

# MAKING DISCIPLES

## RESOURCE SUMMARIES

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### SUMMARY 9

Book: [\*Deliverance Ministry\*](#)

Author: **ICCRS Doctrinal Commission**

Associated Website: [charis.international](http://charis.international)

**This series of summaries is intended to help busy pastoral professionals and church volunteers know whether a resource is going to be helpful to them. If a resource looks useful – PLEASE BUY IT! I do not wish to take away the livelihood of any author by summarising their key points online!**

## Overview

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the Cardinal then responsible for being the point of contact between Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Holy See (the worldwide 'head office' of the Catholic Church) opens this document with a *Preface* (pages 3-6) which deftly summarises its scope and purpose:

- Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a widespread phenomenon of personal conversion. Since [1967](#), many Catholics have experienced a 'filling' with the Holy Spirit. This motivates them to desire to follow Christ more closely and makes them more acutely aware of the sinful behaviours present in their lives.
- Individuals who sought to change their behaviour in response to this conversion often found it difficult or even impossible to break these sinful patterns.
- Others who prayed with them for transformation gained experience in the kind of prayer which helps to overcome this bondage. **This is what we call Deliverance Ministry.** Sometimes this wisdom came from practical experience, other times from supernatural revelation.
- We recognise that this is an appropriate lay ministry because Jesus sent out 'the 70' (and not just the '12' who prefigure clergy) with an explicit mandate to cast out evil spirits (Luke 10:17).
- This document was prepared by theological experts chosen by ICCRS, which was at that time the official body representing worldwide charismatic renewal to the Holy See. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Holy See's official 'watchdog' for Catholic teaching, reviewed drafts and all of the official feedback was incorporated into the final document.

*Since the document was published, ICCRS formally merged with a separate body representing charismatic lay communities, and the document is now 'owned' by the successor body, [CHARIS](#).*

*The document is organised into numbered sections and sub-sections. These, rather than page numbers, will be used for reference.*

### **Introduction**

This book seeks to offer both theological reflection on Deliverance Ministry and practical guidance for its safe conduct, approved at the highest level of the Catholic Church. (1)

Many cultures are turning away from their Christian heritage and seeking spiritual answers in New Age spirituality, overt occultism or Satanism, or syncretistic blends of Catholicism with pre-existing local religions. Modern society is marked by sexual

depravation, broken families, addictive substances and consumerism, which can all be entry points for demonic affliction. Yet the Catholic Church has been largely silent about the role of the Devil in all of this, leading many to doubt whether the Devil is real or that the Catholic Faith is capable of offering release from spiritual bondage. It has been in the context of the post-1967 phenomenon of Catholic Charismatic Renewal that many Catholics have become aware of the works of Satan and of the Church's ministry of obtaining deliverance. (1.1)

There are many legitimate approaches to deliverance ministry around the world. Some are more 'confrontational' in their direct engagement with the presence of evil, than others. This book offers only general principles and guidelines and is not a how-to manual. It does not cover *major exorcism* (the deliverance of a fully-possessed person, which must be referred to a diocese's official exorcist). Individual bishops remain free to put in place additional norms and guidance in their own territories. (1.2)

Terminology is not used consistently by all deliverance ministries around the world, but this book defines the following terms (explained more fully in the original text than the condensed summaries here): (1.3)

**Adjuration** – *a command given to an evil spirit to leave or cease acting, given in the name of God/Jesus.*

**Deliverance Ministry** – *the spiritual work, carried out by laity as well as clergy, in which a person is brought to the light of Christ and seeks to receive liberation from evil influence, through both prayer and words of command.*

**Demon (or evil spirit)** – *a fallen angel.*

**Demon-possession (or possession)** – *an extreme form of bondage where a demon may be able to take temporary control of a human being's body, words or actions.*

**Deprecative** – *adjective referring to an invocation which asks God or the saints to obtain liberation from evil.*

**Devil** – *the Prince of Demons, known as Satan, Lucifer, or Beelzebul.*

**Exorcism** – *an ambiguous term which usually indicates Major Exorcism but might sometimes be used for Minor Exorcism (see definitions below).*

**Imperative** – *adjective referring to a spoken formula which directly commands a demon to leave or cease (words which are not phrased as a prayer to God, but are spoken from the minister's authority as a baptised Christian).*

**Major Exorcism** – *the Catholic Church's formal ritual for seeking liberation of a possessed person, only carried out by a priest with an explicit mandate from his bishop.*

**Minor Exorcism** – *formal prayers for liberation from evil which are found in the official ritual books for Christian Initiation of Adults, and Infant Baptism.*

**Oppression** – *any form of ongoing demonic harassment, which may be spiritual or physical. This level of affliction does not require the victim's consent.*

**Public Exorcism** – *any formal Catholic Ritual, covering both Minor and Major Exorcism.*

**Private Exorcism** – *a term sometimes used for the non-ritual approach to seeking freedom which is more properly called **deliverance ministry**.*

**Simple Exorcism** – *another term used for the non-ritual approach to seeking freedom which is more properly called **deliverance ministry**.*

**Spiritual Bondage** – *a kind of demonic affliction where the subject's will is constrained to some degree, limiting them from being able to choose the good path in certain circumstances. This level of affliction only arises after the victim has 'consented' to evil or trauma in some way.*

### ***Biblical Foundations***

In the New Testament, we see clearly that Jesus came not only to forgive sins and call for conversion of life, but to definitively defeat the works of the Devil. (2)

Satan is rarely mentioned in the Old Testament but appears as the Tempter of Job and (in the prophecy of Zechariah) as the accuser of the high priest Joshua. The demon Asmodeus appears in the book of Tobit, and the works of the devil are manifest in the temptation of Adam and Eve by the serpent (Genesis), the affliction of King Saul in I Samuel, and other examples of evil incitements in Judges and I Kings. (2.1)

In the New Testament, we find a common understanding in the writings of Saints Paul, John, and Peter, that the world is subject to the power of the Evil One, to the extent that Satan can be called the 'king of this world'. He is seen as working through lesser evil spirits, including those named 'principalities and powers' (Colossians 2:15) and also through the structures of human society (Ephesians 2:2). (2.2)

Jesus confronts demons regularly in the Synoptic Gospels; indeed an exorcism is the first act of Jesus' power recorded by Mark. Unlike the rituals of the Jewish exorcists, Jesus acts using his own authority, and proclaims this as a sign that the Kingdom of God is at work through Him, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of 'liberty to captives'. (2.3 & 2.3.1)

The healing of the Gerasene demoniac teaches several lessons: that possession can manifest as superhuman strength; that demons may acquire a right to dwell in a place; and the drowning of the pigs may represent a judgment on spirits which are said to seek out a 'waterless place'. (2.3.2)

Two cases where Jesus delivers a child teach us (i) the power of the parent's faith, (ii) the power of Jesus to heal at a distance, (iii) the possible need to hear the parent's story to discern the entryway for evil, and (iv) the importance of prayer and fasting for a believer exercising the ministry of deliverance. (2.3.3)

In some cases, Jesus cured physical afflictions by casting out the demon behind them. This does not imply that all physical afflictions are due to spiritual bondage. (2.3.4)

Both the '12', who represent the future bishops, and the '70', who represent ordinary Christians, are sent by Jesus with a mandate to cast out evil spirits and return rejoicing that they have achieved this. The mandate is explicitly given to all believers in Mark 16:15-18 and confirmed when Jesus endorses the ministry of an 'outsider' using his name with faith in Luke 9:49-50. Jesus does, however, counsel against an unhealthy focus on achieving power over evil, asking that we should find delight rather in our relationship with Heaven (Luke 10:17-20). (2.4)

The Acts of the Apostles recounts how the Apostles and Deacons did continue the ministry of deliverance and exorcism after Christ ascended to Heaven. We are assured by Acts 16:16 that fortune-telling is a form of occultism and an entryway for demon possession. We also see in Acts 19:13-16 that merely using the name of Jesus as a magic word is insufficient; the one who uses it must act with faith in the Lord. (2.5)

Until the Second Coming, believers will exist in a state of warfare against the works of the Enemy, and are provided with spiritual weapons for this combat. (2.6)

The tactics of the Devil include: (2.6.1)

- Temptation;
- Deception;
- Fear (of death or of humiliation);
- Unforgiveness (or illicit surrender to licit anger);
- External obstacles and attacks (causing illness, or causing people susceptible to temptation or possession to actively obstruct missionary work);
- Taking possession of persons who fully consent to evil.

We are warned that the Enemy seeks to return to every house which is cleansed, bringing companion spirits to cause trouble. This applies not only to persons who have had a major deliverance, but also to any Christian who has embraced redemption. We are offered spiritual means of keeping our house in order: (2.6.2)

- Becoming filled with the Holy Spirit and practicing a life of prayer, Christian virtues, recourse to the sacraments and fellowship with other believers;

- Regular prayer for deliverance from evil – as in the Lord’s Prayer;
- Offering forgiveness whenever we are offended;
- Standing firm and resisting attack, using the full armour of God (truth, righteousness, peace-making, faith, confidence in salvation, Scripture);
- Proclamation of the Gospel.

### ***Theological Context***

Little theological work has been done since Vatican II specifically on deliverance as opposed to exorcism. These words are a tentative beginning. (3)

Deliverance is part of Christ’s saving work, and so part of the Good News. (3.1)

We are called to enter communion with God, sharing in the life of Christ (the positive dimension of salvation), but it may first be necessary for a person to be saved from the negative elements of spiritual bondage as a means to that end. We should not over-emphasise the necessity for this, but neither should we neglect it. (3.1.1)

Baptism, Reconciliation and Eucharist are three sacraments particularly efficacious in bringing about our salvation. (3.1.2)

Evangelization gives examples of how Christ has overcome the works of Satan. (3.1.3)

What is ***spiritual bondage***? Many Christians have reported an inability to overcome a repetitive sin, a strong negative emotion or a compulsive pattern of behaviour. There is a long spiritual tradition, stretching from the Desert Fathers to St Francis de Sales, of understanding how a person’s will can become bound. We can understand this situation better by contrasting it with simple sin and with total possession. (3.2)

In the case of ordinary sin, our will is divided – so at some level I choose to do what I do not ‘want’ to do. But in bondage there seems to be an inability to fight for the good. This is closely related to *vice* – a pattern of wrongful behaviour ingrained by repetitively choosing it. Technically these are distinct: vice is freely chosen while spiritual bondage suffers a constrained will; but in practice these overlap and reinforce one another. Human beings are capable of being tempted by the world and our own flesh as well as the devil, and the Church’s tradition holds that in general, evil spirits can afflict our imagination but not override our will. (3.2.1)

In cases of total possession, a human being has wilfully yielded control to an evil spirit. Spiritual bondage can be seen as a more limited version of the same phenomenon, where a human being has yielded *influence* rather than control, influence which may only come into play in certain situations. (3.2.2)

Here is a non-exhaustive list of types of spiritual bondage: (3.2.3)

- Emotional bondage, perhaps amplifying reactions towards a category of people (men, women, authority figures...);
- Repetitive and obsessive thought patterns, sometimes rooted in our owning a strong statement spoken over us by an authority figure in the past;
- Behavioural patterns: gambling, pornography, compulsive lying, isolating oneself in certain situations;
- Relationships: giving undue influence over us to a person living or deceased;
- Idolatry: attachment to a particular object because of its sentimental value, occult significance, or as a trigger for obsessive patterns.

Spiritual bondage usually arises from a combination of two factors: the first is a trauma, or wound, or psychological disorder. The second is an act of consent, not always conscious, which gives permission to demonic influence to gain a foothold here. (3.3)

There are three types of entryway, in increasing order of severity: (3.3.1)

- Wounds and traumas, which can be personal (especially due to negative authority figures during one's formative years) but could also come from the circumstances of one's conception or some national trauma in time of war.
- Sin, freely chosen by the sinner; but also the effects of sin on victims who then respond by choosing evil themselves, or structures of sin where racist or violent attitudes have become present in a whole society.
- Occult practices, which often explicitly invite spiritual influence; radical commitment to an ideology can also represent an 'idolatry' to something not of God, as can pagan religions or false private revelations.

Psychological disorders can manifest in very similar ways to spiritual bondage and can be hard to differentiate. Both can exist in a mutually reinforcing cycle. But psychological ailments are part of our fragile nature and have a more penetrating and lasting effect on a person's psyche and identity. Spiritual bondage, unlike psychological afflictions, may intensify when a person begins to turn towards Christian spirituality. (3.3.2)

All spiritual bondage begins with an entryway but is sealed with acceptance of a lie: Scripture calls Satan 'the father of lies'. This acceptance is not always conscious; it may be simple acquiescence to a repeated, but false, assertion made by a parent or other authority figure. Usually a person is not consenting directly to an evil spirit but to "a behavioural pattern that protects, comforts, or numbs their pain." The lies that a person internalises might of this kind: "I will never be loved. I am not worthy of being loved." Or: "My value is based on what I can achieve." (3.3.3)

This gives some indication of how children can come under bondage and why those afflicted by bondage may not be 'culpable' for their affliction. The kind of consent given to these attitudes has a kind of permanency which means an explicit act of renunciation is needed, rather than a simple withdrawal of consent. (3.3 & 3.3.3)

Parents have a profound influence over their pre-rational children. The consequences of parents' sins can be passed on to children, but the parents' guilt cannot. A family, ethnic group, or nation can be pervaded by a sinful attitude, but each individual member has the freedom to consent, or not, to the context in which they have been formed. (3.3.4)

Demonic **oppression** does not require consent. There is not a strong distinction between oppression and bondage, as one can slide into the other. Oppression does not directly touch the human will but seeks to influence it by imposing physical or emotional harassment or compulsive thoughts. (3.4)

We accept that we do not have all the answers when we are asked why demonic oppression is allowed to occur. (3.4.1)

Can curses and spells really invoke demonic oppression, or should they be dismissed as superstition? The Bible contains many examples of curses, so believers should take curses seriously. It is plausible that relatives have a greater authority to curse their kin than strangers do. The one who curses may believe they have the power to manipulate evil spirits, but it is in fact the curser who then becomes vulnerable to deeper demonic influence. The curse itself can only produce oppression, but the way in which the person reacts to this may then invite spiritual bondage. (3.4.2)

Deliverance differs from repentance. Conversion (*metanoia*) of will is required for receiving God's forgiveness. We speak of deliverance ministry to refer to 'freeing from spiritual bondage due to evil spirits'. There is also a 'broad' meaning to the word deliverance, which encompasses our **whole redemption by Christ**, but here we only use the focussed meaning of the breaking of spiritual bondage. Sometimes, bondage is released without needing explicit deliverance ministry – a person may find another means to close the entryway through inner healing or the Sacraments. (3.5)

All Christians have authority to pray for deliverance from evil. (3.5.1)

Renunciation is the act of consciously and deliberately speaking aloud the withdrawal of consent we have previously given to a lie which enabled spiritual bondage. This has power on two levels: because it expresses and solidifies our own will, and because we invoke the name and power of Jesus in doing so. (3.5.2)

**Adjuration** is the act of giving a command while invoking a higher authority: "In the name of Jesus, I command all evil spirits which have been renounced to leave now." This is an integral part of deliverance ministry, and is attested by Scripture. But it should only be done after renunciation, to ensure that the spirits cast out have no right to return. (3.5.3)



Deliverance ministry, while efficacious, is neither a sacrament nor a sacramental. It depends strongly on the faith and moral integrity of the minister exercising it, and also the sincere renunciation of consents given by the person afflicted. But like the sacraments and sacramentals, it ultimately derives its power from Christ's grace. (3.5.4)

### ***History***

There is copious evidence that deliverance was a common ministry in the early Church, with examples given from Origen and Saints Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Cyprian of Carthage and Hilary of Poitiers. (4.1)

The Eastern church has always recognised the casting-out of evil spirits as a ministry properly exercised by those who have the appropriate charism. The Western Church gradually restricted the practice, creating a minor order of 'exorcists' and in 1614 requiring explicit permission from a bishop before a person can attempt exorcism. The 1917 code of Canon Law further restricted this to authorised priests only. But alongside this legislation emerged the concept of 'private exorcism' (which we would now call 'deliverance ministry for spiritual bondage which does not constitute possession'), ministry not subject to this formal regulation. (4.2)

The 1983 Code of Canon Law only treats of major exorcism for those believed to be possessed, and does not mention other forms of deliverance ministry. (4.3)

The 1985 official document [\*Inde ab aliquot\*](#) (i) reaffirms that only authorised priests may exorcise the possessed; (ii) forbids laypersons from using the formula called the *Exorcism of Satan and the Fallen Angels* published under Pope Leo XIII; and (iii) forbids anyone other than mandated exorcists from asking questions of demons during deliverance ministry, especially (but not only) to ask their names. Although some have interpreted this document to forbid laypersons from issuing commands to evil spirits, it actually neither forbids nor encourages this practice. ***Therefore lay ministers MAY speak words of command to evil spirits, but may not ask questions of them.*** (4.4)

[Since the document summarised here was published following review by the CDF, which did not challenge this interpretation, we can therefore be confident that the current official position of the Catholic Church is that lay ministers are indeed permitted to speak words of command and use imperative formulae to address evil spirits.]

In summary, deliverance ministry, unlike major exorcism, is not restricted to mandated priests and does not require a pre-written ritual. (4.5)

### ***Pastoral Guidelines***

Pastors should enable rather than suppress deliverance ministry. This document offers general guidelines without prescribing an approach or overriding local norms. (5)

Laity, but only suitable laity, can and should minister deliverance. (5.1)

All Christians may practice self-deliverance, through the Lord's Prayer, prayer in tongues, and explicit words of command. (5.1.1)

A believer who is not offering a regular ministry of deliverance may find themselves in a situation where they appropriately minister to a family member, friend, or a person with whom they are sharing the Gospel. (5.1.2)

A person offering a regular ministry of deliverance should be accountable to some higher authority in the Catholic Church. Not everyone who believes they have a calling to this ministry will be suitable. Formal ministry organisations should carefully screen, train, hold accountable and debrief their ministers. A *charism* of effective deliverance or discernments of spirits is helpful, but not essential. All ministers should be mature Christians in good standing, and from time to time recipients of ministry should be asked for feedback to ensure that they have been ministered to with love and respect. (5.1.3)

It is not always easy to discern when deliverance is appropriate, but these criteria will be useful: (5.2)

Look for the following signs: (5.2.1)

- The afflicted person senses that evil spirits may be involved;
- Physical manifestations – in the person's face or tone of voice, or occasionally an odour or chilliness in the room;
- Bondage to a repeated pattern of sin or negative behaviour;
- Recurring oppressive thoughts.

If a person claims to have the gift of discernment of spirits, this must be tested through experience. (5.2.1)

It is not appropriate to minister deliverance when: (5.2.2)

- There are clear signs of demonic possession: violent aversion to holy things; preternatural strength or understanding of languages; divination; demonic tongues. (In this case refer to an exorcist 'for further discernment'.)
- There are clear signs of mental illness: a person detached from reality or incoherent will be unable to interact effectively with acts of renunciation or forgiveness. (A simple blessing may be offered.)
- A person is asking on behalf of a third party. (Intercessory prayer may be offered, but deliverance requires personal engagement.)

Inasmuch as deliverance explores past trauma and brings the mercy of Christ, it is a ministry of healing. When deliverance is ministered with a focus on the wounded individual rather than on demons, healing is emphasised. (5.3)

Demons may attempt to block ministry by creating distractions or pushing the afflicted person into non-engagement. In this case, you may issue a command binding the demon or speak to the person directly: 'In the name of Jesus, look at me.' (5.3)

At best, deliverance is offered in a private place. The following guidelines need to be adapted for use in healing services or conferences. (5.4)

Ministry should begin and end with prayer. Invoking St Michael and the angels and saints is valuable. (5.4.1)

Respectful questioning, sometimes over the course of multiple sessions of spiritual direction, helps build up the understanding of why and how deliverance needs to be ministered. In general, the afflicted person should go to confession before receiving ministry, but sometimes ministry is needed to release contrition. (5.4.2)

Deliverance is always ministered in the name and power of Jesus. The person receiving ministry should make an explicit act of trust in Jesus. When the person is not already a Christian, there is a greater need to proclaim the Gospel and explain in whose name and power we act. (5.4.3)

Repentance is essential. If it becomes clear that a person is unwilling to turn from a particular sin, it may be necessary to end the ministry session. (5.4.4)

Forgiveness is not minimising or excusing the behaviour of others. It does not require an apology on the part of the one who gave offence. It does not require us to return to a place of vulnerability and victimhood. But forgiveness does require an act of will to offer blessing, not punishment, towards the person who has offended. Forgiveness is best expressed aloud, by forgiving in Jesus' name, person X who gave offence Y. (5.4.5)

Renunciation goes beyond repentance. We can renounce not only decisions to sin, but attitudes of unforgiveness, unhealthy relationships, and negative emotions or patterns of behaviour. The minister can offer suggestions, but only the person afflicted can decide what should be renounced and how it might be phrased. (5.4.6)

We do not give commands to God; we humbly implore God through prayer. But we do not bargain with demons; we give clear instructions. It is not always appropriate to speak words of command aloud. It is not required to tell demons where to go, but if we do, it should be 'to Jesus' or 'to the foot of the Cross', not to any lesser holy person or earthly location. The command can be given calmly. The afflicted person may join in the command. The person can often sense whether something 'lifts' at that point.

Sometimes removing one layer of bondage releases awareness of deeper wounds which will need further ministry. (5.4.7)

After deliverance, it is important to pray for an infilling with the Holy Spirit, and especially for blessings which are the polar opposites of things which have been renounced. It is also important to affirm the afflicted person's identity as a son or daughter of God. (5.4.8)

Words of advice on living a Christian lifestyle and avoiding sin may be given at the end of the ministry. This may include purging a home of occult items or taking some sin which has been renounced to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (5.4.9)

A concluding prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God is always appropriate. If cleansing prayers are used, they should be brief, lest they stir up undue fear of the power of demons. (5.4.10)

As far as possible, the person who received ministry should be supported by a Christian community of people who pray and care. Support groups may be needed by those seeking to break an addiction. If the person who received ministry shows no interest in an ongoing commitment to Christ, only hoping for a 'quick fix', we simply entrust that person to the working of God's grace. (5.5)

There are some traps to be avoided: (5.6)

Discernment is needed: (5.6.1)

- Don't blame the Devil for temptations which come from the world or the flesh.
- Don't tackle something you don't feel equipped to handle.

Don't seek personal gain: (5.6.2)

- Avoid self-promotion – humility and accountability are essential, ideally to a personal spiritual director as well as to a ministry leader or prayer group.
- Payment must never be a condition for offering ministry, though free-will offerings are not forbidden.

Don't give ground to demons: (5.6.3)

- Focus on God and on the afflicted person, not demons.
- Do not dialogue with demons.
- Do not introduce superstitious practices into ministry.
- Do not encourage sensational displays.

Do show respect for the person receiving ministry: (5.6.4)

- Don't dig for unnecessary detail.

- Do respect confidentiality.
- Offer words of knowledge tentatively, and be extremely cautious with words which cannot be verified but which might kindle fear.
- Do not allow anger or annoyance to be shown in your ministry.
- Minimise manifestations of demonic power.

Avoid spiritual traps: (5.6.5)

- Beware of ministry becoming a sexual encounter; normally have two ministry team members present, one of the same sex as the person receiving.
- As in all forms of ministry, do not become emotionally involved.
- Do not encourage dependency on deliverance and be ready to say 'no' to repeated requests.

Ensure respect for the Catholic Church: (5.6.6)

- Do not deviate from Catholic teaching.
- There is no need to bring speculation about angels and demons into ministry.
- Act with respect for limits imposed by bishops and pastors, even when you find them constraining.

### ***Conclusion***

The Virgin Mary is a key ally in our fight against Satan. In Genesis, the 'seed of the woman' will crush our Enemy, and as the Virgin of Guadalupe, her presence in the Americas resulted in millions of conversions from pagan sacrifice to Christ. We entrust this ministry to her intercession.

### ***Selected Footnotes***

'Ministry' in this document does not imply a formal instituted role in the church, but simply a service offered for the good of other Christians. (1.12)

Do not confuse 'imperative' commands with 'imprecatory' ones. 'Imprecation' means cursing. The 1614 Exorcism Rite does include some imprecatory formulae, explicitly cursing demons. This is not necessary for deliverance ministry. (1.13)