Dear Monsignors, Fathers, and Deacons,

Our age is both materialistic and superstitious and there is widespread doubt and ignorance of the presence and work of God in the world. In this environment, there is a growing need for the ministry of the Church to distinguish between natural phenomena, including mental and physical illness, and true cases of spiritual oppression. Persons, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, often turn to the Church and her wisdom for help and guidance.

Therefore, for the good of the Church and all those entrusted to me within the territory of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, I, effective immediately:

- Erect the “Office of Spiritual Deliverance and Exorcism”;
- Appoint, after taking into account the requirements of the Code of Canon Law (Can.1172), Reverend David J. Dohogne and Reverend David N. Coon to the office of “Exorcist” and members of the above named office;
- Grant Rev. Dohogne and Rev. Coon my “special and express permission” to exercise this ministry and all of the necessary faculties, canonical or otherwise, to carry it out;
- Appoint Rev. Dohogne as the Diocesan Coordinator of this office with administrative responsibilities for the ministry, including: keeping me informed and selecting and supervising lay members of the office’s consultation team.

These appointments are in addition to their current ongoing responsibilities and involved training with Bishop Robert Hermann and his team in St. Louis. However, these two appointments do not supersede the role of the local pastor as the first point of contact for anyone seeking counsel concerning the alleged influence of evil in one’s life.

I presume that each and every priest and deacon in the diocese will be present to such a person suffering spiritual distress: to talk with them, pray with them, perhaps blessing his or her home using the ritual found in the Book of Blessings, for example. It’s also good to advise them as to suggested lifestyle changes that will insure their spiritual well-being; prayer and attending church; participating in the sacraments, if they’re Catholic. This, of course, is nothing new. The Church has a long history of reverent and sincere accompaniment in order to bring a soul to Christ, the duty of which is never to be trivialized or sensationalized, no matter the circumstances.

That said, if you have received a call or request that after you have exhausted the above mentioned process you find yourself unable to effectively address or resolve, I ask that you have the person/family contact The Catholic Center directly so that the issue may be further assessed. On a fraternal level, please feel free to contact Fr. Dohogne or Fr. Coon with any questions or concerns.

I am grateful to each of you for your dedication and sincerity in serving the people of the Diocese. The Church, acting in the name of our Lord, has in its sacramental arsenal everything we need to bring hope and healing to those who seek it. Let us continue to pray for one another, and may God continue to bless each of you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

[Signature]

Most Reverend Edward M. Rice
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

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