

Deliverance and Exorcism (2016)

The ministry of the church in its wholeness includes the authority through Christ to deliver oppressed people from the powers of evil and darkness. “And he called to him the twelve... and gave them authority over the unclean spirits” (Mark 6:7). The prayer given to Christ's followers instructed them to pray “deliver us from evil”, or the “the evil one”. In his life, and especially through his death, the demonic forces were disarmed and people were freed. “Jesus’ miracles were not simply kind deeds done to aid individuals; they were concrete ways of proclaiming and affecting God's triumph over the power of evil in the final hour.” (New Jerome Biblical Commentary, p.1321)

There are many expressions of Christian liturgy which reflect deliverance, such as preaching, unction, confession and absolution, and the Eucharist. The most explicit of all, however, is baptism which requires the renunciation of evil and a life-long perseverance in resisting evil.

There are cultural differences within our church which tend to a wide variety in the interpretation of spiritual evil.

- On one side has been a sort of ‘dualistic’ world view which tends in its extremes to see even creation and material as essentially evil. Thus, the world is almost totally under the control of the demonic, and human behaviour is never entirely free of evil spirits or a satanic entity in the most insignificant happenings.
- One the other extreme, the more ‘scientific’ orientation of recent decades has tended to deny spirituality in any sense whatsoever, whether of evil or of God. For many in the Western world, the idea of ‘objective evil’ is bizarre.

There are many people who are cognizant of the presence of evil and seek such rituals as the blessing of homes. Individuals may also identify the evil in particular association with their homes or inanimate objects, especially where there has been human tragedy. (See attached, *Guidelines - Deliverance related to Places and/ or Objects*)

Anglican liturgies acknowledge “Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God”, as distinct from the social evils in society such as war or racism and from the sinful desires within us that draw us from the love of God.

Pastoral care should include a discerning of spiritual evil and the awareness and sensing of the reality of evil in a person’s life. In such cases, there is need for the pastor to include a ministry of healing and deliverance.



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The guidelines below are for clergy who have been approached for a deliverance, commonly called 'exorcism'.

1. **IN ALL CASES a priest will secure the permission and guidance of the bishop.** If, due to extreme circumstance, this is not possible, the bishop must be informed in writing immediately after the event (with full details) including why permission was not sought before proceeding.
2. Because the manifestations of the effects of spiritual evil are culturally conditioned and similar to mental illness, licensed medical, professional specialists in mental, physical, or emotional illness should be consulted as well as persons expert in the dynamics of that culture, or the priest should be assured that such consultation has taken place.
3. If the occasion arises when there is a request for the deliverance of a place or object, Guidelines 1 and 2 remain essential in the process of ministry. (For biblical references see attached *Guidelines - Deliverance related to Places and/or Objects*).
4. The priest should counsel fully with the persons seeking deliverance, and, if applicable, with his or her family. There should be adequate time for listening, identifying, naming, and instruction.
5. It is essential that another priest be present for the actual liturgy of deliverance and be adequately prepared, spiritually as well as pastorally and liturgically.
6. After the deliverance liturgy, prayer for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit shall take place, followed by the celebration and receiving of Holy Communion.
7. The priest should offer extended follow-up including further counsel and spiritual guidance in the person's participation in the fellowship, prayer, and sacraments of the ongoing life of the church.
8. The bishop is a resource person in this ministry, able to make referrals and act as consultant, with particular reference to the document proposed by The House of Bishops, *Task Force on Exorcism* (October, 1990) (attached). The bishop will also have a resource of liturgy and suggested prayers available.
9. An authorized liturgy of deliverance is available from the Bishop's Office.



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A. Guidelines: Deliverance Related to Places and/or Objects

There are occasions when individuals express a desire for the 'deliverance' of a place or an object. This may arise from the use to which the place or object has been put in the past or to its connection with a tragic or violent event. The strong, emotional ties and psychological effect of the past has a continuing effect on the lives of those in the present that is powerful and real for them. There is, however, little biblical evidence of spiritual possession of physical objects or places.

The Old Testament speaks of blessing places in dedication to God. (See below re: blessings - *Book of Occasional Celebrations*, p.119.) The blessing is primarily an act of thanksgiving by God's people for creation, salvation and the provision of physical places/objects with which to serve God. Places or objects connected with evil practices antithetical to God were destroyed [Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), Asherah poles (Exodus 34:12-14)]. However some objects, e.g., battle spoils, were redeemable (2 Chronicles 34:1-7) and even the temple was cleansed and rededicated through the offering of sacrifices (2 Chronicles 29:19).

The New Testament refers only to the restoration and redemption of people. It speaks neither of dedication, consecration or of possession of places/objects by spiritual powers. In this time, prior to the use of physical church buildings, people are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:17), made holy by the sacrifice of Jesus.

There is no direct injunction or command regarding places in the New Testament. God's presence and holiness are seen and known through the life of the community of God's people. Places and objects are tools in holy living - gifts of God. While there is no direct need for 'deliverance' or cleansing of places/objects, a person may have unresolved fears and prayers of cleansing and blessing would be a pastoral response. An analogy can be made to Paul's injunctions to be sensitive to the conscience of one's neighbour in relationship to food offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8).

In light of the above - while taking into consideration the cultural influences and beliefs of those requesting assistance, the most appropriate response would be a Eucharistic celebration in the place or with the object nearby, in which it is blessed as part of God's gifts to us for the service of God. This celebration should include members of the Christian community and family or friends as appropriate. It is a liturgy of blessing for service. Prior discussion with those requesting assistance would identify concerns and fears that could be addressed pastorally in the prayers.

Examples of suitable collects and/or prayers may be found in the *Book of Occasional Celebrations*. For example:

- i) Collects – p. 142 (for church/chapel), p. 150 or 157 (for a home).
- ii) General forms for writing blessing prayers: p. 123ff.



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B. Resource Materials for Prayer and Liturgy re: Guidelines on Exorcism/Deliverance

1. *Book of Common Prayer:*

- i) The Litany (p. 30)
- ii) Service for Holy Communion (p. 67)
- iii) Collect for Advent I (p. 95) [same as BAS]
- iv) Service of Holy Baptism (p. 532) [adults]
- v) Penitential Service (p. 611)
- vi) Compline (p. 722)

2. *Book of Alternative Services:*

- Canticle 7 "Arise, shine, for your light has come" (p. 78)
- Canticle 9 "I will pour clean water upon you" (p. 80)
- Canticle 21 "God's Plan of Salvation" (p. 91)
- Introductory Responsory 4 "Repentance" (p. 97)
- Introductory Responsory 5 "The Cross" (p. 98)
- Introductory Responsory 6 "Resurrection" (p. 98)
- Responsory 2 "My life is in your hand, deliver me" (p. 101)
- Responsory 3 "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous" (p. 102)
- Responsory 7 for Advent (p. 105) use with Responsory 8 for Incarnation (p.105)
- Responsory 9 for Lent (p. 106) use with Responsory 10 for the Cross (p. 107) and Responsory 11 for Resurrection (p. 108)
- The Great Litany (p. 138), Parts 1, 2, 3, Introductory Sentence Part 4, and Concluding Prayers (p. 141)
- Service of Holy Baptism (p. 151)
- Service of Holy Eucharist (p. 185)
- Propers of the Church Year
 - ✓ Collect for Advent I (p. 268)
 - ✓ Collect for Ash Wednesday (p. 281)
 - ✓ Collect for Lent 4 with Sentence, Year A (p. 291)
 - ✓ Collects for Lent 5 with Sentences, Years A, B, C, (p. 293, p. 295)
 - ✓ Solemn Intercession for Good Friday (p. 309, 311, 312)
 - ✓ Exultet from the Easter Vigil (p. 323)
 - ✓ Collect for Easter Day (p. 335)
 - ✓ Collect for after Pentecost - Proper 12 (p. 363)
 - ✓ Collect for after Pentecost - Proper 28 (p. 385)
 - ✓ Collect for after Pentecost - Proper 33 (p. 392)
 - ✓ Collect for the Transfiguration (p. 418)
 - ✓ Collect for St. Michael and All Angels (p. 424)
 - ✓ Collect for St. Luke (p. 425)
- Ministry to the Sick (p. 554)
- Occasional Prayers
 - ✓ for peace (p. 677)
 - ✓ for affliction, mental distress, addiction (p. 682)



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- i) Psalms appropriate
- 3. *Book of Occasional Services (as authorized):*
 - i) Blessings in Homes at Easter (p. 97)
 - ii) Public Service of Healing (p. 163)
 - iii) During Candidacy for Catechumenate (p. 115ff)



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Appendix - The House of Bishops Task Force on Exorcism 1996

THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS TASK FORCE ON EXORCISM

The Doctrine and Worship Committee of the Anglican Church of Canada has for some time been engaged in the preparation of a book of liturgical texts for occasional use. Suggestions were made to members of the Committee that rites of exorcism be included in this book. Eventually the Editorial Sub-Committee of the Doctrine and Worship Committee asked the then Chairman of the Committee (The Rt. Rev'd R.E.F. Berry) to raise the subject of exorcism in the House of Bishops, with the suggestion that advice be sought from people competent in the behavioural sciences and in theology before the development of liturgical material was addressed. (D&W 88/158.1)

The House of Bishops subsequently approved the suggestion made by Bishop Berry and referred the matter to the Primate. The Primate appointed a task force of five persons, the Rev'd Douglas Stoute, Dr. James Wilkes, the Rev'd Alyson Barnett-Cowan, the Rev'd Prof. W. Crockett, and the Rev'd Paul Gibson.

The Following task was assigned.

The Task Force is requested to focus on the following questions:

- 1) Should the Anglican Church of Canada address the matter of exorcism?
- 2) If so, what theological and psychological principles should be enunciated?
- 3) What form of expression would be most appropriate?

eg: Rite and Regulation

The Bible acknowledges the mystery of evil in human life and in the world, but does not give a consistent symbolic interpretation of the origin of evil or of the form which it takes. The Old Testament term for Satan has its origin in a judicial context and means the "adversary," especially in the sense of an accuser at court (Zech. 3:1). Nowhere in the Old Testament does Satan appear as a demonic figure opposed to God. In the book of Job, for example, Satan appears as an adversary who acts with the divine consent. Satan only begins to emerge as a demonic figure in the intertestamental period when a dualistic strain appears in Judaism which sees the world as a battleground between God and the forces of evil, personalized as Satan and the demonic powers. It is during this period that the myth of Satan as a fallen angel who led a rebellion against God and was cast out of heaven enters the literature (2 Enoch 29:4). Satan is now seen also as the initiator of the first sin among human beings, bringing death into the world (Wis. 2:24; 2 Enoch 11: 74-80; 22:42), and is responsible for subsequent evil as well as sickness.

Satan appears in the New Testament under several titles, including diabolos (devil), and his role and that of the demons is largely taken over from late Judaism. Given this world view, it is not surprising that in the New Testament it is assumed that demons can invade the human person and "possess" the individual, and hence need to be cast out (exorcism). Jesus himself practised exorcism as did his disciples. In a different symbolic world view, demonic possession is viewed as the personification and objectification of emotional, mental, or physical states, which require medical or psychiatric treatment. The theological significance of the New Testament's world view is that



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disorder in human life is connected in some way with the reality of sin and requires an appropriate ministry acknowledging that reality. In the New Testament, demons are expelled in the name of God or of Jesus. This is rooted in the idea, common in the ancient world, that power is connected with the act of naming. The liturgical practice of exorcism continued in the early church, particularly in connection with Christian initiation. Exorcism in this context was not concerned with demonic "possession," but was one of the signs which marked the passage of the baptismal candidate from the sphere of evil and death to the sphere of new life in Christ. Exorcism, therefore, has taken on a different meaning in different ecclesial and cultural contexts.

Members of the Task Force found themselves reluctant to encourage or endorse the practice of exorcism in the context of most Anglicans in Canada. They recognized, however, that the concept of exorcism is conditioned by the cultural and symbolic context in which it appears and that in some contexts there is a declared pastoral need. Among aboriginal people, for instance, there is a frequent desire for a ritual act which "cleanses" a house where a death (and especially a violent death) has occurred. In such settings this frequently takes the form of blessing, a category of ritual action which cannot be easily separated from exorcism. Elsewhere, the pastoral care of people who experience a strong awareness of the reality of evil in their lives may require appropriate medical or psychiatric treatment together with prayers for healing and deliverance (see Guidelines 7 & 8 below). Members of the Task Force identified three models of approach to exorcism:

There is a model which sees the world in mythological terms as a battleground between God and the forces of evil, personalized as Satan and the demonic powers. This model tends toward a dualistic view of reality.

There is a model based on native spirituality with its strong sense of spiritual realities. There is a model which looks beyond the literal interpretation of myth, but which acknowledges the theological significance of the symbolic world view of the New Testament and refuses to reduce it to a simplistic scientific world view. This model takes seriously the need for suitable forms of Christian ministry in the face of the reality of evil, but leaves open the question of the appropriateness of exorcism.

Members of the Task Force rejected any approach to exorcism based on a dualistic understanding of reality. The theological tradition of the church has consistently rejected an ultimate dualism between God and the powers of evil. In the classical tradition, St. Augustine taught that evil is not a substance, but a privation of being and is the distortion of a created good. At the present time, at the practical level, there is a tendency towards an ultimate dualism in the fascination with apocalypticism and in the attraction which evil and myths of evil (including Satanism and the occult) exercise on the imaginations of many people, an attraction which has been encouraged and perhaps exploited by the entertainment industry in recent years. Such a dualistic world view, especially when held by persons who have a strong personal need to control others or exercise power, poses obvious dangers where exorcism is concerned. The Task Force, therefore, wishes to discourage these and similar approaches to exorcism. At the same time, it wishes to encourage appropriate sensitive pastoral care for those negatively affected by their attraction to evil, especially individuals and the families of those involved with satanic groups.

The Task Force recognized that forms of blessing/exorcism may be appropriate for pastoral reasons



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in some communities of aboriginal people and other culturally distinct communities, especially where they have already been established by tradition. The Task Force also recognized that forms of prayer for freedom from perceived evil may be appropriate in association with treatment as part of a holistic healing process in certain cases.

The Task Force agreed to recommend that no liturgical form of exorcism should be published.

The Task Force suggested a list of guidelines for consideration (appended).

The Task Force reviewed its task and agreed that:

- 1) the Anglican Church of Canada should address the matter of exorcism, but with caution;
- 2) the theological principles have been identified;
- 3) expression should be by guidelines.



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THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS TASK GROUP ON EXORCISM PROPOSED GUIDELINES

- 1) Exorcism, when practised, is part of the healing ministry of the church and relates to the healing and wholeness of people.
- 2) Where people wish to have a house blessed by prayer or by the celebration of the Eucharist after a death or other tragic event, this should be affirmed within a responsible context of pastoral care. This practice is closely parallel to the existing ministry of healing. The traditional practice of blessing a house as an act of prayer for the future of those who live there is not an act of exorcism.
- 3) If a person requests exorcism because they wish to be delivered from an evil influence they perceive to be affecting them, such action should take place only after competent clinical exploration and in the context of clinical treatment.
- 4) No one should ever be exorcised on the request of others or under pressure.
- 5) There is no need to appoint diocesan exorcists.
- 6) Exorcism should only be performed with the bishop's permission.
- 7) A bishop who receives an application for exorcism should give permission only after consultation with an ad hoc advisory group which includes an experienced pastor, a psychiatrist, the applicant's physician, and other as needed. Within a multi-cultural society it is important that one at least of the bishop's advisors should be familiar with the culture of the person who has requested exorcism.
- 8) The Group is disinclined to recommend a particular liturgical text because of its conviction that the event should be closely related to the symbol system of the person(s) involved. At least, however, an appropriate passage of scripture, a renunciation of evil on the part of the person(s) involved (as in the baptism rite in The Book of Alternative Services, (suitable prayers for healing and deliverance, and the Lord's Prayer should be used. The laying-on-of-hands, anointing, and celebration of the Eucharist may be appropriate.
- 9) Exorcism should always be followed by close and careful pastoral follow-up.
- 10) The event of exorcism should be carried out in a straightforward, matter-of-fact, discreet manner, without any hint of sensationalism.
- 11) Exorcisms should be performed by priests only. Two priests should be present and a physician, preferably a psychiatrist.

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