

## **What is deliverance?**

Every human struggles with temptation and with the results of wounding, neglect, or sin. Yet these obstacles to growth in holiness and union with God often lie deep under layers of deception sown by the enemy of souls, Satan. The process of deliverance can expose and oppose the influence of the devil in the lives of believers, which does not possess them totally, but disturbs them, restricts their freedom, and limits the fruitfulness of graces received.

By engaging the work of deliverance, people identify, name, and reject underlying thought patterns and automatic reactions that feed sin. In solid deliverance ministry, the person receiving prayer honestly acknowledges personal choices that contribute to his bondage, including things that he may not have considered to be sins: unforgiveness, self-justification, blame, agreement with lies, for example. These subtle decisions often block true and lasting repentance and get in the way of authentic conversion.

## **How does deliverance fit together with confession?**

Deliverance is never a substitute for confession; rather, it enriches a person's authentic participation in the sacrament and gives him additional artillery in his ongoing fight for virtue.

Sacraments are always "efficacious but not always fruitful" writes St. Thomas Aquinas. Many priests say that after someone receives deliverance, his confession moves to a new level, beyond the "bad fruit"—the obvious sin—to the roots of sin, exposing them ultimately to the light of healing offered in the sacrament of reconciliation.

That being said, it is commonly said that the best exorcism is a good confession! It's not either-or ... it's both-and!

## **Can lay people pray with others for deliverance?**

The help of a person trained in a safe, non-confrontational model of deliverance ministry can provide valuable assistance to souls seeking deeper conversion.

Lay deliverance ministry has a time-honored place in Catholic tradition. Many non-ordained saints and holy men and women have set captives free from the devil's influence. Today we see that the Lord is again raising up men and women anointed for deliverance, because it is greatly needed in this time of intense spiritual conflict.

Faithful Catholics understand that any effective lay ministry must stand in proper relationship to church authority, must operate in the context of sacraments, must accord with church teaching. When these things are in place, deliverance ministry can be a powerful tool that helps people overcome barriers blocking gifts and graces showered on them by the Holy Spirit acting in the heart of the church.

### **Isn't it true that only priests have the authority to command demons to leave?**

Well-respected theologians and church authorities debate the question of whether or not a lay person can speak a “word of command” in deliverance ministry. Some bishops support the right of lay ministers to take authority over the enemy on behalf of another and encourage the development of respected deliverance teams, like we have in the Diocese of Lansing (Live Free Ministry). Other bishops reserve the right of “deprecation” to clergy. Clearly, for a Catholic ministry to flourish, its leaders must follow the instruction of their local bishop.

Nonetheless, Scripture is clear that every believer receives power over the enemy as part of his new identity as a child of God and disciple of Jesus. Any baptized Catholic can take authority over his own life in the name of Jesus Christ.

So, in situations where the bishop does not allow a lay minister to speak with authority on behalf of another, then the person receiving prayer speaks the word of command for himself after closing doors to the enemy's work through sincere surrender to Jesus, repentance for sin, forgiveness, and renunciation.

## **How is deliverance different from exorcism?**

Deliverance ministry should never be confused with exorcism, which is a solemn rite of the Catholic church that sets people free from possession, i.e. from utter bondage of their free will (at least for periods of time). In contrast, deliverance ministers stand alongside a person who is not possessed, yet experiences some level of bondage or oppression. This one receiving prayer exercises his personal power to choose against Satan's work, recognizable in particular areas of struggle. The minister adds his faith to the faith of the person and together they claim the freedom that the Father intends for all his children.

## **How are deliverance and healing related?**

Some people conflate deliverance with healing, but they are not the same thing, although they are closely related. An analogy may help: Imagine a wound that just won't heal, despite cleaning, soaking, stitching, even after days, weeks, two weeks, six months. Sometimes the wound seems to be healing, but then it starts oozing and opening up again.

Finally, a doctor diagnoses an infection in the wound. He prescribes a potent antibiotic. And suddenly, within just 48 hours, the wound begins to close. A week later it has healed over.

People walk around with *spiritual* infections of demonic influence that keep them from healing, sap their strength, limit their mobility, and afflict them with chronic pain.

Sometimes these are low-grade infections that they don't even pay attention to; sometimes these infections spread until they infect the whole body and lead to a fight for life itself. When people come to understand and address these infections through deliverance, the results are often dramatic.

*Deliverance makes healing possible.*