads the texts once he or she is given the opportunity to access the texts. In that reading interaction, there is a dialogue going on between the reader and the text. In that interaction, the reader generates meaning

³ Michael Payne, *Reading Theory: An Introduction to Lacan, Derrida and Kristeva* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991).

not detached but based on the text. This generation is not limited to the text at hand but already interwoven with other texts. The reader is a site of texts or scripts that allow him or her to relate different texts (intertextuality) or resist the texts (preferred reading). The reader does not have a tabula rasa mind that begins with zero-degree reading, nor have full innate ideas that just overflow or spill on meanings. The reader is open but not empty in the process.

I. God is Love

A. The Love Letter

The Letter of Pope Benedict begins with a quotation God is love taken from the Letter of St. John. This quotation cites the theme of his Letter addressed to the members of the Catholic Church. Thus, God is encapsulated by that love as his characteristic image. Moreover, Christian identity is defined not as an ethical idea or rational choice, but as an encounter or an event in the person of Jesus Christ. The encounter is a relational bond between God and human being. God initiates love by loving us first, while human being responds to that gift of love. That response is not limited to God, but is directed to others. This movement – God first loved us and we share that love to others – will determine the direction of the Letter. Thus, love is both biblical in knowledge and experiential in application.

B. The Theory of Love

1. Eros and Agape

The outstanding epitome of that love is derived from the love between man and woman in marriage where they are united together and they vowed fidelity to one another. Once this is done, their love brings joy or happiness to the couple. To disambiguate the meaning of love, the Pope distinguished between the Greek eros and Christian agape. In ancient Greeks, eros intoxicates human beings to divine madness which overpowers or overwhelms reason. Because of this effect, Christians tend to avoid eros. This avoidance “clearly points to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love” (6). However, the Old Testament did not reject eros altogether but only corrected its distortion or destructiveness. “Evidently, eros needs to be disciplined and purified if it is to provide not just fleeting pleasure, but a certain foretaste of the pinnacle of our existence, of that beatitude for which our whole being yearns” (7). Thus, eros can still be redeemed from its grandeur because “eros tends to rise ‘in ecstasy’ towards the Divine, to lead us beyond ourselves; yet for this very reason it calls for a path of ascent, renunciation, purification and healing” (9).

In contrast, the Christian agape as a biblical notion of love transcends that selfish character of eros and expresses concern and care for the other. It is no longer “sinking in the intoxication of happiness; instead it seeks the good of the beloved” and renounces selfishness for the sake of the other (9). This love

is indeed an ecstasy, not in the sense of intoxication but a journey from self towards the other. Thus, Christian love is giving oneself to the other.

Comparatively then, “eros indicate[s] worldly love and agape “refer[s] to love grounded in and shaped by faith” (10). To put it in another way, “descending oblation love – agape - would be typically Christian, while on the other hand, ascending possessive or covetous love – eros – would be typical of non-Christian and particularly Greek culture” (11). However, eros and agape cannot be totally separated. “The more the two, in their different aspects, find proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized” (11).

2. Biblical Love

In the Bible, God loves human beings. This love is primarily personal, God loves his people. This love is also elective, God chooses Israel as his people. This love is represented by a betrothal or marriage between God and his people Israel as opposed to idolatry. Thus love demands fidelity: human beings must be faithful to this one God. “God loves, and his love may certainly be called eros, yet it is also totally agape” (13). God is love in himself since that is his nature but that love goes out and reaches out to his people. God shares his love to his people. God gives this love gratuitously to his people. When his people forgot the covenant of love and sinned against God, God forgives his people. “Eros is thus supremely ennobled, yet at the same time it is also purified as to become one with agape” (14-15).

Moreover, in the creation of humanity, Adam found himself in solitude. God senses the lonesomeness of Adam. Adam needed a companion and God satisfied that need by giving Eve. In effect, Adam was delighted. Adam and Eve lived together in the garden as husband and wife. Adam showed his eros when he seeks a partner and longs for their unity in marriage. The two became one. Thus, eros directs man towards marriage to a woman. The intimacy between eros and marriage is unique in the bible. The one God is linked with the one marriage between man and woman.

3. Jesus Christ

The New Testament presents Jesus Christ as a good shepherd who goes out from his comfort zone risking himself in search for the lost sheep. We have an image of Jesus as a searching God for the straying sheep. Jesus selflessly gives himself in search for the lost sheep. The crucifixion is the culmination of that self-giving when he gives himself to the cruelty of that punishment to save humanity from sinfulness. “It is from there that our definition of love must begin” (17). This self-giving is immortalized in the Eucharist when Jesus offered himself body and blood to his disciples. In Jesus, love is searching for the other and giving oneself to the other.

The church is united in Jesus Christ. “Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself” (18). We are the people that make up the body of Christ. Aside from the body of Christ, we are also constituted in com-

munion with Jesus and his disciples. "Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians" (18). This body offered and this unity bounded in the church is love incarnate in Jesus. The Love of God and the love of neighbor are now truly united: God incarnate draws us all to himself" (18). This is a command to love God and to love our neighbor. "Love can be commanded because it has first been given" (18).

Jesus summarized the commandments into two interrelated love: Love of God and Love of neighbor. Pope Benedict clarifies that the concept of neighbor was understood as referring essentially to one's countrymen and to foreigners who had settled in the land of Israel" (19). However, that concept was abolished since the neighbor now refers to "anyone who needs me and whom I can help" (19). "Love of God and love of neighbor have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God" (19).

4. The Love of God and Neighbor

In the commandment, the "love of neighbor is a path that leads to the encounter with God" (20). Because God loves us first, we can then respond with love to God and share that love to others. Since we are united with God, we see the others from the perspective of God made man Jesus. "His friend is my friend" (22). "Only if I serve my neighbor can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me" (22). The love is no longer just commanded, but "freely bestowed experience of love from within a love which by its very nature must then be shared with others" (22-23).

C. The Practice of Love

1. Charity as a Responsibility of the Church

The love of neighbor is a responsibility and practice of the church. As an institution, the charity must be organized for the service of the community in need. Since the church is a communion, "the believers hold all things in common and that among them, there is no longer any distinction between rich and poor" (28). Thus, "the ministry of charity exercise in a communitarian orderly way became part of the fundamental structure of the church" (29). "For the church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being" (32).

2. Charity and Justice

The state, not the church, has the central responsibility in the just ordering or structuring of society for the pursuit of the common good. The church has the significant responsibility in the purification of reason and formation of conscience toward the understanding and achieving the requirements of justice. "The church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the state"

(36). The state and the church need the service of love in the just ordering of society and in the purification of reason, respectively.

The laity, not the clergy, is the one with direct and proper duty to the work for a just ordering of society. “As citizens of the state, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity” (37). The church makes charitable organizations as her proper work in the service of the community and acts as her responsibility in accordance with her nature. The state and the church can cooperate in their charitable services. The believers in their charitable works do not just perform them for the needs of the moment but they lead to the encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits for others” (41).

The church is the subject of these charitable organizations. The bishops in their respective dioceses are in charged with this responsibility. As a church activity, these charitable works should be independent of party politics and ideologies, and should not be engaged into proselytism or indoctrination. Believers should be guided by faith and moved by love. The *Magna Carta* of this ecclesial service is found in 1 Cor. 13:4: “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing” (45). Believers involved in charitable works in the service of the people should be led to humility in helping others and prayer in times of difficulties.

Conclusion

The saints demonstrated this charitable service for others in their lifetime and in their own way. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was the exemplary model of charity in helping her cousin Elizabeth in her pregnancy. She embodies that love in her relation to God and her neighbors.

II. The Name of God is Mercy

1. Definition of Mercy

Pope Francis defines mercy in the following: “mercy is the divine attitude which embraces, it is God’s giving himself to us, accepting us, and bowing to forgive” (8-9). For him, mercy is “Jesus’ most important message” (5), the most amazing attribute of the Creator and Redeemer” (7), “God’s identity card” (9), “the first attribute of God” (62), the “name of God” (85). Thus, mercy is a message, an attribute, identity and name of God. The word ‘attribute’ enters twice in the definition of mercy. Theologically, attribute is a distinguishing characteristics of God inseparable from the identity or name of God. The necessary step required to experience mercy is to acknowledge that we are in need of mercy. We are sinful, and therefore we need forgiveness. However, God’s mercy does not erase sin but only God’s forgiveness. Uniquely, the mercy of God is great because it caresses us as a sign of our acceptance and forgiveness. God never tires of forgiving us; we just need to return to him and ask forgiveness from Him.

2. The Church as Sacrament of Mercy

Pope Francis declares that this year (2015-2016) is the Year of Mercy⁴. In making this declaration, the Pope underlines the mercy of God to His people. “The church is showing her maternal side, her motherly face, to a humanity that is wounded” (6). This mercy “is manifested though the sacrament, in particular that of the reconciliation” (7). The church must exercise the “apostolate of the ear” (17). That ear must listen to, not judge, people with mercy. The Pope even compares the church into a “field hospital, where treatment is given above all to those who are most wounded” (8). Humanity is deeply wounded in various forms – social and personal - and so it needs mercy. The church must attend to these wounded people and heal them with mercy. However, we become indifferent to the mercy of God not only because of the loss of the awareness of our sin or the belief in the incurability of our sin “We lack the actual concrete experience of mercy” (16).

3. The Priest as Confessor with Mercy

The priests in the sacrament of reconciliation act in *persona Christi*. “They become instruments of [the] mercy of God” (21). Taking the place of Jesus, they should embody the attitude of Jesus to sinners whom he did not condemn but forgave. Jesus encouraged them to rise again and to sin no longer. They should bring the people closer to the church and not drive them away further from the church. They need acceptance, not condemnation. They “need to resemble God in all his mercy” (44). They need to go out from the church and parishes, to go outside and look for people where they live, where they suffer and where they hope” (52). They need “to be helped, not pushed away or cast out” (68). When they sit in the confessional, the priests should think that they too are sinful and that they too are forgiven. They should not condemn but commiserate with the penitents. “The more conscious we are of our wretchedness and our sins, the more we experience the love and infinite mercy of God among us, and the more capable we are of looking upon the many wounded we meet along the way with acceptance and mercy” (67).

4. The Penitent as Wounded and Healed by Mercy

We are wounded. “We try to follow the path of goodness, but we often fall because of our weaknesses and choose evil” (42). We have sinned in many ways and we regretted for doing it. We confessed our sins to a priest and resolved to return to God. We need mercy and find mercy in the Sacrament. We “reach a point when we need to be understood, to be healed, to be made whole, forgiven” (31). We need to recognize our sinfulness. Sometimes, we are tempted to dismiss our sin thinking that it is natural. So we apologize for our obstinacy. God waits for that moment when we go to the confessional and ask for forgiveness. “In order to be filled with his gift of infinite mercy, we need

⁴ See The Holy See, “Misericordiae Vultus: Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy,” in *The Name of God is Mercy*, Pope Francis (New York: Radom House, 2016), pp. 105-151.

to recognize our need, our emptiness, our wretchedness” (43). God heals us from our wounds. The logic of God is mercy because he “welcomes embraces and transfigures evil into good, transforming and redeeming my sin, transmuting condemnation into salvation” (66).

We are social beings. When we sin, we offend our brothers and sisters and when we ask for forgiveness, we restore our relationship. “Sin is a wound; it needs to be treated, healed” (26). When we confess your sins to the priest, we are entrusting ourselves to him. In the confessional, we are “looking at another person and not in a mirror” (22). The priest condemns the sin but embrace the sinner. “The confession “is an encounter with mercy” (23). “No human sin—however serious – can prevail over or limit mercy” (51). Confession is a dialogue between the confessor and the penitent. We know that “in a dialogue, we need to be listened to, not interrogated” (27). “In addition to suffering from the illness, they faced exclusion, marginalization and loneliness’ (65). Jesus is moved with pity. “Jesus does not remain indifferent, he feels compassion, he lets himself involved and wounded by pain, by illness, by the poverty he encounters” (64).

5. Mercy Exceeds Justice

Pope Francis argues that justice is strict because it follows a measurement of equality. Mercy is loose because it is the liberality of God that prevails in the relationship. “With mercy and forgiveness, God goes beyond justice, he subsumes it and exceeds it in a higher event in which we experience love, which is at the root of true justice. In this sense, mercy exceeds or surpasses justice in social relationship of fellowship. Mercy is superabundant. Moreover, “there is no justice without forgiveness and that the capacity for forgiveness underlies all plans for a more just and supportive future society” (79). In this sense, justice requires forgiveness so that peaceful existence will prevail in society. “When there is mercy, justice is more just” (80). This “means that that we have to help those who have fallen to get back up” (80). We cannot imprison the sinner forever; we have to offer new possibilities to everyone. “Mercy will always be greater than any sin” (86).

Corruption defies mercy. ‘The corrupt man is the one who sins but does not repent, who sins and pretends to be Christian and it is this double life that is scandalous” (81). Corruption is a “sin [...] elevated into a system” (81). As a system, “it becomes a mental habit, a way of living” (81). This habit limits “one’s capacity for love” and creates “a false sense of self-sufficiency” (82). The corrupt man is a “slave that masks his vice with good manners, always managing to keep up appearances” (83). Moreover, corruption is not just a systematic sin but also a “personal and social condition or state in which we become accustomed to living” (83). The corrupt man builds his “fraudulent behavior: he spends his life taking opportunistic shortcuts at the cost of his own and others’ dignity” (83).”The corrupt man often doesn’t realize his own condition” (84).

Corruption rubs the poor of the social services the government should extend to them. The mercy of God is expressed in the compassion of people. Compassion means “to suffer with, to suffer together the pain and the suffering of others” (91). The pope observes that “if we look at our situation, our society, it seems to me that there is no lack of circumstances or opportunities all around us” (98). This “compassion is needed today to conquer the globalization of indifference” (92). We need this compassion “when we find ourselves in form of the poor person, an outcast, or a sinner” (92). “We are called to serve Christ the Crucified through every marginalized person” (98). “By welcoming a marginalized person whose body is wounded and by welcoming the sinner whose soul is wounded, we put our credibility as Christians on the line” (99).

III. Connecting the Two Popes: The Parable of the Good Samaritan

In the Gospel of Luke, we find the famous parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 25-37). We can divide the parable into two parts. The first part tackles the question on eternal life and the summation of the commandments. The second part wrestles with the question on the relationship with the neighbor. There are two questions asked by the expert to Jesus. First, What must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus did not answer the question, but elicited the answer from his interlocutor. What does the Law say? The expert summarized the Law in twofold part: Love your God and Love your neighbor. Jesus affirmed his correct answer because it conformed with the Law. The first part ends with a challenge: Do and live! Second, Who is my neighbor? According to the parable, the expert asked the question because he wanted to justify himself. Jesus did not answer his question directly but indirectly using a parable to answer it. The person was attacked by robbers. He was stripped, beaten and abandoned. The priest and levite saw him but left the victim. The Samaritan saw and helped the victim. In the parable, Jesus focused on responsibility. He was interested on the response of the passersby to the victim on the road. The situation was urgent and the victim needed a help. An appropriate response is required immediately. Jesus asked the expert in this case who is the neighbor. The expert again answered the question. The neighbor was the Samaritan who showed compassion to the victim. The second part ended with a challenge. Go and do!

In the parable, the love in the first part of the parable is actualized or realized by the compassion in the second part of the parable. To put it differently, the theory of love is enfolded in the praxis of compassion. In the parable, the question who is my neighbor is asked by the expert. Thus, the expert is asking who is his neighbor. In the end of the parable, Jesus is asking the expert who is the neighbor of the victim. The neighbor question is no longer referred to the other of the expert but to the helper of the victim. The neighbor is the Samaritan who rescued him. The Samaritan is qualified as good because of that action of compassion. In this sense, neighbor is a relational concept. It refers both to the victim who is in need and the helper who responded to the need.

Pope Benedict focuses on the first question found in the first part of the parable, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? The expert was able to answer the question correctly. Love your God totally and love your neighbor as yourself. The expert knows the bible well that enables him to correctly answer the question. He was then challenged by Jesus to love, that is, to put love into practice. This is a commandment that a believer is obliged to follow. He followed up his query with regard to the identity of the neighbor, Who is my neighbor? The neighbor is not just anybody, but specifically a victim of a crime. The need of the victim and the response of the Samaritan are correlative and dependent. The love must be urgently given to the victim out of compassion⁵. The compassion of the good Samaritan exemplifies the mercy of God. He lends his hands to the other or reaches out to the other. Pope Francis focuses on the second question in the second part of the parable⁶. The person must respond with compassion to the victim. We need to connect love and compassion in our relation to the other whether that is a poor person or a sinful person. The question who is my neighbor is relational in the sense that it takes two to become neighbors. Relationship is not limited to the observance of the law but the practice of compassion⁷.

In the practice of love, Pope Benedict split love into charity which is properly the domain of the church and justice which is properly the domain of the state. Each domain must be kept separate but nonetheless they can cooperate. However, in justice, Pope Benedict further split it into two domains, namely, execution which is reserved by the laypeople in justice-making as ordering or structuring society and purification which is delegated to the church. The purification function of the church is intellectual in nature where it imparts the social teachings of the church to the laypeople in justice making and animation which vivifies the spirit in the practice of justice in society. In the practice of mercy, Pope Francis distinguishes justice from mercy. Justice observes the standard of equality in the relationship of people, while mercy overflows or overflows in the relationship between God and sinners. In mercy, God heals the wounds of the sinner by means of acceptance, embrace and forgiveness.

⁵ Pope Benedict uses the Good Samaritan to demonstrate his point on the love of God. The Samaritan is endowed with a heart that sees. The visual image is emphasized here. "This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly" (42).

⁶ Pope Francis employs the story of the adulteress who was caught violating the Law and was condemned to death by her accusers. Jesus came to her rescue and his accusers left her one by one. The heart is focused here. The writings on the ground that Jesus wrote remain unknown and unreadable but the leaving of the accusers signified that they were shamed by those writings. Jesus showed his mercy to the woman by not condemning but forgiving her.

⁷ Surprisingly, the criminality aspect in the parable is left out from the discussion. The parable did not ask, Why is there crime perpetuated by crooks against a victim? The parable asks or focuses on the question, Who is my neighbor? Although we need to inquire about criminality in our society and there are many reasons behind crimes, the parable emphasizes the responsibility of the passerby to the other.

Mercy is superabundant in God who never tires in forgiving us and always waits for us. Pope Francis further differentiates mercy from compassion. For him, mercy is reserved for God as His attribute, while compassion is applied to human being in feeling pity to the other. Both mercy and compassion imply the maternal face of God and feminine response to the other.

Charity as an organized or institutionalized work for the less fortunate people follows a structured and structuring pattern⁸. The structure is constraining in the sense that it is governed by bureaucracy with its officials and policies in carrying out its ministry or apostolate to the people. However, the structure is also enabling because the resources in the bureaucracy - personnel and rules - empower the organization in effectively doing its work of charity in the service of the people. We have to note that structures are man-made because they are created and executed by the expertise and manpower of the organization. They can be changed or altered if they no longer serve their purpose. However, the transformation of structures is slow and difficult because the organization is already used to them and the people are already satisfied to them. In this case, structures are conserved and reproduced. Structures may outlive their purpose and their usefulness because institutions are created to respond to certain and particular needs in time and place. If the needs are already responded to and the organization already satisfied its mandate, the bureaucracy has to change to a different mission or service or suffer from irrelevance and uselessness. Thus, we always need to subject the institution or organization to the criticisms and feedbacks from the ground and from the members in their actual and daily experiences. In this way, we rethink the organization and change the strategies and works relevant to the times and the needs of the people, and practical in the discharge of its services and methods to the people. It is the needs of the people that matter most and not the organization. The organization merely responds to the needs of the people.

Let us take the example of the field hospital given by Pope Francis. Even if a field hospital is temporary, it needs a loose organization and flexible bureaucracy. When we serve in the field of hospital, we need an organization with resources –staffs, rules and finances – in the discharge or delivery of services to the patients for temporary relief. Primarily, the hospital is made to serve the patients. When we work and serve in the hospital, we do not just look at the welfare of the patients who are wounded and who need healing; we also would like to look into the condition of the hospital in the field and the quality of service of the personnel or staff. We want a well-functioning and well-ordered field of hospital so that we can effectively deliver services and cater to the needs of the sick and the needy. For instance, in a disaster, we need to prioritize

⁸ See Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). Pierre Bourdieu, *The logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1990). Jürgen Habermas. *The Theory of Communicative Action* (2 volumes) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

the seriously ill or critically harmed for immediate response, we need to separate the male and female quarters or camps and we need to bring together the lactating mothers with their breastfed infants.

Moreover, if the field hospital in a disaster work receives charitable donations and financial assistances from different sources or agencies, we need to look into the sources of these donations and assistances that they do not come from criminal and illegal activities. When these donations and assistances come from legitimate sources, we want to ensure that the donors are satisfied with the way we spend and use their money. We want to be transparent and accountable to the purchase of supplies and the salaries of the employees. We send them financial reports occasionally with the proper documentations. We do this because we want to ensure good services and honest practices in the field hospital where it is free from corruption charges. In this way, the donors will continue to support the endeavor knowing that the money is really spent for the needs of the hospital and the patients, and not siphoned into the pockets and squandered into luxuries of corrupt officials. In the name of love, justice and mercy of God, we need a better field hospital that would cater to the needs of the patients wounded and hopefully healed.

If there are anomalous practices and transactions involving financial matters in the budget of the hospital such as ghost employees, substandard purchases of supplies and drugs, inhuman condition of labor among the rank and file, then we need to look into this anomaly and bring the matter to the attention of the management so that proper and appropriate action will be made and executed. However, if the management did not act and just ignored the complaint, then the concerned people should lodge a formal complaint to the management and protest against the indifference and inaction of the management. We assume that these concerned people working for the welfare of the patients and workers in the hospital are motivated by the social teachings of the church and by their faith in Jesus who came not to be served but to serve the people, especially the poor, the sick and the hungry. If ever they protested as recourse, they wanted to restructure the bureaucracy of the hospital and institute reforms in the finances of the hospital so that the institution is really meant for the benefits of the people and not for the greed of few corrupt individuals. These concerned people are working for the common good and social justice for the sake of the people of God. They need to forge their efforts together in effectively holding their protest and in immediately rectifying the corruption⁹.

⁹ See Slavoc Zizek, Eric L. Santner & Kenneth Reinhard, *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (London & New York: Verso, 2007).

Conclusion

To conclude, let us summarize Pope Benedict’s *Deus Caritas Est* and Pope Francis’ *The Name of God is Mercy*. We have the following schema:

	Pope Benedict	Pope Francis
Focus	God is love	God is mercy
Theme	Love is self-donation to the other	Mercy is the identity or attribute of God
Basis	God loves us first	God is foremost merciful to us
Process	From eros to agape, from self to the other	From God to the sinner, from mercy to forgiveness
Context	Love of God and Love of Neighbor	Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)
Goal	Charitable works to the poor	Healing the wounds of sinners
Justice	Political ordering of society	Strict equality of relationship

The *Deus Caritas Est* is the first Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict, while *The Name of God is Mercy* is the unwritten “first encyclical” delivered in a homily by Pope Francis. For Pope Benedict, God is love is the heart of the Christian faith, while for Pope Francis, mercy is the most amazing attribute or identity of God¹⁰. Although the popes look at God in different facets, they tell us the different foci of their papacy. Pope Benedict chose the episcopal motto, *Cooperatores Veritatis* (cooperators of the truth) signifying the importance of truth in his papacy, while Pope Francis chose the episcopal motto, “*Miserando Atque Eligendo*” (Because he saw him through the eyes of mercy and chose him) suggesting the relevance of mercy in the world of indifference. Both love and mercy are directed to the other and practiced for the sake of the other.

Pope Francis’ analogy of the church as a field hospital needs Pope Benedict’s charitable works for the poor and needy. The church needs both love and mercy. The love of neighbor is a command and a gift given to others. That love is incarnated or enfleshed into mercy and compassion of God to his people. That is precisely *Emmanuel*, God lives with us and dwells among us. Jesus offered his life out of his love for us and Jesus forgave us out of his mercy for us. Pope Francis says: “This love of mercy also illuminates the face of the church, and is manifested through the sacrament, in particular that of the reconciliation, as well as in works of charity, both of community and individuals”

¹⁰ Their respective ideas of God seem to presuppose the scholastic distinction between essence and accident. In this case, Pope Benedict seems to anchor his phrase ‘God is love’ on the essence of God, while Pope Francis seems to ground his phrase ‘mercy is an attribute or identity of God’ on the accident/quality of God. We say only seemingly because the way Pope Francis phrases the mercy of God as attribute and identity eludes strict scholastic categorization.

(7). When we relate to others, we involve or engage our whole being – love of God and mercy of God, soul and body, reason and emotion, personal and social – to the service of the people of God. We do not just love and reason; we also commiserate (or ‘mercify’ in the preferred word of Pope Francis) and forgive others.

Summary

This paper is a comparative study on the concept of God according to Pope Benedict in his encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est* and Pope Francis in his interview book *The Name of God is Mercy*. Their particular concept of God is complementary as exemplified in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Key words: God, love, mercy, justice.