



The Diocese of Portsmouth
Norms for Healing and Deliverance Ministry
2019



PHILIP

By the Grace of God and the favour of the Apostolic See
Bishop of Portsmouth

Whereas there has never been established a set of norms for Healing and Deliverance ministry within the Diocese of Portsmouth,

Whereas today there is an urgent need for these matters to be clarified, ensuring that the Spiritual welfare and Safeguarding of the faithful of the Diocese of Portsmouth is of the utmost importance,

Therefore, I, the undersigned, Bishop of Portsmouth, in virtue of my pastoral office, confirm the norms for healing and deliverance ministry issued in this document.

Given at Portsmouth on the 25th day of January, the Conversion of St Paul

Bishop of Portsmouth

Chancellor

Norms for Healing and Deliverance Ministry

Introduction

1. “Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness” (Mt 9: 35). The healings of Christ were signs of His messianic mission and the victory He won by His Death and Resurrection. That victory is shewn not only by healings and cures that He continues to bestow today, but also “through the voluntary and innocent suffering of Christ in his Passion, which gives every person the ability to unite himself to the sufferings of the Lord” (IPH 1.1).

2. The Church continues this ministry of Christ through prayer and the sacraments, through teaching and proclaiming the Word of Truth, and through her pastoral care of the sick.

3. In healing ministry, it is helpful to differentiate three overlapping ministerial activities that are related one to another in a kind of continuum. In ascending order:

a) *healing* (spiritual, mental, psychological, emotional and physical), especially the two ‘healing sacraments’ of Reconciliation and Anointing, and prayers for healing either offered privately, or within a group, or liturgically in accord with the liturgical books. Jesus laid hands on the sick to cure them (Mark 6:5) and the Apostles continued this ministry (e.g. St. Paul in Acts 28:8);

b) *deliverance*, that is, prayer for the removal of obstacles, bondages, memories, entanglements and addictions of a spiritual origin that hold a person back, impair their functioning and well-being and/or prevent their restoration to health. These spiritual negativities need to be ‘turned’ towards Christ. The analogy here is with Jesus, portrayed in the Gospels, “casting out demons” such as the demoniac of Gadara (Mt 8: 28-34) and the Apostles continuing that ministry (cf. the epileptic demoniac in Mt 17: 14-20 and the ministry of Philip in Samaria where in Acts 8: 4-8 he cast out unclean spirits).

c) *exorcism*, either *minor* or *major*, that is, ritual, liturgical prayer, conducted by a minister, in order to cast out Satan and the powers of darkness who in some manner have ‘possessed’ a person. Exorcisms use various sacramentals such as a crucifix or holy water. The rites of minor exorcisms are usually reserved to a priest and the Rite of (Major) Exorcism requires the direct mandate of the Bishop, who delegates the task to the diocesan Exorcist.

4. A pastoral ‘canon of parsimony’ should usefully be applied here, in which the presumption is made in favour of a ‘lower’ rather than a ‘higher’ diagnosis and solution. In other words, the immediate and initial response to a pastoral situation will not be the need for a major *exorcism*, nor the ministry of *deliverance*, but for *healing* and then for healing by using the ordinary means that the Church provides, namely prayer and the sacraments. Prayer and the sacraments are the ordinary means of grace that God has provided, especially the two sacraments of healing, which always have a priority over other healing prayers and actions. In this regard, pastors and anyone with the care of souls need to exercise careful discernment when cases present themselves.

5. The *Norms* that follow are concerned only with the ministries of *healing* and *deliverance* as exercised within the Diocese of Portsmouth, and not the ministry of *exorcism*. The ministry of *exorcism*, which already has its own protocols, is reserved to the Bishop.

6. God gives the gift of His love abundantly and in many and various ways. He works notably through the care of doctors, nurses, psychologists and medical specialists. It is always right, in cases of sickness, whether physical or psychological, to encourage immediate recourse to the appropriate members of the medical profession. The Church's understanding of sickness is derived from her maximal perspective and theological viewpoint, and thus she rightly collaborates with the medical profession. This collaboration, for instance, is the basis of chaplaincy in a hospital where the Church rightly works as part of a team. The Church's prayers for *healing*, *deliverance* and *exorcism* accompany, facilitate and assist the work of medical practitioners and others in carrying out God's will.

7. It should be presumed that those who do not work within the *Norms* here outlined are not acting in the name of the Catholic Church. All ministries being exercised within the Diocese ultimately need the consent and approval of the Bishop and are subject to his direct and/or delegated oversight. Again, ministers should recognise their limitations and in case of doubt seek advice. They should also know the local professionals and whom to contact.

General Norms

8. In the Catholic Church, the ordinary and most effective means of dealing with sin, sickness and the various mental, emotional and psychological obstacles that arise, is through the Sacraments, especially Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, and the two 'healing sacraments' of Reconciliation and Anointing. Those in need should approach their parish priest in order to request them.

9. The parish priest has the primary joy and responsibility for the pastoral care of his flock and the care of the sick. It is his personal responsibility to oversee, direct and conduct the ministry to the sick in his parish, just like "Jesus, Who went about doing good" (*Eucharistic Prayer for use in Masses for Various Needs IV*). He will normally associate with himself others, such as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and parish visitors, who will collaborate with him in this ministry, under his leadership, formation and direction.

10. Prayer for healing is an essential part of pastoral ministry. The *Roman Missal* contains a formulary for a Mass for the Sick and the *Rite of Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick* contains various other liturgies and prayers that can be used with the sick. The *Book of Blessings* provides blessings for the sick. The sick in their moment of need should also turn to Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction, the Rosary, devotions, pilgrimages, invocations of the saints and other prayers approved for use.

11. Besides the hierarchical and institutional gifts given to His Church, God also bestows charismatic gifts upon individual members of the Church. These include the gift or charism of healing (cf. 1 Cor 12: 4-11, especially v. 9). This admirably disposes a person to a particular function within the life and mission of the Church. The Church takes care to discern the charisms given, and to form and train individuals to use their gifts wisely and appropriately in service. It is the responsibility of the Bishop at the diocesan level and the parish priest within his parish community to order the use of such gifts. 'Lay ministers' of

healing and *deliverance* within the diocese or within the parish function only by a delegation from the Bishop and/or the priest. Where a priest gives a delegation at parish level, it is not transferable to another parish.

12. The ministry of *deliverance*, by its nature and by its proximity to a minor *exorcism*, is rarer. This ministry, as exercised by a priest, or by a ‘lay minister’ with the charism of ‘discernment of spirits,’ requires a specialised formation and training. Moreover, no one else should engage in a ministry of deliverance with an individual without first liaising with that person’s parish priest, who may have important information not known to the minister.

13. Anyone intending to exercise a public ministry in the Church, such as ‘lay ministers’ of *healing* and *deliverance*, do so only with the permission of the Bishop or the parish priest and only with appropriate formation and training.

They must exercise their function in full communion with the Church, in accordance with her teaching and canonical discipline. They must comply with Diocesan Operating Policies, especially those relating to safeguarding and the protection of vulnerable adults and children, and be subject to safe-recruitment procedures.

14. The need for healing in a person’s life often becomes evident in those seeking to become members of the Church through the pre-discipleship and RCIA processes and for those growing in their spiritual journey. Consequently, catechists involved in the accompaniment of catechumens and those engaged in spiritual direction need to acquire a level of expertise in relation to healing ministry.

15. In some parishes, there are prayer-groups and prayer-teams that engage in personal ‘prayer ministry’, who pray with individuals for *healing*, or offer prayers and blessings after a Sunday or weekday Mass. Some priests and parishes organise occasional Healing Masses and Healing Liturgies, with the Sacrament of the Sick or Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. Again, charismatic conferences and Days of Renewal with *healing* and *deliverance* ministries are organised from time to time by different groups, including those from outside the Diocese. All these pastoral initiatives are laudable and to be encouraged, but they must adhere to right doctrine and to the liturgical norms and liturgical books. They should also adhere to the *Norms* laid out here, in particular to the norms about ministries and ministers, as well as to the national policies relating to safeguarding the vulnerable. In the case of groups from outside the Diocese of Portsmouth invited to work within it, parish priests and organisers must ensure that these groups are in good standing with their own bishops, that valid *Testimonials of Suitability* and *Celebrets* for any clergy involved have been submitted, and that leaders and ‘lay ministers’ are appropriately formed and trained, and have been through a safe recruitment process. In case of doubt, reference should be made to Bishop’s Office, to the Healing Advisory Group and the diocesan Safeguarding Office.

Specific Norms

16. Formal and informal prayers for *healing* and *deliverance* should take care not to mimic sacramental actions. The laying on of hands is traditional, but any sort of anointing is not.

17. Care should be taken to ensure that prayers for *healing* and prayers for *deliverance* take place in suitable locations that do not inadvertently compromise the professional integrity of ministers or recipients (e.g. in a public space not behind closed doors). For all forms of

individual prayer for *healing* and/or *deliverance*, the national safeguarding policy is that in addition to the minister and the individual, at least one other person should be present. Whilst common sense will often suffice, in specific instances, the diocesan Safeguarding Office will be able to advise.

18. For many, the ministry of *deliverance* is unclear and ambiguous. This ministry should never be embarked upon without prior experience or seeking wise counsel. On-going formation and training, together with the sharing of experience and good practice, would benefit both clergy and laity engaged in this ministry. Clergy study-days, linked with Safeguarding training, will help.

19. A diocesan framework team called 'Healing Advisory Group' should be established to advise the Bishop and to act as a point of reference for healing ministry and ministers. It could profitably identify appropriate training and on-going formation for those engaged informally or formally in this ministry, including specific ministers of *healing* and *deliverance*. It would hold a database indicating those who have undergone training. It would affirm those who are compliant with the diocesan policy and advise those who are not compliant. Whilst recognizing the fluidity of the situation on the ground and the need to exercise guidance with a 'light touch,' this Team could also build a list of approved groups and a register of leaders engaged.