

Tridentine Community News

May 24, 2026 – Pentecost Sunday

The Catholic Rite of Exorcism

By James Murphy

The Catholic Church has long understood exorcism to be a sacred and solemn rite entrusted to the authority of the Church by Christ Himself. Far from superstition or sensationalism, exorcism is viewed in the traditional Catholic understanding as an act of pastoral charity and spiritual warfare, ordered toward the liberation of persons, places, or objects believed to be afflicted by demonic influence.

The Church distinguishes between ordinary spiritual remedies, such as prayer, Confession, fasting, sacramentals, and the Holy Eucharist, and the solemn rite of exorcism. While possession of a person is the most serious and well-known form, the Church has traditionally recognized that demonic oppression or infestation may also involve homes, locations, or objects associated with grave evil or occult practices. In all such cases, the Church acts cautiously and under lawful ecclesiastical authority.

The Church's law regarding exorcism is explicitly stated in the 1983 Code of Canon Law. Canon 1172 declares:

“No one can perform exorcisms legitimately upon the possessed unless he has obtained special and express permission from the local ordinary.

The local ordinary is to give this permission only to a presbyter who has piety, knowledge, prudence, and integrity of life.”

This canon reflects the Church's insistence that exorcism belongs to the public ministry of the Church and is exercised only under episcopal oversight. A priest acts not by personal power, but by the authority of Christ exercised through His Church.

The traditional ritual most associated with exorcism is the A.D., 1614 edition of the *Rituale Romanum*, promulgated under Pope Paul V. Often referred to as the “Traditional Roman Rite of Exorcism,” it contains direct imperatives addressed to demonic spirits, psalms, Gospel readings, litanies, blessings, and repeated use of sacramentals such as holy water, relics, and the Sign of the Cross. The rite reflects the Church's sober realism concerning the reality of Satan and the triumph of Christ over evil.

In A.D., 1999, the Holy See promulgated a revised rite entitled *De Exorcismis et Supplicationibus Quibusdam* under Pope John Paul II. While preserving the Church's doctrine regarding demonic possession and the necessity of episcopal authorization, the revised rite adopted updated language and structure consistent

with post-Second Vatican Council liturgical reforms. Nevertheless, many experienced exorcists and traditionally minded clergy have continued to prefer the 1614 rite, considering its language more direct, its theology more explicit, and its practical application more effective in confronting demonic manifestations. The Holy See has continued to permit use of the traditional rite with appropriate authorization.

Before any solemn exorcism is undertaken, the Church requires careful investigation to exclude psychological, medical, or natural explanations. Traditionally cited signs of genuine possession have included speaking unknown languages, extraordinary strength, hidden knowledge, and violent aversion to sacred objects or the Holy Name of Jesus Christ. Even then, the Church proceeds with caution, discretion, and prayer.



The qualifications for a priest appointed to this ministry are also clearly defined. Canon law and traditional Catholic practice require that the exorcist be distinguished by piety, prudence, sound doctrine, integrity of life, and spiritual maturity. Because the rite directly confronts spiritual evil, the Church insists that only priests of proven virtue and obedience undertake this ministry.

Ultimately, the Catholic rite of exorcism demonstrates the Church's enduring belief that Christ has conquered Satan and that the authority entrusted to the Church

exists for the salvation, protection, and spiritual liberation of souls.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Mon 05/25: 6:30 PM Vespers & 7:00 PM Mass at *St. Thomas the Apostle, Ann Arbor* (Pentecost Monday)

Tue 05/26: 6:30 PM Vespers & 7:00 PM Mass at *St. Thomas the Apostle* (Pentecost Tuesday)

Tue 05/26 7:00 PM: High Mass at *St. Benedict/Holy Name of Mary, Windsor* (Pentecost Tuesday)

Wed 05/27: 6:30 PM Vespers & 7:00 PM Mass at *St. Thomas the Apostle* (Ember Wednesday)

Thu 05/28: 6:30 PM Vespers & 7:00 PM Mass at *St. Thomas the Apostle* (Pentecost Thursday)

Fri 05/29: 6:30 PM Vespers & 7:00 PM Mass at *St. Thomas the Apostle* (Ember Friday)

Sat 05/30 7:00 AM: Mass at *St. Thomas the Apostle* (Ember Saturday)

Sun. 05/31 3:00 PM: High Mass at *St. Benedict/Holy Name of Mary* (Trinity Sunday) – Marian Procession and May Crowning after Mass