

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Q & A

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PRIESTS AND LAITY

DAN SCHNEIDER, PHD & JESSE ROMERO

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Spiritual Warfare Q & A: Priests and Laity © 2025 Jesse Romero,
Dan Schneider

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
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Chapter I: Exorcism & Deliverance Basics	5
--	---

From the Field: “You have no authority here.”

1. What is exorcism? Is that the same as deliverance?
2. What is the difference between “imprecatory” and “deprecatory” prayer?
3. Why can’t I just take authority in the name of Jesus and drive out demons?
4. What does the authority structure have to do with exorcism and deliverance?
5. What happens when someone steps out of the authority structure?
6. What are the most common sins which lead to possession?
7. What are the levels of diabolic affliction?
8. Why does God allow us to be tempted?
9. What do exorcist and exorcism mean? Is an exorcist’s mandate “just a piece of paper” as some claim?
10. You say an exorcist needs a mandate from the local bishop. Do we see that concept anywhere in the Bible where an apostle gives a mandate to a subordinate?

11. Sometimes exorcists on the internet report on what the demon says in session. But doesn't the demon lie?
12. Should every diocese have an exorcist?
13. Can a bishop do prayers of exorcism over the city of his diocese? What else can he do to fight off evil?
14. What do you mean that "the most powerful force in the world is the human will"? Can you give an example of what that looks like?
15. What do you mean in saying that "all liberation is self-liberation"?
16. What is the Phase One Prayer Regimen? Why is it helpful in spiritual combat?
17. I was reading an exorcism from Matthew's Gospel and saw that the verse stating "this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting" is missing from some versions. Why was this removed?
18. I'm worried about you looking at occult websites to prepare for your radio show. I don't want you to get attacked by demons. Isn't curiosity dangerous? Didn't Eve get in trouble for curiosity?

Chapter II: General Questions 45

From the Field: "My habit is falling off of me."

1. What about the seventy apostles in Luke chapter ten? They were lay people, right?
2. I am part of an exorcism team, and I am getting emotionally invested in the case of this petitioner. I feel like I should counsel her and personally invest myself in her case and help her get liberated. Thoughts?
3. Can other religions conduct exorcisms? I thought that the "gods of the Gentiles are demons" (Psalm 96:5)?

4. I was at a conference where someone manifested. The priest came over and people prayed until he calmed down. Does that mean the person was delivered?
5. Why is the prologue in John 1:1–14 used during the rite of Exorcism? It's also read at the end of the Latin Mass.
6. Why do demons hate Gregorian Chant and Latin?
7. Is it ok to watch horror movies?
8. If I pray prayers outside a Planned Parenthood abortion facility, what prayer protocol is recommended?
9. I'm going to an abortion clinic to inspect it as part of my job. What sacramentals do I wear? What prayers do I pray?
10. I am a police detective working major crime cases including assaults, sex assaults, and homicides. Is there an appropriate binding prayer that I can use before going into an interview?
11. Can a Catholic practice yoga? I am not sure this is something that any Christian should be doing.
12. What do I pray if I am being attacked by things like back pain, neck pain, and headaches (physical) as well as anxiety (psychological). I think it may be demons projecting these attacks. How do I pray against these attacks?
13. A priest told me that I should not pray deliverance or binding prayers for my family. He strongly advised me against this practice. I listen to War College, and I hear quite the opposite.

Chapter III: The Occult and Mystical Phenomena . . 69

From the Field: "But I am not being retaliated against."

1. I know the diabolical can mimic anything. How can we tell the difference between true and false visions?
2. I purchased a house and found out that a murder-suicide took place there years ago. Sometimes I think the house is haunted. Can that happen?
3. What do I do when I awake at three o'clock in the morning with a sense of evil? Is that just a coincidence or is there more to that hour?
4. I have dreams that often seem very symbolic. Is it wrong to interpret dreams?
5. Is there such a thing as a Chucky doll?
6. What are "satanic" rosaries?
7. How do I dispose of objects which I believe may be cursed? Can't I just throw them away?
8. What is wrong with going to haunted houses?
9. My father and grandfather were Freemasons. What prayers do I need to pray to break any curses? What do I do with his ring and apron?
10. What is a "demonic matrix?"
11. What does Liber Christo mean when they say that a person has "fractured thoughts"?
12. Can a demon take on a physical body?
13. What makes the Rosary such a powerful weapon against Satan?

Chapter IV: Breaking a Vice,
 God's Providence, and Evil 95

From the Field: "Leave."

1. I need to work harder to stop being in mortal sin so much. My Achilles heel is lust. Any advice on what I can

do to stay in a state of grace for longer periods and hopefully for good?

2. What does the battle with lust look like practically? What is “custody of the mind”?
3. I have heard you recommend that people who struggle with lust should gaze upon the crucified feet of Jesus. Will you give me instructions or ideas on how to proceed with this?
4. What do you mean by “the demon enters through sin but holds through heresy”? How does that relate to removing obstacles to grace?
5. What does it mean to live in a state of grace? How does that help in spiritual combat?
6. My son tries to practice his faith, but his speech is very vulgar. Is this dangerous for spiritual life, and what is the best way to break that habit?
7. I am a twenty-two-year-old that is on fire for my Catholic faith, but my parents are consulting a wizard and go to Mass as well. What can I do? I still live with them.
8. I keep hearing of the efficacy of the novena to Our Lady of Sorrows, but how exactly is this novena made? By praying the Rosary, by other special prayers?
9. I am under spiritual attack. What should I do?
10. What are “generational spirits”? Is this the same as “healing the family tree” and “generational sin”?
11. I know IVF (in vitro-fertilization) is a grave sin, but is it a satanic ritual?
12. What is the most effective protocol for decommissioning tattoos, especially those in which the ink might have been cursed, or the image itself might be evil?

13. Is all magic evil? Didn't Saint John Bosco do magic tricks?
14. Megan Fox recently said that she and her boyfriend drink each other's blood. Is that satanic? Vampirism?
15. If you renounce God and Our Lady and even sign a pact with the devil, can you ever come back?
16. My adult son does not go to Mass anymore. Where do I begin?
17. I think my husband is possessed. Can you help me?
18. Should a Catholic use "healing rocks" for physical, spiritual, or emotional healing of self? Did St. Hildegard of Bingen use healing rocks or stones?
19. Is burning sage in your home OK with the Catholic Church?
20. What is the role of sacramentals in spiritual warfare?

Chapter V: Questions from Priests—General.143

From the Field: "What is your name?"

1. How does the ministry of exorcism relate to me as a parish priest? What does it have to do with the *tria munera*?
2. What is "exhausting the pastoral response"? Phase zero?
3. I had a good formation in the seminary, especially regarding sacramental theology, but we never learned anything about praying deliverance prayers after sacramental absolution. Wouldn't it be best for the diocesan exorcist to pray these types of prayers?
4. I was told by a priest-mentor not to pray deliverance prayers/minor exorcisms, since only the diocesan exorcist has the authority of the Church behind him, and

therefore I would be spiritually vulnerable engaging the demons on my own. How do I respond to him?

5. When do you recommend that I use exorcised oil in deliverance ministry?
6. I see many priests and exorcists being taken down in this ministry by women. Why is this seemingly more common among those who engage in spiritual warfare?
7. Some of my brother priests think that when it comes to deliverance, we should just leave well enough alone, or at least let the diocesan exorcist deal with it. What should I say to that?
8. I am hesitant to engage in deliverance ministry because of fear of transference. Am I as a priest vulnerable to this, especially if I pray with my hand on the person's head?
9. Doesn't the Bible show us that lay people can impose hands as well?
10. Someone showed up at my parish and said he is possessed. What should I do?
11. I have a deacon at my parish. What can deacons do in deliverance ministry? Can they lay hands? Can they pray imprecatory prayers?
12. Some parishioners want to set up a deliverance team at my parish. Is that safe?
13. What do modern exorcists say about the imposition of hands by the laity? Don't sponsors impose hands during the Rite of Confirmation?
14. A group from our diocese wants to lead a retreat doing "impartation" at my parish. I have never heard of it. What is impartation?
15. What about Vatican II's "active participation" of the laity

- in deliverance ministry? Isn't that part of the rights of their universal priesthood as baptized Christians?
16. I recently preached on the priesthood and cautioned lay people against imposing hands. A woman accosted me after Mass and accused me of clericalism. How is that clericalism?
 17. I did not learn anything about spiritual warfare in the seminary. How can I use it to help my parishioners and protect my parish?

Chapter VI: Questions from Priests—Specific187

From the Field: "Look at the Anointed Hands of a Priest of the Living God."

1. Who can pray Chapter Three? How often should I pray it over my parish property?
2. I am an exorcist, and I noticed that when possessed people see me, they get fidgety and struggle to make eye contact. Why is that?
3. Is it true that deliverance prayers are most effective following the words of the absolution in the sacrament of confession, and if so, why?
4. If I pray deliverance prayers in the sacrament of confession, am I protected by that sacrament from demonic retaliation?
5. I have been considering praying deliverance prayers in the confessional following sacramental absolution, but what prayers should I begin with?
6. If a penitent manifests in the confessional, then the demons try to attack the priest physically, but it goes away after the priest does binding prayers, what's their end game in attempting to attack? (e.g., panicking, retaliation)

- tion, affirming the priest that he's getting them angry because you're about to absolve, etc.?)
7. I was recently ordained, and after one of my first Masses, a woman manifested right outside the sacristy right after Mass. A group of lay people jumped in to help, but it seemed to make things worse. When I raised my hands in prayer, the demon seemed to be in pain. Why did this happen and how do I shut it down?
 8. A parishioner says she is hearing voices. How can you tell if this is demonic?
 9. I started doing some deliverance prayers and now things are lighting up. I hear that a priest will get his toughest case up front. Why is that?
 10. I am doing minor exorcisms, and another priest told me I needed to find a "sensitive" to help me. What is that?
 11. I serve in an area where the charismatic movement and also laying on of the hands has been widespread for decades. It is expected that eventually a charismatic, usually a woman, will come back into the sacristy and say something like, "Father, I have gifts. Can I pray over you?" I'm not sure how to respond to her.
 12. What is "saturation prayer"? Some people want to teach this at my parish.
 13. I had always had the impression that a general confession should not be made because it would foster scrupulosity. Why then is a general confession especially recommended before deliverance prayers are prayed?
 14. In my pastoral experience, breaking soul ties is very effective with regard to sexual sins and even sins of abortion, but some priests think breaking soul ties is not in Catholic tradition and has Protestant or New Age

origins and therefore is a suspicious pastoral practice at best. How do I respond?

Chapter VII: Conclusion—	
Smashmouth Catholicism	213
From the Field: Prayer begets what it signifies	
An Historical Note: A Lesson from the 82nd Airborne	
Appendix A: Authority Charts	225
Appendix B: The Liber Christo	
Thirty-Day Prayer Regimen.	229
Appendix C: Prayers of Protection for	
Praying at an Abortion Clinic	233
Appendix D: Destroying Cursed Objects.	237
Appendix E: Instructions for Breaking	
Freemasonic Curses.	243
Appendix F: Protocol for Decommissioning of Tattoos .	249
Appendix G: Suggested Prayers for Priests	251
Bibliography	255

INTRODUCTION

“THE WHOLE OF man’s history has been the story of dour combat with the powers of evil,” states the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day.” Thus, the life of man is one of “battle” where he finds himself “in the midst of the battlefield” and he must contend and struggle for victory in this life (CCC 409). While most Catholics recognize this as true, very few set about learning the rules of engagement so that they can attain that victory which, in the words of Saint Peter, is “the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Pt 1:9).¹ This book is designed with that purpose in mind and the additional purpose of bringing some objectivity to an otherwise elusive and subjective—at times, even outright speculative—field of spiritual warfare.

What is needed today is a return to Catholic norms in an apostolate that has been largely influenced by Protestant and charismatic modalities that emerged in the wake of the charismatic renewal of the previous generation. Although these have had some effect, such modalities are not equipped to meet the emerging needs of today’s post-Christian and increasingly pagan world. Too often, that influence has meant

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references will be taken from the New American Bible. My own translations are taken from the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (NA28), Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta* (LXX), and *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 5th edition (VUL).

an overemphasis on the devil and freedom from affliction and temporal suffering to the exclusion of Jesus Christ and the intricacy of the human person as a body-soul composite created in the image and likeness of God. As Pope Benedict XVI insisted as inherently self-evident, Christianity is, after all, about Christ. Liberation is not static, therefore, nor is it merely the cessation of pain and suffering but a movement towards Him: “For freedom Christ set us free; so, stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1). The first movement, therefore, is one of *freedom from* disordered attachments and sin which expose the soul to the slavery of the diabolic. This requires, however, a second movement, or *freedom for* a life of virtue, sanctifying grace, and ultimately, union with Christ.

The pathway to that union, indeed, one of “dour combat” and the “battlefield” in which we find ourselves, as if air-dropped behind enemy lines, is largely an interior one. Thus, our safe return homeward—that is to say, heavenward—means a return to authentic Catholic theology and philosophy, to include Christian anthropology. The Christian understanding of the human person can be gleaned from the words of Saint Augustine: “Inasmuch as the mind itself is the image of God, in that (reality) he is *capable* of God.” Sometimes translated “partaker of,” the Latin *capax* means *capable*, in the sense of *able*, *apt*, *suitable for*, *able to conceal*, and *the right to inherit*. In the Catholic tradition, our “partaking” of God (*capax Dei*) encompasses all of those realities. Man’s *telos* is God, which means the definition of liberation also encompasses much more than simply an absence of darkness. On the contrary, true and lasting “liberation” means reconciliation with God the Father, the full actualization of man’s divine filiation, his baptismal dignity.

What we have attempted here in this book is to provide in laymen's terms how to defeat the infernal enemy through adherence to the teachings of the Catholic Church, a renewed prayer life, and radical return to the sacraments. Accordingly, this is not merely an informational treatise on the topic for the curious seeker but a "how-to" manual for the Church Militant. We chose the question-and-answer format for this book to help flesh out the rules of engagement for today's Catholics. On average, across our platforms, we receive approximately eight thousand emails a year inquiring on spiritual warfare. Over time, certain questions come in on a regular basis, patterning in a certain way, if you will. We include here many of the most common and recurring questions. Some are more theological, and others quite practical. Some answers have been expanded and others shortened, but overall, the astute reader will see the same pattern emerge.

We fight an ancient enemy, and therefore, our best weapons are those that are ancient, tried, and tested. The sacraments and liturgical life of the Church are both the means and the end of true and lasting liberation. You have them at your disposal, but the enemy does not want you to learn how to use them. Most Catholics, then, need someone to take them to the gunnery range so they can learn how to use their spiritual weapons safely and effectively.

We begin with a principle set forth by Saint Irenaeus of Lyon who first spoke of the "unbending Rule of faith." This second-century Father and Doctor of the Church gave a principle with which to check both doctrine and practice by asking whether it is consistent with (1) that faith which the successors to the apostles taught and handed down to apostolic witnesses and (2) the unity of Sacred Scripture. "The Rule" not only helps us to know true doctrine but also serves as a guide for holiness of life. Thus, we lean upon the living Tradition

of the Church in formulating a systematic and institutional response for this “dour combat with the powers of evil” with whom we are now engaged. May this book bring you closer to Him and to that freedom which only He can give.

Dan Schneider, PhD

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Chapter I

EXORCISM & DELIVERANCE BASICS

“A PRIEST—ONE WHO is expressly and particularly authorized by the Ordinary—when he intends to perform an exorcism over persons tormented by the devil, must be properly distinguished for his piety, prudence, and integrity of life. He should fulfill this devout undertaking in all constancy and humility, being utterly immune to any striving for human aggrandizement, and relying, not on his own, but on the divine power. Moreover, he ought to be of mature years and revered not alone for his office but for his moral qualities.

“In order to exercise his ministry rightly, he should resort to a great deal more study of the matter (which has to be passed over here for the sake of brevity), by examining approved authors and cases from experience; on the other hand, let him carefully observe the few more important points enumerated here.

“Especially, he should not believe too readily that a person is possessed by an evil spirit; but he ought to ascertain the signs by which a person possessed can be distinguished from one who is suffering from some illness, especially one of a psychological nature. Signs of possession may be the following:

ability to speak with some facility in a strange tongue or to understand it when spoken by another; the faculty of divulging future and hidden events; display of powers which are beyond the subject's age and natural condition; and various other indications which, when taken together as a whole, build up the evidence."

—*Praenotanda to the Rite of Exorcism*, nos. 1, 2, 3

From the Field: "You have no authority here."

Power and authority are not the same thing. Simply stated, power is the ability to effect change, and authority is the right to command change. What is known as "Chapter Three" is a restricted prayer (the third chapter of the Rite of Exorcism) that requires a priest to attain permission from his bishop to pray publicly.² The demon knows the rules of engagement and will try to seduce priests out of their lane of authority. Make no mistake, priests can also become afflicted or even possessed (and we have had several cases of possessed priests over the years). A newly formed team in another country, for example, reported their initial case load as including four priests and a permanent deacon. What was common to all five? Each was praying Chapter Three without permission from their bishop, using ecstatic forms of adjuration (including praying in tongues over the possessed), blending of the roles between priest and lay team members, and generally

² This is a "slang reference to Title 12, Chapter 3 *Rituale Romanum*, also known as the Leonine 'Prayer against Satan and his fallen angels.' Pope Leo XIII incorporated this prayer into the solemn rite of exorcism, which had previously contained Chapter 1 (Praenotanda), Chapter 2 (Solemn Exorcism), and now by inclusion, Chapter 3, the above-mentioned prayer. By recent proclamation from the Congregation for the Divine Faith, this prayer is now regulated and only available to priests for public use with episcopal permission." Schneider, *The Liber Christo Method*, 23–24.

following a Protestant model found in a popular book used in some Catholic circles.

Closer to home, a young man in his twenties presented himself to a priest in his hometown. The man reported that he had been involved in Satanism at some level, and so the priest decided to pray over him immediately. They were not in the confessional, and the priest knew nothing of the man's background. The man simply came to the office and told the priest of his affliction. Without asking anything regarding the man's sacraments or anything of his current situation, this well-meaning young priest began to pray the Chapter Three in Latin over this young man.

The demon immediately began to manifest; that is, he appropriated the senses of the young man, and a diabolical presence took over his body. The demon spoke to the priest in English, and the first thing that the voice said was "Your Latin is deplorable."

The priest had just enough training to know that this does not detract from the power of his office as priest, so he replied to the demon,

"Yes, but you must yield to it."

In this, by dialoging with the demon, the priest departed the protection of his authority. The demon lured him out, as if easing him onto the edge. The priest then returned to the Ritual and prayed, "and I command you."

The young priest later reported that at those words, he immediately experienced a shift. The *Praenotanda*, or Preface, to the Rite of Exorcism delimits the rules for engagement and right use of this powerful prayer. Specifically, the preface gives guidelines on how the priest must be vested and what sacramentals which he must have on hand, in addition to the interior preparation through prayer before deploying the Rite. Notably, the young priest did not possess the things

requisite to praying Chapter Three. For starters, he did not have a crucifix in his hand, nor was he wearing a stole, nor had he been fasting.

The priest reports that in the moment when he simply said, “I command you” to the demon, he felt a chill come over the room. First his fingers, he said, went numb. Then his feet went numb. His nose became icy cold. His tongue became, in his words, “frozen to the top of my mouth,” and he could not speak. Then the eyes of the young man, now appropriated by the demon, held him. The priest said they “pierced” him, as the demon’s voice then said, “You have no authority.”

And in that moment, the priest was absolutely devastated, terrified. He says that he does not know how long the eyes held him, but eventually feeling started to come back to his fingers and feet. Meanwhile, the young man recovered and had no clue what had just happened. This priest, however, knew. He had enough schooling to know that he had the power over the demon but despite being a priest, he lacked the proper authority.

In this section, we discuss this in depth, specifically what it means to be “authorized by the Ordinary” as a mandated exorcist, as well as the importance of holiness (“piety, prudence, and integrity of life”) and other rules for spiritual combat.

1. What is exorcism? Is that the same as deliverance?

According to the *Catechism*: “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” (CCC 1673). Thus, as explained in *The Liber Christo Method: A Field Manual for Spiritual Combat*, exorcism is “the expelling of evil spirits in cases of possession and obsession according to the rite prescribed in the Roman

ritual, and presently performed by a priest with the permission of his bishop.” Exorcism, moreover, can be “*major* (with use of the Solemn Rite of the Church) or *minor* (deliverance prayers, prayer of minor exorcism using various rites and not requiring permission of the local Ordinary).”³ This liturgical action is “the Church’s formal response on behalf of the energumen⁴ . . . whereby the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that the person be protected from the evil one and withdrawn from his domination.”⁵

Deliverance is a broader term and is related to exorcism, referring to “prayers of minor exorcism, typically in the deprecatory form, which address primarily the affliction, its effects, and entreat the Lord, His angels, His saints, the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Virgin Mary, etc. to intervene and to bring relief to the penitent/energumen suffering affliction.”⁶ This is significant in that many lay practitioners have blurred the distinction between exorcism and deliverance and who, while claiming to do “deliverance from evil spirits,” are, in effect, performing minor exorcism without the requisite authority (to wit, “through the spiritual authority which Jesus entrusted to his Church” as per CCC 1673). Unless one has the proper authority over the person, place, or object, he should not bind any demons.

2. What is the difference between “imprecatory” and “deprecatory” prayer?

The imprecatory form of prayer is the direct commanding of a demon. The imprecatory form (“In the of Jesus Christ, I

³ Schneider, *The Liber Christo Method*, 24.

⁴ A technical term for one who is possessed.

⁵ Liber Christo, *Mentors, Case Facilitators, and GP Priests*, 7–8.

⁶ Liber Christo, *Mentors, Case Facilitators, and GP Priests*, 8.

command *x*") is dictated not simply by the ability to command, but also implied is the right to do so. This means that to command a demon, you have to have authority over the realm where the nefarious activity is found. Whenever someone prays, "In the name of Jesus, I bind *x*" (note the "I bind"), he is using the imprecatory form. Because man has been given by God the right of self-determination, anyone can bind any demons afflicting himself. To bind (Latin, *ligare*) means to place under oath, and therefore what is referred to as a "binding prayer" means to place a demon under oath and command him to do this or that (the cessation of nefarious activity). To bind another (whether another person or a demon) means you first have the right of disposition over the person, place, or object. The purpose of adjuration is to place another under obligation. Authority, then, is the right over another to command and place him or her under an obligation.

The deprecatory form is petitioning God for this or that intention or desired effect. While not directly commanding the demon, deprecatory prayer is asking the Lord, the Blessed Mother, Saint Michael, our guardian angel, etc. to bind the demon. One is a command; the other is a petitioning. Both are effective, but we often fall into the trap that we need to bring out the "big guns" and pound the demon, which is not always the case. The use of the Divine Name is rightly exercised as imprecatory (command) or deprecatory (beseeching) according to one's relation to the other person, place, or object. Deprecatory prayer should not be seen as the backup plan in case the imprecatory cannot be used. Petitioning the Lord in the deprecatory form is an act of faith in the providence of God, something which requires trust and, at times, even suffering. Thus, when someone prays "May the Lord bind *x*" (note the language of "may the Lord do this or that"), he is petitioning, which is perfectly safe and legitimate.