



Vatican Conference Guides Clergy in Exorcisms; Surge in Satanism Cited

The Vatican's annual course on exorcism, entitled "Exorcism and Prayer of Liberation," began on May 5 at Rome's Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum. The course concludes Saturday with a discussion of the ministry of exorcism and a roundtable discussion. Its description states that the course "seeks to explore the theoretical and practical implications of the ministry of exorcism. It is designed particularly to help bishops in the preparation of the priests they assign to this ministry."



The Rome correspondent of the *Telegraph* (U.K.) cited a statement from Giuseppe Ferrari, of GRIS, the Catholic research group that organized the conference, who said there was an ever growing need for priests to be trained to perform exorcisms because of the increasing number of lay people tempted to dabble in black magic, paganism, and the occult. "We live in a disenchanting society, a secularized world that thought it was being emancipated, but where religion is being thrown out, the window is being opened to superstition and irrationality," said Ferrari.

The abandonment of religion "inevitably leads people to ask questions about the existence of evil and its origins," Ferrari told Adnkronos, an Italian news agency.

The southern Italian newspaper *Gazzetta del Sud* quoted Father Cesar Truqui, identified as an exorcist from the Legionaries of Christ, which helped organize the conference with GRIS, who said, "Exploring the theme of demonic possession does not mean causing general paranoia, but creating awareness of the existence of the Devil and of the possibility of possession."

Truqui noted that Pope Francis in his April 11 homily admonished the faithful to "learn to fight the devil ... who exists even in the 21st century." "The pope reminds us," continued Truqui, "that speaking of demons doesn't mean creating a new theology outside the Gospels, but rather staying within Jesus Christ's teachings."

Speaking to ZENIT news service from the conference, Father Louis Wesly Merosne from the Haitian diocese of Anse-a-Veau and Miragoane, said the course has shown him the need for ministers "who are willing to be used by the Lord in the work of exorcism and prayers of liberation."

"We need clarity on how to proceed, so that our tactics can be organized to have the greatest effect against the kingdom of evil," he said.

Merosne stated: "Satan has much power and wants to cause a lot of damage to God's people. However, Christ is risen and is all powerful. Therefore, with Him, we do not need to fear anything from the enemy."

While the Catholic Church may have more formalized rituals for combating demonic torment or



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possession than other Christian traditions, the awareness of the ongoing battle against Satan and his demons is a universal concept among Christians.

In his article “Prayer and the Spiritual Battle,” posted on the Focus on the Family website, Dean Ridings, a representative of The Navigators’ Church Discipleship Ministry, wrote: “Anyone who seeks to have a vital relationship with God through prayer — ever growing toward greater intimacy with the Father through the finished work of the Son, Jesus — is a prime target for satanic salvos.”

Ridings notes that the Bible makes it clear that we have an “enemy the devil [who] prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

While assuring his readers that Jesus promises that His followers can both survive and thrive through the battle, that God limits the activities of Satan and his demons, and that the ultimate war against Satan has been won, Ridings also reminds his readers that “we are engaged in a daily battle against the prince of this world.” He concludes:

We are clearly warned in God’s Word of the damage that can be inflicted by the kingdom of darkness. The Enemy schemes against us, throws flaming missiles at us, seeks to devour us, and wages direct warfare upon us (2 Corinthians 2:10-11; Ephesians 6:11-12,16; 1 Peter 5:8) As a result, we are to arm ourselves, stand against, refute, resist and overcome (Ephesians 6:12-18; Isaiah 54:7; James 4:7; Revelation 12:11). Everything we need to successfully do battle was appropriated on the Cross. We simply need to appropriate it.

In his article “Covenant: The Heart of the Marriage Mystery,” posted by Focus on the Family, Dr. David Kyle Foster, the founder of Mastering Life Ministries, described the origin of the term “exorcism” and its practice as follows:

Another Greek word for “oath” is “horkia” or “horkos” — the English term “exorcism,” or “to oath out.” When you exorcise demonic spirits in ministry to someone, you literally “oath out” evil. Dr. Hahn notes that “Cross my heart and hope to die” is a medieval oath formula. The martyrs in heaven before the throne with raised hands are bearing witness under oath to Christ’s faithfulness. As a result, the accuser of the brethren is cast out.

Still, exorcism remains largely a Catholic and Eastern Orthodox practice regarded as unnecessary or even ill-advised by many denominations. However, a few of the mainstream denominations do sanction the practice. The Church of England provides for exorcism as part of its Deliverance Ministry and the Episcopal Church’s Book of Occasional Services discusses provision for exorcism.

The Lutheran church recognizes demonic possession and has procedures to treat this affliction outlined in its *Pastoral Handbook* that consist mainly of the pastor guiding the individual in prayer to be freed from possession. The Methodist Church holds that the ritual of exorcism involves “the casting out of an objective power of evil which has gained possession of a person.”

In “On Exorcism and Exorcists: An Evangelical View,” an article published by the *Christian Post* in 2010, R. Albert Mohler, Jr., the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, wrote his response to that year’s meeting of American Catholic bishops to discuss exorcism.

Asking rhetorically why there is no evangelical rite of exorcism and noting that evangelicals deal with angels and demons, too, Mohler explained his views:

Evangelical Christians do believe in the existence, malevolence, and power of the Devil and demons. About these things, the New Testament is abundantly clear.



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However, he continued:

Evangelicals do not need a rite of exorcism, because to adopt such an invention would be to surrender the high ground of the Gospel. We are engaged in spiritual warfare every minute of every day, whether we recognize it or not. There is nothing the demons fear or hate more than evangelism and missions, where the Gospel pushes back with supernatural power against their possessions, rendering them impotent and powerless. Every time a believer shares the Gospel and declares the name of Jesus, the demons and the Devil lose their power.

Of course, if all Christians agreed about all theological issues, including the best way to continue the power that Jesus granted to His disciples in Mark 3:15 (“power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils”) then there would be only one Christian Church. Since this is not the case, some Christians will determine that this power is exercised by an ordained ministry descended from the 12 Jesus ordained in Mark 3, while others will maintain that the power belongs to an entire priesthood of believers who have accepted Jesus.

A consoling conclusion, however, is that all Christians, despite their differences, are aware that Jesus was victorious over Satan and that they may share in His victory if they are faithful and remain vigilant.



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