

In the previous two weeks' Gospels, Jesus drove out the demons of possessed persons. During the first Sunday of Lent's Gospel, the Devil attempts to tempt Our Lord. As we acknowledge in the St. Michael the Archangel prayer, evil spirits prowl the world to ruin souls. Demons possess people because they are evil. In a sense, they want to spread evil like a Christian should desire to spread love. Also, it is believed that by possessing people, demons mock the Incarnation. Exorcists believe demons generally enter into parts of a person's emotional and sensitive soul. Therefore, they can wreak havoc on someone's emotions, memory and imagination. There are generally three ways a demon can enter someone: (1) through the occult (such as, psychic mediums, Ouija boards, Astrology, Wicca, Satanic worship and/or music); (2) through sustained, serious sin; (3) through trauma (emotional and physical abuses). These demons are usually identified by the name of the sin or trauma a person is experiencing. For example, there are Demons of Lust, Anger and Emotional Abuse. This does not mean that someone wrestling with a serious sin is possessed. Nor does it mean someone with a traumatic event in their past, who is finding it very difficult to move forward, despite years of treatment, is possessed. In all likelihood, the serious sin is simply a deeply ingrained habit. However, it can become a doorway for demons to enter. The trauma victim is still on the long road to some sort of recovery and benefits mostly from human means of healing (i.e., therapy) together with strong faith practice and prayer. In such cases, it's not possession. Demonic possession is rare.

What is more common is demonic oppression. However, as in possession, one shouldn't assume they are oppressed. It's more likely, a bad habit or a bad emotional wound. In oppression, a person is harassed by a demon or demons. There can be some violation of a person's emotional and sensitive soul, although they are not technically possessed. In demonic oppression, an exorcism is not necessarily needed. An exorcism can only be performed by a trained priest with permission from his bishop. In cases of demonic oppression, deliverance prayers can in many instances free a person. Some people just need sustained prayer, not the Rite of Exorcism. Although all Christians have a certain authority over evil (see Mark 16:15-20) in serious and persistent cases of demonic activity, they should always consult the Church.

Below is a deliverance prayer. Jesus and the Blessed Mother are kryptonite for demons. Evil spirits aren't going to last long once a person makes a commitment to rid them using the aid of Jesus, His Blessed Mother and the Saints. You'll know the demon has left because the demon will give you a parting shot while he's leaving. It will be minor. You'll get a flat tire or get locked out of your home. It's a small price to pay though in relation to being delivered. Once delivered, stay in a state of grace through the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist. Also, continue to pray, for example, the rosary.

Deliverance Prayer: In the Name of Jesus, the Son of God, I ask my Guardian Angel to free me from the demon of....., I ask the Lord Jesus to cover me with His Most Precious Blood and I ask this through the intercession of all the Holy Angels, Saints and Blessed Mother...Hail Mary...

If anyone is interested, Father Chad Rippercher's book, *Deliverance Prayers: For Use by the Laity*, has been recommended to me by a priest for the laity.

N.B. I had the facts of this bulletin article vetted by five priests before going to print. One priest is associated with deliverance ministry. One priest is associated with exorcism ministry. In none of the cases is the priest Father Rippercher.