

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE CATHOLIC MINISTRY OF SPIRITUAL LIBERATION AND EXORCISM

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Important: All answers are based primarily from the perspective of the Catholic Church both in its Latin (Roman) and Eastern (Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*) form.

1. What is Catholic Exorcism?

When the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion, it is called exorcism. Exorcism is directed at the expulsion of demons or to the liberation from demonic possession through the spiritual authority which Jesus entrusted to his Church. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1673)

2. Where does the Catholic Church derive its authority to “Exorcise”?

Jesus performed exorcisms, and from him, the Church has received the power and office of exorcizing. (Matt. 10:1; Mk. 3:15; Lk. 9:1) The ability to expel evil spirits is a manifestation of the triumph of the Kingdom of God and is an exercise of the power of the keys. (Matt 16:18-19)

3. What are the types of Catholic Exorcisms?

- a. Simple – a command in the name of Jesus Christ to evil spirits to leave a person, place, or an object, whether animate or inanimate. It can be a spontaneous prayer or in formula form given by a priest. All Catholic priests can do a simple exorcism. Instances, where a simple exorcism can be performed, include demonic obsession, demonic oppression, demonic infestation of places and objects. During the catechumenate of a person preparing for baptism, a series of simple exorcisms are done, which include the adjuration of the Devil. During baptism itself, a simple exorcism is also performed. In the blessing of certain sacramentals using the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite in blessing objects or most Eastern Catholic Rites of Blessings, a simple exorcism is performed over objects like salt, water, oil, candles, incense, bells before their blessing.
- b. Solemn (Major) – Only applied in verified cases of demonic possession using the *Roman Ritual of Exorcism*. Only a mandated Catholic priest can use the prescribed ritual in the name of the Catholic Church. The priest-exorcist must proceed with prudence, strictly observing the rules established by the Church. Illness, especially psychological illness, is a very different matter; treating this is the concern of medical science. Therefore, before an exorcism is performed, it is crucial to ascertain that one is dealing with the presence of the Evil One, and not an illness. Although it is not uncommon that the Evil One can hide or work through legitimate illness, in this case, both the catholic medical specialist and exorcist can collaborate for the greater good of the victim.
- c. Deliverance Prayer – can be performed by any baptized Catholic over a person, object, or place within their spiritual/moral authority imploring God to deliver these from the clutches of the evil spirits. It can be in the form of prayerful supplication to God through the intercession of the Saints, or the Holy Angels or a simple command in the name of Jesus Christ against the evil spirits.

The Catholic Church warns the faithful who have no spiritual authority over those vexed by evil spirits in performing “exorcisms” as these would agitate the demons if they are indeed present and will open the person to virulent retaliations. (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Inde Ab Aliquot Annis: On the Current Norms Governing Exorcisms*, #3. 20 Sept 1984).

4. Who is a Catholic Exorcist?

A Catholic Exorcist is a priest delegated or given by a diocesan bishop the authority to perform solemn exorcisms within his ecclesiastical jurisdiction (1983 CIC Canon. 1172 §1). He is expected to possess piety, knowledge, prudence, and integrity of life (1983 CIC Canon. 1172 §2).

5. Are all Catholic Priests Exorcists?

The authority to expel evil spirits is given in the Sacrament of Orders just as the power to forgive sins. However, the Supreme Authority of the Church regulates the exercise of the ministry by providing the faculty according to the prescriptions of canon law. By apostolic succession, all bishops of the Catholic Church are real exorcists, and they can delegate it to their priests. However, bishops exercise that ministry freely only within their territory.

6. Can Catholic Laypeople be exorcists?

As canonically established or mandated catholic exorcists? The answer is “No”. Only priests can be Catholic Exorcists. However, they can be recognized deliverance ministers in a local parish or diocese that is under the supervision of the parish priest or bishop. The Church acknowledges that certain people were given by the Holy Spirit the charism to expel demons (1 Cor. 12:4-11). The presence of charisms has always been there throughout the history of the Church. For example, many saints though not mandated exorcists of their time had the power to expel demons –e.g., St. Benedict of Nursia, St. Dominic de Guzman, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, among many others. However, it is the Church that is given the power and authority by Jesus Christ to discern if a person’s ability to “exorcise” is really from God or comes elsewhere. (*Didache* Ch. 11; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Letter “*Iuvenescit Ecclesia*” to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Regarding the Relationship Between Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts in the Life and the Mission of the Church. 15 May 2016.)

7. What is the Roman Ritual of Exorcism?

The Roman Ritual of Exorcism is the Official Ritual or Prayer Book of the Roman Catholic Church in the exercise of the liberation of possessed persons of evil spirits. It has two forms -- The *Extraordinary Form*, which dates back to 1614 during the pontificate of Paul V (1605-1621) and reprinted during the time of Pope Pius XII (1939-1958); and the *Ordinary Form* which was published in 1999 during the reign of St. Pope John Paul II (1978-2005).

The 1614 Edition is found in Title XII of the *Rituale Romanum* of Pope Pius XII entitled *De Exorcizandis Obsessis a Daemonio*. Meanwhile, the 1999 version has the title *De Exorcismis et Supplicationibus Quibusdam*. Any catholic exorcist can use both forms. The standard or original version of the Roman Ritual of Exorcism of 1614 and 1999 are in Latin. Various translations in English of the 1614 ritual exists, but there is no “official” version. The 1999 edition now exists in other modern languages –Italian, Spanish, French, English. The approved English version was released in the United States in 2017 entitled “*Of Exorcisms and Certain Supplications*”.

8. Is it true that using Latin prayers during exorcisms is more potent than the vernacular?

One of the signs of demonic possession is knowledge of unknown tongue or language. Therefore, by using Latin, which in many instances, the energumen (the possessed) does not know, the exorcist can verify this sign. Moreover, Latin has been the language the Catholic Church has been using for millennia in exorcisms. Hence, the demon, remembers all too well this reality and reacts to it. In most solemn exorcisms, it is observed that the energumen acts faster with Latin than with the modern official languages. However, it does not mean that Latin is more powerful. Nonetheless, we highly recommend the use of Latin, especially during the imperative (command) prayers of the Rite of Exorcism.

9. Who needs exorcisms?

The Council of Trent on June 17, 1546, in Session V, First Decree, no. 1 teaches that because of the “*original sin*” of Adam and Eve, the whole material cosmos has by default, fall into the dominion of the Devil, not by the intention of the Creator. God has given Adam and Eve jurisdiction over the material created order (Gen. 1:27-29), but because of their succumbing to the deceptions of the Devil, they, by default, handed this to the serpent. Hence, the Devil can claim that this has been given to him (Matt 4:9; Lk. 4:6). However, through the Incarnation of the Word of God and by His birth, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification, Christ destroyed the works of the Devil (1 Jn. 3:8) and transferred these back to the Kingdom of God. And to show this transfer visibly, Jesus gave His Church authority to drive out the Devil. Hence, the exorcism and blessing of all things by the Church is a manifestation of this authority. Therefore, all need to be exorcised to show the transfer from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. Hence, during the enrollment into the Catechumenate, and finding its peak in Baptism, the renunciation of the Devil and his pomps, and the exorcistic gestures and words figure prominently. In truth, all baptized Catholics have renounced the Devil and been exorcised.

The Church recognizes the possibility as well that people may be swayed by the evil one to grave sin and destroy the loving relationship we have in God received in baptism. In these terms, the Devil may insert itself into a person's life and thus destroy even further the integrity of the person leading to destruction. Hence, the Church intervenes as a loving mother to save her children through the power of Jesus Christ by a confrontation with the Devil.

10. Can non-Catholics (including non-Christians) be exorcised?

Yes, if they come to ask for assistance (1917 CIC 1152; 1999 Praenotanda #18). However, depending on the degree of attack from evil spirits, the priest is to determine what kind of help is to be provided. In cases of possession, the diocesan bishop is always to be informed and his counsel to be sought and obeyed. The principle to apply still is “*salus animarum suprema lex*” (the salvation of souls is the supreme law). And here the Church in her love for all and her desire for their salvation, supplies what is lacking in the faith of the non-Catholic (*ecclesia supplet*). However, it must be noted that the priest or the exorcist always acts on behalf of the Church, of her faith. Hence, in no way should her faith be compromised in assisting the non-Catholic. Even with non-Catholics and non-Christian, we continue to bear witness that in the ministry our prayers express deep faith in the Triune God, the Incarnate Word (Jesus Christ), the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Saints, the Angels; that sacramentals will be used and that we would require from them at least the conviction that God will help them.

Moreover, fidelity to the Catholic Faith while ministering to the afflicted of evil spirits through the ministry of spiritual liberation and exorcism becomes a useful evangelizing tool.

11. Do non-Catholics and non-Christians have some form of deliverance ministry, or what is akin to an “exorcism”?

A quick search on the internet of the word “exorcism” will result in many entries coming from various Christian denominations, non-Christians, and even among the neo-pagans of what seems to be a work in combatting evil spirits. We do not wish to discuss this issue here. The presuppositions and teachings or beliefs in these circles, especially from the non-Christian groups, will inherently be different from the Catholic doctrinal point of view, and that makes a lot of divergences.

12. Can local healers or witch doctors or shamans or “albularyos” exorcise?

The data from Holy Scriptures and the constant teaching of the Catholic Church – only God, can genuinely expel demons; only in Jesus Christ are the works of the Devil destroyed, and the kingdom of Satan vanquished forever. All others control evil spirits through subjugation to higher spirits. Evil spirits have a hierarchy; they have leaders who are more powerful demons. Lower demons are subject to them. Hence, healers who received power from higher demons can subjugate lesser demons. Thus when occult healers “exorcise”, they do not expel the evil spirits but put them under the authority of a higher demon. In effect, there is deception here. The lower demon keeps quiet as a superior demon takes over. However, they remain dormant to give the impression of healing or deliverance. The person is spiritually worst than before, and it would not be long before a more serious illness comes, no doubt instigated by the presence of more demons in the life of the person; this is the reason why people who have been exposed or healed by occult healers are more vulnerable to curses, undiagnosable illnesses, and possessions.

13. What is Prayer of Deliverance/Liberations as differentiated from Prayer of Healing?

Prayers of Liberation or Deliverance is focused on freedom from the influences of evil spirits in the life of a person, or an object or a place. The Catholic Church commonly uses the word “Exorcism”. However, exorcism has a more nuanced meaning as it is “when the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion, it is called exorcism.” (CCC 1673) In the discipline, therefore, of the Church, catholic exorcisms are performed only by authorized clergy as they take the form of a formal rite. Minor or Simple Exorcisms can be administered to by all priests while Major or Solemn Exorcisms are performed only by mandated Catholic exorcists.

In Catholic understanding, Prayers of Liberation or Deliverance are prayers addressed to God or through the intercession of the saints and holy angels to free a person, place, thing, animal from demonic vexation without the use of formal rite and prayer. All the Catholic Faithful can do it with the proper intention and disposition.

However, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its Letter to Ordinaries regarding Norms on Exorcism of 29 September 1985 noted “an increase in the number of prayer groups in the Church aimed at seeking deliverance from the influence of demons, while not actually engaging in real exorcisms. These meetings are led by laypeople, even when a priest is present.” The CDF warned that “those who are without the due faculty may not conduct meetings during which invocations, to obtain release, are uttered in which demons are questioned directly, and their identity sought to be known.”

The Prayer of Healing is an invocation to God for either spiritual, mental, or physical healing. In most cases, the cure often asked is healing from a body infirmity.

The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in the *Instruction On Prayers For Healing* issued September 14, 2000, gave the principles, guidelines, and rules pertinent to this question.

14. Why is being ministered to by fake Catholic priests or exorcists spiritually dangerous?

The theological reason is that they do not have the spiritual authority to minister to the Catholic faithful in the capacity that they are presenting themselves. The Catholic bishop gives a validly ordained Catholic priest in proper standing mandate to minister to the people of God under his jurisdiction. The laws of the Church govern the extent by which this priest can minister to other Catholic faithful outside the diocesan territory. If he is a mandated exorcist of his diocese, he can minister to the Catholic faithful afflicted by unclean spirits only within the limits of that mandate, that is, only within the territory of his diocese. If he is to minister to other people from other dioceses, he either does it within his diocese or asks permission from the local ordinary of the diocese he is going to perform the ministry. If the consent is not given, he cannot lawfully perform ministry.

A fake Catholic priest, meanwhile, has no real spiritual authority over the Catholic faithful. Any ministry he does is invalid. Even if he were a minister of his denomination, sect, or church, he

could not minister to the Catholic faithful while presenting himself as a Catholic priest. The spiritual danger is pronounced as the devil recognizes who has the spiritual authority to expel him. Any sign of pride or arrogance or deceit is a welcome sign for the evil one to meddle. This is spiritually dangerous both for those ministering to and puts the fake minister at risk of grave demonic retaliation.

Thus, the Catholic faithful is to be wary of these vagabond and unscrupulous persons. When in doubt, ask the local Catholic parish priest or the diocesan chancery office for the authenticity of the claims of these so-called ministers.

15. What is demonic retaliation?

Demonic retaliation is when evil spirits who were disturbed or discovered seek to do harm in one form or another over a person. The retaliation can be directed towards the victim directly or those around him, such as other persons, animals, plants, or property.

When spirits are being expelled by the power of God through exorcisms, retaliation occurs because the spirits claim a legal hold or right over a person, an object, another living being by reason of occult consecrations, satanic pacts, superstitious beliefs, and deep habitual unrepented sins. They retaliate to prevent complete surrender and trust in God of souls that were under their power for a long time. The only way to really prevent retaliations is to be fervent in prayer, remain in habitual state of grace, and firm in faith.

16. Why do we need as Catholics to have an orthodox knowledge about angels and demons?

In the spiritual battle, our primary enemies are the fallen flesh, the world rebelling from God, and the demons or fallen angels. The nature of these fallen angels is evil, and their actions deceptive and cunning. Therefore, we need to have a correct belief regarding them through the guidance of Divine Revelation and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church so that we would not be deceived. They precisely con many people because they have wrong notions of these creatures taken mostly from superstitious, occult, esoteric, and new-age sources.

Moreover, according to Pope St. John Paul II: *“The reality of human greatness and the tragedy of his misery in the face of death cannot be fully grasped without understanding the role played by the angels.”* (Catechesis on the Angels, 9 July 1986). He also said that: *“Through the Devil’s envy, death entered in the world and all those who belong to his party experience it.”* (Evangelium Vitae, 7 (1995); Wisdom 2:24) And it is in these errors in knowledge and understanding of the spiritual world that the Devil lures us to his sphere of influence. Had it not been for the aid of Divine Revelation, the Evil One and his minions who have kept humanity in error.

17. What are Angels?

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church #328, *Angels* are purely spiritual, non-corporeal beings. As purely spiritual creatures, angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendor of their glory bears witness. (CCC 330)

18. Why did God create angels?

Creation from nothing (*ex nihilo*) is always an act of love and goodness by the Creator. By giving life or being to a non-being shows not only the power but also the goodness of God. The mission of the angels is:

- a. Proclaim or sing God's majesty and glory
- b. Execute God's will in creation

19. Do angels have names, and can we know them?

Yes, the angels have names because they are persons. It is God who gave them names proper to their glorious nature. (Ps. 147:4)

Their names can be known if God revealed them, that is if they are given to us in Sacred Scriptures and the consistent Tradition of the Church. There are only four angelic names revealed in Scriptures and the constant Tradition of the Church:

- a. St. Michael "Who is like God" (Daniel 10:13-21, 12:1; 1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 1:9; Rev. 12:7-9)
- b. St. Gabriel "Power of God" (Daniel 8:15-26, 9:21-27; Luke 1:11-18, 19-25)
- c. St. Raphael "God Heals" or the "Medicine of God" (Tobit 12:15)
- d. Lucifer – Fallen Angel (Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14).

Holy Scripture prohibits the naming of an angel because of the tendency of man to worship anything awesome and grand or to control them for the powers they possess. Hence, the event in Genesis 32:29 has both a teaching and doctrinal reason. Men cannot command angels. Only God is their true master. Moreover, the Church explicitly discourages the naming of the angels except those already revealed by God, i.e., Michael, Gabriel, Raphael. (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines*. No. 217,2. December 2001.)

20. Who are the Fallen Angels?

Fallen Angels belong to the angelic realm that God created good but have become evil by their own choice. (CCC 391)

21. Who is Satan or the Devil?

The Church, in her teaching regarding the Devil, identifies him as the Tempter: “Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called "Satan" or the "Devil". The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God.” (CCC391)

22. Why did the angels fall?

The fall of the angels likely occurred before the creation of humankind as the Catechism says that the creation of the angels and the material world happened at the same time but before the fashioning of man (CCC 327). What exactly is the cause of their fall is not explicitly revealed in Sacred Scriptures but can be gleaned from the commentaries of the Fathers of the Church, the Doctors of the Church, the mystical experiences of the Saints, and in the prayers of the Church to combat the influence of the Devil. And they are unanimous in opining that the fall of the angels had something to do with the plan to create man in the image and likeness of the Creator. Moreover, it also includes the command to worship the God who will become a human being, thus the worship of the God-Man by the Angels. (Heb. 1:5-6) Some Fathers of the Church like Irenaeus of Lyon and Cyril of Alexandria theorized that in the incarnation of the Word of God, a woman would bear him, and thereby make the woman higher than the highest of the angels for being found worthy to be the “Theotokos”. The Orthodox Hymn to the Theotokos has these words: “It is truly right to bless you O God Bearing One, as the ever-blessed and most immaculate Virgin Mother of Our God. More honorable than the Cherubim and by far more glorious than the Seraphim...”.

23. What are the sins of the angels?

Disobedience is the external manifestation of the sin of the angels. It is their radical and irrevocable rejection of God’s absolute sovereignty and His will (CCC 392). The Catechism identifies three major ones:

- a. Envy of God’s prerogatives and Man’s destiny (CCC 391)
- b. Pride because of its superiority in every aspect of its being to man created from the dust of the earth (CCC 392)
- c. Hatred of God and Man (CCC 394).

However, the root of this rejection of God and His sovereign will and plan is Pride. Accordingly, the apostate angels rebelled because being God’s most sublime creatures, and they thought that the honor of being the most eminent should belong to them. However, the Creator decided to give this to the Woman, who will bear God the Son. (Bamonte, Francesco. *La Vergine Maria e il diavolo negli esorcismi*. 2010. pp. 55-61.)

24. What did sin do to the Fallen Angels?

By having an irrevocable and radical decision against God and His reign, the Fallen Angels have become a “living spiritual being that is perverted and perverts” (St. Pope Paul VI. General Audience. November 15, 1972).

They lost all connections to the holy –to God. And set up opposition against Him. Their inherent angelic knowledge remains, what was infused, and revealed knowledge before the fall was also retained. They could no longer know or see God. Their will is fixated on evil; hence, their actions are all evil. They lost their natural glory and the possibility of eternal happiness. (Thomas Aquinas, *In IV Sent.* II, dist. VII, q.1, a. 2; q. 2, a. 1; STh I, q. 64, a. 1-3; Duns Scotus, *In IV Sent.* II, dist. 4-7.)

25. Can the Fallen Angels repent of their sins and so be forgiven by God?

No! The nature of angelic knowledge (intellect and will) is different from humans. Therefore, their rebellion against God has the character of irrevocability since it is a radical and total turning away. They are always in a state of rebellion or apostasy. Hence, their sin is unforgivable, not because of a defect in the divine mercy, but because the fallen angels are incapable of humility and, therefore, repentance. “There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men after death.” (CCC 393)

26. Where are the Fallen Angels now?

The Fallen Angels are suffering the pains of hell wherever they maybe. It is manifested in the following manner:

- a. they lost their natural glory and eternal happiness
- b. The highest in the rank of the fallen angels are now subject to the authority of God given to the lowest of the holy angels who have become more powerful and glorious because of sanctifying and confirming habitual grace.
- c. They have sorrow not due to repentance, but in the affliction of knowing they cannot attain beatitude, that their power is curb and limited by divine governance, that men, despite their efforts, may get to heaven.
- d. The fallen angels are engaged in battling against man’s salvation and in torturing lost souls in hell. They beset man on earth, carry with them their dark and punishing atmosphere, but wherever they are, they endure the pains of hell and the knowledge that they are totally defeated and vanquished forever. (Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae.* Ia, qq. 64)

The more virulent and superior in rank fallen angels are chained in hell, awaiting the Final Judgment. The lesser demons or fallen angels are roaming the earth, tempting men, and putting those they have seduced to bondage. The higher demons control the lower demons and exert their influence over other creatures through their minions.

27. What are the powers and actions of the Fallen Angels?

According to Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Devil is a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies. (Jn. 8:44). Therefore, the action of the fallen angels concerning human beings is always to turn man's heart away from God to lead them astray and away from the great destiny God planned for humanity. Since he is the father of lies, he is then a master seducer and deceiver. And when his deception has born fruit in the soul of man, he then enslaves them and keeps them in spiritual bondage through spiritual blindness, intending to destroy them by leading them to eternal destruction.

Since they are far superior to man in intelligence and will by nature, The Fallen Angels retain their natural angelic nature as spirits, they can pretend to be anything they want to be (2 Cor. 11:14). They can ape, mimic, or pretend to appear like God, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, an Angel of Light, a Holy Angel, a Saint in Heaven, the soul of the deceased, or a living human being (doppelganger) (*Instructions on the Rite of Exorcism*, 1952 #14). Thus, they can influence the imagination and deceive the senses. They do these to defraud and to bring as much spiritual harm as possible to those who would enter their ambit of influence.

28. How is this capturing the hearts of man done?

Through

- a. Idolatry – worship, service, fear, recognition, offering, beholden, servitude to any creature
- b. Moral Corruption – refusal to accept God's sovereignty and precepts over one's own life and the world around him manifested in total moral autonomy from the Creator.

29. How does the Devil influence or control us?

The action of the Devil can be:

- a. Ordinary – through temptations leading to entrapment, subjugation, and bondage to sin
- b. Extraordinary – by the manifestation of demonic power over a person or things
 - Demonic obsession – is the intrusion of the demonic in thought processes suggesting insidious, negative, destructive thoughts and compulsions are affecting emotions and relations.
 - Demonic oppression – is an attack on the external physical body through unknown, undiagnosable, or untreatable illnesses, or signs in the body (scratches, lumps, bumps). It can also occur in the circumstances of life that prevent the victim from carrying on a healthy life. Moreover, a series of unfortunate events seem to happen whenever there are attempts for serious conversion to God or a desire for spiritual growth.

- Demonic infestation – a manifestation of the diabolical in places, things, including animals and other inanimate objects. The intention to sow fear or to weaken faith in God the Almighty by terrifying its victims to do something contrary to the holiness of God –pagan rituals, superstitious actions, and beliefs, etc.
- Demonic possession – is the taking over of the body, the senses, and lower faculties of memory, imagination, and emotions of the victim. It is experienced by the energumen as if there is another person inside them with the intent of being able to control through demonic subjugation of the higher faculties of will and intellect.
- Demonic subjugation – is when the victim is no longer a victim but a willing accomplice of evil through the identity of one’s will and thinking with that of the demonic.

30. What are “Elementals”?

Elementals or Nature Spirits are fallen angels that inhabit things in nature –trees, forests, lakes, caves, ravines, crossroads, baths, cemeteries, mountains, etc. They are generically called “Engkantos and Malignos” in Philippine lore. The Exorcism Prayers of St. Basil the Great, of St. John Chrysostom, and of St. Gregory of Nazianzen recognize demons found in these areas. These are the spirits that our pagan ancestors consider as gods and thereby offered them worship. St. Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology*, identified categorically that the gods of the Greeks and Romans are all wicked demons. These fallen angels have appropriated for themselves the deities of mythology and therefore take the forms of how the myth stories describe them – elves, dwarves, goblins, fairies, gnomes, nymphs, sirens, etc. These “elementals” are said to give favors to anyone who would offer them service and worship. They are easily offended and punish severely with sickness or death, those who intrude into their territory without fear.

Yahweh, the God of Israel, shamed these false gods in various stories in the Old Testament from the gods of Egypt to those of the desert-dwelling people –Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Jebusites, Philistines, Assyrians, Persians among many others. St. Paul would, in his address to the Athenians mention of the many gods worshiped by the Greeks. However, he would present to them Jesus Christ, as their Unknown God who is above all the gods of the gentiles. The early Christians in their evangelization encountered the priests of these nature spirits and showed them the supreme power of Jesus Christ. Thus St. Patrick would destroy the Druids and their gods, St. Boniface would destroy the fear of the Goths on the god Thor, St. Cyprian of Nicomedia would destroy the gods invoked by the sorcerers and witches of his city.

There is a powerful Catholic exorcism prayer against false deities and spirits that inhabit nature, which is intended to expel them from what they claim as their territory; this is done because only God is the true owner of all things in nature, for He is the Creator. The exorcism prayer also prevents these false deities from destroying in retaliation their former habitations.

31. Do we have Guardian Angels?

It is of Catholic Faith that every human being has a guardian angel: "From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession. "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life." Already here on earth, the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God." (CCC 336)

32. What do Guardian Angels do?

They are protectors of our soul and body. And if our will is in tune with that of the divine will, they work to bring the plan of God to fulfillment in our life –i.e., to bring us to heaven and so be united with God forever. They help and assist us as long as it is to contribute to our growth in holiness and virtue. They never interfere with the decisions of our will if it is contrary to that of God. However, if we ask them to help us do God's holy will in our lives, they are there to help us. They defend and protect us from evil spirits if we ask them.

When we die, they are the first spiritual beings that we will see, for they will bring us to the Divine Throne of Judgment for our particular judgment before God. They will bring us to heaven, purgatory, or hell, depending on the righteous and just judgment of God. If we are sent to purgatory, they will wait for us until we enter heaven. They are our most loyal friends, as God has given us to them as their ward.

Every human being has a unique guardian angel. They are never "recycled". The guardian angels come from the rank of "angels", that is, the lowest rank in the hierarchy of angels.

33. Do angels have ranks or hierarchy?

According to Pseudo-Dionysius in "*De Coelesti Hierarchia*" (Celestial Hierarchy) and some other early Christian sources, there are nine choirs of angels or nine ranks. And the nine choirs are divided into three. Depending on the purity of service or ministry they do –service to God alone, or service to God as He governs the world. In the order of glory, power, depth of knowledge, the angels are divided, thus:

Highest Rank – service to God purely

- a. Seraphim
- b. Cherubim
- c. Thrones

Middle Rank – governs the cosmos and other angels

- d. Dominions
- e. Virtues
- f. Powers

Lower Rank – God's messengers and protectors of peoples

- g. Principalities – governs nations

- h. Archangels – messengers of Salvation and Special Missions
- i. Angels – governs nature and guardians of human beings

34. How many angels did God create?

God created the angelic world all at once. Thus, their numbers are fixed from the very beginning of their creation. How many they are is not revealed, but divine goodness knows no bounds, and therefore, they are “myriads upon myriads”. We cannot even fathom the number of stars in the universe; how can we comprehend the number of these remarkable celestial beings? However, God did not create additional angels after the fall of the third.

35. How many are the Fallen Angels?

According to the book of Revelations, 12:4: “[The Dragon] Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.” The early Church Fathers interpreted it to mean that a third of the angelic realm from the rank of the seraphim until the level of the angels became fallen angels.

This fall across the ranks of the angelic realm is plausible and makes us understand how Lucifer, who became Satan, was considered early in the Church as the highest and most powerful of the fallen angels. Satan is viewed as the leader of the apostate angels and is chained in the abyss by St. Michael.

36. Are the high ranking fallen angels more powerful than my guardian angel since they are of the lowest rank?

In the *order of grace*, that is, the status of the angels after the “test” or “fall” among their ranks, the holy angels have been confirmed in grace and holiness. They have been upgraded as God has further elevated their original angelic majesty and glory as a reward for their fidelity. Thus, the lowest rank among the holy angels is more powerful, majestic, glorious than the highest of the fallen angels who have only their angelic nature from the “*order of creation*” (status when created) or “*order of nature*”. Moreover, the holy angels carry the authority of the Most High God wherever they go, and therefore the demons are subject to them; this is the reason why our holy guardian angels can protect, defend, and fight for us against Satan and his minions.

37. Can angels fall in love with human beings?

In a carnal manner? Never. Since angels are pure spirits, they are not drawn to anything material as this is outside their nature. They are, however, attracted to that which is spiritual in us –our souls. Hence, demons or fallen angels assuming some form pretend to seduce men and women to them to lure them into servitude so that they can possess their souls and torture them in hell when they die. Therefore, stories of fairies or elves or mythological creatures falling in love with handsome men or beautiful maidens is not possible. We have already determined that these mythological creatures are fallen angels. Hence, their intention is malicious and evil.

Nonetheless, they will not immediately show their vileness but will seduce a human being to follow them in their fairy kingdom willingly and remain with them forever. If the human being's will is captured and accedes to the invitation with no turning back, the fairies will show their true nature as demons.

The holy angels, like the guardian angels, meanwhile, are tasked by God to protect our body and soul, and they love us with a supernatural love because God loves us. They love what God loves.

38. Can high ranking angels be a guardian angel?

Considering the mission or service an angel does is proportionate to its rank, then ordinary human beings do not have a high-ranking angel as a guardian angel. However, St. Bonaventure believes that specific crucial human missions, vocations, offices also have their guardian angel or enabling angel that assists the person holding that position. Hence, the Holy Father may have an extra angel guarding him by virtue of his office as the Successor of Peter and Vicar of Christ. Bl. Catherine Emmerich says that she saw several angels guarding priests and bishops as they perform their ministry of saving souls.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Our Lord was ministered to by several angels after the Devil left him (Matt. 4:11). In the Gospel of Luke, an angel ministered to Him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk. 22:43). And since Jesus is God-Man, it is therefore not far-fetched to surmise that high ranking angels ministered to Him: "And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'" (Heb. 1:6)

39. "Demons", "Devils", "Fallen Angels", "Unclean Spirits", "Evil Spirits", "Elementals" are they the same?

In Catholic Demonology, these words are synonymous with each other. All these terms refer to Fallen Angels. In common parlance, "Elementals" are evil spirits claiming dominion over some part of nature –trees, forests, mountains, mounds, hills, plains, lakes, rivers, seas, crossroads, etc.

Some non-Catholic sources would say the damned souls are also included in the category of unclean and evil spirits. However, the doctrine of *Particular Judgment* removes the possibility of damned souls roaming around and infesting nature or possessing human beings. Souls of the damned, because of divine justice, are in hell and cannot get out of their place of torment. When during demonic possessions, the evil spirit identifies itself as a human being in history, e.g., Nero, Hitler, Judas, Ahab, Jezebel, etc. It is more of the demon that is attached to these persons, or qualities of these notorious persons that are diabolical. Moreover, during seances or conjurations of souls of the dead, those who often respond are the demons attached to the dead when they were still living, that is why they know the particularities and circumstances of the conjured soul. They pretend to deceive.

40. How does the extraordinary action of the Devil enter our life?

In human beings, the extraordinary action of the Devil usually enters through any one of the following *spiritual openings*:

- a. A habitual unrepented gravely sinful lifestyle
- b. Deep emotional trauma leading to hatred, anger, unforgiveness
- c. Direct contact or communication with the preternatural world through the “occult third eye of the spirit of divination” or “New Age” practices that attempt to communicate with the mysterious world of fallen spirits.
- d. The administration of pagan rituals over a person or the multiple exposures with the occult or New Age practices overtime.

In places or things, the extraordinary action of the Devil comes through any of the following:

- a. Pagan or satanic rituals and practices were done in the area, or the objects were used in pagan or satanic rituals
- b. Grievous sin done in the area –sexual perversion, violence
- c. When multiple accidents leading to loss of human lives occur in that specific spot.

41. How does one prevent extraordinary intrusion?

The first action is to close all spiritual openings; this is done through sincere repentance, wholehearted renouncement of anything that has to do with the works of darkness, honest and integral confession of sins, inner spiritual healing (memories, emotions, forgiveness), and then consecration to God. Exorcisms will only be necessary if there are manifestations of the diabolic through preternatural or paranormal activities in the person’s life.

In cases of objects, a severance of unholy ties between the thing and the Devil is to be done and then sprinkling with holy water. In cases of pagan or satanic objects, besides the severance of unholy soul ties, the thing has to be defaced and destroyed and disposed of either in the fire or in running water (river, lake, sea, where it cannot be found).

In cases of infested houses or properties where people live or work, the deliverance of the place will be necessary as well as a spiritual preparation for all those who will participate in the liberation, the owners, and tenants included.

42. What is the “Occult”?

In the context of the Ministry of Spiritual Liberation and Exorcism, the “Occult” means powers that are not “Supernatural” (not from God) nor “Natural” (not from Man or his world), but “Preternatural” (demonic).

The Catholic Church considers tapping of “occult” powers as gravely sinful and is an insult to the virtue of religion, which is due to the one true God alone.

CCC 2116 All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to "unveil" the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.

CCC 2117 All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service and have a supernatural power over others - even if this were for the sake of restoring their health - are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming someone, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons. Wearing charms is also reprehensible. Spiritism often implies divination or magical practices; the Church for her part warns the faithful against it. Recourse to so-called traditional cures does not justify either the invocation of evil powers or the exploitation of another's credulity.

43. What is Superstition?

Superstition is a false belief under the guise of religious faith that makes a person fear a retaliation either on his person, or work, or property, or loved one if not followed. The Catholic Church condemns this as an affront to divine providence and the sovereignty of God over the whole creation.

CCC 2111 Superstition is the deviation of religious feeling and of the practices this feeling imposes. It can even affect the worship, we offer the true God, e.g., when one attributes an importance in some way magical to certain practices otherwise lawful or necessary. To attribute the efficacy of prayers or of sacramental signs to their mere external performance, apart from the interior dispositions that they demand, is to fall into superstition.

44. What is the "New Age"?

The Church document "*Jesus Christ: The Bearer of the Water of Life, A Christian Reflection on the New Age*" (Pontifical Council for Culture and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, February 3, 2003) gives its view on the "New Age". It is worthwhile to read this document to understand the negative judgment of the Church regarding this movement. The New Age is a hodgepodge of esoteric, gnostic, occult teachings and practices mixed with pseudoscience to make it appear understandable to modern man. Various elements of the New Age has received negative judgments on the part of Catholic Episcopal Conferences such as those on Energy Healings (e.g., Reiki and Pranic Healing, Magnetic, Cosmic Healings), Psychological Tools (e.g., Enneagram), various Meditation Techniques that get their spirituality and teaching from non-orthodox and non-christian sources, a spirituality that is reaching out to spirits (spirit

guides, “angels”) but without reference to the One True God; this is esoteric and occult. It poses as a spiritual opening to the demonic.

45. What is the “Third Eye”?

In the Ministry of Spiritual Liberation and Exorcism, we use the term “Occult Third Eye of the Spirit of Divination” to signify the source of the power and the power itself. It is also referred to as DEF “Demonic Enhanced Faculties”. The cause is occult and, therefore, demonic. The specific demon involved --the spirit of divination that gives powers to know hidden things, including mystical or esoteric knowledge. And its manifestation is that of very enhanced sensorial faculties all clumped together as “third eye”. It is a psychic ability that is fully human but bonded or hijacked by a demon that controls it. The demon is deceptive and difficult to detect for people who are used to using its powers, considering them instead as a “gift” from God rather than from the Devil.

The occult third eye is the doorway to all other evil spirits that cause spiritual blindness. It is also the last spirit to go out when an exorcism is done.

46. What is “Divination”?

The seeking of knowledge of future or hidden things (including past events) by non-natural means is divination. Since the methods are not appropriate to human nature, they must, therefore, be then supplemented by some power that has always been considered in catholic theology as coming from evil spirits. Thus, in Catholic understanding, all forms of divination are from the Devil. (Thomas Aquinas. *S.T. II IIae*, q.95. also CCC 2116, 2117)

In the occult, new age practice, divination is represented by an opened eye on the forehead in between the brows; this is the “Third Eye”.

47. What does the “Third Eye” do?

The “Third Eye” is fundamentally the organ of divination. Its way of acquiring knowledge is different from the way rational human beings would. And since the experience it gets is hidden, then the source is above human ability. Depending on the strength of the bond with the spirit of divination, the following gets heightened over time:

- Feeling
- Peripheral Vision
- Hearing
- Smelling
- Tasting
- Seeing frontally
- Communicating
- Channeling (spirit is allowed to take possession of body, mediumship).

With channeling comes automatic writing (spirit uses the hand to write something, sometimes intelligible to others but intelligible to the medium).

The demon of divination also teaches person sorcery, witchcraft, shamanism. It also gives the power to send curses and to remove curses or to heal illnesses that demons of lower or equal rank have caused.

48. How does the “Third Eye” open?

The “Third Eye” is fundamentally opened by:

- a. occult means, that is, through communication with preternatural beings, through some occult or satanic ritual, through multiple contacts with occult practitioners (shamans, healers, false visionaries) and New Age practices intended to have a heightened spiritual experience.
- b. It can also be transmitted through the bloodline of direct ancestors with an active third eye or ancestors who are occult practitioners.
- c. It can also be opened through constant contact with occult objects or cursed objects (e.g., talismans, amulets, infested images or statutes, etc.)
- d. It can also be opened through trauma, either emotional, psychological, or even near-death experiences.

49. How is the “Third Eye” closed?

Depending on the gravity of the bondage of the psychic ability to the demon of divination and of other evil spirits that have access to a person, the closing of the occult third eye requires a series of exorcisms. It requires a sincere and complete renouncement of the spirit of divination and the powers that it has given the person. Then when the demon is expelled and the ability closed, the consecration of the psychic abilities to God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary follows. There is a specific rite for the closing of the occult third eye.

50. What is Chakra?

When the Psychic Abilities were opened or enhanced using New Age techniques, including through energy healings, more often, it is not merely the Third Eye that was activated but also various energy centers in the body called “chakra points”. The concept is fundamentally Asian in origin –India, and China for the most part. This energy in the body is the life force, called “chi,” which is like electrical power going around the body. These specific centers are well known in Asian healing methods like ayurvedic medicine, acupuncture or acupressure, martial arts, and meditation. It is only very recently that the concept of chakra entered western consciousness, and most of this was through the New Age. Chakra centers are spread all over the body with full of blood and nerve connections to it. They can be likened to hubs. The major ones are found where the endocrine glands are, while others are where abundant blood vessels and nerves are

located. The basic idea is that if enough chi energy flows unhampered to the chakra points, then you can experience heightened awareness and power.

51. How can the opening of chakras be a spiritual opening that will make a person vulnerable to demonic influence?

That chakras influence health is a medical principle well established in ayurvedic medicine. Its danger for the Ministry of Spiritual Liberation and Exorcism is the possibility of demonic contamination or intrusion when coupled with a cultic dimension — in concrete, opening chakra points to experience heightened spiritual experience while invoking strange deities. We had seen cases of possession that was triggered when acupuncture needles were offered to strange gods before use on a patient. This contamination occurs because the action is intimately connected with religious beliefs and practice. The same impurity arises when a massage therapist at the same time an occult practitioner (local healer) or the therapist, is contaminated with occult spirits that gave them the power to do healing massages.

52. How are chakra openings closed?

There is an exorcism rite for the closing of chakra openings. Fundamental to it is the sincere and total renouncement of the power received through the opening of the chakras and the demons that entered through it and those that control it. The closing of the chakras is followed by the exorcism for the closing of the occult third eye of the spirit of divination. It has been observed that if other chakra openings are present in a person with a very active third eye, during its closing, the person will have great difficulty doing the renouncements as the demon brings the person in an in-and-out state of trance. The evil spirits come in and out of those chakra openings. So it is required that when the afflicted has undergone New Age practices, to close the chakra openings first before attempting to close the third eye. In the current chart of chakras openings, there are seven major centers and 23 minor ones for a total of 30. When the tailbone (base of the spine) chakra (kundalini) has been activated, the whole 30 centers have to be closed.

53. Why is the Filipino practice of “Atang”, “Padugo”, “Tabi tabi po”, “Pangontra”, “Pagpag” and similar practices not following true Catholic belief?

“Atang” or food or drink offering to the spirits either in gratitude or as a peace offering together with “Padugo” the pouring of animal blood on places, i.e., cornerstones, lands, bridges, etc. are all pagan practices. They are offered to spirits to receive good luck or to be left in peace. Failure to do so would undoubtedly invite bad luck. In certain instances, the offerings are offered to the saints represented by their statues; likewise, before a picture of the dead during the commemoration of their birth or death anniversary or by their tomb during All Souls Day. Failure to do so would invite being haunted by the spirits of the departed as a consequence of their neglect of filial duty.

“Tabi tabi po” is a superstitious practice of asking permission from invisible creatures that inhabit nature such as a mountain, forest trails, caves, individual trees. Failure to do so would

earn the ire of the spirits; thus, they would make them sick. The remedy is to offer a peace offering in the form of food or blood, depending on the gravity of the offense.

“Pangontra” is the use of talismans or amulets to ward off evil spells from persons or spirits. These objects are said to be either natural deterrents from evil spirits or are said to have been given by benevolent beings to their users.

“Pagpag” is the practice of not going directly to one’s house when coming from a wake or a funeral. The superstitious belief is that the mourners picked up an evil spirit or even the spirit of the dead person when they attended the wake or funeral. Hence, by going to another place other than one’s habitation, the spirit is left behind in the transitory place like a park or restaurant. Indeed, this practice does not make sense at all, as if one can outsmart the spirits.

These practices are all idolatrous as it brings a person to fear a spiritual or invisible being other than one true God. The sense of fear of reprisals for failure to observe these ritual offerings is a manifestation of belief in a power that can harm and fails to recognize the almighty power of God to protect His children. Thus, it is against the virtues of religion, faith, and hope. Only to God should sacrifices and offerings be offered. However, food and blood offerings are not pleasing to Him without true conversion (Hosea 6:6). Only the precious blood of His Son is acceptable to God the Father (Heb. 10:4). And a humble and contrite heart is the only disposition that God requires and no other offerings (Ps. 61:16-17).

CCC 2112 The first commandment condemns polytheism. It requires man neither to believe in, nor to venerate, other divinities than the one true God. Scripture constantly recalls this rejection of "idols, (of) silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see." These empty idols make their worshippers empty: "Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them." God, however, is the "living God" who gives life and intervenes in history.

CCC 2113 Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc. Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon." Many martyrs died for not adoring "the Beast," refusing even to simulate such worship. Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is, therefore, incompatible with communion with God.

CCC 2114 Human life finds its unity in the adoration of the one God. The commandment to worship the Lord alone integrates man and saves him from an endless disintegration. Idolatry is a perversion of man's innate religious sense. An idolater is someone who "transfers his indestructible notion of God to anything other than God."

54. What is a Curse?

A “curse” or malediction or malefice is an illness or harmful condition obtained through the power of demons. Someone motivated by hatred, envy, jealousy sends a spell conjured by an occult practitioner, like a sorcerer or witch, through the intervention of evil spirits.

55. What are the types of curses?

According to the late Fr. Gabriel Amorth (Gabriel Amorth, *“The ways and the means of Evil, Memoirs of an Exorcist: My Life Fighting Satan”*. Trans. Marco Tosatti. Kindle Edition. Piemme. September 16, 2014.), foremost exorcist of the Vatican in our time, curses can be classified as to (a) purpose; (b) method; (c) operation; (d) as to means.

- a. As to purpose
 - 1) Amorous – to obtain the love of a person or to destroy the object’s romantic feelings or relationship with others to free that person so that they can receive their love. In Pilipino, this is *“gayuma”*. The bond is almost permanent when sexual intercourse occurs.
 - 2) Poisonous - to cause physical, psychological, familial, or economic ruin on the victim.
 - 3) Binding – to block action, movement, relationships.
 - 4) Transference – to transfer to the victim the hideous things usually in the form of torments performed on a doll or photo of the person targeted.
 - 5) Putrefaction – to procure a sickness leading to death. Usually, there is a rotting of an internal organ involved.
 - 6) Possession – to conjure a demon and command it to possess the victim.
- b. As to method
 - 1) Direct – where the curse is introduced to the intended victim through an object that would touch the body of the person, such as by way of cursed food or drink.
 - 2) Indirect – where the curse is performed in an object that represents the victim, such as a voodoo doll.
- c. As to operation
 - 1) By puncture and torture – using pins, nails, hammer, blade, fire, ice, bugs.
 - 2) By tying or binding – with laces, knots, bridles, ribbons, bands, hoops, chains.
 - 3) By putrefaction – burying the object, throwing it to the sea where it cannot be found. The cursed object is symbolic of the victim. At times, the cursed object is an animal sacrificed to the demon that would deliver the curse.
 - 4) By malediction (Tagalog *sumpa*) – desiring ill directly upon the person, or on a photo, or a symbol.
 - 5) By Satanic rite – using a Satanic cult or black mass performed to inflict mortal harm on the intended victim.
- d. As to means

- 1) With hexes and spells – puppets or meat with pins, bones of the dead, blood, toads, chickens, insects.
- 2) With cursed objects – gifts, plants, pillows, dolls, ribbons, talismans
- 3) With an evil eye, a touch of the hand, an embrace, a breath
- 4) With a telephone – whether in silence, a word, a breath, or something else.
- 5) Through cursed websites – where certain internet posts have been cursed to transmit a spell on those who will read it. (This we add to the list as per our experience in some instances of a malefice sent through the internet.)

56. Why are people affected by curses?

Curses, by their very nature, are intended to destroy. Hence, they are intrinsically evil. Consequently, those who conjure it tap on a diabolical source that is otherwise not accessible in a healthy way. Thus, conjurers of curses use demonic power. A curse's control over a human being (the victim/s) is dependent on the spiritual openings present in them. The more the spiritual openings the victim has, the severe the effect of the curse. Hence, it can be safely inferred that if a person is affected by a malefice, the person is already pre-disposed to it.

57. How do we protect ourselves from curses?

The protection from a real curse can only be supernatural or divine in provenance.

- a. The first protection is on the level of the soul; in this case, habitual sanctifying grace. The person should, therefore, not be in a state of sin, specifically mortal sin. Now grace is restored in the soul through repentance and the sacrament of reconciliation.
- b. The second protection is on the level of mind and will, and here the practice and life of virtue –prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice strengthened by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity play a crucial role. The virtues of faith, hope, and charity are fortified by actual grace received through regular reverent reception of the sacraments and development of a consistent prayer life. The devout use of the sacramentals of the Church dramatically aids in the protection of mind, body, and spirit.

Therefore, habitual sanctifying grace in the soul, actual graces, virtuous life, and sacramentals are to be present in the person if they are to prevent curses from affecting them. If the maledictions are sent to an adequately protected person, the curse will bounce back to the conjurer and the one who authorized the malefice.

58. What is an “Evil Eye”?

The evil eye is a human look believed to cause harm to humans, animals, and trees. The damage may be minor or grave, e.g., disease, injury, or even death. The “evil eye” is a specific type of magical curse and has its roots in magical thinking and superstition. Symptoms of illness caused

by the evil eye include loss of appetite, excessive yawning, hiccups, vomiting, and fever. It often affects children, particularly infants and toddlers, and those who have spiritual openings to the demonic. In Pilipino, the word “nabati”, “nausog”, “nabales” is a form of the “evil eye”.

59. How does one protect the self from the “Evil Eye”?

The “Evil Eye” is a form of a poison curse. Therefore, protecting oneself from it follows the spiritual requirements for shielding self from curses. Sanctifying Grace is a vital component as it is the living presence of God in our soul, in our life. Without sanctifying grace, we are not friends with God; we do not have a loving relationship with Him. With grace in our soul, we need to fortify that further by striving to live in holiness and virtue daily. Wearing blessed sacramentals devoutly, like the Medal of St. Benedict, maintaining a truly Christian home, aid tremendously in warding off evil.

Moreover, better heed this warning: No healing ritual founded on the occult or superstitious belief must be done –e.g., use of saliva or going to the local healer. To mix Christian and superstitious healing rituals is syncretism and a grave sin against the first commandment –“You shall have no other gods before me!” Instead of protecting, syncretistic practices further make a person vulnerable to other malifices.

60. Why is sending malefice or curses a mortal sin?

Our Savior Jesus Christ told us that to harbor hatred or ill-will in the heart is tantamount to killing “our neighbor” (Mt. 5:21-22). St. John also teaches us that “Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.” (1 Jn. 3:15). Thus, the intention itself is already gravely sinful.

Moreover, the employment of demons, which is automatic in every malefice or curse, whether the conjurer is aware or not, multiplies the gravity of the hatred and, therefore, the sin. It is like hiring a professional killer to finish-off an enemy, for the “Devil is a murderer from the beginning” (Jn. 8:44). Therefore, both the occult practitioner who makes the curse and the patron who procured their service, by the very act of conjuring the malefice, give themselves to the service of the Devil. And this goes both against the first commandment by the act of idolatry, and the fifth commandment of “You shall not kill.” Even if the intention is not to kill but only to cause some harm, this still is covered by the sin against the fifth commandment as the intention itself and the action is inherently evil. In truth, those who give themselves up to the service of the demons are liable to go to hell (Mt. 5:21-22).

61. What do we need to protect ourselves effectively from the Evil One?

The following are required to protect ourselves adequately from the Evil One:

- 1) True Faith in God without contamination of errors or false beliefs and practices
- 2) Habitual Sanctifying Grace – living in the state of grace daily by loving God and avoiding mortal sin

- 3) Reverent reception of the Sacraments – fortifying the sanctifying grace we received, providing us with sacramental graces, and actual graces to persevere in battle
- 4) Virtuous Living – shaping our lives to grow in virtue to be pleasing to God
- 5) Pious use of the Sacramentals – to remind us through visible signs that God is with us
- 6) Prayer Life – prayerful encounter with God through His Word in Holy Scriptures and a prayer life that is characterized by the love of God
- 7) Communion of the Saints – our awareness that we are never alone in the battle against evil spirits, both the Church Militant (on Earth), the Church Suffering (in Purgatory), and the Church Triumphant (in Heaven) intercede for us unceasingly so that we may never tire in the battle.

62. What are “Sacraments”?

CCC 1116 Sacraments are "powers that comes forth" from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant.

CCC 1123 "The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to give worship to God. Because they are signs, they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects, they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called 'sacraments of faith.'"

CCC 1127 Celebrated worthily in faith; the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son's Church, which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power.

CCC 1131 The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.

63. Why are Sacraments necessary for us?

The Sacraments are the ordinary means by which God the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit gives us sanctifying grace by which we truly become children of God, strengthen us with the actual graces that we need, envelop us in holiness, and therefore shield us from the Devil. The Sacraments are the “powers that comes forth” from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. (CCC 1116).

It is the aim of the Ministry of Spiritual Liberation and Exorcism that the Christian life of an afflicted of evil spirits be reconciled back to God in its fullness and be sanctified and fortified by a genuine, vibrant experience of God and His Church through the Sacraments by the graces it gives. For being fully incorporated in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church founded by Jesus Christ, the spiritually afflicted find solace and protection from the attacks of the evil one.

Furthermore, when the Sacraments are received in the correct disposition, they not only give sanctifying and actual graces but also *sacramental grace*. Each of the sacraments gives a special grace, called sacramental grace, which helps one to carry out the particular purpose of that sacrament. For example, the sacramental grace given in baptism is remission of original sin, divine adoption, incorporation into the Church, and the permanent character.

64. How many are the Sacraments?

There are Seven Sacraments, Jesus Christ instituted all of them.

- 1) Baptism
- 2) Confirmation
- 3) Eucharist
- 4) Reconciliation
- 5) Orders
- 6) Matrimony
- 7) Anointing of the Sick.

CCC 1121 The three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders confer, in addition to grace, a sacramental character or "seal" by which the Christian shares in Christ's priesthood and is made a member of the Church according to different states and functions. This configuration to Christ and to the Church, brought about by the Spirit, is indelible, it remains forever in the Christian as a positive disposition for grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church. Therefore, these sacraments can never be repeated.

In the spiritual journey of a spiritually afflicted person of evil spirits, we presuppose that the person is a baptized Catholic but has lapsed in the practice of the Catholic faith, thereby weakening their defenses against the insidious attacks of evil spirits. Therefore, it is crucial the sacramental life be restored, which is characterized by true faith in Jesus Christ and His Church and the willingness to carry the cross of bearing witness to the truth of God. Hence, the frequent reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist are indispensable.

65. What are "Sacramentals"?

CCC 1667 Holy Mother Church has, moreover, instituted sacramentals. These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual

nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church. By them, men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy.

The characteristics of sacramentals

CCC 1668 Sacramentals are instituted for the sanctification of certain ministries of the Church, certain states of life, a great variety of circumstances in Christian life, and the use of many things helpful to man...

CCC 1670 Sacramentals do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do, but by the Church's prayer, they prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it. "For well-disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals sanctifies almost every event of their lives with the divine grace which flows from the Paschal mystery of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. From this source, all sacraments and sacramentals draw their power. There is scarcely any proper use of material things which cannot be thus directed toward the sanctification of men and the praise of God."

Various forms of sacramentals

CCC 1671 Among sacramentals, blessings (of persons, meals, objects, and places) come first. Every blessing praises God and prays for his gifts. In Christ, Christians are blessed by God the Father "with every spiritual blessing." Therefore, the Church imparts blessings by invoking the name of Jesus, usually while making the holy sign of the cross of Christ.

CCC 1672 Certain blessings have a lasting importance because they consecrate persons to God, or reserve objects and places for liturgical use.

66. What are the Sacramentals often used in protecting oneself from evil spirits?

These are the sacramentals often used in Spiritual Battle and the Ministry of Spiritual Liberation and Exorcism

- Sign of the Cross
- Holy Water
- Exorcised-Blessed Salt (Sea Salt or Rock Salt preferred)
- Exorcised-Blessed Oil (Olive Oil)
- Exorcised-Blessed Candles
- Exorcised-Blessed Incense
- Blessed Bells
- Exorcised-Blessed Medals of St. Benedict
- Crucifix
- Purple Stole of Priest
- First and Second-Class Relics of Saints
- Sacramentals connected to devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary – Rosary, Brown Scapular, Miraculous Medal, Rose of the Rosary

- Blessed Icons, Statues, Images, Medallions (No images from false or unapproved devotions or false apparitions)
- White Cord of St. Joseph

The reason why these sacramentals are used in spiritual protection is founded on the prayer-blessing the Church uses whenever her ministers bless these objects. In the blessing of these sacramentals using the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, the exorcistic and protective character of the sacramentals are explicitly asked for from God. However, this is not gleaned in the Ordinary Form. Nonetheless, the intention of the Church remains, since she is the author of the sacramentals.

67. What is “Grace”?

Grace is a supernatural gift of God bestowed on us, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for our salvation. There are two types:

- 1) Sanctifying or Deifying Grace
- 2) Actual Grace

68. What is “Sanctifying Grace”?

Sanctifying grace is that grace which makes the soul holy and pleasing to God.

CCC 2000 Sanctifying grace is a habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. Habitual grace, the permanent disposition to live, and act in keeping with God's call....

It is lost when we fall into mortal sin –a grave sin committed with full knowledge and intent. However, because the indelible character or permanent mark impressed in our soul in baptism, sanctifying grace is restored with true repentance and in the sacrament of reconciliation.

The presence of sanctifying grace in our soul makes us indeed adopted children of God, and everything we do for the love of God and neighbor produces “merit” in what we do. When we fall into mortal sin, the merits earned are lost. However, they are regained once sanctifying grace is restored.

69. What is “Actual Grace”?

Actual grace is the help of God which enlightens our mind and moves our will to shun evil and do good. They come to us only when we need their help in doing or avoiding an action, and it remains with us only while we are doing or preventing the action.

These graces refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification. (CCC 2000)

70. What are “Virtues”?

Virtue is the habit of doing good, and vice is the habit of doing evil. A virtue or a vice is the result of repeated acts of the same kind.

CCC 1803 A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.

Types of Virtues

1) Human Virtues

CCC 1804 Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good.

The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love.

There are Four Human Virtues (Cardinal Virtues) (CCC 1805-1809)

- a. Prudence – to act rightly at the right time
- b. Temperance – moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable.
- c. Fortitude - ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause.
- d. Justice - the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity concerning persons and to the common good.

CCC 1810 Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts, are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God's help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of the good. The virtuous man is happy to practice them.

Hence, the cardinal virtues, though also gifts of God, may, as natural virtues, be obtained by our efforts.

71. How do we grow in virtue?

CCC 1811 It is not easy for man, wounded by sin, to maintain moral balance. Christ's gift of salvation offers us the grace necessary to persevere in the pursuit of the virtues. Everyone should always ask for this grace of light and strength, frequent the sacraments, cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and follow his calls to love what is good and shun evil.

72. What are “Theological Virtues”?

Those graces or gifts of God by which we believe in Him, and hope in Him, and love Him, are called the Divine virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

CCC 1812 The human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature: for the theological virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the One and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object.

CCC 1813 The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues:

- a. Faith - is a Divine virtue by which we firmly believe the truths which God has revealed.
- b. Hope – is a Divine virtue by which we firmly trust that God will give us eternal life and the means to obtain it.
- c. Charity - is a Divine virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

The Theological virtues are infused virtues because they are poured into our souls gratuitously by God and do not depend upon our efforts to obtain them.

73. What are “Charisms”?

Charisms are gifts of the Spirit used to gather, sanctify, and minister life in the Church and the world.

CCC 799 Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world.

CCC 800 Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.²⁵³

CCC 801 It is in this sense that discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church's shepherds. "Their office [is] not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good," so that all the diverse and complementary charisms work together "for the common good."

(Note: The types of Gifts are taken from the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis - <http://ccro-msp.org/charisms-holy-spirit/> - Accessed December 30, 2019; while the comment from the experiences of exorcists is ours).

In the New Testament, there are listed at least 27 gifts (Acts 2, 1 Cor 12, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4). Moreover, St. Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12:4-11), mentions nine extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Charismatic Renewal is now appropriating these exceptional gifts.

- a. Gifts of Grace (*charis*) The power to speak, sometimes called Word Gifts: Prophecy, Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues.
 - 1) Prophecy is God's message spoken through an individual to the community. Prophecy does not necessarily mean predicting the future. Paul says the purpose of prophecy is for the "upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" of God's people (1 Cor 14:3).
 - 2) Tongues (*glossolalia*) are God's messages spoken through an individual. Tongues, individually or in a group, as a personal prayer resource does not need interpretation. There is the phenomenon of speaking publicly in tongues and having someone else understand and express the meaning of tongues; this includes the charism of interpretation.
 - 3) Interpretation of Tongues is the ability to interpret (not translate) a message given in tongues into the vernacular. Tongues, along with interpretation, amounts to prophecy.

There is still a continuing debate on the nature of tongues, on what it means to yield to tongues, and to the notion that it is the doorway to other gifts, and of tongue workshops. Exorcists are pretty cautious when it comes to this topic as every so often, they encounter members of the charismatic community who are demonically possessed and start to speak in tongues when they are in a possessed state.

Moreover, one of the first signs of a possessed person is the ability to speak in an unknown language. So, a nuanced understanding and distinction is necessary. Hence, it would be essential to understand also the phenomena of "counterfeit charisms".

- b. Gifts of Service (*diakonia*) The power to know: Wisdom, Knowledge, Discernment. These gifts are the ability to express and understand various aspects of God's nature or plan in a matter that brings effective results.
- 1) Wisdom is the facility to offer a solution to a problem or to give insightful teachings that open the hearer to God's wisdom.
 - 2) Knowledge is the ability to communicate God's word or doctrinal truths or to know how God is working within an individual or in the community at a particular time.
 - 3) Discernment is the capacity to know whether a gift or inspiration has at its source the Holy Spirit, is of human origin, or evil influence. Paul says that the Spirit always bears witness to Jesus (12:3).
- c. Gifts of Works (*energema*) The power to do: Faith, Miracles, Healing. Jesus' preaching was always accompanied by cures, miracles, and deliverance that led the people to faith and enabled them to experience as well as hear the good news.
- 1) Faith is a supernatural infusion to know with full certainty that God will bring something about. (Charismatic faith is not the same as the virtue of faith with which we receive our salvation in Christ).
 - 2) Miracles are God's supernatural interventions into the natural realm to demonstrate divine power. Miracles help strengthen faith or bring about faith.
 - 3) Healing is the manifestation of God's power to restore a person's spiritual, psychological, or physical well-being; this may be instantaneous or gradual, and often through the use of natural means.

The phenomenon of *sleeping in the Spirit* or *slain in the Spirit* is included under this manifestation of healing, where the recipient of the *sleeping* falls during a pray over.

Again, there is debate on this phenomenon as it is also observed during exorcisms where a normal person suddenly falls when the exorcist puts his hand on the head of the energumen.

Moreover, it also has been noted that those who are psychic, whether they are aware of it or not, often fall into this kind of experience during intense spiritual activities like during the so-called Baptism in the Spirit, or whenever they are prayed over by someone who does healing or deliverance.

74. Are Charismatic Gifts true and what should the correct Catholic attitude be towards these extraordinary gifts?

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the “Letter *“Iuvenescit Ecclesia”* to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Regarding the Relationship Between Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts in the Life and the Mission of the Church” on May 15, 2016. This document governs the principles, rules, and guidelines related to the “Charismatic Gifts”. It recognizes its presence throughout the whole history of the Church even to the present. It also acknowledges that it is the Church that is competent to judge the veracity of the gifts, whether from God or otherwise. It recognizes the need for pastors of souls to be vigilant and prudent in deciding their manifestation in persons. And that the faithful have a right to be directed as to whether what they possess indeed is an authentic charism or a false one.

Catholic Exorcists are keen on this matter as they also recognize the presence of counterfeit gifts which the Devil uses to deceive the faithful. And when people are more after “charismatic gifts” such as tongue workshops, rather than “sanctification” and growth in virtue, the counterfeit gifts can get the upper hand in the community.

75. What is the proper Catholic understanding of Praying in Tongues or Interpretation of Tongues?

This is a highly debatable subject, and Catholic theologians take different sides regarding it. Although the phenomena of praying, singing in tongues, and interpretation of tongues as experienced overall in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal came from Pentecostal Groups at its incipience, it has developed in a nuanced manner. The various catholic charismatic renewal groups are mostly obedient to the directives of the magisterium of the Church; this is true most especially on groups well directed by orthodox catholic priests. Experience shows that many groups that are lay driven without spiritual and doctrinal guidance from the Church tend to be more “Pentecostal” in their doctrine regarding the charismatic gifts.

Catholic Scripture Exegetes are one in saying that the New Testament experience of the Tongues, as reported in the Acts of the Apostles and mentioned in the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, is in many ways not the same as the experience of the Pentecostals and many charismatic groups. It was clear that in the kerygmatic preaching of the apostles recorded in Acts, the apostles spoke their language and understood in the different languages of those who were hearing the preaching (interpretation of tongues). In both ways, it was indeed a human language and not some unintelligible mumbling.

Historically in the experience of the Church from the 2nd century onwards, the phenomena became very rare. There are two reasons for this:

- a. the Montanist Controversy, which was eventually declared a heresy for advocating that the extraordinary charismatic gifts, like tongues, are “normative” for the true church and faithful Christian. Therefore, its absence in a person means that they are not true

Christians. That baptism alone is not sufficient, but the visible manifestation of these gifts signal that God has accepted the person.

- b. The preaching is done in the *universal language* of the time, which are Greek and Latin. And Sacred Scripture both the Old and New Testaments are being translated into those languages as well as others like Syriac and Armenian. More and more Christian missionaries and writers are spreading the gospel in the languages of the period. Thus, there was no more need for the extraordinary gift.

That a person speaking in tongues to be profitable spiritually to the community needs another person with the gift to interpret the languages is also problematic. It is a case of verifying a “gift” using another “gift” –tongues and its interpretation. In the end, how does one know if what is said and what is interpreted is true? One needs a more stable foundation to verify the integrity of the gifts, and this is found only in the teaching authority of the Catholic Church.

Moreover, in the Ministry of Spiritual Liberation and Exorcism, one of the primary signs of demonic possession is the knowledge, understanding, and speaking of languages unknown to the possessed; this, therefore, points to the possibility of “counterfeit charism of tongues”.

For someone to claim that they speak the “language of the angels” when they speak in tongues is utter nonsense. It is theologically wrong as angels are pure spirits, and they do not talk the way humans do. As pure spirits, they communicate in a purely intellectual manner devoid of any instrumentation of matter similar to a human tongue.

76. What are “Counterfeit Charisms”?

Counterfeit charisms are extraordinary manifestations similar externally to that of genuine charisms. However, the source of false gifts is the Devil, while that of authentic charisms is the Holy Spirit. An example of a false charism is divination –reading of auras and hearts, third eye, clairvoyance, hidden knowledge, while an authentic one is called prophecy, knowledge, or discernment of spirits. A person with false charisms will never say that they have false charisms but is convinced that what they possess is a “gift” from God; this spiritual blindness is precisely what false charisms do to its recipient.

Scripture is replete with instances where false charisms are manifested side by side with that of true ones. The confrontation between the magician of Pharaoh with Moses and Aaron (Exo. 7:22ff); the story of Balaam (Numbers 22); Sts. Paul and Silas against the Soothsayer in Philippi (Acts 16:16-21); Sts. Peter and John rebuking the sorcerer Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24); while in Ephesus, St. Paul shamed the Seven Sons of Sceva and led the Magicians of Ephesus to conversion (Acts 19:13-20).

The existence of counterfeit charisms is what caused St. John to say: “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false

prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 Jn. 4:1) Likewise, St. Paul would insist on looking for the fruits of the Spirit rather than simply what seems to be extraordinary manifestations of power: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law.” (Gal 5:22-23) Moreover, he warns the Corinthians that any manifestation of power without charity is nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

77. Is it licit for laypeople to lay their hands as a gesture of healing or sending of the Holy Spirit like what priests do?

In the practice of the Catholic Church, the “Laying of Hands” symbolize and formally manifests the invocation of the Holy Spirit. It has been primarily used in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, anointing of the sick, and the ordination of deacons, priests, and bishops. Likewise, the imparting of specific blessings to persons and the blessing of sacramentals, and during exorcisms, the gesture is used. It is primarily an *epicleptic* (invocation of the Holy Spirit) gesture and is priestly.

In many healing services led by laypeople in the charismatic renewal, this has also become relatively common. Such that laypeople begin to make the gesture even when a priest is present doing the blessing or prayer of healing or exorcism. Although the practice is not reprobated (forbidden) formally by the Church, the praxis of laypeople laying their hands over priests or bishops, or over others is not theologically sound. Moreover, it generates confusion both doctrinally and liturgically -- Doctrinally because the laying of hands over a person signifies spiritual authority and power. The ordination of bishops, priests, and deacons give them explicitly and with divine assurance this spiritual authority and power over those under their charge. Laypeople do not have this even if they are the leader of a group. The lay faithful’s spiritual authority is limited only to those within their family and proprietary circle. Hence, parents can bless their children even if their child is a cleric. They explicitly give their parental blessing but not anything else.

Liturgically it is also confusing because a priestly blessing is different from lay blessing. So, a priest laying hands over people or things and then simultaneously laypeople extending their hands over them give a confusing sign.

78. Can laypeople sprinkle Holy Water over others?

Lay people can sprinkle holy water on themselves and their property and others; this they can do for spiritual protection. However, just like laying of hands, they cannot use it with the intent of blessing things in the manner that priests do blessings with the sprinkling of holy water.

During deliverance of a place or home or object led by a priest, the laypeople can be tasked to sprinkle holy water while the priest does the prayer of exorcism or deliverance. In this case, it is

the priest who does the deliverance and blessing prayers and requests the lay faithful to assist him in the exercise of the ministry at that moment.

79. Can laypeople anoint with Exorcised Blessed Oil over others?

As with Holy Water and Blessed Salt, the lay faithful can use Exorcised Blessed Oil freely on their person, family, and property. They use it while invoking God to grant them healing and protection. They can also use it on others if they are asked to pray for them by the persons concerned. However, lay use of this exorcised blessed oil for prayers of healing should never be confused or substitute for the priestly prayers of healing connected with the Sacrament of Anointing the Sick.

During deliverance of a place or home or object led by a priest, the laypeople can be tasked to anoint walls, doors, windows, and objects like mirrors as the priest does the prayer of exorcism or deliverance. In this case, it is the priest who does the deliverance and blessing prayers and requests the lay faithful to assist him in the exercise of the ministry at that moment.

However, in *Healing Services* whether liturgical or non-liturgical, “in no instance may the non-ordained perform anointings either with the oil of the sick or any other oil” as this may simulate the Sacrament of Anointing. (*Ecclesiae de mysterio*, art. 9. 15 August 1997).

80. How can a “seemingly” catholic religious object become evil when maliciously tampered with, i.e., Satanic Rosaries, Images with non-Catholic additions?

To understand how particular religious objects that externally to the uninitiated looks like a catholic devotional item, e.g., rosaries, images, medallions, can turn out to be demonic or evil, we must go to the intention of the artist, the manufacturer or fabricator of such things. “The intention (Final Cause) of the First Cause endures” is the principle at work here. Any work is owned by the one who made it, thought about it, designed it, that is its creator. Even if he sells it, it will always have a link to the one who made it. Thus, a painting of a portrait of the patron does not belong to him even if he commissioned the artist. It is the artist who is the owner of the painting. Its creator gives its meaning. So also, with religious objects. If somebody tampers with the design of the rosary and adds something to it, whatever intention or purpose he gives to what he has done, this endures. Therefore, let us say that somebody designed a cross and placed a satanic symbol to it and had it manufactured and multiplied. Then he had this cross, now tampered, attached to a series of beads to look like a rosary. Even if a priest blesses this object, he cannot remove its meaning unless he removes the sigil (sign) of the satanic there. Thus, the blessing has no meaning because if it does, then the satanic symbol is also blessed, which cannot be. The priest blesses the object assuming that it is a rosary, but for the manufacturer –the real owner, this is not a Catholic rosary.

In the practice of the Early Church, pagan temples, when they are to be converted into churches, part of the purification is to destroy all pagan statues and connections inside the edifice. These

are removed from the premises. The building is exorcised through several purification rites before being consecrated and used for Christian worship. If, in some unfortunate event, the structure is desecrated, a reparation rite is done, then followed by purification rites, and finally rededication.

The blessing of religious objects for the veneration of the faithful, therefore, must take into consideration its provenance, the intention of the maker, the meaning behind each of the items in the image or statue. Anything in the icon, image, medallion that is alien to its traditional depiction must be carefully scrutinized for the meaning and reason behind its incorporation. If the purpose is suspect, then the priest should not bless it.

There is an exception to the rule here. The statue of St. Michael the Archangel, or St. George the Dragon Slayer, or St. Joseph the Terror of Demons, or the BVM of the Miraculous Medal, where there is the inclusion of the Devil or dragon or the evil serpent in the image, is not intended for satanic purposes but to depict a truth. When the priest blesses the image, the blessing does not make the object of the Devil there blessed. Again, the intention of the maker here is at work. The aim is and always to show the defeat and humiliation of the evil one. Thus, when they venerate the image, they do not venerate the Devil but only the holy one of God.

81. How should we rightly view advertised Miracle and Healing Crusades?

The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in the *Instruction On Prayers For Healing* issued September 14, 2000, gave the Diocesan Ordinary competency to render norms and procedures on how the ministry of healing is exercised in his ecclesiastical territory.

It is wise that Diocesan Ordinaries do a background check of all Catholic Healers who wish to do ministry in their diocese. It is certain from experience of the Church through the centuries that not all healers even if they be catholic faithful (cleric, religious, or lay) can with certitude say that their healing powers come from God. There is always a danger of spiritual contamination in this matter. This means that when there is even a remote occult exposure or practice or ancestry of the healer, e.g., an ancestor who is a local healer, or that the person has in the past been healed through occult means, or that the person has communicated in the past with occult spirits or with elemental spirits, or that the person underwent a traumatic near-death experience, or that the person underwent “New Age” healing techniques and then suddenly can do healing; this ability or power is suspect. It is known that occult spirits can be latent or inactive for many years though present in a person and will manifest itself in a suitable time when it can do the greatest deception and damage to souls. In contaminated persons, the occult powers will often manifest itself after what seems to be a significant spiritual activity or event, such as but not limited to, clerical ordinations, religious professions, pray-overs during spiritual exercises (life in the spirit seminars), and exercises intended to have heightened spiritual experience. Hence, the plausibility of healing priests or religious or laypersons using occult powers, although unknown to them, does exist. The CDF Document on *Instructions on Prayers of Healing* recognizes this danger. Likewise, the document *“Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian*

Reflection on the New Age” published by the Pontifical Council on Religious Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for Culture in 2003, warns of New Age healing practices.

82. What is the proper Catholic disposition regarding reports of alleged miracles, apparitions, visions, private revelations?

The attitude is always with caution. Not to be too gullible as to believe reports of alleged miracles, apparitions, visions, and private revelations immediately. Throughout the entire history of the Catholic Church, there have been many charlatans, false prophets, false visionaries, false apparitions, fraudulent private revelations. That the Evil One is behind every deceptive trick done under heaven is not at all outrageous. For an online list of Approved and Disapproved Apparitions please refer to Miracle Hunter at <http://www.miraclehunter.com/miracles/> (Accessed March 17, 2020).

The best disposition is the disposition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a disposition of humility and obedience. There are those who seeing or experiencing something extraordinary immediately attribute it as a miracle or from God. This is spirituality dangerous, and many have been led astray filled with their own pride. A faithful Catholic always listens to the voice of the Magisterium that guides us towards the truth. The charism of discernment of spirit is assured of the Church as she teaches the flock (CCC 889, 890, 892). Therefore, in terms of extraordinary phenomena we listen to the official pronouncements of the Church even if at times it takes so long. All we need to be saved has been given to us in the Divine Revelation. Private revelations when approved by the Church, helps bolster our faith, but they should not be our focus. However, when the Church declares private revelations, apparitions, visions as “non-supernatural” (not from God), then we should abandon it and never touch it again even if previously we believed and benefited from it. For prior to the formal and final declaration of the Church, we came in faith, but when the Church speaks and does not approve the private revelations, and we insist, it is no longer authentic faith, but pride and stubbornness. It would no longer be beneficial spiritually as there is disobedience in the heart. Instead, there is spiritual danger, and the Devil is behind every act of deviance from the Church’s teaching office.

The official procedure on determining alleged apparitions or private revelations is governed by the “[Norms Regarding the Manner of Proceeding in the Discernment of Presumed Apparitions or Revelations](#)” issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on February 25, 1978. A reader friendly way of understanding these norms are found in this site -- http://www.miraclehunter.com/marian_apparitions/discernment/index.html

Our opinion and recommendation, so as not to pre-judge the authenticity of the extraordinary phenomenon until a theological investigation has been made, pastors should not celebrate holy mass or the sacraments in those places, as this gives a wrong signal most especially for the gullible. Prudence is always a necessary disposition on the part of pastors of souls in relation to

these types of phenomena. It is also our opinion that bishops where the phenomenon occurred should be vigilant, for clearly the Norms say:

1. If, on the occasion of a presumed supernatural fact, there arises in a spontaneous way among the faithful a certain cult or some devotion, the competent Ecclesiastical Authority has the serious duty of looking into it without delay and of diligently watching over it.
2. If the faithful request it legitimately (that is, in communion with the Pastors, and not prompted by a sectarian spirit), the competent Ecclesiastical Authority can intervene to permit or promote some form of cult or devotion, if, after the application of the above criteria, nothing stands in the way. They must be careful that the faithful not interpret this practice as approval of the supernatural nature of the fact on the part of the Church (cf. Preliminary note c).
3. By reason of its doctrinal and pastoral task, the competent Authority can intervene *motu proprio* and indeed must do so in grave circumstances, for example in order to correct or prevent abuses in the exercise of cult and devotion, to condemn erroneous doctrine, to avoid the dangers of a false or unseemly mysticism, etc. (Norms Apparitions II, 1-3).

83. How does the Church view Devotions from Private Revelations?

To answer this question, we would like to quote extensively the *Norms on Sacramentals and Popular Piety* published by the Archdiocese of Washington on 2014. (cf. <https://adw.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Norms-13Sacramentals.pdf>) (Accessed April 4, 2020)

“Some popular devotions are based on private revelations rather than public revelation. The Church distinguishes between public revelation, which God has given to the Church as a whole and to which all the faithful are bound, and private revelations, which God has given to a particular individual or group, and which place no obligation on the rest of the Church.

The term **public revelation** refers to the revealing action of God directed to humanity as a whole and which finds its literary expression in the Old and New Testaments. It is called revelation because in it God gradually made himself known to men, to the point of becoming man himself, in order to draw to himself the whole world and unite it with himself through his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ.

Public revelation has been transmitted in Sacred Scripture and in Sacred Tradition, which together “form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church.” This is the revelation that was given to the entire Church and that must be received in

faith by all the People of God. It is complete in itself and does not need to be supplemented by later revelations.

“In Christ, God has said everything, that is, he has revealed himself completely, and therefore revelation came to an end with the fulfillment of the mystery of Christ as enunciated in the New Testament.” The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council affirmed, “we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Private revelations refer “to all the visions and revelations which have taken place since the completion of the New Testament.” A vision or any other kind of miraculous communication from God or from Mary or another saint falls into this category. Private revelations are given to an individual or small group, not to the Church as a whole. Consequently, while specific commands may be directed to an individual or small group, no obligation of assent of Catholic faith is placed on the Church as a whole. “Even when a ‘private revelation’ has spread to the entire world ... and has been recognized in the liturgical calendar, the Church does not make mandatory the acceptance either of the original story or of particular forms of piety springing from it.”

Private revelations do not have the same authority as public revelation. Public revelation “demands faith; in it in fact God himself speaks to us through human words and the mediation of the living community of the Church.” Private revelations do not demand faith on the part of the Church as a whole because such revelations do not belong “to the deposit of the faith.

It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive revelation, but to help [people] live more fully by it in a certain period of history.”

The role of private revelations is to help people to enter more deeply into the faith that has been revealed publicly. Private revelations are thus in service to the faith, which is based on public revelation. Private revelations are “a help to this faith and shows its credibility precisely by leading [one] back to the definitive public revelation.”

Private revelations are always to be judged by their conformity to public revelation, particularly to the Sacred Scriptures, and not the other way around. As public revelation is centered on Christ, any genuine private revelation will make Christ known and will help bring people to Christ. The criterion for the truth and value of a private revelation is therefore its orientation to Christ himself. When it leads us away from him, when it becomes independent of him or even presents itself as another and better plan of salvation, more important than the Gospel, then it certainly does not come from the Holy Spirit, who guides us more deeply into the Gospel and not away from it.

Although not every popular devotion has its origin in a private revelation, every popular devotion must be in conformity with the faith of the Church based on public revelation and must ultimately be centered on Christ.”

Finally, it is necessary to note that with regards to private revelations:

“An assent of Catholic faith is not due to revelations approved in this way; it is not even possible. These revelations seek rather an assent of human faith in keeping with the requirements of prudence, which puts them before us as probable and credible to piety.” (CDF, Message of Fatima, 121. The CDF quotes the statement from the treatise by Cardinal Prospero Lambertini (later Pope Benedict XIV)

Likewise, “Christian faith cannot accept ‘revelations’ that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such ‘revelations.’” (CCC 67).

84. When the Church officially declares that a private revelation or apparition or extraordinary mystical phenomenon is not supernatural, what does that mean?

There are three phrases often used in official Church declarations regarding authenticity of alleged private revelations, apparitions, or extra-ordinary mystical phenomenon and each would carry a judgment or implication. Here we cite them as summarized in the section Discernment of Miracle Claims by Miracle Hunter --

(http://www.miraclehunter.com/marian_appearitions/discernment/index.html) (Accessed September 21, 2021) . They are:

a. **Not Worthy of Belief** - *Constat de non supernaturalitate* (categorically “**not from God**”)

The statements to declare a private revelation false are given according to the Latin phrase: "*Constat de non supernaturalitate*" (It is established that there is **nothing** supernatural here). It has been determined that there are **no characteristics that show it to be from God thereby attributing it to fraud or another spirit.**

As an example, in the Philippines, this phrase has been used by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the presumed apparition in 1948 of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mediatrix of All Grace in the Carmelite Monastery in Lipa Batangas to the novice Teresing Castillo. (CDF Protocol 224/1949, on December 11, 2015).

“After nearly two years evaluating of the relevant testimony and the opinions of theological experts, the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office

determined, categorically, that the events which took place in the Carmel in Lipa were of non-supernatural origin and character. This determination, ***constat de non supernaturalitate***, is a definitive formulation in the applicable law, indicating that the events were unambiguously natural in their character and origin.” (Par. 14)

On July 7, 2018, His Eminence Orlando Cardinal Quevedo, OMI, Chair of the Episcopal Commission on Doctrine of the Faith of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, released a document on “*Pastoral Instructions on the Devotion to Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace, On Lipa and Local Interpretations*”, placed in clear terms that the alleged apparitions in the Carmelite Monastery in Lipa

- a. did not have a supernatural character and origin
- b. they are not authentic.

In a similar light, the case of the fifty-four apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Ida Peerdeman under the title of Our Lady of All Nations between 1945-1959, were declared on the 7th of May 1956 by the Bishop of the Diocese of Haarlem (Netherlands) to have no evidence of the supernatural nature of the apparitions. (CDF Notification May 25, 1974).

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19740525_signora-amsterdam_en.html (Accessed 21 September 2021)

- b. **Nothing Contrary to the Faith - *Non constat de supernaturalitate*** (“it is not clear whether it is from God”)

When locally it is decided or suggested that the reported apparition might or might not be of supernatural origin, the apparition is assigned to the category of “***Non constat de supernaturalitate***” (It is **not** established that something supernatural is here). Apparitions in this category do not enjoy approval of their supernatural character but are determined to contain nothing that is contrary to faith and morals.

- c. **Approved - *Constat de supernaturalitate*** (“judged to be from God”)

The supernatural character of the apparition is declared worthy of belief (“*Constat de supernaturalitate*”) and contains nothing that is contrary to faith and morals. But belief in the apparition (even the true one) is not necessary for salvation.

85. How do we make of so-called miracles of healing coming from false apparitions?

Some principles from mystical theology can shed light on this difficult question:

- a. Only God can make true miracles.
- b. Demons can amaze people with tricks that seem to be miracles, but they cannot perform real miracles.
- c. Shamans and occult practitioners are also able to do healing, but this is out of magic and under the influence of the power of the evil one.
- d. Only the Supreme Authority of the Church can declare with definitiveness, which things are to be considered truly miraculous about presumed apparitions or healings. This is done for reported miracles for candidates for beatification and canonizations.
- e. Prayers addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary or the Saints even in *de facto* false apparitions, as far as the faithful in their faith and heart believe that they are praying to their saintly benefactors, and have no knowledge of the deception, in truth pray to them. Therefore, whatever grace they receive is due to that faith. Had they known beforehand that this is a false apparition, they would not have gone there and sought the help of an impostor.
- f. When the Church has already spoken in a definitive manner about the presumed apparition and that the verdict is in the negative, the faithful are obliged by religious submission of the intellect and will. Hence, to continue in the devotion based on an apparition that is not true is to put oneself in spiritual danger. By not listening to the discernment of the Supreme Authority of the Church, one is opened to deception, as the devil is the “father of lies” (Jn 8:44) and can present himself even as an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14).

86. What do we do with devotional materials connected with false apparitions and private revelations?

This is a sensitive question, and the answer is not easily taken by some. One opinion is that they all be disposed of. If they have been blessed, then the suggestion in #87 can be followed. Another opinion is to continue using the devotional object but completely dissociating it with the discredited apparition or private revelation. However, if the devotee cannot in conscience dissociate it, and would want to dispose of the object, then #87 can be applied.

In the case of the devotion to Our Lady of All Nations (1945-1959), the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith recognized two approaches made:

- a. prohibit use of the image (Notification November 25, 1974) (https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cf_aith_doc_19740525_signora-amsterdam_en.html) (Accessed 21 September 2021)
- b. conceded that the title, the image, and prayers can be used but there should be no association whatsoever with the apparition. (Clarification by the Bishop of Haarlem-Amsterdam regarding the Lady of All Nations.

(<https://www.bisdomhaarlem-amsterdam.nl/?p=news&id=4486&t=Verduidelijking+ten+aanzien+van+de+Vrouwe+van+alle+Volkeren>) (Accessed 21 September 2021)

The same can be said with the devotionals related to Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace of Lipa, Batangas. That is,

- a. prohibition on the use of the image and all devotionals attached to the apparition rose petals and water from the apparition site (Santos, Rufino J., DD. (Apostolic Administrator of Lipa), Decree. April 12, 1951). And the CDF Decree Prot 224/1949, par. 10 also says: “On 16 July 1991, then Bishop of Lipa, Most Rev. Mariano Gaviola, effectively lifted the ban imposed in 1951 and allowed the veneration of the image of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. This decision was never communicated to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.”
- b. conceded that the title, and the image can be used but it should not be associated with the apparition (Communique of the CBCP Permanent Council March 14, 2017).

In a communique of Card. Quevedo on July 31, 2018 *“The Various Features and Titles of the Mediatrix”*, in Item 3, he says: “Therefore, in places where the Lipa statue is not known to be related to the alleged apparitions, the statue may be kept and venerated as one of the many different statues of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Graces. **Priests should ensure that statue is not to be related to the Lipa apparitions.** This suggestion is left to the prudential judgement of the local Ordinary. **But where the statue is to be disposed of, the delicate sensitivities of Marian devotees have to be wisely considered.**”

87. How does one properly dispose of blessed sacramentals when they are worn out, disfigured, broken, etc.?

Blessed sacramentals are to be disposed of properly, and this is done by cutting what can be reduced or destroying what can be destroyed. All this must be done with reverence. If they can be burned easily, they are to be burned, and the ashes buried in the ground or thrown into flowing water such as lakes, rivers, seas. They are not to be thrown in the dumpster as impious iconoclasts do or in the sewage or sink or toilet. Sacramentals that cannot be burned by fire, if they can be broken into pieces, should be done so and the remains buried on the ground. When doing so, they are done discreetly and never in public. They are not to be buried entire; otherwise, if someone were to discover it in the future may consider it miraculous. This is the reason why it should be destroyed. In the Catholic Church, there is a solemn rite for the decommissioning of churches and sanctuaries; that is if these places are no longer to be used as places of worship. In sacristies of churches, there is a special place called “Sacrarium,” where particles of blessed hosts are washed off with water, and the refuse goes directly to the ground. Holy Oils that have become stale are also disposed of in the sacrarium. In a like manner, the faithful can retire from veneration and retire their sacramentals –worn rosaries, scapulars, images, icons, medallions, etc.

88. During the period of strict lockdown due to an epidemic or any serious situation that prevents a general access of the faithful to Church services can we still ask that our sacramentals be blessed by a priest through live-streaming?

There are two schools of thought regarding this question. One is a definite “No” for all circumstances. And the other is “Yes” provided that some conditions are met. We would like to side with the conditional “Yes” unless higher competent ecclesiastical authority decrees otherwise.

Condition 1: Extraordinary situation declared by the Church. This is the most crucial condition because it is the reason by which rules ordinarily followed or governed specific actions are dispensed with for the spiritual good of the Christian people. However, it must be clear that the integrity of the matter to be blessed remains. The theological principle of *Ecclesia supplet* (the Church supplies what is lacking) and *Salus animarum suprema lex* (the salvation of souls is the supreme law) is applied in this case.

It is apropos to quote CCC 1668: “Sacramentals are instituted for the sanctification of certain ministries of the Church, certain states of life, a great variety of circumstances in Christian life, and the use of many things helpful to man. In accordance with bishops’ pastoral decisions, they can also respond to the needs, culture, and special history of the Christian people of a particular region or time. They always include a prayer, often accompanied by a specific sign, such as the laying on of hands, the sign of the cross, or the sprinkling of holy water (which recalls Baptism).”

A particular case in the Philippines during the Enhanced Community Quarantine in 2020, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines suggested that on Palm Sunday there are two modes of blessing the palms:

A. The faithful who will be following the celebration on TV can hold their palm branches (or any available branch of leaves) while the prayer of blessing of Palms is prayed by the Presider. In this case, those who follow the celebration on TV, there is no need for Holy Water to bless the Palm branches.

B. After the Mass, the presider can go around the streets of the parish at a previously announced time, to bless the palms without using Holy Water, of the faithful who wait in front of their homes. The priest makes the sign of the cross as he passes through the streets. The blessing with Holy Water might cause commotion. A loudspeaker may be used to make people aware that the priest is passing by.

(cf. Recommendations for the Celebrations of the Holy Week During the Quarantine Period (2020), Circular No. 20-15, March 20, 2020).

The bishops premised this “live-streaming of blessing” of the celebration of Holy Week including the Blessing of Palms on Palm Sunday” in this manner:

In this time of Intense Quarantine due to the spread of the COVID-19, almost everything and everyone is affected. Our social, economic, and religious life are painfully hit by the “social distancing” that is a necessity this time of pandemic to stem the transmission of the virus.

It is in this context that we are offering all our dioceses these liturgico-pastoral recommendations to keep a balance of the centrality of the celebrations of the Paschal Triduum and the demands of the measures to stem the transmission of the Covid-19. The balance has to be met in the one hand of the essentials of the celebrations and on the other the accommodations due to the precautions to stem the transmission of the virus.

I. We remind all priests that we will continue to celebrate the Holy Week and Paschal Triduum even in the absence of our assembly. The celebrations will be simpler this year because of the absence of our faithful but we will make every effort to keep the dignity and solemnity of our celebrations by following the liturgical form by which the Church has entrusted to us these celebrations. This is in line with our directive in our previous circular.

II. Again we enjoin all to keep the prescribed social distancing, hygiene protocols and sanitation of our spaces for the liturgy.

III. It is beneficial for the people to follow the live streaming of the celebrations. Every diocese is encouraged to live stream their celebrations. The online celebrations should also aim at generating an affinity of the faithful to the local Church. The importance of the domestic/family church stands out during this time. Like the early Church which was a “Domus Ecclesiae” a domestic/family church our families will come together to celebrate the great mysteries of our faith uniting themselves with the local Church through the celebrations transmitted though internet, tv or radio.

Condition 2: The competent minister of the blessing intends what the Church intends to do when blessing. The sacramentals are blessed indeed through the action and intercession of the Church (*ex opere operantis Ecclesiae*). Although the faith disposition of the one asking for the blessing of the sacramentals is an essential requirement for receiving the grace through the sacramentals; nonetheless, it is through the intercession of the Church that they become (constitutive) “blessed” or receive (invocative) the blessing.

Condition 3: That the objects to be blessed are actually present as the priest does the prayer and blessing. Some interpret this condition strictly as to mean that the objects to be blessed are right in front of the priest doing the blessing. Therefore, live-streaming does not seem to fulfill this condition as the priest does not see the things he is blessing. We concede that in ordinary times the necessity of “actually present” is required. However, in this extraordinary time, this cannot be applied in a most strict and literal sense. Here, the principle of “*ecclesia supplet*” truly applies. The priest relies on the goodwill of the Christian faithful who would like

their sacramentals to be blessed and obeying the prescriptions of the Church, lay down in their home altar these objects to be blessed by the Church for their pious devotional need. The live-streaming online blessing of the sacramentals is “synchronous in nature”, that is, the objects to be blessed are there prepared as the priest blesses them. The blessing does not extend when the video is replayed at another time. So, the faithful cannot simply replay the video to have his sacramentals blessed at his convenient time. That is not how it works.

Something analogous to this occurred when the Holy Father, Pope Francis, gave an extraordinary Urbi et Orbi Blessing on March 27, 2020. In that blessing, a Plenary Indulgence was given even to those who could not join the live broadcast of the solemn event, but who unite themselves in spiritual communion with the prayer. (cf. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-03/pope-prayer-friday-urbietorbi-plenary-indulgence.html>)

Although this blessing is not constitutive but invocative, still through the intercession of Holy Mother Church, the faithful truly receive the grace: “The gift of special Indulgences is granted to the faithful suffering from COVID-19 disease, commonly known as Coronavirus, as well as to health care workers, family members and all those who in any capacity, including through prayer, care for them. (cf. *Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary on the granting of special Indulgences to the faithful in the current pandemic*, 20.03.2020. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320c.html>). There is an assurance for the faithful that they genuinely receive the plenary indulgence when they are correctly disposed.

And although one may argue that only the Supreme Pontiff can give Plenary Indulgences, however, the theological reason remains that under certain serious conditions, the Church can relax the fulfillment of rules without jeopardizing the doctrine and the discipline. In fact, the decree would require “with the will to fulfill the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion, and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible”.

Therefore, it is our position that following the examples of the CBCP Guidelines on Holy Week, specifically the Blessing of the Palms, the Extraordinary Urbi and Orbi of the Supreme Pontiff, without the intention of usurping their authority and prerogative, and always willing to be instructed by the competent ecclesiastical authority with regards to this matter, we say that it is valid and licit to bless certain sacramentals for the pious and holy use of the Christian faithful through live-streaming during this extraordinary situation like the Covid19 Pandemic of 2020.

89. What happens to our soul when we die?

The soul enters *Particular Judgment* immediately after the separation of the definitive separation of the soul from the body.

CCC 1021 Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ. The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul -a destiny which can be different for some and for others.

CCC 1022 Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven-through a purification or immediately, or immediate and everlasting damnation.

At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.

90. Are there “wandering souls”?

“Wandering Souls” we mean human souls of the departed:

- c. who do not know that they have died and therefore are wandering on earth waiting for entrance into the after-life;
- d. it can also mean souls with unfinished business and therefore need to remain in the abode of the living to close the pending works; or
- e. a human soul that is so attached to a place that it lingers there.

These three notions are all contrary to faith and the doctrine of the particular judgment. God is sovereign over the life and death of every human being. A human soul outside the human body is a pure spirit and therefore possesses “intuitive knowledge” proper to spirits; its knowledge of reality is immediate. It knows that it is dead intuitively. Hence, a human soul “wandering” is a contradiction of the nature of a spiritual being. Immediately after death, it enters into particular judgment and knows the just sentence of God instantaneously. There is no room for “wandering”.

Meanwhile, the argument on “unfinished business” case also does not hold water with the doctrine of particular judgment because even in the instances of so-called “accidental death” or “unprepared death”, the person is judged by God according to his life and works, of his response to the love of God. Hence, even in cases of suicide, the soul enters into judgment before God, the author, and giver of life.

The argument of attachment of souls to a material place is also contrary to the nature of spiritual entities. A soul outside the body is a spirit and therefore not attracted to matter.

It is highly probable that “wandering souls” are not human souls but are evil spirits pretending to be human souls. Stories of hauntings in places – in houses, streets, cemeteries, corridors, buildings, hospitals, etc. are demons; that is why they react to exorcism prayers and the use of blessed sacramentals.

The Church does admit from the testimony of the saints, that, God sometimes allows poor souls in purgatory to manifest themselves to people who can help them with suffrages and prayers. However, these are not wandering souls. The Poor Souls in Purgatory are holy, their eternal happiness is assured, although awaiting their final purification and redemption (CCC 1022).

91. Can we talk to the dead?

The talking with the dead is frequent among occult practitioners and immersed in esoteric belief. It has various forms. The most common are:

- a. Necromancy - the conjuring of the spirits of the dead for purposes of magically revealing the future or influencing the course of events
- b. Spiritism – conjuring of spirits of the dead through a medium or psychic.

These practices are considered abominations in the sight of Almighty God (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10; Gal. 5:19-20; Acts 19:19). It is strongly prohibited among the Israelites under the pain of death (Lev. 20:27). Talking with the dead is typical of the pagan religions surrounding the Israelites. God forbids the Chosen People from being contaminated by them. The reason is simple; those spirits are not really of the departed but are demons impersonating as human spirits. Hence, it does not matter whether one conjures an ancestor, a loved one, or even a saint. Since how it is done is forbidden by God, the danger exists of demonic deception.

Praying to the Saints is not necromancy nor spiritism. However, if done superstitiously, it is erroneous. So, if using an Ouija board, somebody attempts to call on any one of the saints or holy angels, this is a superstitious act and opens one to spiritual dangers of demonic deception. For it is certain that it will not be the holy angel or the saint who would respond but an imposter spirit.

92. Can souls appear to us?

It is attested by the experiences of the saints that God does allow a soul in purgatory to appear to persons they can ask for help to alleviate their suffering. St. John Macias, a Dominican cooperator brother, is known to have helped many souls in purgatory to go to heaven by his unceasing prayers of the holy rosary on their behalf during his night vigils. It is said that as he was praying, souls would appear to him at the left and right of the altar. He would then offer for their suffrage the rosary, and he would see them change their color from pale gray to luminous white and ascend to heaven. So yes, they can appear. However, it is wise never to talk to them. Without the light of discernment of spirits given by the Holy Spirit, a person can easily be deceived by demons pretending to be souls; this is most especially true when “souls” appear to help solve problems like crimes or show treasures, for example.

93. Can evil spirits possess saints?

Frequently demonic possession is found among those who are deeply ingrained in sin, many occult practices, subjected to evil spirits through pacts and consecrations, or with powerful harmful and destructive emotions coming from trauma. However, it has been known throughout the history of the Church, that certain holy men and women have experienced being oppressed and harassed by evil spirits; examples include St. Anthony of Egypt, the Holy Desert Fathers and Mothers, St. Benedict of Nursia, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic de Guzman, St. John Bosco, St. John Marie Vianney, St. Padre Pio, St. Gemma Galgani, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, among many others. The demons torment them because they are stumbling blocks to his plan and design. God, in His wisdom, also allows them to be harassed and attacked because of their holy disposition and, by the aid of His grace, can receive the attacks and bear the suffering for their love of God. Hence, the attacks of the evil one do not produce the reaction he intended to come out but rather become means for more exceptional merit on the part of the saints, produce much good for themselves and those they pray for.

As to the question of saints being “demonically possessed”, there have been rare cases. And these saints described the pain and suffering they have to endure when the Devil took over their body to inflict on them the greatest sufferings ever to be experienced by human beings. Unable to take their soul because they are in the state of grace, protected by God, totally in love with Him, the demons inflicted their anger on the body of the saints. However, they could not do anything beyond physical torment, because even in cases of possession, God is still sovereign. Just like the story of Job in the Old Testament, the Devil was impotent beyond what is permitted by the divine governance.

The case of Discalced Carmelite St. Mary of Jesus Crucified (Mariam Baouardy, 1846-1878) is an example of a demonic possession that is not rooted in sinfulness but was permitted by God for the highest good not only for the victim but eventually for many others as well. It is reported that the demon afflicting her, wanted to leave the body of the saint just on the first day of the possession. Seeing nothing in her that the Devil could latch onto, the demon inflicted pain and suffering on her body. However, instead of cursing God for her afflictions, she glorified and blessed the Lord even more. When the demons would temporarily leave her, she would pray even more fervently, worshiping God, and performed penances for the sins of humanity. She offered her agonies from the Devil to save many souls. The evil spirits loathed on this disposition of the saint and so tortured her all the more — the more intense her woes, the greater her offering to God. The demons gave up and wanted to leave on their own. However, Divine Governance prevented them from departing until the demons were humiliated and defeated from their own game by the perfect sacrifice of self by the saint; this is similar to the sufferings that Christ endured on the cross. The demons wanted Jesus to suffer terribly. However, in His very pain, He reconciled the world to the Father.

That saints can suffer the sorrows of demonic possession is mind-boggling. However, it does show how holy men and women, in their great love for God, are willing to offer themselves like Jesus their Savior and Lord, to undergo the greatest passion for saving many people. It also shows how God can extract the highest good from the most contemptible of human suffering.

94. Why does the Church discourage the faithful from practicing Feng Shui?

The popular understanding of Feng Shui is, "it is also known as Chinese geomancy, is a traditional practice originating from ancient China, which claims to use energy forces to harmonize individuals with their surrounding environment. The term feng shui literally translates as "wind-water" in English." That it is geomancy, which is a form of divination through the arrangements of things in nature to attract good luck or positive energies and ward off bad luck or negative energies, is contrary to the virtue of religion. The Christian belief in the absolute sovereignty of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and His Divine Providence exclude the belief in good luck or bad luck and anything that seeks to control the flow of "energies" to manipulate them. In God's providential care, certain things in nature do promote good health and well-being. Unfortunately, man's abuse of the very same things that help him now become inimical to his good living. However, this does not mean that by rearranging things or directing things to face this direction or that direction or to place this object in a different place so as not to block the flow of good vibrations or energies, he can control now his fortune. Being in harmony with one's environment is not bad. However, in this harmony, there should never be any attribution that it was the cause of one's good fortune. Blessings come from the Creator, and bad things happen due to our own wrong decisions and failures.

95. Why is joining Freemasonry and similar secret societies a spiritual opening to the demonic?

Any institution, association, group, a movement that inherently seeks to undermine the truths of the Catholic Faith, or destroy the Catholic Church, or malign her is by its very nature demonic. Satan seeks to destroy the Church from the very beginning. He is the "*haereticorum doctor*" (mastermind of all heresies). Hence, all those who enter into these secret societies and profit from its membership, whether one is aware of its innate diabolic nature or not, automatically comes by default to the ambit of demonic influence.

From the Catholic Encyclopedia (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09771a.htm>) entry on Masonry, we cite the different Papal Decrees related to the banning of Catholics from joining this association and other secret societies:

Clement XII, Constitution "In Eminenti", 28 April, 1738;
Benedict XIV, "Providas", 18 May, 1751;
Pius VII, "Ecclesiam", 13 September, 1821;
Leo XII, "Quo graviora", 13 March, 1825;
Pius VIII, Encyclical "Traditi", 21 May, 1829;
Gregory XVI, "Mirari", 15 August, 1832;
Pius IX, Encyclical "Qui pluribus", 9 November, 1846;
Pius IX, Allocution "Quibus quantisque malis", 20 April, 1849;
Pius IX, Encyclical "Quanta cura", 8 December, 1864;
Pius IX, Allocution "Multiplices inter", 25 September, 1865;
Pius IX, Constitution "Apostolicæ Sedis", 12 October, 1869;
Pius IX, Encyclical "Etsi multa", 21 November, 1873;

Leo XIII, Encyclical "Humanum genus", 20 April, 1884;
Leo XIII, "Præclara", 20 June, 1894;
Leo XIII, "Annum ingressi", 18 March, 1902 (against Italian Freemasonry);
Leo XIII, Encyclical "Etsi nos", 15 February, 1882;
Leo XIII, "Ab Apostolici", 15 October, 1890.

Meanwhile, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith through the years have reiterated this position of the Catholic Church:

Irreconcilability between Christian Faith and Freemasonry - Reflections a Year After Declaration of Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, March 11, 1985;
Declaration on Masonic Associations (Declaratio de associationibus massonicis), November 26, 1983;
Declaration concerning status of Catholics becoming freemasons (Declaratio de canonica disciplina quae sub poena excommunicationis vetat ne catholici nomen dent sectae massonicae aliisque eiusdem generis associationibus), February 17, 1981.

96. Why is “Divining Water” using a “Water Witch” or a “Dowsing (Divining) Rod” to find water considered to be occult?

The method is not scientific or not based on sound science. Thus the ability to find water using divining “dowsing” rods is not supported by principles and laws known to science; this being the case, it is, therefore, outside its realm. That water witches claim to sense where the water is and that the dowsing rods focus their powers to the location of the aquifer demonstrate an outside physical power source of the ability. In this case, it is therefore considered “occult” in origin; that the skill can also be transferred or inherited bolsters all the more the judgment that we are not dealing here with something “scientific” but something of a different nature. Since it is a form of divination, then immediately, the occultic dimension becomes clear.

97. Is the practice of Bible Cutting a correct method of obtaining answers from God?

Bible cutting or Bibliomancy or *Sortes Sanctorum* (Lots of the Saints) or *Sortes Sacrae* (Holy Lots) is a practice rooted in superstition. It is the practice of divination utilizing a book, in this case, a sacred book. Generally speaking, bibliomancy involves turning to a random page in a holy text to find the answer to a question posed. It is asking God for something and expecting the answer immediately by a very casual turning to a page in the printed text; this is a form of divination and hence sinful.

98. Are “witches” real and do they have magical powers?

The concept of “witch”, both male and female, has always been present even in primitive societies. Often there is a very negative view of them across the ages as harbingers of ill-fortune, maleficence, pests, hexes and curses. In other cultures, the “witch” and the “shaman” or the “local healer” or “witch doctor” are in one the same person. They are an integral part of tribe which serve both as healer for their own people and protector against pestilence or maleficence sent by other “witches” from enemy tribes. They also act as their priests, mediators or oracles between the tribal deity and the people. They are revered and feared because of their power over nature –animals and foliage included. They are also referred to as sorcerers and magicians. This term magician is not to be confused with the illusionists we often know today who do tricks to entertain. The magicians of old were feared because of their mastery of occult powers, their knowledge of esoteric secrets, and their power to cause gruesome death to those who cause displeasure.

In the formation of the people of Israel as the Chosen People of God, their strict monotheism – devotion and worship to the One True God, the witches were placed under a ban. The practice of sorcery and witchcraft, necromancy, and sending of maleficence were punishable by death (Exo. 22:18; Deut. 18:10-14; Lev. 20:27) because of the identification of witchcraft with the pagan gods of neighboring nations. Witches and their craft, their powers were all drawn and learned from the false gods of the nations. It is an abomination, an anathema before the One True God. King Saul had all the witches and mediums banished (1 Sam. 28:9)

The Early Church inheriting the strict monotheism of the Jews rejected too sorcery and witchcraft. St. Paul has shown the immense power of the name of Jesus Christ against all the magicians and sorcerers of the Greeks. Thus, in Acts 13:8-12, St. Paul, equated sorcery and its practitioners as from the devil. This is one of many instances the Early Church will face in its battle with paganism and those who claim to hold power from their gods. In St. Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* and Tertullian’s treatise *On Idolatry*, they would equate the pagan gods as demons pretending to be gods who instruct their followers on how to worship them and so obtain favors. The conversion of St. Cyprian of Nicomedia, who was a feared sorcerer of that city, to the Christian faith, was triggered by the uselessness of his power over St. Justina, whom he had amorous feelings. However, St. Justina rejected all his advances, and thus one after the other, he sent curses, spells, hexes, potions, poisons to sway her. However, this did not affect her. On the contrary, all that evil he sent returned to him with a vengeance. It was at this point that he recognized the impotence of his power over the God that is protecting St. Justina.

When the Roman Empire embraced Catholic Christianity as the official religion under Theodosius I (347-395 A.D.), all the pagan practices were removed and outlawed, including the oracles and the witches, sorcerers, and magicians. By the reign of Justinian I (482-565 A.D.), this prohibition became permanent law of the empire for both East and West. All witches were banished, placed in prison, or executed. It was only through the period of the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment that up to our times that a resurgence of interest in witchcraft emerged. The secularization of the West and emergence of a post-Christian worldview brought once more to the fore the practice of the occult and sorcery. As many become interested in the

occult, esoteric knowledge, nature worship, and neo-paganism, some unscrupulously identify themselves as witches, wizards, druids, Wiccans, and neo-pagans. While many are charlatans, others are authentic ones.

Moreover, there are now movies, television shows, literary works, store items, and specialty shops that glory in these neo-pagan beliefs. Attempting to bring them as acceptable and normal, believing that people can control their life through conjurations of spirits, casting of spells, or protecting themselves from enemies through amulets and counter-curses or hexes. These are readily made available through the medium of the internet.

However, the Catholic view of witchcraft and its practitioners has not changed. The Catholic Church rejects it and identifies the source of the occult power as from the devil (CCC 2116, 2117). Thus, white witch or white magic, grey witch or grey magic, dark witch, or black magic, they are all the same. The power is occult and, therefore, demonic. And to the question, if they have real power, the answer is they have in so far as the devil gives them. Though, the damaging effect of their power is always subject to Divine Governance.

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