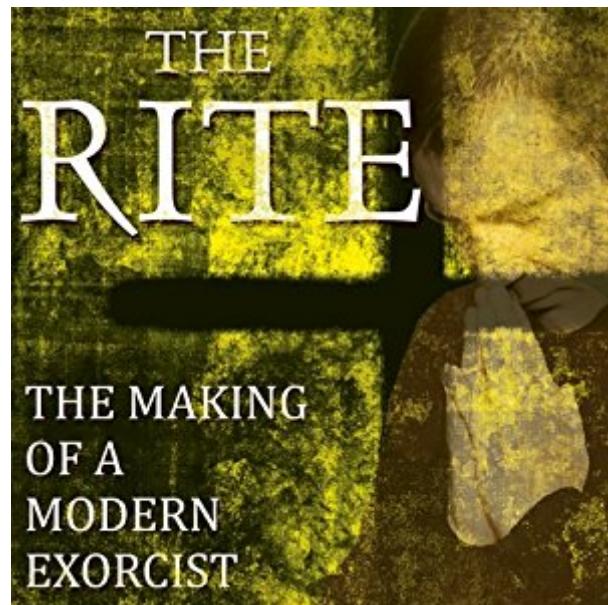


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# The Rite: The Making Of A Modern Exorcist



## **Synopsis**

California pastor Father Gary Thomas reluctantly accepted the request of his bishop to attend a course on demonic possession in Rome. He participated in more than 80 exorcisms alongside a senior Italian exorcist. Matt Baglio had full access to Fr. Thomas as he learned the process of exorcism and as he grew and changed in his understanding of the nature of evil and human suffering. The Rite describes the reality of demonic possession. It also traces the history of exorcism and treats related topics such as satanic cults and black masses. Since Fr. Thomas was a skeptic and the author is a fact-seeking journalist, this book is more compelling even than the previous best-seller on this topic, *The Exorcist*.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This is a well-written book by a journalist who covers an American priest's sabbatical in Rome to learn how to administer exorcism. The book lays a solid foundation for understanding both the practical and theological underpinnings of the actions of demons as understood by the Catholic Church and its measured response to claims of possession. One of the things that makes the book interesting is the reserved and often skeptical approach that the Church takes evaluating claims of possession and its insistence that psychiatric and other disorders be ruled out before proceeding forward. Another strong aspect of the book is that it shows the education and apprenticeship that the priest undergoes in becoming appointed as the exorcist for a diocese. The author does an excellent job of describing the personalities of the key subjects of the book and presents

descriptions of exorcisms in a very measured way. If you are looking for a book that covers an obscure part of the Catholic Church in a respectful and matter-of-fact manner, *The Rite* would be an excellent choice.

This question (my review headline) was recently asked of me by the Jesuit President of a famous Jesuit university after I had announced to a small group that Rev. Gary Thomas, an exorcist, would be one of our featured guests in the 2010-2011 Oakland Diocese's *Catholics@Work* Speakers Series. His disparaging response is characteristic of today's American Catholic Clergy as many find the concept of the Devil and exorcism to be a sideshow that no "serious minded" priest would lose time considering and would just as soon forget. Those who doubt the existence of evil and the Devil are reminded in "*The Rite*" to be mindful of French poet Charles Baudelaire's philosophic proclamation - "the Devil had finally convinced the world that he no longer existed." Fortunately, an unintentional spoiler has come along - Matt Baglio, an ambivalent "cultural" Catholic who was living in Italy as a freelance writer and Vatican journalist. In 2005, Baglio heard that one of the Vatican universities was offering a course entitled "Exorcism and the Prayer of Liberation." While writing about exorcism was not at the top of his list of subjects to write about, Baglio was curious, believing this might be a public relations stunt, registered for the course, and ended up writing "*The Rite*" about his experience and observations. Baglio quickly learned that the students were anything but superstitious or puritanical and befriended fellow American Fr. Thomas who impressed him with his honesty and transparency. This marked the beginning of an important journey that both would make together. For Fr. Thomas, a story of a "remarkable American priest who answered the call of his Bishop to become the appointed exorcist for his diocese...who delved deeply into a world he never knew existed, completing the course and participating in over 80 exorcisms along with a senior Italian exorcist. As a result, his view of the world - and his place in it - changed dramatically." For Baglio, a story of journalist reconnecting with his faith in a way he never intended or expected, experiencing a "phenomenon" that filled him with immense joy, also changing his view of the world and his place in it. Baglio's "*The Rite*" provides a compelling, hard to put down story that believers and non-believers alike will find satisfying and provocative. He provides an intelligent, myth-busting look at exorcism that explains what the Church really teaches about demonic possession, what the priest and the victim experience, and the critical role of an exorcist in today's orthodox secularist society. The book is being adapted to film and is presently being shot in Budapest with Anthony Hopkins playing Thomas's teacher. The film is to be released in January 2011. I highly recommend "*The Rite*" and bet it will also change your view of the world and your place in it.

Baglio was a journalist in Rome when he heard about a new class at a Vatican-affiliated university on exorcism. Fascinated if the church in fact still believed in it, he attended and met one Fr. Gary. This American priest came to provide this interesting window into exorcism today in the Roman Catholic church. This is a great read about how the American bishops were encouraged to appoint a priest to be trained in Rome as their exorcist. Californian Fr. Gary is such an appointee, and then the book unfolds his trip to Rome, class and development as a certified exorcist. Not all of this was new to me, except that I too had the major misperception that the Rite of Exorcism, if done properly, cast the demon/s out immediately. Fr. Gary discovers this also, that for some it took decades. The proliferation of demon activity in Italy shocked me as well, but shouldn't as we know the proliferation of the occult is growing worldwide. So much for all spirituality being the same. We Lutherans concur with this belief that the devil and his cohorts are real and active. Before my being certified at Seminary to be eligible for a call into the ministry, three sem professors questioned me for three solid hours on theological matters. At the end, one asked: do you believe in exorcism. I quickly answered yes. They then demanded that I provide evidence supporting this from Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, which I did. They then asked what I would do to determine that a person was potentially demon possessed, and how I would proceed. I responded with much the same criteria that is used in this book by these exorcists, and that I would contact them to find out how to proceed. Many Christians besides Roman Catholics hold these same Biblical views about demon possession and exorcism. Interested parties will want to read two good volumes on this: J.W. Montgomery edited a great volume: Demon Possession, and Kurt E. Koch's "Occult Bondage and Deliverance."

This book gives a bird's eye view of the Roman Catholic Church in training a priest to be an exorcist. This book is excellent because the author presents the topic of exorcism from the view point of an objective investigation done by a top notch news reporter. You get to see how a priest is trained to deal with Satan and his demons using the power of prayer, blessings and rituals in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This book should be read by any one interested in demonology or thinking about entering the priesthood.

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