

§1800 HEALING AND DELIVERANCE PRAYER MINISTRY

“The longing for happiness, deeply rooted in the human heart, has always been accompanied by a desire to be freed from illness and to be able to understand the meaning of sickness when it is experienced. This is a human phenomenon, which in some way concerns every person and finds particular resonance in the Church, where sickness is understood as a means of union with Christ and of spiritual purification. Moreover, for those who find themselves in the presence of a sick person, it is an occasion for the exercise of charity. But this is not all, because sickness, like other forms of human suffering, is a privileged moment for prayer, whether asking for grace, or for the ability to accept sickness in a spirit of faith and conformity to God's will, or also for asking for healing. Prayer for the restoration of health is therefore part of the Church's experience in every age, including our own. What in some ways is new is the proliferation of prayer meetings, at times combined with liturgical celebrations, for the purpose of obtaining healing from God. In many cases, the occurrence of healings has been proclaimed, giving rise to the expectation of the same phenomenon in other such gatherings. In the same context, appeal is sometimes made to a claimed charism of healing.” —Instruction on Prayers for Healing, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, September 14, 2000.

The Church exercises her ministry of healing in both liturgical and non-liturgical forms. Within the liturgy, prayers and rites for the sick are regulated by the official liturgical books, such as the Ordo Benedictionis Infirmorum and the Ordo Unctionis Infirmorum eorumque Pastoralis Cura. These prayers are celebrated according to prescribed ritual forms and are inseparably linked to the Church's sacramental life.

Outside the liturgy, the faithful also engage in prayers for healing and deliverance in a wide variety of pastoral settings. Such gatherings, though not sacramental in nature, remain genuine expressions of the Church's solicitude for the suffering. To preserve clarity and fidelity, the following diocesan norms provide guidance for these non-liturgical forms of prayer, ensuring that they are carried out in harmony with the Church's teaching, in distinction from the sacraments, and always oriented toward the good of those who seek God's healing grace.

Prior to His Ascension, Our Lord promised: “These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons [...] They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mk 16:17–18).

In accordance with Canons 838 § 4 and 839 § 2, it pertains to the Diocesan Bishop to establish norms governing the prayers and religious practices of the faithful entrusted to him, whether these be liturgical and non-liturgical, and to ensure that they are in keeping with the Faith and norms of the Church.

Finally, these Norms presuppose adherence to the universal Norms already established in the Instruction on Prayers for Healing (September 14, 2000) and the Letter to Ordinaries regarding norms on Exorcism (29 September 1985), both issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The disciplinary norms from the Instruction on Prayers for Healing and the Letter to Ordinaries regarding norms on Exorcism are included with the present instruction as appendices.

§1801 GENERAL NORMS FOR HEALING AND DELIVERANCE MINISTRY

1801.1. Policy These norms primarily address non-liturgical prayers for healing. As stated in the Disciplinary Norms of the Instruction on Prayers for Healing (cf. Articles 2–5), the *Ordo Benedictionis Infirmorum* of the *Rituale Romanum* and the *Ordo Unctionis Infirmorum eorumque Pastoralis Cura* already govern the prayers and rites to be used in liturgical settings. Given the wide variety of pastoral contexts and circumstances, the present norms do not prescribe a fixed format for healing and deliverance prayers outside the liturgy. Rather, they identify the essential elements to be observed and the practices to be avoided, so that these ministries may be carried out in fidelity to the Church’s teaching and for the spiritual good of the faithful. In this way, the norms complement the liturgical books by ensuring clarity and consistency in non-liturgical practice.

Procedures

- a) When preparing non-liturgical healing or deliverance prayer, ministers are to follow the norms provided here, ensuring that practices remain faithful to Catholic teaching, avoid confusion with the sacraments, and foster the good of those seeking prayer.
- b) Healing and deliverance prayer ministers should adapt the selection of Scripture, intercessions, and prayers to the pastoral needs of the situation while maintaining reverence, doctrinal soundness, and conformity with these diocesan norms.

1801.2. Policy In accordance with the *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, art. 1, “It is licit for every member of the faithful to pray to God for healing.” However, this does not imply that every individual is suited or permitted to participate in healing or deliverance prayer ministry. Only those who abide by these Norms can engage in healing or deliverance ministry in the name of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

1801.3. Policy Any individual or group who wishes to exercise a public prayer ministry within a specific parish or other Catholic institution, whether the services be liturgical or non-liturgical, may do so only with the permission of the local ordinary (Diocesan Bishop or Vicar General) or his delegate and the parish pastor (or chaplain). Where a pastor grants permission at the parish level, this permission is not transferable to another parish, institution, or entity.

Procedures

- a) Priests of the Diocese who are trained in healing and deliverance ministry may seek general approval from the Diocesan Bishop to engage in this ministry. Those priests seeking this approval should consult first with the Vicar for Clergy.

1801.4. Policy Even where the local ordinary and pastor have granted permission, in accordance with Art. 10 of the *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*: “Authoritative intervention by the Diocesan Bishop is proper and necessary when abuses are verified in liturgical or non-liturgical healing services, or when there is obvious scandal among the community of the faithful, or when there is a serious lack of observance of liturgical or disciplinary norms.”

1801.5. Policy Prayer ministers must exercise their function in full communion with the Church, in accordance with her teaching and canonical discipline.

Procedures

- a) Any non-Catholic Christians who assist also must carry out their prayer ministry in a way that does not contradict the teachings or discipline of the Catholic Church.
- b) Non-Christians (i.e., unbaptized persons) may receive prayer, but they should not assist directly in any kind of prayer ministry.

1801.6. Policy All involved in prayer ministry should have sufficient training and formation for the relevant ministry.

Procedures

In general, the level of training needed corresponds to a person’s role. Those who lead the prayer gathering or service require more training than those who simply pray with individuals as part of a prayer team. Those who only assist a prayer leader by simple intercessory prayer do not require any specific training, but they must be chosen and guided by the ministry leader(s).

1801.7. Policy The Diocese of Springfield in Illinois does not currently offer or host any specific training programs for these ministries. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the local ordinary and the parish pastor and other prayer ministry leaders to determine whether an individual has the necessary training, formation, and experience before granting him or her permission to engage in healing or deliverance ministry.

Procedures

Some possibilities for training and formation include 1) The Catholic Renewal Center of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, which offers a variety of in person training programs for healing, inner healing, and deliverance ministry, as well as other ministries; 2) Encounter Ministries, which offers shorter, intensive training seminars in person and online, as well as the two-year Encounter School of Ministry. The two-year school addresses healing and deliverance prayer ministry extensively and is available in person at the St. Louis, MO satellite campus or online.

1801.8. Policy All involved in healing and/or deliverance prayer ministry, especially when ministering with minors and/or vulnerable adults, are subject to the Safe Environment training and certification process for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

Procedures

The current program used is “Safe Haven – It’s Up to You” from Catholic Mutual Group (available online at <https://cmgconnect.org/>).

1801.9. Policy Prayer ministers must comply with all diocesan policies and guidelines, especially those relating to safeguarding and protection of vulnerable adults and children. It is the responsibility of the prayer ministry leader(s), in consultation with the pastor, to ensure these policies and guidelines are known and observed by everyone involved.

1801.10. Policy In the case where groups or individuals from outside the Diocese of Springfield are invited to work within it, it is the responsibility of the inviting pastor and organizers to confirm that these groups are in good standing with their own bishops. Specifically, they must ensure that any clergy involved submit Testimonials of Suitability to the Diocese, and that ministry groups/ministries are operating with the approval of their pastors and/or bishop. Anyone who wishes to serve as prayer minister must submit documentation showing their completion of Safe Environment training.

1801.11. Policy The church building, as a sacred place, is ordinarily the preferred setting for healing and deliverance prayer. However, when circumstances require, these ministries may be conducted in another suitable location, provided that the space is conducive to prayer, ensures adequate room for participants, and safeguards the confidentiality and dignity of those receiving ministry.

Procedures

When an alternate space is used, ministers should ensure that the setting is reverent, free from unnecessary distractions, and arranged in such a way that personal privacy is maintained. Care should be taken that the environment reflects the Church’s pastoral concern and preserves the sacred character appropriate to the ministry being carried out.

1801.12. Policy If the Blessed Sacrament is to be exposed during any prayer service or gathering, it must be ensured that at any given time, the majority of the faithful present are adoring the Lord and that He is the primary focus.

Procedures

- a) If healing or deliverance prayer ministry is offered simultaneously with Eucharistic exposition and adoration, prayer teams should be located outside of the church or chapel where adoration is being held so that they will not distract from adoration.
- b) In this context, it should also be remembered that “Exposition which is held solely to impart benediction is prohibited” (*Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass*, n. 89).

§1802 SPECIFIC NORMS FOR HEALING PRAYER MINISTRY

1802.1. Policy Healing ministry should only be exercised by a fully initiated adult Catholic in good standing with the Church who is in a state of grace. Those who feel called to this ministry should speak to their pastor to discern this ministry and to identify possible training opportunities and resources.

1802.2. Policy Healing prayer leaders or ministers must never claim or even imply through teaching, preaching, or prayer, that healing of any kind is an inevitable outcome of prayer. While healing does require faith, and all present should be encouraged to pray with desire, faith, and expectation, prayer ministers should not tell particular prayer recipients that their lack of healing is due to a lack of faith. Finally, in fidelity to Church teaching on the redemptive value of suffering, suffering and illness must never be presented as inherently incompatible with the love and goodness of God.

Procedures

Since healing prayer ministers are not the primary agents of healing, but instruments of the Holy Spirit, it should be made clear that all the baptized can pray efficaciously for healing. Thus it should not be claimed or implied that only certain persons have the charism of healing. This would place a distorted emphasis on the healing prayer ministers themselves. As the *Instruction on Prayers for Healing* states:

“[I]n prayer meetings organized for asking for healing, it would be completely arbitrary to attribute a “charism of healing” to any category of participants, for example, to the directors of the group; the only thing to do is to entrust oneself to the free decision of the Holy Spirit, who grants to some a special charism of healing in order to show the power of the grace of the Risen Christ (I, n. 5).”

1802.3. Policy There must always be a minimum of two (2) persons assisting an individual prayer recipient. They should take into account gender balance, which means at least one of the healing prayer ministers must be of the same sex as the prayer recipient.

1802.4. Policy Healing and deliverance prayer must always be carried out in a manner that safeguards both the safety and the dignity of those receiving prayer. Ministers are to take reasonable steps to prevent injury and to ensure that all actions reflect propriety and respect.

Procedures

- a) Prayer recipients should be given the option to sit while receiving prayer. If they are standing, designated assistants should be positioned nearby to provide support in case someone becomes unsteady or falls.
- b) When assisting women, particular care must be taken to preserve modesty and propriety; whenever possible, female attendants should assist female recipients. In every case, ministers are to act with prudence, sensitivity, and respect so that the person's dignity is upheld and the focus remains on prayer.

1802.5. Policy Healing prayer ministers must ensure that all prayers for healing and deliverance, whether formal or informal, must avoid imitating sacramental actions such as imparting blessings, laying hands on the head, or anointing with oil. In fact, regarding the use of oils, “in no instance may those who are not priests perform anointings either with the Oil of the Sick or any other oil” (*Ecclesia de Mysterio*, Art. 9 §§ 1-2). In the context of healing ministry, anointing with oil belongs solely to the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, administered by a priest with the Oil of the Sick blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass.

Procedures

- a) Healing prayer ministers are to be clearly instructed that gestures proper to the sacraments—especially anointing with oil—are not to be used in healing and deliverance prayer.
- b) Priests are not to bless any oils during healing or deliverance prayer sessions.
- c) When appropriate, those receiving prayer should be reminded of the distinction between sacramental anointing and non-sacramental prayer, to prevent confusion.

1802.6. Policy Healing prayer ministers may only lay their hands on a prayer recipient with the permission of the prayer recipient.

Procedures

Touch should ordinarily be limited to the shoulder area of the recipient. The exception to this is when the afflicted or injured body part is not a sensitive area (e.g., the arm, knee, ankle, foot) and it seems suitable to pray with the hands placed there directly.

1802.7. Policy Children under the age of 18 are only to be ministered to with the permission of their parent or guardian.

Procedures

Attending a retreat where healing or deliverance prayer is taking place will constitute permission on the part of the parent if the parents are informed in writing that healing or deliverance prayer ministry may take place.

1802.9. Policy Healing prayer ministers are never to tell any prayer recipient directly or explicitly that he or she (the recipient) has a specific illness, sin, emotional/spiritual wound, spiritual/demonic attachment, or curse, or claim other definitive insights into an individual's condition. A person's individual conscience and spiritual good must always be revered.

1802.9. Policy Healing prayer ministers are never to tell or declare to someone that he or she is healed. It is the right of the prayer recipient to testify to the work of the Holy Spirit in him or her.

Procedures

Healing prayer ministers should never tell a prayer recipient to stop medical interventions or treatment.

1802.10. Policy To avoid sensationalism and to safeguard their own credibility, healing prayer ministers should avoid publicly proclaiming accounts or testimonies of particular healings as certainly having occurred until some review of the evidence has taken place by competent medical and ecclesiastical authorities. However, the prayer recipient always has the right to share his or her testimony of healing.

1802.11. Policy General pronouncements during prayer ministry gatherings within a public or group setting that identify specific illnesses, sins, emotional/spiritual wounds, spiritual or demonic attachments, curses, etc. which need healing, will be healed, or have been healed are prohibited.

1802.12. Policy Whenever significant healings occur, testimonies and evidence should be gathered by the healing prayer ministry leaders and submitted to the diocesan bishop or his delegate for review and assessment. Instances where healing appears to have occurred may not be described as miracles unless declared as such by competent ecclesiastical authority following the prescribed process for review and assessment of such cases.

1802.13. Policy While praying in tongues cannot be prohibited (cf. 1 Cor 14:39), prayer ministers should take seriously the exhortations of St. Paul, “Let all things be done for building up” and “all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Cor 14:26, 40); they must also heed the words of the *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*: “Anything resembling hysteria, artificiality, theatricality or sensationalism, above all on the part of those who are in charge of such gatherings, must not take place” (Art. 5, § 3).

1802.14. Policy If there is evidence of overt demonic or preternatural manifestations during the course of healing prayer ministry with an individual, the healing prayer minister should calmly and prayerfully end the prayer session and seek the immediate consultation and assistance of the prayer ministry leader. If necessary and if possible, the prayer recipient’s pastor or the appropriate diocesan personnel should also be consulted for further assessment and ministry.

§1803 SPECIFIC NORMS FOR DELIVERANCE PRAYER MINISTRY

1803.1. Policy Anyone involved in deliverance prayer ministry is to be well-formed, and given proper training and permission by the authority of the Church.

Procedures

Prayer Minister status should be reviewed and updated every five years.

1803.2. Policy These Norms concern only the ministries of healing and deliverance, not the ministry of exorcism. The prayers of exorcism contained in the *Rituale Romanum* must remain separate from healing services, whether liturgical or non-liturgical. It is strictly forbidden (and dangerous) for anyone to attempt an exorcism except a trained priest with the explicit delegation of the local ordinary per canon 1172 of the *Code of Canon Law*. If a prayer minister suspects that an exorcism is needed, he or she should immediately inform a member of the clergy.

1803.3. Policy Deliverance ministry should only be exercised by a fully initiated adult Catholic in good standing with the Church who is in a state of grace. Even more than healing ministry, deliverance ministry requires serious training and formation, as well as a high level of spiritual maturity. Those who feel called to this ministry should speak to their pastor to discern this ministry and to identify possible training opportunities and resources.

1803.4. Policy Matters discussed in the context of healing or deliverance prayer belong to the non-sacramental internal forum. Both priests and lay persons who assist in these ministries may be present when prayer recipients share personal or sensitive information. All such information must be treated as strictly confidential and may never be disclosed outside the context of the ministry. Prayer ministers must also recognize that issues proper to the Sacrament of Reconciliation are not to be handled in healing or deliverance prayer.

Procedures

- a) *Confidentiality*: All healing and deliverance prayer ministers, clergy and lay alike, are bound to maintain strict confidentiality about anything shared during healing or deliverance sessions.
- b) *Redirection to Confession*: If a recipient begins to disclose matters that properly belong in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, ministers should gently redirect the person to bring these concerns to confession with a priest, and if appropriate, help facilitate access to the sacrament.
- c) *Clarity of Role*: Healing and deliverance prayer ministers should remember and, when necessary, communicate that healing and deliverance prayer is not a substitute for sacramental absolution.
- d) *Respect and Discretion*: Conversations should be carried out in a respectful and discreet manner, so that the recipient feels heard and supported while their dignity and privacy are fully protected.

1803.5. Policy During healing and deliverance ministry, laypersons are prohibited from using imprecatory prayers—i.e., first-person prayers in which the prayer minister speaks direct commands (e.g., “In the name of Jesus, I command/cast out/bind,” etc.). The exception to this is when the person has the proper authority over the prayer recipient according to natural law (oneself, one’s spouse, one’s minor child) or according to divine law (Holy Orders).

1803.6. Policy Persons engaged in deliverance ministry with an individual are prohibited from addressing any demons directly by name aloud. They are also prohibited from uttering any prayers in which demons are questioned directly or their identity is sought to be known. Prayers for deliverance should never be confrontational or provocative.

1803.7. Policy It is not permitted for laypersons to use the formula of exorcism against Satan and the fallen angels, extracted from the one published by order of Pope Leo XIII, nor may they use the full text of this exorcism.

1803.8. Policy In liturgical or non-liturgical prayer settings, the reality of diabolical oppression, obsession, or possession must never be used as a method of provoking fervor or docility to ministry leaders.

1803.9. Policy The possibility of diabolical oppression, obsession, or possession as the source of various afflictions is never to be suggested to any individual prayer recipient.

APPENDIX I

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Disciplinary Norms, *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*
14 September 2000

Art. 1—It is licit for every member of the faithful to pray to God for healing. When this is organized in a church or other sacred place, it is appropriate that such prayers be led by an ordained minister.

Art. 2—Prayers for healing are considered to be liturgical if they are part of the liturgical books approved by the Church’s competent authority; otherwise, they are non-liturgical.

Art. 3—§ 1. Liturgical prayers for healing are celebrated according to the rite prescribed in the *Ordo benedictionis infirmorum* of the *Rituale Romanum* and with the proper sacred vestments indicated therein.

§ 2. In conformity with what is stated in the *Praenotanda*, V., *De adaptationibus quae Conferentiae Episcoporum competunt* of the same *Rituale Romanum*, Conferences of Bishops may introduce those adaptations to the Rite of Blessings of the Sick which are held to be pastorally useful or possibly necessary, after prior review by the Apostolic See.

Art. 4—§ 1. The Diocesan Bishop has the right to issue norms for his particular Church regarding liturgical services of healing, following can. 838 § 4.

§ 2. Those who prepare liturgical services of healing must follow these norms in the celebration of such services.

§ 3. Permission to hold such services must be explicitly given, even if they are organized by Bishops or Cardinals, or include such as participants. Given a just and proportionate reason, the Diocesan Bishop has the right to forbid even the participation of an individual Bishop.

Art. 5—§ 1. Non-liturgical prayers for healing are distinct from liturgical celebrations, as gatherings for prayer or for reading of the word of God; these also fall under the vigilance of the local Ordinary in accordance with can. 839 § 2.

§ 2. Confusion between such free non-liturgical prayer meetings and liturgical celebrations properly so-called is to be carefully avoided.

§ 3. Anything resembling hysteria, artificiality, theatricality or sensationalism, above all on the part of those who are in charge of such gatherings, must not take place.

Art. 6—The use of means of communication (in particular, television) in connection with prayers for healing, falls under the vigilance of the Diocesan Bishop in conformity with can. 823 and the norms established by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the *Instruction* of March 30, 1992.

Art. 7—§ 1. Without prejudice to what is established above in art. 3 or to the celebrations for the sick provided in the Church’s liturgical books, prayers for healing—whether liturgical or non-liturgical—must not be introduced into the celebration of the Holy Mass, the sacraments, or the Liturgy of the Hours.

Book IV The Sanctifying Office of the Church

§ 2. In the celebrations referred to § 1, one may include special prayer intentions for the healing of the sick in the general intercessions or prayers of the faithful, when this is permitted.

Art. 8—§ 1. The ministry of exorcism must be exercised in strict dependence on the Diocesan Bishop, and in keeping with the norm of can. 1172, the Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of September 29, 1985, and the *Rituale Romanum*.

§ 2. The prayers of exorcism contained in the *Rituale Romanum* must remain separate from healing services, whether liturgical or non-liturgical.

§ 3. It is absolutely forbidden to insert such prayers of exorcism into the celebration of the Holy Mass, the sacraments, or the Liturgy of the Hours.

Art. 9—Those who direct healing services, whether liturgical or non-liturgical, are to strive to maintain a climate of peaceful devotion in the assembly and to exercise the necessary prudence if healings should take place among those present; when the celebration is over, any testimony can be collected with honesty and accuracy, and submitted to the proper ecclesiastical authority.

Art. 10—Authoritative intervention by the Diocesan Bishop is proper and necessary when abuses are verified in liturgical or non-liturgical healing services, or when there is obvious scandal among the community of the faithful, or when there is a serious lack of observance of liturgical or disciplinary norms.

† Joseph Card. Ratzinger
Prefect

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Secretary

APPENDIX II

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Letter to Ordinaries Regarding Norms on Exorcism
29 September 1985

Your most Reverend Excellency,

Recent years have seen an increase in the number of prayer groups in the Church aimed at seeking deliverance from the influence of demons, while not actually engaging in real exorcisms. These meetings are led by lay people, even when a priest is present.

As the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has been asked how one should view these facts, this Dicastery considers it necessary to inform Bishops of the following response:

1. Canon 1172 of the Code of Canon Law states that no one can legitimately perform exorcisms over the possessed unless he has obtained special and express permission from the local Ordinary (§ 1), and states that this permission should be granted by the local Ordinary only to priests who are endowed with piety, knowledge, prudence and integrity of life (§ 2). Bishops are therefore strongly advised to stipulate that these norms be observed.
2. From these prescriptions it follows that it is not even licit that the faithful use the formula of exorcism against Satan and the fallen angels, extracted from the one published by order of the Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII, and even less that they use the integral text of this exorcism. Bishops should take care to warn the faithful, if necessary, of this.
3. Finally, for the same reasons, Bishops are asked to be vigilant so that – even in cases that do not concern true demonic possession – those who are without the due faculty may not conduct meetings during which invocations, to obtain release, are uttered in which demons are questioned directly and their identity sought to be known.

Drawing attention to these norms, however, should in no way distance the faithful from praying that, as Jesus taught us, they may be delivered from evil (cf. Mt 6:13). Finally, Pastors may take this opportunity to recall what the Tradition of the Church teaches concerning the role proper to the sacraments and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the Angels and Saints in the Christian's spiritual battle against evil spirits.

I take the opportunity to express my deepest respects,

Your most esteemed in Christ,

† Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Prefect

† Alberto Bovone
Secretary