

Lay deliverance ministry has a time-honored place in Catholic tradition. Many non-ordained saints and holy men and women have been anointed to 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.

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

In particular, greater self-awareness and greater awareness of spiritual battle can help souls to identify underlying thought patterns and automatic reactions that feed sin patterns. This understanding can take confession 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. Additionally, in solid deliverance ministry, the person receiving prayer is led to honestly acknowledge personal choices that contribute to his bondage, things that he may not have considered sins: unforgiveness, self-justification, blame, agreement with lies, for example. These often block true and lasting repentance.

So 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 daily fight for virtue.

That being said, 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 that block the fruitfulness of graces showered on them by the church.

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 ministries such as Unbound. Other bishops reserve the right of "deprecation" to clergy. Clearly, for a Catholic ministry to flourish, its leaders must follow the instruction of the local bishop. In situations where the bishop does not allow lay people to speak with authority on behalf of another person, then the person receiving prayer will speak the word of command after closing doors to the enemy's work through repentance, faith, forgiveness, and renunciation. 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. We can take authority in his name over our own lives.

Finally, deliverance ministry should never be confused with exorcism, which is a 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 exercising his free will to choose against Satan's work in his life, recognized by particular areas of struggle and oppression. The minister adds his faith to the faith of the person and together they claim the freedom that the Father intends for his children.