

## Exorcisms

## Policy No. 405

*Exorcism is an act of faith in Jesus Christ who was sent by the Father to redeem mankind from the works of the Enemy. It is a ministry of the Church instituted by Christ. Those who request this ministry from the Church are expected to show authentic desire to be committed to Christ. As clearly stipulated in the Rite of Baptism or Christian Initiation, they are expected to be ready to accept responsibility in being a follower of Christ or, if they are already baptized, to renew the vows of their own Baptism, “to reject sin; profess [their] faith in Christ Jesus.” (Rite of the Sacrament of Baptism #56). They must keep in mind what St. Paul said: “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1)*

**Policy Statement:** Only a priest authorized by the Archbishop is permitted to conduct an exorcism (c. 1172).

An exorcism may only be exercised in accord with the formulas of the Roman Ritual.

**Intent of Policy:** To provide for the spiritual release and relief of those who suffer possession by an evil spirit(s).

**Definitions:** **Exorcism** refers to a prayer where “the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ, [for] a person or object to be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion, [through a rite] called exorcism.” (CCC 1673) It is a procedure of the “expulsion of demons or liberation from demonic possession through the spiritual authority [entrusted by Jesus].” (ibid)

**Exorcist** refers to a priest who has been mandated by the local Bishop to perform the rite of solemn exorcism.

An Exorcism may be required to address the following condition/situation:

- **Diabolical Possession:** The domination of a person’s body (not the soul) by the Devil, who speaks and acts without the knowledge or consent of the victim.

Prayer and pastoral care may be required to address the following conditions/situations:

- **Diabolical Obsession:** Symptoms include sudden attacks, at times ongoing, of obsessive thoughts, sometimes even rationally absurd, from which the victim is unable to be free.
- **Diabolical Infestation:** Manifestations in houses, things or animals.
- **Diabolical Oppression:** Symptoms of affliction varying from very serious to mild, affecting health, jobs, relationships.

Definitions provided by Fr. Gabriel Armorth, Chief Exorcist of Rome (2006)

***Procedure:***

For persons who are baptized in the Catholic Church or persons of no faith background or affiliation:

- a) When approached by a person requesting an exorcism, the need for the exorcism must be discerned.
- b) The person is to meet with the proper pastor for a preliminary conversation and spiritual assistance.

The pastor will be provided with support from the Spirit Discerning Ministry Committee through the Office of the Chancellor.

- c) If further enquiry is necessary after the initial meeting, the pastor will request the following:
  - Documentation from a physician attesting to the physical health of the person.
  - Documentation from a psychologist/psychiatrist attesting to the mental health of the person.
- d) After reviewing the documentation and recording his own summary, the pastor, if he deems appropriate, may recommend the person for an exorcism and submit the case to the Spirit Discerning Ministry Committee, along with the consent of the person to release the information.

The Committee through means of discernment will recommend an exorcism or other appropriate referrals.

- e) Persons who contact the Office of the Chancellor directly requesting an exorcism will be instructed to contact their proper Pastor for an initial meeting and spiritual assistance as in b).

***Exceptions:***

- a) Persons baptized in different Churches or ecclesial communities will be referred to their faith community.
- b) Persons of different faith traditions, e.g., Islam, Jewish, will be referred to their respective faith traditions.