



E-BULLETIN #149

07-Dec-14

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 284

'It gives one hope!'

Polish Pallottines succeeded their German confreres in Canada in 2002. They started at *St Agnes* parish in Waterloo, and in nearby Kitchener, both in Ontario. Since then their presence has expanded to other parishes in Ontario, mainly English speaking, but they have also tried to meet the needs of Polish, Portuguese, and Italian parishioners. Today there are 7 Polish Pallottines from the Warsaw Province serving in 5 parishes across the Hamilton Diocese – one of the biggest, in terms of area and number of priests, in Canada.



I am quite new to the Delegation of St John Paul II. I arrived in June 2014 officially, but I used to come to Canada when I was assigned to the Antilles' mission [the archipelago bordered by the Caribbean Sea, and which includes Barbados]. After my tropical encounter it was nice to experience the changing seasons again - winter is really 'cool'.

The Catholic Church in Canada is relatively young. Most Church buildings I have seen are no older than 40-50 years, the oldest structures date back 100 years. When you enter a Church and find a carpeted floor and beautiful stained glass windows then you must be in Canada!

This country is proud of her multicultural background. Canada has accepted millions of immigrants following the Great War. They represent a mosaic of nationalities, languages, cultures and customs. The Catholic community clearly reflects this variety. You can easily find a Filipino or Vietnamese church, as well as churches originating from the time of the old immigration – from Ireland, Germany, Portugal, Italy and Poland. A third of the clergy are of foreign descent, happy to serve the nationals in their native languages.

The Church in Ontario is blessed to have free Catholic education, provided by the state. Almost every parish church has an elementary school next door, some even have responsibility for more than one school as in our Pallottine parishes. It is a demanding task to be pastor of a busy parish and to be responsible for several schools. The students have many celebrations, not to mention frequent sacramental preparation requiring

the priest's presence. One wonderful practice is children's regular confession, at least twice a year. And there are new schools being built. In Milton, a city created in the wilderness from nothing, there are already 3 new Catholic schools. The biggest secondary school is very modern. Designed for around 2000 students, it is already at half capacity and still growing.

Even though our schools are doing so well their future, regrettably, is uncertain. The main reason is demographics – numbers have dropped dramatically. Children are being born, but to non-Catholic families. There are of course Catholic candidates, but their families are mostly non church-goers. Another problem is the recruitment of suitable teachers who are not only good pedagogues but also good witnesses to their faith.



The Church in Canada is well established and organized. There are variety of formation and social programs helping Catholics to know their church and religion better. Recently we hosted in our parish a movement called "Couples for Christ". Around 50 couples came for Sunday Mass after their annual retreat to renew their marriage vows.

The Synod on the Family in Rome hasn't evoked much interest in Canada, except perhaps from the few who have followed the news. This includes the clergy for sure. We noticed some stormy clouds over the Vatican, perhaps some thunder or lightning, but it passed by. There were evaluations and comments, but these came from across the border, from bishops in the Unites States. There is a kind of expectation here that some changes may be addressed, but there is also a sense of patience. The Catholic people suffer from the same diseases as those affecting Catholic populations elsewhere. There are moral and doctrinal challenges, and shrinking communities. However, on the other hand, there also are examples of thriving parishes and organizations. It gives one hope!

Almost every day a family come to our church for morning Mass. A young couple bring two small babies. I can sense how happy they are and how much they must love God. When I see them they make my day, the Church is alive and has a future.

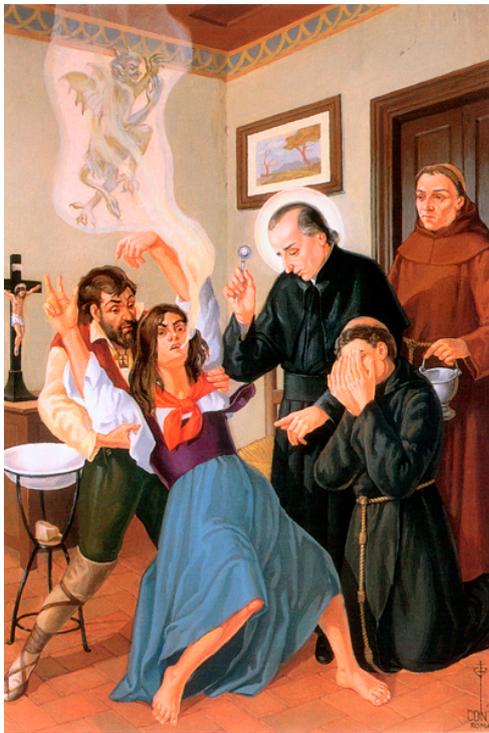
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item 285

the ministry of Exorcism

A few weeks ago the International **Association of Catholic Exorcists** had one of their annual conferences in Rome. In line with that, Pope Francis has stressed the need for the Church to pay great attention to the ministry of exorcism because of the perceived actions of the devil in people and in the world. It is against this background that I write this article, offering a brief description of what exorcism is all about, describing other elements connected with it and highlighting it's significance in today's world. It is not meant to be an academic exposition, but a simple reflection flowing from my own personal experience.

I must say from the outset that the worst thing that can happen is for a person to believe that the devil is not real, or even to downplay his wicked actions and violent intention to destroy whatever God loves.



The ministry of exorcism is not a new ministry in the history of the Church . We have instances where saints, for example Vincent Pallotti, became involved in it. Christ himself, the founder and head of the Church , engaged in this ministry, as we see in many recorded incidents (e.g. Mk 1:23-26; 9:14-29; Lk 11:14-26 etc).

Exorcism is a ministry necessitated by the reality of evil possession or demonization. I always speak of it as a continuation of the liberating mission of Christ, but in a unique way. It is a direct confrontation of the devil, who possesses a child of God, trusting solely in the ultimate authority of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit through the Church. In other words, I believe strongly that this ministry can never be disassociated from the overall ministry and authority of the Church over the devil, a small ministry within its overall structure. It is a ministry of casting the devil out of people and things, in the name of Jesus Christ, using certain approved prayer formulae, and rituals and fasting. It is the manifestation of the ultimate and victorious power or dominion of Christ over the power of the devil (Luke10:17).

In other words, it is always about the name and authority of Christ over the devil.

From earliest times it was an important and integral part of the early ministry of the apostles (Mt. 17:14-21). Through it the faith of those who experienced the power of Christ at work was stimulated. This likewise becomes very important in today's world where what people see and experience tends to play a strong role in shaping their inner conviction or faith. Jesus himself, when leaving this world, commanded his apostles to cast out demons in his name (Mt10:1; 10:8; MK 6:7; Lk 9:1-10; Mk. 16:17). Exorcism is more of a cure and liberation from the shackles of the devil than a punishment – and on no account is the possessed person deemed to be evil in essence.

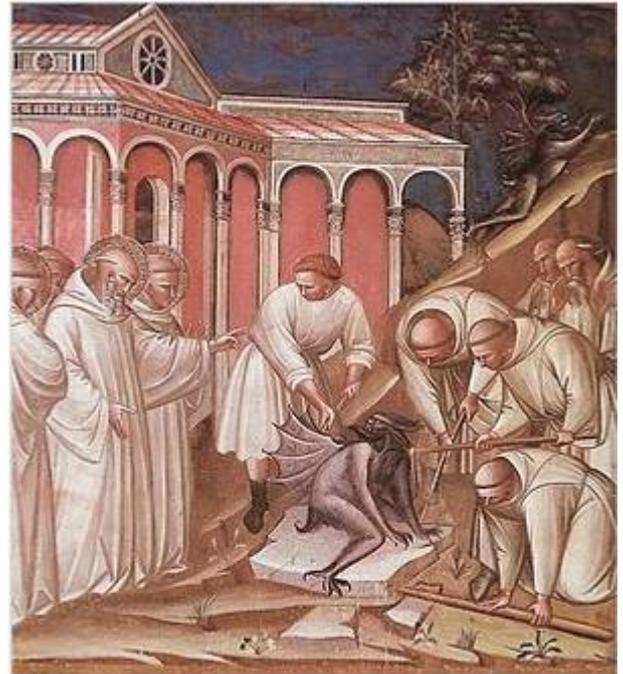
Before any exorcism takes place, certain precautionary measures are taken. Thorough psychological and medical tests and evaluations are usually made by competent persons to determine the overall situation of an individual and the possibility of a psychological or mental illness, which will not require the process of exorcism. Together with this, critical evaluation is usually made of an individual's level of faith, spiritual practices, family background, and interpersonal relationships. Only if, after all the tests and evaluations, there exists a great need for it then an exorcist, with the authority of a bishop, engages in this spiritual journey of liberating the possessed person.

From personal experience I can assert that, as much as there are many who are very critical, and others who find it difficult to accept and promote, and still others who remain very cautious, the

fact remains that the devil is very busy possessing people and devastating lives. He continues to search for ways to destroy our world. Today there is a proliferation of diabolical and occult movements, and diabolical spiritual practices (spiritism), deeply linked with the devil but which appear to be godly at face value. Increasing numbers are in one way or another becoming possessed through these mediums. Many youth, due to their uncontrolled quest to know and practice everything, get themselves deeply into these diabolical practices. Once entangled they can no longer help themselves except through exorcism.

The truth is, whether we accept it or not, people do have genuine problems of evil possession, and if the Church which is supposed to be their last hope fails, their desperation can take them outside of it and into wrong hands. Should this happen then the Church can definitely be blamed for failing in her mission of love.

So great attention must be given to the ministry of exorcism through which such problems can be adequately addressed. If there is a failure to apply this ministry when needed the possessed or demonized person will be forced to remain a slave under the domination of the devil, something painful to see. One has to experience this to understand. And yes, it is a very vigorous and dangerous ministry, but the joy that follows after the liberation of someone possessed is almost unimaginable. It is a very loving, charitable and caring ministry, a way of bringing a personal touch that embodies in itself the fullness of God's liberating and restoring power.



Exorcism of St Benedict by Spinello Aretino, 1387. 

It is through this ministry that we most often become more aware of the operating antics of the devil and thus can caution people accordingly. In the deliverances and exorcisms that I have done, one common factor is that the devil's centre of attention in his destructive acts is the weakening or destruction of our faith and trust in God, and of our willpower. He penetrates us through our curiosity, needs, wants, desires, passions and goals. And when he succeeds it becomes very easy for him to possess and dominate people. Therefore great attention must be paid to how we search for the satisfaction of our curiosity, our needs and wants, passions, desires and goals.

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