

## To Journalists and Media Organizations:

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In response to your inquiry about exorcism, the following information is provided to help familiarize you with the principles and mission of the Pope Leo XIII Institute.

While we clearly understand the media's curiosity and interest in this subject, it is essential for media professionals to understand that the Pope Leo XIII Institute is not a ministry site performing exorcisms, but rather a ministry institute providing priestly formation, education, and evangelization. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit teaching institute of the Catholic Church operating with the approval and under the auspices of a designated Catholic Bishop of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The Pope Leo XIII Institute is a training institute providing a clear, concise, and extensive understanding of the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on the topic of exorcism, healing, and deliverance. Our student body is composed of existing exorcists as well as priests, and deacons involved in the ministry of exorcism and deliverance.

The Institute undertakes its work at a time when many Catholics are even among those who don't believe in the devil or his influence upon them. Recognizing we live in a time when there is often great confusion regarding the devil, it is important to recall that Pope Francis has never been shy about speaking about the devil, and has warned many times against naiveté in the fight against Satan, even in the 21st century. The Pope has repeatedly requested of priests that the nature of spiritual disturbances should be submitted to careful discernment and take into account all the existential, ecclesial, natural and supernatural circumstances. In his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis wrote, "it is precisely the conviction that this malign power is present in our midst that enables us to understand how evil can at times have so much destructive force."

In its work of training priests and deacons, the institute works to strengthen effective collaboration between Church theologians and mental health professionals. To this end, a significant part of the Institute's curriculum is devoted to the importance of knowing how to discern whether someone is truly possessed, or whether they have some sort of psychiatric or psychological illness. The aim is to harmonize the work of these two disciplines in service of the afflicted. Furthermore, the Institute's curriculum explores the topic of demonic influence in our modern culture considering diverse factors and perspectives including psychological, familial, social, cultural, theological, anthropological, canonical, liturgical, historical and criminal. Program participants become trained skeptics while accessing multiple disciplines in bringing care and healing to individuals seeking help.

The Institute faculty includes experienced exorcists, mental health clinicians and professionals, theologians, historians, a committed and diverse board of directors, as well as legal and canon law experts. The Institute provides theological formation which occurs in the context of contemplative prayer and the Sacraments and emphasizes the spiritual formation of each priest and participant. Our ministry is understood as a wellspring of Jesus Christ's love and healing

power flowing through the priesthood, as well as a reaffirmation of the Sacrament of Confession as the most powerful tool, after the Eucharist, in the fight against the evil one.

The Institute is aware of the many reports of an increased number of exorcisms in recent years, and while this is true, it must be acknowledged that there is no serious statistical study on the practice of exorcism. Although the institute has information, it does not collect, analyze, or disseminate any data. As a training institute, the privacy and care of those we teach and serve is absolutely paramount.

It is essential for the media to understand that our goal is not to promote the Institute except in terms of the Institute's role as an educational and teaching center. More important to us is protecting the privacy of people who seek care and healing. The Institute's approach to the privacy issue is similar to how HIPPA protects and governs the rules of disclosure of health information of patients. The Institute allows the flow of private information only as necessary to provide and promote high quality spiritual care. Our singular goal is to perform our mission while also assuring the individual information of student priests, and clinicians (and any person they may serve), is properly protected.

Since the common cultural perception of the nature and application of exorcism is shaped and exaggerated by films, television, and online media, the Committee on Divine Worship has approved dissemination of some basic questions and answers found in the link directly below. Our hope is that with the media's help, more clear information is brought to bear on this topic often shrouded in mystery or misinformation.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) provides basic questions and answers about the Rite of Exorcism that can be found by clicking the link below: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/sacramentals-blessings/exorcism.cfm>

Please note that we are unable to assist those who are doing research for any reason on the topic of exorcism, healing and deliverance. There is ample research material already in the public domain that is accessible to those who seek it. Any calls seeking interviews or information by directly attempting to contact Institute Board Members will not be returned. Please contact us through our general office phone number and email.

May God bless your essential work as journalists and communicators in bringing the truth of the Gospel to all people.

Respectfully,

The Pope Leo XIII Institute