

EXORCISMS, FUNERALS, LENT AND CANON LAW  
SESSION 18

Prayer: De Profundis and Dies Irae (sheet)

Image: Ladder of Divine Assent

Homework: Lenten Practices:

**EXORCISMS**

The Church has always taught and believed in the activity and influence of evil spirits who oppose the reign of God and seek to cause harm to humanity.

*What is an Exorcism?*

In simplest terms, an Exorcism is the separation of any connection to the influence or effects of any malintentioned spirit. Therefor, there are prayers of *exorcism* for inanimate objects, and the Extraordinary Form of blessings almost always included an *exorcism*. Most of the revised Blessings do not include an *exorcism*. Either form can be used, but most *exorcists* describe that said in Latin is more effective than the vernacular (local language). One likely reason for this is that Latin has become the language of the Church and is largely set aside for use by the Church. In this way, it may have become a Holy Language dedicated to God. As evil spirits oppose anything directed, and even more so, dedicated to God, they may reasonably find Latin more distasteful, like Holy Water.

*How can a soul be effected by an evil spirit?*

- Temptation
- Obsession
- Oppression
- Attachment or Binding
- Antagonism
- Possession/Infestation

*How does a spirit become attached to a person?*

One of the greatest and most dangerous fallacies is that attachment or possession is due to the action of the person who is afflicted by a spirit, as either a punishment or the result of their own sin. A person can be cursed by another (we acknowledge the real effects of curses and what are sometimes called “black arts”. However, these are very different than what is usually portrayed in Hollywood movies and popular culture. We are not in control of the natural elements and a curse is not the result of someone saying certain words in a correct manor or performing a magical ritual. Rather, what we see in the effects of these things are the activities of Satan, the Opposer and Enemy and spirits that are aligned with him. Their goal is always to separate humanity and individuals from the love of God. But at the same time, even if they are able to draw away some souls from their Divine Salvation, we know that the end result of their work and attempts, ends up contributing to the work of Salvation over all. One can become attached or harassed by a spirit either through an act of right judgment (the result of our sin and rejection of God), such as if a person invites their influence through, or it is allowed by God for some good of His Kingdom and the salvation of others. It is also important to remember that this is never a punishment by God. God does not send evil spirits to take out His punishment on

a soul, but sometimes will allow a soul to be effected either as a natural consequence of actions, or because it serves the work of salvation.

As Scripture warns us, any practice of the occult (witchcraft, fortune telling, communicating with the dead, etc.,) is sinful and a form of idolatry.

*Some other Questions:*

What if someone I know or love appears to be attached, influenced or possessed?

Are there prayers for the laity to use?

What is Deliverance?

## **FUNERALS AND DEATH**

### **PRAYERS AND RITES FOR THE DYING AND DECEASED**

The Moment of Death

Anointing and "last rites"

Prayers for the Dying

Graces of a Good Death

St. Joseph, Patron of the Dying

Vigil for the Deceased

Prayers after Death

Transfer of the Body to the Church

\*\*There are two forms of prayers and Rites that you can receive: The Extraordinary Form (Latin/Old Way) or the Ordinary Form/New Way. The Ordinary Form is the most common and what a priest will ordinarily perform, but you can ask for the Extraordinary/Latin.

### **THE FUNERAL MASS**

The Funeral Mass, or liturgy outside of Mass, is an act of mercy and work that accompanies and helps the salvation of the one who has recently died.

*Mass or Celebration of Life?*

In our changing culture, one of the significant monikers of a Catholic funeral liturgy is that it remains a funeral, even if held outside of a Mass, and not a celebration of life. This is not because the Church does not want to celebrate the joys, gifts and positive memories of someone who has recently died, rather, it is out of our understanding of the promises of resurrection and importance of our prayers for the dead. In a Catholic Funeral, we approach the altar of Our Lord, with the person who has died, in the unity of the communion of saints, we pray on their behalf, and not only express our grief, but also lay it at the foot of the altar of the same Lord. We also call to mind the promises of the Resurrection and the life that is to come. It is this Resurrected life that is the focal point of the funeral liturgy and our sure Hope that we will see our beloved again in the Kingdom of Heaven. A celebration of life, on the other hand, draws our focus and attention toward the life that was lived and has ended and away from the new life. In this way a funeral is the truer form of a Celebration of Life, the one that is eternal, over the life on earth that is passing and ended. Even more, the funeral liturgy is not simply for the

benefit of the mourners and those left behind, but itself is a work of mercy for the one who has died.

When a funeral becomes a celebration of life, it is essentially replacing the work accomplished by the prayers of the funeral liturgy and eliminating a most valuable aspect of both our responsibility to pray for the dead and our human grieving.

These reasons are why the Rite does not include a Eulogy or option for family and loved ones to speak at a time during the liturgy. It is not because the priest simply does not want to let family members speak or because he is concerned about how long the funeral will take. For pastoral reasons, a priest may allow one or two family members to speak during the homily, or at the end of the liturgy. The desire is to keep the focus on the particular character and work of the funeral and not become a celebration of life, or wake, which are Good, but different, events.

### *Cremation*

With regard to cremation, the Church's teaching is that cremation is permissible when the option for burial of a person's body is not possible. In other words, it is recognizing that there are places and circumstances when cremation is necessary and this does not cause irreparable harm to the soul. As the *Order of Christian Funerals* describes "Although cremation is now permitted by the Church, it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body." (#413) it continues: "When extraordinary circumstances make the cremation of a body the only feasible choice, pastoral sensitivity must be exercised ..." (#415). In any situation, it insists the importance of burial of any cremated remains in the same manner that a the body is treated and returned to the earth.

### **CANON LAW:**

"Over the course of time, the Catholic Church has been wont to revise and renew the laws of its sacred discipline so that, maintaining always fidelity to the Divine Founder, these laws may be truly in accord with the salvific mission entrusted to the Church." from *Apostolic Constitution* on Code of Canon Law

The Code of Canon Law is to secure and help lead the people of God to Salvation.

-Compare this to the Constitution of the United States of America which specifies that the reason for the formation of the nation was to "Form a more perfect union, establish justice ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity"

What does the Code of Canon Law Govern?

Who is bound by the Code?

Baptized Christians

All people?

Although we may not say that all people are bound to follow Canon Law, there are *Universal laws* which apply to everyone and the Church is responsible for applying.

ex. The Bishop of a diocese is not responsible for only the Catholics under his jurisdiction, but for all souls who live in the diocese; a pastor is similarly responsible for all of the people who live within his parish boundaries, whether they are baptized Catholic or not.

## PREPARING FOR LENT

Days of Fasting and Abstinence:

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (Fasting)

Fridays (Abstinence)

\*Those over 60 or for health reasons, are exempt, but are to complete another suitable form of penance.

Prayer, Fasting and Abstinence

The 3 pillars of the Spiritual life. It is encouraged to take up a deliberate practice in each of these areas, beyond what is already prescribed.

40 Days, not including Sundays

