

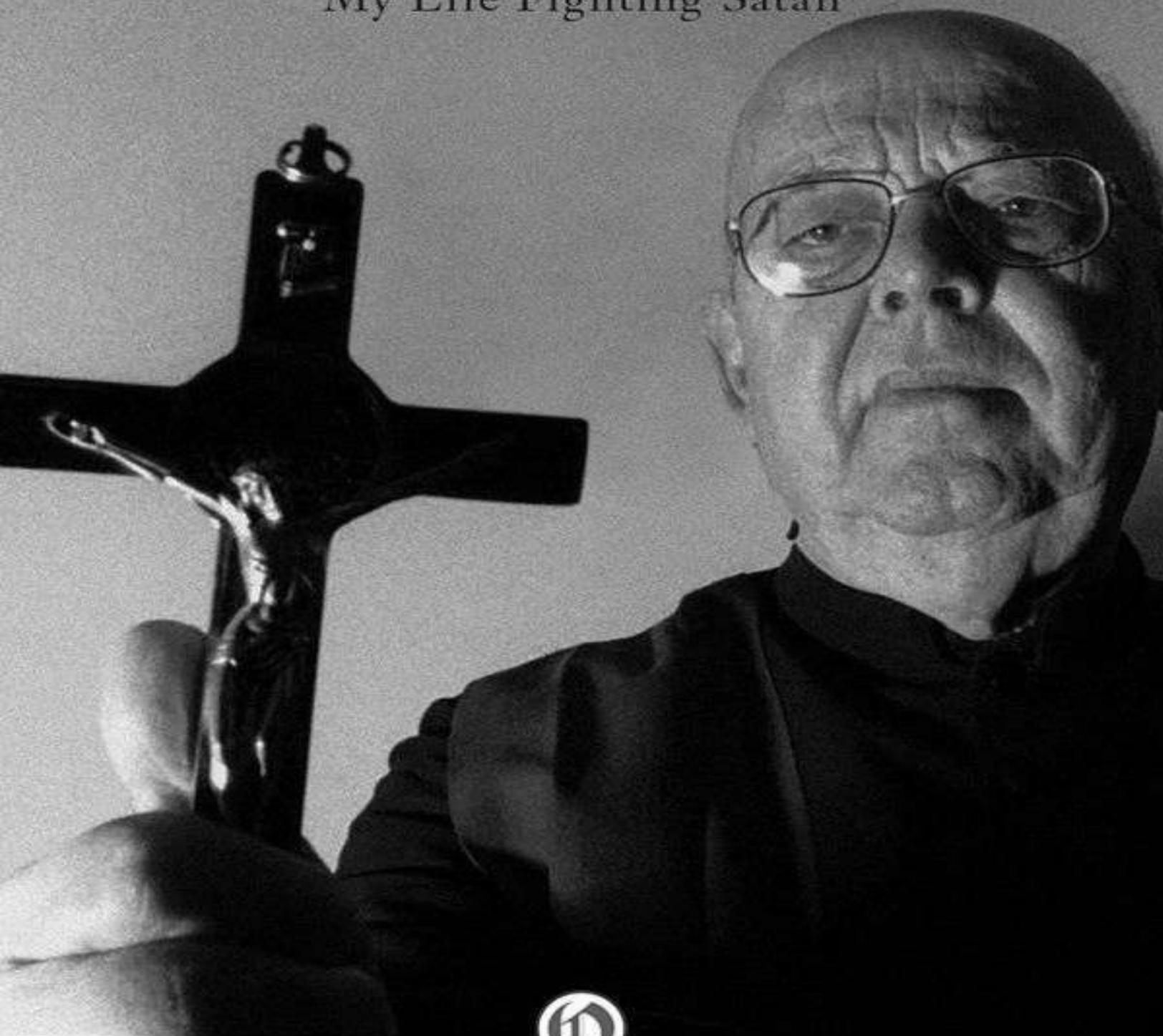


FATHER AMORTH

interviewed by Marco Tosatti

MEMOIRS OF AN EXORCIST

My Life Fighting Satan



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Translated by Andrew Hiltzik

PIEMME

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An introduction to a very special man and a very special book

In the room on via Alessandro Severo, on the ground floor of the big development complex, a veritable citadel, that is overshadowed by the basilica and its rather imposing dome that houses the Roman headquarters of the *Società San Paolo*, it is cold. A little electric furnace wages its desperate battle against the drafts that infiltrate through the door. And the elderly man who enters, slightly bent, briefcase in hand, quickly informs me, “I’ll leave my cap on.”

It’s a stark atmosphere. The principle pieces of furniture include a small, extremely simple wooden table in the center, a few chairs from the sixties, and a brown armchair like those that were fashionable thirty years ago, with wooden arms, lightly angled backs, and brownish upholstery that recalls the socialist décor of the Eastern countries. An enormous vintage refrigerator hums in a corner. The armchair is where Don Gabriele’s peculiar patients sit. “Peculiar” because they suffer from illnesses that no one can recognize, understand, nor cure. Not medical science, which calls it a joke; and not those who should have some more familiarity with it, or at least the capacity, the desire, the duty to keep an open mind in regards to the paranormal, the supernatural...and yet... Anyway, now we are coming to the heart of the matter, and I would prefer to talk more about the man, about the environment in which he passes the greater part of his time face-to-face, not just metaphorically, with an adversary who cannot be caught. I would like to tell you about this eighty-four-year-old man who twenty three years ago, in 1986, radically altered his own life, opening himself up to an adventure that engages him still.

There are few pictures on the walls. There is a large photograph of Don Giacomo Alberione, founder of the *Società San Paolo*. And another, the image of a white-haired priest with tremendously expressive eyes beneath a broad forehead, wearing a large white heart embroidered on his black robes, the “uniform” of the Passionists. It is Padre Candido Amantini, who was an exorcist for forty years at the *Scala Santa* in Rome, and was Don Gabriele’s mentor. A statue of Our Lady of Fatima dominates another wall, flanked by the image of a delicate Archangel Michael, probably of Baroque design. But by the armchair is the smiling face of Don Bosco, and close to him is a middle-aged Padre Pius: they are two saints who had a more than passing familiarity with Don Amorth’s unwelcome guest—that is, with the devil—but the saint of Pietrelcina had received particular attention, which is defined by the technical term, “vexation.”

Don Gabriele is a smiling man with a restless air, who always injects a certain amount of levity into his speech. He has no cell phone, he knows nothing about the internet, he doesn't watch television or read newspapers. "At lunch, my brothers keep me informed on the things that are going on in the world." And his patients keep him well acquainted with other, unhappy things.

The impression of entering into another world, a dimension that is not your own familiar one, is intense. And it becomes even stronger the further the old priest unravels the thread of his stories. It shows you how some people, who seem the prototype of the smiling, talkative, genteel guest, can transform suddenly, falling into a trance, becoming screaming beasts, spewing foam and curses from their mouths, imbued with such strength that not even six or seven men could subdue them, and it becomes necessary to tie them to a bed to prevent them from doing harm to themselves or others...only to come back around as soon as the prayer is finished, emerging from the trance calm and normal. There is a sense of two universes existing side-by-side, so close, parallel, and once in a while touching in a dramatic short circuit, caused by the Presence of a palpable malignant power, in that bare room on the ground floor of a *palazzo* on the outskirts of Rome, the headquarters of the editorial fleet of *San Paolo*. And what is astounding is the serenity of the priest before you who seems to hold the keys to that bridge between two universes, and speaks to you as though seeing ten-centimeter iron nails materialize in someone's foaming mouth as they tried to spit them at you were the most normal thing in the world. Don Gabriele has a wealth of memories, stories, and experiences. And more than that. When memory fails, we are aided by printed records in the newsletter of the—Italian at first, then international—Association of Exorcists. It's a very "homemade" newsletter, edited on a portable typewriter, in several dozen copies. Don Gabriele has put this historical memory at our disposal with unprecedented access. It was the means by which the obscure combatants of this strange world exchanged information, experience, and the know-how critical to the daily battle against the Adversary. Together with the fruit of long meetings with Don Gabriele, we publish these experiences in order to render the portrait of a vocation and of a pastoral ministry that has been carried out at a distance and shrouded in mystery.

Of the testimonies that Don Gabriele has offered us—always careful to omit the names of persons involved, to prevent any possible identification—some were personally witnessed by him. Others belong to priests employed in the same war against the Adversary; others still are the words of the victims. But it seems that in reality they all belong to him, to Don Gabriele, because from his voice come the circulars of the International Association of Exorcists, which is his most visible and lasting creation. We have therefore decided not to divide the results of these long talks into classical chapters, preferring to maintain and convey the sense of a long stream of words and feelings, punctuated by stories, testimonies, and experiences. Enjoy.

A life “derailed”

Don Gabriele, in 1986 you were granted the position of exorcist by Cardinal Poletti. It's well over twenty years that you've been waging this battle; how has your life changed?

It has changed radically. For one, I wrote a lot at first. I was the director of the Mariology journal *Madre di Dio*, the Marian monthly of the *Società San Paolo*. I did that for a few years. You might even say my speciality is Mariology. Anyway, since 1986 my life has changed radically, because now I dedicate myself exclusively to performing exorcisms. And seeing as there is an immense demand and exorcists are so rare, I work seven days a week, morning and afternoon, including Christmas and Easter. So, in practice I occupy myself with nothing else, except some preaching I may be called upon to do to some group, large ones—only large groups, especially groups from the Charismatic Renewal, or Medjugorje (those are the two movements I dedicate myself to)...and then every month I have a conference at Radio Maria, with a question and answer session from 6 to 7:30. An hour and a half, on the second Wednesday of every month. This sort of conference has been going on for sixteen years, and I can see that people still aren't tired of it, even if my subject is a unique one: exorcisms. And yet it's also clear that people welcome these ideas, because they can learn something. I get so many letters and phone calls of thanks, the questions are always numerous, and many tell me, “I can never manage to get my question through.”... I speak for three quarters of an hour, and then on to the phones and the questions start coming in. And I respond, one at a time. And every time, it makes me aware that, in opposition to the great silence surrounding the devil that comes from within the Church itself, there stands a profound desire for knowledge on the part of the faithful and the common people.

So it has to do with a truly radical turn—it couldn't possibly be more radical! I'm no longer noted as a Mariologist, as I once was—or “mariolo,” if you will—but I'm known as an exorcist. Also, since exorcists are so few, the idea came to me to start writing books. They have been so successful that I think the Madonna must have blessed the idea herself. My first book, *Un esorcista racconta* is in its twenty-first Italian printing, and has been translated into twenty-three languages. A global success, which has made me known in every country. I'm invited everywhere—in Poland they tell me, “You are renowned in Poland,” or in Brasil, “You are renowned in Brasil,” or in the United States, etc., etc. And I am known by way of my books, because I've never been to those places, and I never will: I have too much to do here.

Subsequently, I thought of founding—and I did found it—the Association of Exorcists. It was only national at first, but later it became international. Just think, at the first meeting there were only twelve of us, in 1991, in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, here in Rome. At that first meeting I hoped—because at the time he was still alive—that Padre Candido Amantini would come. But no, he didn't feel like coming. In any case, twelve present. But even the next year there were already many more of us, and the following year we grew even more in number, until we arrived at 1994, the year the Association became international, when many priests started coming in even from abroad. Today I am the president emeritus of the Association. After a certain number of years, and the ten conferences I organized single-handedly, I thought, "It's better to turn it over, let someone else step up." Now the president is Giancarlo Gramolazzo. But the members have named me honorary president for life. After a few years in the ministry of exorcism, it occurred to me to found the International Association, and from its success, and the growing number of members, I believe I can safely say that the Lord has blessed this initiative and made it his own.

A battle of charity

Considering you began to exercise this ministry at a certain age, and by now you've passed your eightieth year, I can't help but ask whether, from a physical standpoint, this is a very wearying calling...

Yes, of course, it is quite wearying, also because a strange thing keeps happening to me: every year I seem to be one year older... I am eighty-four years old, on the first of May. The date is no coincidence: I believe I was born on the first of the month dedicated to Mary precisely in honor of the Madonna.

Anyway, returning to the weight of my particular ministry, I must acknowledge that the greatest fatigue derives from the fact that I see the needs of these people, and it pains me deeply. And I come across cases of enormous suffering, drawn out for years and years. And I see how, with exorcisms, we're able to provide some solace, and often to reach complete liberation. Saint Alfonso de' Liguori, he understood, he said, "It doesn't always come to total liberation, but it always does some good." And it really is so. And so once in a while we have those who are not yet at total liberation, but have reached a level of autonomy such that nobody would notice their particular condition. One can conduct a "normal" life this way, with a family and a job. And maybe feel the need to come once or twice a year for an exorcism. And once or twice a year really is not a lot, if you consider that we started with once a week, and maybe they even needed to be held down and tied to a special bed. But now, on the other hand, on the verge of total liberation, they come here, alone, and they sit calmly on the sofa.

But normally, in the most difficult cases, when we are at the beginning of the course of exorcism, there are such violent outbursts that I need six or seven people—at least—to help me control the rantings and ravings of the possessed.

So you see that the physical aid of assistants is important—to keep the afflicted stationary, but also to clean their faces or their clothes if they salivate, as they often do—but their assistance also consists of prayer, which constantly accompanies their actions during the exorcism. Other than these lay assistants, obviously, there are many priests who desire to gain experience and grow in their ministry of exorcism.

A risky business

I would now like to offer the readers an initial testimony regarding the characteristic manifestations that accompany exorcisms, highlighting in particular the power and utility of holy water in the diagnosis of the cases that present themselves to me.

A parish priest, one from my own diocese, had invited me to help in the case of an afflicted woman. We had made the appointment a few days prior. The day before my arrival, the woman told the priest that I would not make it because I would fall ill. I didn't know about this conversation yet; the priest related it to me later. The day after, as I was about to leave, I suddenly started to feel faint, on account of kidney stones, and was taken to the hospital.

Some weeks later the encounter finally took place. At the outset, the woman certainly had the appearance of a disturbed person, but she presented as the benign (*simpatico*) type. Then, the more we talked the more restless she grew. She became uneasy with my presence to the point where she stood up, went to the other priest, and wrapped her arm around his neck like a scared child, saying, "Please protect me from him." She made a sign to the priest and he had her sit down again.

I had prepared two glasses on the table next to us: one with ordinary water and the other with holy water. I offered her the ordinary glass; she thanked me and drank. A few minutes later I handed her the other glass with the holy water. She drank, but this time her demeanor changed instantly: from a frightened child to an enraged person. Enunciating the words with a loud, deep timber, as if a man were speaking from inside of her, she said to me, "You think you're clever, priest?" That's when we began the prayer of exorcism and only an hour later, when the rite was completed, did she have her liberation in that church.

I'd now like to present another account. I had been ordained as a priest for only a year when I received a telephone call from a brother. He asked if I could go and help him with the case of a young woman whom they had just led into the rectory. At first I hesitated, and not without reason. I had just returned to my parish after suffering from hepatitis for six weeks. Moreover, I had to perform mass that evening, my parish priest being absent. So I declined the invitation. During the Eucharist, after distributing communion to the congregation, as I was putting the pyx back in the tabernacle, with profound surprise I heard a voice inside saying, "I am with you." I felt a new vigor return to my body and realized that I had to go and assist that brother who had asked for my help.

And so I went to the rectory. After a lengthy initial prayer—around three hours—we realized that we found ourselves before a case of true possession, which is why we contacted the bishop to request authorization to proceed with the necessary exorcisms. These are a few of the things that came to pass in that situation.

The young woman's body moved three meters along the floor, slithering like a snake. Other people were with us and bore witness to the fact. I also recall having a horrible nightmare during that time. I was being taken towards a kind of huge bath, in the belly of a great ship far out to sea. There I met three people, a blonde woman, completely nude, whose face was shifting as she approached, becoming half beast, half woman. The second was a pale youth, with dark hair and his hands clenched around a club: as he approached he tried to throttle me. The third person was a black man, but I couldn't see his face. It seemed he was having sexual relations with a dark woman, who was hiding her face.

The next day during the exorcism, we discovered the names of those three people, as well as others, thanks to the possessed girl. The day of the demon's final parting and the victory of Christ over "Legion"—as the demon called himself—I had arrived late to the prayer meeting. As I drove towards the church, my car was softly lifted from the street and deposited on some grass. It should be noted that at the time I was driving very slowly, about fifteen kilometers per hour. All efforts to return my car to the road were in vain: it no longer responded to my commands. The possessed girl was sitting in the back seat with a rather strong person whom I had asked to accompany me, to keep her still. I saw that the right rear tire had been slashed, who knows how. Anyway, we arrived late. A few days later, after liberation, the priest who had asked for my help had a car accident in that exact same spot.

As I was about to enter my brother's house, I felt the presence of evil behind me, ready to attack me. I turned and saw the young woman with a pair of scissors in her hand, about to strike. God be praised: everything concluded to his glory and his praise. The young girl, after her complete liberation, married and now lives happily...

The incredulous bishops

You once told me that exorcists were in short supply and many dioceses, in fact, didn't have one. Has this situation perhaps changed today?

The situation unfortunately has not changed, because even still we have many priests and many bishops who do not believe in it. I have even written a letter on this matter to the Holy Father, and we can hope... He has promised that he will bring about a document from the Congregation for Divine Worship who are in charge of the drafting of such documents, in which he will recommend that bishops retain at least one exorcist in each diocese. However, in many dioceses there have passed—and it would take too long to tell—many years since any exorcisms have taken place. A consequence of this is that in most seminaries, where the priests of tomorrow are formed, exorcisms were not discussed. And it's still not talked about today.

During the first four centuries of Christian history anyone could perform an exorcism. Exorcists as we understand them today did not exist—that is, priests with a precise ministerial mandate. Jesus said, “In my name you will cast out demons.” It was enough to believe in Him and act with faith. And this remains true today. You see that there are the Renewal groups and even sole individuals who perform what I won't call exorcisms—to distinguish them from proper exorcisms. I'll call them “prayers of liberation.” But when they are performed with faith they have a great effect, the same as proper exorcisms.

But getting back to the story: in the first four centuries of Church history, anyone could do an exorcism. Then the Exorcistate was created, a minor order open only to priests, who themselves were chosen by bishops. And today it still works that way: only bishops have the authority to appoint exorcists. They have absolute power over it and can revoke the right to perform exorcisms as well. However, these, which we call exorcisms because the priests perform a public prayer, do not exhaust the initiatives that one can undertake to liberate someone from the devil: there is also private prayer, answered by Jesus, that anyone can perform.

Entire nations without exorcists

What are the consequences of the silence surrounding the devil which, as you said, for some time has even characterized the inner life of the Church?

The first consequence is that today people are writing to me from many countries lamenting the total absence of exorcists. And I'm talking about first-world nations: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, just to name a few. In these countries they have no exorcists. And so many Christians write to me because they want to come to Rome to receive exorcisms from me. And this isn't possible, because I'm already overloaded with duties and cases to follow. So I direct everyone to the Renewal groups, or to those priests that do prayers of liberation that, if they are performed with faith, have the same effect—as I already said—as proper exorcisms.

At this point I'd like to note that in the lives of many saints you find numerous episodes that testify to how, without being exorcists, they expelled the devil. I'll give you the name of a saint who has never officially been named the patron of exorcists, but who has come to be considered the protector of the industry: Saint Benedict. Well, Saint Benedict was neither a priest nor an exorcist. He was a monk. However, he was really effective in his prayers of liberation! I'll give you another name: Saint Catherine of Siena. When exorcists failed to liberate someone from the devil they sent them to Saint Catherine, who was neither a priest nor an exorcist, and she prayed, and with her faith she achieved extraordinary liberations. And so many other men and women, with their faith and holiness. ... And there's no shortage of testimonies recounting how even Father Pius, who has never been an officially exorcist, freed people from the influence and the actions of the Adversary.

A battle on two fronts

Therefore yours is a double-sided battle, one fought on two fronts: against the Adversary, as always, and against the silence or incredulity on the part of the Church itself.

Certainly, it's a matter of persuading the people of the Church. Until the twelfth century things unfolded nicely, because there was a great number of exorcists in every diocese. And then what I'll call the period of foolishness occurred, that is, when some members of the Church authorized the torture of heretics, and then another period in which they authorized them to be consigned to the "secular branch," that is the justice of the state, and burned alive at the stake. And similar barbarisms went on for several centuries. Sadly, exaggerated actions have been taken against heresy, to the point where for a long time they didn't perform exorcisms but sent the possessed directly to the stake. However, documents do remain from those few who still performed exorcisms: there's a well-known story of a French bishop who, in the case of a nun possessed by the devil—a real witch—had her exorcised instead of sending her to the stake. It took two years to liberate her, but afterward she lived a holy life for the rest of her days. It was a case of veritable possession, like those which typically constitute rather rare cases with regard to the various demonic manifestations and actions that occur.

Still on the subject of diabolic heretics, I recall that they once asked me on Radio Maria if even Saint Carlo Borromeo had sent people to the stake; yes, it's true: there are testimonies stating that Borromeo had done so. Sainthood does not keep one from having the mentality of the time, and even he, though a saint, condemned people to the stake.

Anyway, at that time they didn't do exorcisms, and now as a result of such absurdity and atrocity perpetrated for so long, they don't do them at all anymore. No more exorcisms. The consequence being that in most of the seminaries they don't even talk about Hell anymore, nor of the devil; and even now, in many such institutions, they no longer talk about exorcisms.

You see why today you find a great number of priests who don't believe in it, and a great number of bishops...yes, even bishops, because some priests later become bishops, but continue not to believe in it and come out to say it in public: Hell does not exist, the devil does not exist...even Jesus in the Gospel spoke about it abundantly, which leads one to suggest: either they haven't read the Gospel, or they don't really believe it!

And in the face of the numerous healings performed by Jesus on the possessed, they say it has to do with a term derived from the language and culture of the time, which defined the possessed as those who in reality were simply ill. But the Gospel distinguishes very clearly between the two cases, that is, when Jesus cures the sick, and when instead he casts out the devil. It also distinguishes very clearly between the power to heal and the power to expel demons. And the final mandate is: go forth, preach my word, expel the demons, and cure the sick.

They say we exorcists are fanatics

At the first meeting of the Association of Exorcists there were twelve of you, while now there are many more. This means that some things have changed.

Undoubtedly. I've done many television interviews and I accepted them willingly, to divulge, make known, to spread as much new information on the topic as possible... I've made a whole lot of noise on the subject! I believe the Lord has indeed used me to spread the word on these things, in order to bring back the practice of exorcisms. There are many people suffering. And where do they end up? With mages, with witch-doctors! Where else can they go? They end up there, because they feel mistreated by certain priests and they say: at least I can go to someone who will receive me with kindness, who will sit me down, show me they want to help. While some priests hear, "I'm having some trouble" and immediately reply, "It's all fairy tales, get out of here!" And they slam the door in their face. It is a ludicrous thing, which Christ would never have done.

There's that wonderful book by the only Italian bishop who does exorcisms, Monsignor Gemma, who speaks clearly, and with great courage, of the reality of the devil. Of course, he's not alone: many others have made their voices heard on this oft-neglected, or outright censored, subject, but they are too few.

In any case, there is someone who, maybe gritting his teeth, has to appoint exorcists. But not very enthusiastically. And I'll also say that exorcists in general are looked down on by a good part of the clergy itself, who often consider them zealots. They're not well accepted, even though they're not only members of the clergy, but on point of principle can be considered among the best. I say the best because the Canon Law says that the bishop, in appointing the exorcist, must choose a priest of prayer, culture, and poise, who has a good reputation. All qualities that every priest ought to have, but not all do. So I'd say that exorcists are chosen from the cream of crop of the clergy. But instead, other priests do not always esteem this thing that they do, because often they are among the first to disbelieve.

However it may be that some things are shifting now. The first to break the ice and tell the truth was Paul VI in 1972, when he gave the famous speech of November 15, dedicated fully to the devil. Whoever doesn't believe the devil exists—he said, to paraphrase—is outside the doctrine of the Church. He finally broke the ice, and it was the pope speaking! But he didn't have a great follow-up. Instead, it is yours truly, who is not the Pope, and practically a nobody, that has been blessed by the Lord.

I am a pupil of Padre Candido Amantini. For some forty years this man here [indicating the large photograph hanging from the wall] has been exorcist to the Scala Sancta. A Passionist. I was appointed as assistant exorcist to father Candido, and I owe everything I am to him. I wrote the first book to relate and put down on paper the teachings that Padre Candido had given me. And I, like all authors, aspired to a second edition. An author in general aspires to at least a second edition. But to think that in the first year they had to print six editions... They went like wildfire! And even now, after so many years, it's my best-selling book. The others sell well...and even in translation they've sold well. I saw it in Madrid, where I was visiting, and in one day I had to do six interviews, organized by the publisher. They even translated it into Japanese...

Demons and damned souls

I'd now like to offer the reader a testimony that brings to light how demonic possession involves not just demons, but also damned souls.

A few years ago a man asked me to go and bless his house because some extraordinary events had occurred. He would hear the footsteps of people who weren't there; under the pillow or on the windowsill he would find three coins, or three twigs, or three pebbles; often his comb or toothbrush would be found in the refrigerator. During meals the cap of the mineral water would position itself near his wife; and his wife, only she could see over her shoulder a handsome blonde youth who wandered their house and its surrounding gardens. The man had alerted the police, thinking that someone was up to something; but after many days of futile stakeouts, the *militari* desisted, thinking that it was all imaginary, or the hallucinations of a sick mind.

I went immediately. As I was putting on my robes, the woman remained aloof, glaring at me with menacing eyes. I began to pray, delivering the benediction with holy water. A few drops fell on the woman and provoked an unthinkable reaction. She immediately began to yell that the holy water was scalding. I was petrified and recommended to the husband, "This is a serious case: bring your wife to the diocese exorcist." The next day they went to the exorcist in charge, who said right away that they were dealing with a grave case, a true demonic possession. It was the sixth or seventh serious case that he had encountered since he had become an exorcist. The woman was exorcised twice a week. But after a while the priest advised the husband to go to the bishop of the diocese to ask the help of a priest who could attend to her every day; otherwise the time until liberation would be very long. The couple went to the bishop, who decided to put me in charge. Once I had been acquainted with the facts, I became their priest.

I began, therefore, to visit this family every day, staying for forty-five minutes to an hour, depending on how long it took the devil to depart and set the woman free, at least temporarily. Each time, before the exorcism, the woman asked me, "What are you doing here? Don't you have anything better to do?"

Once the prayer began she entered a trance, held back by her husband and me because she would become violent. Two times, before I began, she succeeded in getting a hold of a knife, which she threatened us with; one time she managed to lock herself in her room and, going into a deep trance, she mocked us. Then I started the exorcism on the other side of the door and, bit by bit, she calmed down and let us in. During the exorcism she spoke various languages with different voices: she sang the Marseillaise, or recited Dante's *Inferno*.

After a few exorcisms, under my orders, the devil revealed his name: Zago. He said he was the chief and was worshiped in a distant land, beside a crumbling church; he explained his mission, saying that he had won.

The other demon present was Astaroth, who presided over the destruction of the couple's love for each other and their children. There was also a third demon, Snake, who had the task of driving the woman to suicide: he had tried it with plastic bags tied to the woman's neck and cords hung from the chandelier, and indeed one time had attempted to make her throw herself off a bridge. The woman often packed her bags and said she had to go to that place, where that ruined church could be found, because *he* was waiting for her there: he had ordered her and she had to go. According to Zago a legion of minor demons was also present.

To my great surprise three damned souls were also revealed: Michelle, a woman who had worked at the Moulin Rouge and who was killed by drugs at the age of thirty-nine. Michelle often spoke phrases in French, those repeated in the past to attract clients. Then the woman's face became sweet and mellow; Michelle would be the one to remain with the woman until the end of the exorcism, only to leave her wracked and crying.

Then Beelzebul was also present, a Moroccan who had decapitated three missionaries in 1872. When I asked what order those men belonged to, he replied, "What do I know about your religious orders?" He later killed himself out of remorse.

The third damned soul was Jordan, a Scotsman who had killed his wife. He often intervened and seemed to assert, "The true god is Zago. He is the most powerful." I think that's what he said; I don't know much English.

During the exorcism Zago boasted of being the captain of the world, claiming that everything moved as he wished, that he had instigated the civil war in Rwanda himself, relishing and taking satisfaction from the spilled blood of brothers. Then he provoked me, saying, "Everything you preach is fairy tales, and nobody listens!" He often threatened to come to me at night and tear out my bowels. One time he said to me, "Be careful, I could go inside you, too." And after some reflection he added, "But it's no fun living inside a priest." When I was insistent with my questions, cornering him, he told me, "You're busting my balls." And I replied, "I wasn't aware that demons had balls." And he retorted, "Idiot! It's your figure of speech." And he scoffed.

At my command, they told me when they had entered the woman. Zago explained, "I came in 1972, before the woman entered the church on the day of her wedding, at noon." He was very exact. I had performed that marriage. Zago had been summoned to this mission by a man from Viterbo who didn't want the marriage to happen. Then, at midnight, with another black mass that involved the killing of an animal, other demons entered her. After these revelations, the husband remembered that a priest had been approached by a man who didn't want this conjugal union to come about on the day before the marriage. Zago bragged that beside the ruined church was his temple, with the large inscription, TO THE GOD ZAGO. When I pronounced the phrase, "To God the kingdom" he quickly corrected, "To Zago the kingdom."

The longer the exorcisms went on, the more you could see his unease, and his complaints. When I would place my hands on the woman's head, Zago would shriek. He no longer understood a word, and shouted, "You're soiling my house, you're letting the light in, you're ruining my home!" I replied that the light is beautiful, it is life, but he cried, "No! The shadows are my home!" He claimed that he was in the woman's head. To the question, "Why are you in her head?" he responded, "That's where you control the whole body." The laying on of hands turned him into a beast. On her head the woman had a lump, and he revealed that long ago he was the one who caused it. The husband confirmed that it had appeared suddenly, many years ago, alarming everyone; but all analyses revealed nothing troubling.

I often breathed upon the woman, as a tangible sign of the Holy Spirit, and flailing about she would cry, "Burning wind!" in the same way she cried when I blessed her with holy water; though this furious reaction didn't occur after he had gone, at the conclusion of the exorcism. Early on we tried in vain to put some holy water in a bottle, to make the woman drink but the bottle always remained empty.

Meanwhile, the threats against the woman multiplied, because she had begun to pray. Since the day of the wedding, she had not entered a church, except occasionally and with great discomfort; and she no longer prayed. The demon coddled the woman and would make her hear classical music in her head for hours. To the question, "Why classical music?" the answer was, "Because she likes classical music." Moreover, he presented himself to her as a blond youth, because she liked blonds. During the day he whispered sweet phrases to her, to the point that the woman said she was happy with him. But in actuality, she was isolated and lived in her own little world.

In each of the exorcisms, when the demon ceased to resist he would remove himself. At this point the woman came out of the state of trance and asked what had happened and what she had said. She didn't know anything about what had transpired, only that she felt tired and sore, as if she had been beaten all over. One time when she thrashed a great deal, I accidentally hit her head with the heavy aspergillum, raising a lump; but she didn't feel a thing. Only after the exorcism did she touch that spot and feel pain.

After the exorcisms, the woman would see the demon roam the room or the garden, and alerted us that he was no longer in her. But after a bit she would feel his presence inside her again. One time, with the exorcism completed, we were unable to open the automatic gate outside. The woman came outside and saw that the demon had placed himself between the remote and the gate. A benediction was enough to open the gate. In the summer I went camping with the boys of the parish, in the mountains; but once a week I came down to perform the exorcism. When she saw me, the woman, who was already in trance, said to me, "Weren't you better off up there? What did you come here for?" And she continued with her threats. When I returned from camping I went back to exorcising her every day. I felt that the demon's strength and arrogance were diminishing more and more; in fact he began to invoke Satan: "Satan, do not abandon me! Satan is present here, Satan is among us; help me, Satan!"

Since the month of July he had promised that he would leave. In the early days of August he started to say he would be gone by the eve of the Assumption, affirming precisely: "When you carry around your puppet [the statue of the Madonna] I will go away." In secret I advised the community to pray and fast, announcing that on the eve of the Feast of the Assumption a great miracle would occur. I had the woman positioned in an appropriate place, along with her husband and a friend, where the procession would pass by. At the passage of the Madonna the woman let out a loud shriek and fainted.

After the ceremony she asked what had happened. I told her that while I was in the church after the procession, I had seen the woman inside, among the crowd, smiling; which was strange because the woman had not smiled for a long time. Then I interrupted the singing of the litany, I announced that the miracle occurred, and we thanked the Lord. For a week everything was quiet; but then the woman complained of sharp pains in her abdomen; boils appeared all over her body and sores inside her mouth, bad enough to keep her from eating. If she did manage to eat something, she brought it back up almost immediately; it had already happened that she'd brought up locks of hair, nails, and even excrement. Moreover, the devil twisted the woman into humiliating states: he made her urinate in whatever position she found herself in, or he made her drop the bottles she was buying from the store counter; or he made blood come out of her nose, or down below. The woman prayed, aided by her husband, but the devil wanted none of it. One day, during the exorcism, he shouted at me, enraged, "Do you know what you've done! You prayed! You shouldn't do that! From today on I will send you so many woes!" After that, underneath the pillow, the couple would find a thousand lire with a nail plunged now in the eyes, now in the mouth, or in the ears, or in the throat of the image that was on the thousand-lira bill. It was a warning that the next day the woman would suffer brutally in the area signaled by the nail. And it happened just like that!

A few days after the Feast of the Assumption the demon Snake returned, coiled up in the woman's belly. In fact, when I placed my hands on her stomach she suffered terribly and I felt something hard under my hands, which avoided me and, if I grasped it, cried, "You're strangling me! You're suffocating me!" I responded that he could no longer stay in that body, that it belonged to God. But he rebutted angrily, "The head, then, is yours, but the body is mine."

One day, during this period, the husband called me, very agitated, and told me there was a snake coiled around his wife's neck and it had bitten her. I rushed over and found the woman extremely worked up; she was running around the room and trying to tear something away from her neck that was squeezing her. She said it was a snake and it had bitten her. In fact, after we intervened with the holy water we noticed two small holes. The demon Snake boasted that now the woman had been bitten and she would irremediably die; now she was his and he had accomplished his mission, which was indeed that of killing the woman.

At this point the husband related what he remembered: “My wife, a long time ago, saw a snake up a tree in front of our old house. But only she saw it.” After that episode with the bite and the threats, I performed the exorcisms twice a day. This was the beginning of December. Now only Snake spoke. He had a cavernous voice, deep, but grew weaker and more submissive every day. Finally he promised that the following Sunday, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, he would leave definitively and there would be a clear sign.

During this time I heard a new voice that appeared during the exorcism. I asked forcefully, “Who are you?” And a feminine voice revealed, “I am Vanessa, a twenty-three-year-old girl. I was a university student. Then I met a young man who brought me to black mass by the ruined church, and there I began to serve the devil. One night, as I emerged from the ritual intoxicated, because I had drunk blood, I crossed the street and died, hit by a car.”

In the course of the exorcism I asked both Michelle and Vanessa if they had been baptized. I reminded them of the joyous day of first communion; they always replied sadly, but angrily. Meanwhile mysterious signs kept appearing throughout the house. Drawn on the wall, on a pillow, on the sheets, the sign of death: a skull. For the demon Snake it was the sign of his victory, with the death of the woman. But they were the last attempts he made. The woman was drained; she couldn't take it anymore. It was so bad that she had decided to stop praying and to stop putting herself through the exorcisms. We convinced her to recite the exorcism prayer of Leo XIII, and the effort it took was enormous, because at the words in which she asked the demon to leave she felt something squeeze her throat until she couldn't speak.

I invited the husband to pray even more with his wife. He also made signs of the cross on her body or on her arms to subdue her when she became violent. One day the demon told him, “What are you doing! You're no priest!” But it was clear that even these signs of the cross affected him. Sometimes the husband complained of the sleepless nights; then the wife was the one to give an explanation, “Sure, but didn't you know that between you and I there was him?” In an adjacent room there was a free bed, available in the event of guests, where no one slept. And yet on that bed we would see an imprint as if someone had slept there. I observed it myself several times.

During those long months other strange things happened. A pistol locked in the safe suddenly found itself in the woman's hands, even though the husband kept the keys to the safe with him at all times. The woman's finest clothes were found full of holes and tears, no one knows how. We noticed by chance that beads had been stripped off the rosary and the holy images were singed around the edges. And many other inexplicable things: the photograph of the woman's mother was turned around or upside down on the bedside table; a small icon of Saint Michael was found torn up; they found out their old house had been broken into, but nothing stolen; under the cushions they found rings and earrings that didn't belong to anyone in the family. The husband's license and personal documents disappeared mysteriously. I forgot to mention that during the woman's exorcism, suddenly she screamed and pointed to part of her person. We looked and found a sign of the cross carved into her

flesh, as if with a piece of glass.

During the exorcisms in December, the devil, often dispirited, declared, “You win, you win. I can stay no longer; there’s too much light in here.” I pressed him to find out what constrained him to go. He begrudgingly replied, “It’s her prayer; because it’s good and you’ve come so many times. You’ve won, you’ve all won. I must go.” I asked him where he would go to cause more suffering. He answered, “I must sail to other shores, but beware that I may return.”

During the final exorcism prayers, two strange things occurred. A dull red cross appeared on the woman’s forehead. I thought it was lipstick, or something similar. The husband, touching the cross, found that it was blood. We asked the reason and received an upsetting answer: “It’s the blood of a four-day-old child, who was offered to me by his mother, one of my adepts, in my temple.” We stood there dazed and horrified.

The second event was this. During the exorcism the devil said to me, “Go see what I did to your puppet.” In the garden of the house there was a statue of Mary. I motioned to the husband to take a look. When he returned he told me the little Madonna had tears of blood. Finishing the exorcism, we all went into the garden to see. I testify also to this fact. There was blood coming out of her eyes. We took a Polaroid and snapped a number of photos that I still have. We cleaned the face of the *Madonnina* and the next day, the same thing happened again.

On the day of December 10th, the devil promised that the day after, “the day of your Lord” (it was a Sunday) in the afternoon, during the exorcism, he would leave forever. The next day, around 3:30, I went to the house. As soon as I started the prayer, the devil began to cry, “I see Saint Michael coming with a bloody sword... Look, he’s coming and I can’t escape! And who is that woman surrounded by light? She’s coming!” “It’s the Madonna!” I cried. And he went on, “There is a great light.... It has twelve stars and the moon beneath its feet...I can’t, I cannot stay.” Then I heard a scream like nothing I’d ever heard in my life. The woman, emerging from the state of trance, woke up asking, “What happened?” We cried, “It’s over! It’s over!” We shared an emotional embrace.

A few months after the definitive liberation from the devil, a singular thing occurred. The woman’s husband saw on the hedge, a little more than a meter off the ground, near the little statue of the Madonna, a huge snake wrapped around itself. The man called a neighbor to help and he came with a big hairpin. They knocked the snake onto the ground without it reacting, and crushed its skull. The event seemed strange, but the local exorcist, when he had been filled in, explained that even that could be a sign. Keep in mind that the woman, when she went to hang the linens by the hedge, saw a snake. But only she saw it then, and she was always afraid to go near that spot.

In the final months, while the demon still had possession of the woman, the husband noticed that some money and bank transactions were disappearing; what’s more, certain rent payments didn’t go through. But the woman would leave the house with the cash, and then the money would vanish into thin air. One day I asked the devil how these things were happening, and he replied that he took the money to give to his adepts, who he wanted to be

rich and happy. But he added that before long he would give it all back. When it came to the final days, when the devil said he would depart, I told him he had not kept his promise because he hadn't restored that money. He replied, "And you believe what the devil tells you?" I accompanied the man to the bank and to a firm where some of the payments were due. The husband believed that the wife had approved them, but that wasn't the case. Their bank deposit was almost empty, although that had all happened legitimately. And that firm hadn't been paid a cent. The husband, checking his accounts, spoke of a loss of 20–25 million lire. Moreover, at times when she was not suspected, the woman had asked some friends for money, saying she had to pay some overdue bills, but didn't want to let her husband know. So there were some other debts to settle.

After these events, the husband became aware of the profound meaning of certain episodes in the past, since the day of their wedding. The wife, who had a sweet and affable character, took on a forceful and quarrelsome temperament. She would see her dead father at the head of the bed, and hear strange noises. She became unbearable; she was wasting away before his eyes. He also told me that seventeen years after the death of his wife's father, the casket exploded in the cemetery, as if it had only just been buried. And black blood was coming out of the cracks in the coffin (a fact declared inexplicable by the doctor that had been called). The husband also remembered having often felt inexplicable drafts of wind, and chills all over his body.

By the grace of God, now it's all finished. Peace and smiles reign in that house. The woman is doing very well, although sometimes she falls into depression. The exorcist of the diocese explains that they are incursions of the devil, and tells her to continue praying and to bless herself every week.

A profound change

How have you changed, personally, in these twenty-three years?

Undoubtedly being an exorcist is very good for your faith, for your prayer. It has greatly reinforced my faith and prayer. At one of our conferences, when I was still president and organized them, I invited a famous exorcist who said, “Sometimes the demon delights in revealing the sins of the exorcist, or of someone present. Imagine, then, how I sought, when I did exorcisms, to be clean, totally clean.”

There are various episodes that Padre Candido related to me. One day a priest told him flat out that he didn’t believe in all of this: demons, exorcisms, and all that. Padre Candido replied: come and assist us one time. Padre Candido told me that this priest stood there, with his hands in his pockets. At the *Scala Santa* they perform exorcisms in the sacristy, and he was there, almost with an air of disdain. And at a certain point the demon turned to him and said, “You do not believe in me, but you believe in women, oh how you believe in women!” And this priest, Padre Candido told me, walking backwards, all ashamed, got to the door and bolted. In any case, doing exorcisms has reinforced me in faith, in prayer, and most of all in charity.

Faith, prayer, and charity. I also seek to be clean, so as not to have that fellow throw things in my face. While Cardinal Poletti was writing that document for me, to give me the right to exorcise, I turned to the Madonna: “Envelope me in your mantle and protect me, I am yours.” And then, “My name is Gabriele, and he is my patron archangel.” And I am very devoted to my guardian angel. So I have as my defenders the Madonna, the Archangel Gabriel, and my guardian angel.... Many times the demons have said, “We can’t do anything to you, you’re too protected.”

Now I pass my days in here—and also at another place—because here in my home they prohibited me from doing exorcisms, saying, “We don’t want the screams to be overheard, and scare people.” Still, I work just the same, morning to night, but here I take care of cases who don’t scream, and don’t become enraged...even if there are some exceptions. I’ll do it forever.

Some have to be tied down

Where do you treat the most serious cases?

Twice a week I go to a church in the center of Rome, the *Chiesa dell'Immacolata*, on via Emanuele Filiberto. It's not a parish.

After the 8 o'clock mass, they close the church until 5 in the afternoon. It's kept by a very nice priest; he was a great teacher—he's retired now—at the *Università Lateranense*, specializing in Christology. He's written several books on Jesus Christ and is a truly valuable mind. Moreover, he's very generous. He gave me the keys and hosts me twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, when I treat the serious cases. We keep a special cot there, with cords to tie the possessed if need be, and an armchair since some, though they may shout, don't get violent and can sit patiently during the exorcism prayer...

But there are more serious cases...some have such strength [his voice changes slightly as he speaks, becoming hoarse] that they can't be held down. Six men couldn't restrain them. So they're tied; their legs especially; their arms generally don't need to be secured.

There aren't many cases where we need restraints, but there are some. Usually it's enough to hold them down, quite firmly. I have men and women, all lay, who help me with this and who accompany me with the personal oration. They help me, primarily with prayer, but physically as well. There are many possessed who spit up, so I have assistants to clean them up—which I do this as well, since I often perform exorcisms here alone. It doesn't bother me at all to see people vomit.

A mysterious case

A young lady in her twentieth year came to me almost by chance. She was accompanying a friend of the same age who had been referred to me by her parish priest, who said she presented symptoms of curses, and perhaps a veritable possession. After performing an exorcism on the friend, who I continued to exorcise afterward, I gave the girl a blessing, so as not to send her away empty handed. In doing so, I encountered some minor but suspect reactions, so I performed a small exorcism, the kind I use for exorcisms over the phone. I saw an increase in these small reactions, but I didn't think them worthy of consideration. Then, as I accompanied the two girls and their families down the corridor, I noticed that the girl, who had come along with her friend, was struggling to walk. I held her up and asked her father to do the same. It was lucky we did because a few seconds later she was on the verge of fainting. Suspecting that my blessing could have caused this, I gave her an appointment for the following week.

To make a long story short: It took five exorcisms (in which the reactions grew progressively stronger) to make the evil come out in full force. From that moment on, I continued to perform exorcisms on the medical bed that I use in the cases of serious reactions, so that the person remains comfortable and is more manageable for the four to eight people who help keep her straight and clean her up. As often happens, the disturbances and the causes dating back to her past were recalled a bit at a time. Right away the parents and the girl herself said that the trouble started two months before. Then other disturbances came to light, and we began to see that she had begun to have episodes as far back as four years before, when the girl was sixteen. Digging deeper, I discovered that she had had a period of strange occurrences, which the doctors were never able to explain.

There were typical symptoms, which the girl related to me bit by bit. She was an only child and whenever she was alone, she had the impression of being watched, like there was someone else in the room, someone who sometimes felt close enough to touch her. And although she was very religious and regularly participated in a prayer group, it had become a struggle for her to pray; hearing prayers or holy chants started to bother her.

The symptoms grew worse and worse. She couldn't pronounce a single word of prayer, she had to be taken out of school. During the exorcisms she reacted very violently. She kept her eyes shut tight, but she could tell when I would reach out my hand to pick up the crucifix on the table, or the holy water, or the oil. For a certain time she had strange reactions: she went completely stiff before entering my room for the exorcisms, but during

them she flailed like a madwoman, only to become rigid again afterwards. We would have to carry her out.

Very often there was a psychiatrist present, who also wanted to try a bit of psychotherapy. The meetings went on normally for a time, and the girl trusted her psychiatrist. Then, seeing no advantage, she refused to continue the sittings. Meanwhile, during the exorcisms, the demons spoke, after much insistence on my part. They certainly weren't talkative. They gave their names, the day, month, or hour in which they would leave (those are the questions spoken in the Rite. I always ask them, even though I rarely obtain a truthful response). In this case I got a straight answer and on the appointed day, they left. After a few weeks of apparent health, some disturbances returned, but more weakly, so I continued the exorcisms. All told it took two years and two months of weekly exorcisms, and in the most acute periods twice weekly. As for the cause of these possessions, I never arrived at a satisfactory explanation. Considering the odd things she found on her pillow and in her dolls, I would assume it was an evil spell.

Demonic possession and vexation

When your “patients” come to you, do they come into the study already enraged?

Sometimes they come in furious to the point where they have to be carried. Sometimes, though, they laugh, they joke, and we try to keep a calm atmosphere. We take a break between one exorcism and the next, maybe I'll tell a couple jokes, you know, to keep a relaxed atmosphere. Naturally it's above all an atmosphere of contemplation, since we pray a lot. And generally, in the most difficult and rarest of cases—demonic vexation—the person goes into a trance. I say demonic vexation to differentiate between possession by the devil and curses by evil spirits. The case of Padre Pius, who according to various testimonies was beaten and bloodied by the devil, was actually a case of vexation. He was never possessed, he was cursed. Curses come in different degrees, just like there are different degrees of possession. All are of varying gravity. And naturally, the liberation can take varying lengths of time, depending on the nature of the case. So the support of these lay persons ends up being rather useful as part of prayer groups; they accompany me in my ministry and help me either to pray for these poor people, or to hold them tight and still, for their own good.

Speaking of vexations, we can say that they manifest essentially in the form of unpleasant pranks perpetrated by the devil. The Adversary is capable of playing some rather heavy “jokes,” and he does so often. And the people that are subjected to these particular attentions suffer great pains as well as troubles. Doors and windows will open and close, appliances will turn on and off, and all electronic devices are affected...telephones ring and there's no one on the other end, televisions that tune themselves without anyone touching them and then turn off...the devil's pranks! I call these “disturbances.” And they are the lightest forms of vexation. But there are greater ones. There are many people that have very strong physical disturbances that no doctor can diagnose, much less cure.

Black lesions

A husband, along with his wife and nephew, managed a supermarket with the help of two employees. Shortly after they began their work, people coming into the store came down with a persistent headache, and then black lesions began to form on their arms. These marks would then turn red and painful, spreading from their necks to their legs, all over. Some of the store appliances began to go haywire: the refrigerator, or the coolers, or the cash register with the receipts... Invisible hands regularly relocated the store merchandise. The doors would lock or open on their own. Basically, there was always something not working normally. But when the technician would arrive, there would be nothing wrong. Then, as soon as the technician left, there you go, everything breaks down again.

As soon as they called me I promised to bless the place, but first I asked them to put their spirits at ease with a good confession, and to commit themselves to a path of faith. I then proceeded to exorcise every person present and the store itself, and said a prayer to break any spells or curses. I also, while praying, placed various glasses of holy water and exorcised salt around the store. After just one day, the salt from five of the glasses had poured onto the ground; nothing happened with the other three.

All five of our protagonists noticed that a woman—who had done everything possible to block the opening of the store, and who lived in an apartment one floor above—entered and left without buying anything, always stopping before the places where the glasses with the spilled salt were hidden: it seems like she was looking for something. The exorcised salt was scattered all over the place. We prayed a lot and repeated the renouncement of Satan, the prayers against the malign, the renewal of the baptismal vows. An image of the Merciful Jesus was put on display and they took up the habit of reciting a prayer before starting work every morning.

Even I, upon entering the store one day, found a black mark on my arm. It turned red and was very painful, but it went away quickly when I applied exorcised oil to the spot.

After only four exorcisms (but many prayers!) all of the disturbances ceased. They don't see that woman around anymore, and can do their jobs in peace.

A case of Satanic vexation

Could you give me an example of diabolic vexation from among the many cases you've had occasion to pursue?

As an example, I remember a case that involved a constant headache and a persistent stomachache of no apparent cause. The afflicted person couldn't do anything, not even sleep at night. Exams and analyses didn't find a thing.

I exorcised a girl of seventeen years who had been institutionalized in a number of psychiatric clinics in Europe, and they couldn't turn up anything anywhere.

The poor girl suffered in her mind; she was unable to hold a conversation, she couldn't study anymore, to say nothing about concentrating at all! Forget about prayer, much less going to church! She suffered because she had pains all over her body, ones that could not be physiologically justified. I repeat: various European clinics couldn't find anything. And I have many cases of people who visited multiple clinics in Italy and had stacks of test results, and there's nothing, nothing to explain the poor health from a medical point of view. These people suffer tremendously.

Anyway, this seventeen-year-old girl arrived, came to my study. Now, with exorcism you can clearly see whether or not the affliction is caused by the devil. In the end it comes down to this: either the direct presence of the devil, or an illness caused by the devil. So the early exorcisms are diagnostic. I maintain that only an exorcism can determine with certainty whether the devil is present or not. I've also had various cases referred to me by psychiatrists. "You try and see," the doctors would say. "Maybe you can make something of it." And after the exorcism, I'll tell them that it was a case of an illness that science still cannot identify nor, consequently, cure. That in fact, it has to do with a diabolical influence.

Many people have come to me after visiting a doctor. Indeed, I myself have established that, as a rule, one cannot come to me without a medical diagnosis that demonstrates that a specialist has conducted a thorough examination. This is because if someone is sick, the first thing they should do is go see a doctor.

Coming back to the case of the girl I was talking about before, I must say that in my opinion it was a case of vexation, therefore one of the "lighter" cases with respect to a true possession, but nevertheless an extremely powerful vexation. She suffered from a powerful vexation that affected her in her whole body, and above all, her mind.

Her liberation did not take very long. The longer the demon stays in one place, the deeper he digs in his roots. That's why, in the first exorcism, we pray to the Lord—I use the old Rite, because I've criticized and slammed the new one—for help to eradicate the presence of the devil. In sum, there are cases of serious vexation that come to a good end quickly enough...

Unwelcome and unpleasant guests

Could you tell me, then, about these infestations, which are the lowest level of supernatural action on the part of the devil, followed—you've already said—by vexations and then by terrible possessions?

To talk about infestations, I have to refer to several experiences with demonic presences in houses. I'll give you two cases in particular.

First case: I was invited to the home of a young couple that had a one-year-old baby. During the night, they would hear noises in the wardrobe, knocking against the shutters, the radiators, the electronic appliances. But what frightened them the most was the little one herself. Every night, at the same time, she would awaken with a start and begin to cry. Moreover, the baby was more frail than normal, and had not begun to speak yet.

The parents prayed and went to mass regularly. Then something they said aroused my suspicion. They told me that every time her two aunts gave their niece a gift, the noises got worse. Both women were fortune-tellers. I intervened several times because I saw the little one grow more and more affected: she wouldn't sleep, she didn't eat much, she spent most of the night crying and hiding under the covers. When I blessed the house, the noises stopped, but only for a day or two. So, I decided to hold mass in the house along with some nuns who were close to the family and with a few members of prayer groups. After the mass, I sprinkled holy water around the house, ordering the devil, in the name of God, to abandon that place forever. Since that day, the noises stopped, the child flourished, and everything returned to normal.

Second case: A man who had lived far from God and who, for his wickedness, was loved by no one, had been dead for one year when strange things began to happen around his house: the gold objects in front of the man's portrait turned white, and knick-knacks disappeared. The man's wife and daughters called me. I knew the deceased and thought that he needed a mass for the sake of his soul. I held a number of them. After a few days of peace, the strange things started up again, but now worse than before.

One of the daughters was married and had a daughter of two and a half years; every night at the same time, the little one would awaken and start to scream. At their request, I blessed the house a few more times but the peace only lasted a few days. I decided to hold a holy mass in the evening, inviting the relatives and neighbors as well. First we recited the Rosary; during the prayer, the child was agitated like never before, jumping on the bed and playing tricks on everyone there. Above all, she got worked up about the Rosary beads. During the Gospel—I selected an excerpt involving Jesus casting out a demon—the little

one stopped in her tracks and didn't move again. With the consecration of the Eucharist finished, the baby cried, "Mamma, the bad thing jumped out the window!" This was our sign of the liberation from the demonic presence that infested the house. So, finally, peace was restored.

An undiscovered murder

The following testimony reports another case of infestation.

A married couple with a daughter are the caretakers of a great aristocratic villa and live in a house built adjacent to the manor. For fourteen years, that is, as long as they'd had that job and lived in that house, they'd been subjected to everything in the book. It should be noted as well that near the villa there was an old castle, long ruined, of which only one tower remained standing. I would say that all of the things that happened are typically seen in cases of infestation, but not in these proportions. Moreover, the disturbances affected the three caretakers, the house, and the animals. Here's a list. The lamps, television, radio, and appliances turned on and off on their own. The water faucets opened and closed without anyone touching them; pictures came off the walls and flew to the other side of the room without breaking the glass or frame. The furniture would fall over or change places. I can go on: they'd hear loud knocking at night, and loud footsteps, like marching soldiers; water would seep through the wall between the kitchen and the dining room flooding both rooms, even though there were no pipes installed; strange images of faces would appear on the windows; doors and windows opening and closing noisily with no one around... The spouses and the daughter are all good Christians, with lots of faith and a good spirit of prayer; they are sensible people, sound of mind, credible in everything they claim to perceive. They also often notice disturbing presences. And not just small ones! Many times the woman was pushed from her bed; the husband often felt knocked about. The girl felt herself be hoisted up and flung down the stairs with a shove; she was left bruised all over. They had thirty hens, healthy and productive; one day they were all suddenly found with their legs twisted and crippled, they couldn't hold themselves up and were crawling around, because they couldn't walk; but they could still eat. The docile, cuddly housecat suddenly turned ferocious, jumping on its owners, biting and scratching. Often the wife felt constricted, she seemed to be suffocating and unable to move. I could add many other strange things. These phenomena occurred both in their own house and in the master villa.

Exorcisms were performed on both buildings. It should be noted that the owner, an amateur painter, painted horror pictures, full of skeletons, devils, hooded beings.

Another peculiar thing happened to me. Three days after I exorcised the two buildings, I was ninety kilometers away and in the process of exorcising a possessed young lady when the devil spoke through the girl and said, "Go. Go play your little games to cast me out; that one (a dead man?) still won't go; they killed him to steal his inheritance." Then he broke into hoots and guffaws. When the girl returned to herself, she felt the need to draw a sketch

of someone who appeared to her during the exorcism. She drew the face of an old man with a beard. When I showed the sketch to the caretakers of the villa, all three of them recognized the face of an old man who had appeared on the windows of their home. Remember that they never knew or met the girl who I was exorcising.

We must ask: can a suffering soul, a miser's, after being killed for his inheritance, cause so much trouble for so long?

Regarding this specific case, which still hasn't been resolved, I am hopeful because a similar thing had already happened to me in another spot in the same province. A house was greatly disturbed by inexplicable noises and strange occurrences. Investigating, it came to light that the house had been constructed on land where five Zouave soldiers had been killed. Ten masses were held in honor of those soldiers and an exorcism was performed on the house. The trouble ceased immediately, and hopefully forever.

I wasn't concerned with the devil at first

Don Gabriele, returning now to your personal experience. Before having received this charge from cardinal Poletti, what did you think of the devil?

To tell the truth, I didn't concern myself with it too much. Yes, I knew that he existed, and I believed the Gospel. I'm from Modena, but I'd heard talk of the existence of exorcists. On the other hand, in those times, most priests hardly ever talked about these things—the devil, possessions, and exorcisms, I mean.

I was consecrated as a priest in 1954, Mary's year, the hundredth anniversary of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. More than fifty years have passed. But, then as now, what's most important is the education that must be imparted to those who are preparing to become priests, concerning the reality of the devil and the ministry of exorcism. And this is even truer today, now that many young people no longer go to church. Instead, they are devoted to séances, mages, fortune-tellers, and so on. You see, I think it's very important to warn them to keep away from these dangers. There should be well-prepared priests to inform them. Instead, the greater part of the clergy knows truly little about these things.

When I found myself before an obvious case of demonic possession, I realized that the reality of Satan's work and of exorcism prayers is not a thing of the past. These things cannot possibly be confined to the past, or solely to Jesus's time, but to our present: Satan is even more active today than ever before, seeking to lead the greatest possible number of souls to eternal damnation.

From the beginning of my ministry I understood that there are two opposing categories of possessed persons: those who are so because of their errors, and those who are so because of their love for God. I can confirm this based on the Scripture and on tradition.

I remember another case that moved me deeply. An exemplary seminarian left his seminary after two years and lost his calling because I did not exorcise him; it was a very delicate affair, and also painful, so I won't dwell on the details. I can say, however, that it was a very shocking revelation for me. It made me understand why we should do everything in our power to oppose the actions of the devil, above all when he moves to strike at the ordained. In the ten years following, I've saved the careers of many seminarians, priests, and believers with exorcisms.

Two cases of possession

Two cases in particular come to mind concerning demonic attacks on ordained persons, or the faithful who are bound to be ordained. The priests involved made these testimonies to me.

“I was preaching at a retreat to a congregation of believers, when the mother superior called me to take care of a member of the community who seemed affected by stigmata. But she presented behavioral problems so grave that it shattered the life of the community. She used language that was unbecoming of a nun and certainly did not correspond to what would be expected of someone who truly shared in the sufferings of Christ.

After having prayed and reflected a long while, I began to pray for her liberation. She was finally liberated from the demonic oppression: her behavior and her language changed immediately, the stigmata went away. She was not experiencing the suffering of the Passion, but suffering because of the devil...”

“In Bombay, a priest came to find me, along with his mother, to ask my advice concerning one of her brothers. He was thirty-four years old and had attended university in the United States. There, he had come into contact with a new religious movement; after some time he agreed to attend their seminaries. Bit by bit he was completely swallowed by the cult.

He progressed into the internal hierarchy of that group and was to marry a woman who held a very important position in that world. In reality he had claimed to want to marry another woman, but on the day of the wedding, members of that movement lynched her. This event destroyed him physically and psychologically. Fortunately his parents had arrived in the United States, worried because their son wanted to marry outside his faith and the catholic community. They brought him back to India, but they were faced with a request for a large sum, as blackmail. In order to pay, one of the brothers was forced to sell all of his possessions. In the meantime the whole family lived in terror, afraid that members of this cult, who wouldn't shy away even from murder, might attack them.

When I was called to meet that youth, I found him in terrible condition: he never left his room, he didn't bathe, he didn't cut his nails, he wouldn't eat with his family. His room was incredibly filthy and he spoke with people who weren't there.

His priest brother thought that psychiatric treatment was necessary, but first he wanted my advice. I went to his house with a prayer group. Some minutes before we arrived, the young man locked himself in his room, even though nobody warned him of my arrival. Since we were unable to convince the poor victim to open the door, we decided to pray

together with the family and, following a hunch, we performed a prayer of liberation in front of the closed door. In the prayer I also included a supplication to God for the liberation of the founder of that movement, even citing his name.

To all appearances nothing happened on that day. But the next day his parents called me, very pleased. Their son had finally left his room and had walked about the whole house, even on the roof, in search of the founder of that movement (who, along with the rest, was already dead). Not finding him, he decided to wash himself, cut his nails and hair, restore his normal appearance, and for the first time in months, he went back to eating with his family. He also agreed to go to Goa for a period of convalescence. He still lives there today and has found work, and is leading a normal and quiet life.”

A bewitched priest!

I was invited to a meeting among some high-level academics. We spoke about magic and witchcraft with an informative and scientific approach. Specialists from various parts of Europe participated. As for me, I was invited to speak on the magic of our time. After my speech, a man who had been present came to me and confided his suffering. Here's how:

“What you described corresponds exactly to what I am living. I am a priest and look what's happened to me. I was on a mission in a large African city. I had raised a few houses with the intention of constructing a village for children. A team of workers from the area assisted me. I had received a large donation on behalf of an international organization. With the money I received, I hired a second team of workers from another tribe.

When the work was finished, one of the men from the second team told me, “Father, do not sleep in these houses. It will be bad, you'll see. Watch!” Lifting up the bricks of the floor, he showed me some strange objects, fetishes. Peeling the paper from the walls, he showed me other strange things. Then he added, “Father, they are objects consecrated to the devil; they were put here by the other work team. They are hostile to us because we're from another tribe and because you hired us on. They're retaliating and want to kill you.” As a good European rationalist, I took no heed of the warning. Inside, I laughed at their gullibility.

The following night, I slept in that house; though I should say I didn't sleep at all. I was tormented by all kinds of apparitions and wild notions, so much that it was impossible to sleep. After several sleepless nights I was tortured by the desire to end my own life. I took myself to a hospital. They managed to prevent my suicide, but it turned out all the analyses were good and the psychological tests declared me perfectly sane. They had to repatriate me. For years, in France, I wandered between clinics and hospitals, with no results. I was taken in by a house for sick priests, where they couldn't find any illness. Now I live in a house for elderly and infirm priests. I see myself in the signs you have indicated.”

Although he was very tired, I gave him a lengthy liberation prayer. He writhed a lot, but prayed with all his strength. That night I was unable to free him. But we started again the next day. It took a long time, but he was finally liberated: he left the house for elderly and infirm priests and departed again for his mission in Africa. He writes me once in a while; for four years he's been fully active in his mission. His liberation was definitive. No further intervention was necessary.

A rescued calling

Now here's the testimony of a "victim."

"I write out of obedience, because it was asked of me, but I also believe that it may help others to understand and to act appropriately. The first symptoms that left me dumbfounded appeared one night when I was going to bed, after having turned off the light. I felt a sudden terror and feverish agitation of the senses: shakes and jolts. My reaction was to plunge into the deepest parts of myself in search of God, beseeching the holy Virgin. It took a long time before I connected all this with the attacks I perpetrated against the sixth commandment. These phenomena repeated whenever I lay down, and I was regularly tempted during the night. The sacrament of confession gives me strength; otherwise I could never resist the temptations against the sixth commandment, which once they start can't be stopped, not even with prayer.

The second symptom consists of shakes that appear at the beginning of prayer, usually during the morning service, or temptations toward desperation and suicide. My spiritual father told me over the phone that this was all part of the struggle. But the one who really helped me was the exorcist priest who attends to me, also over the phone. For some time I had great difficulty studying, and also trouble eating. During a service in the chapel I smelled something rank, and had the impression that the holy water I keep in a bottle had putrefied; the next day it was normal, and no longer smelled.

A violent temptation against the sixth commandment made me repeat, "Better to die than succumb." I benefited from reading the exorcism of Leo XIII, but more from the exorcisms I received over the phone from the exorcist priest. The following Sunday the same symptoms appeared: I called the exorcist priest, who exorcised me over the phone. This was repeated three times in the same day. Before the exorcism I felt like I was going mad, but the exorcism helped me overcome.

In August the symptoms reappeared: extreme fatigue, migraines, the feeling of going mad, depression, etc. The father exorcised me in person. From the very first words I stomped my feet on the ground. The demon spoke through my mouth. As soon as I could, I prayed silently, invoking the name of Jesus. I was afraid of holy water, and the reliquary with the wafers burned me when it was placed on me. I moved uncontrollably. But after the big exorcism all the trouble disappeared and peace returned. I did have one more attack, but a long-distance exorcism was enough to stave it off.

I'll conclude by saying that the most important moment for me was when I recognized the devil's existence. From that moment on, my true battle against him began and I finally understood that I was not mad. I would not have been able to do this without the intervention of the exorcist, and my vocation would have been ruined. I also felt, and continue to feel, as one with the Passion of the Christ."

The forces of the enemy: Satanic cults

Don Gabriele, you began this battle more than twenty years ago. In all this time, have the forces of Satan grown, or diminished?

Well, you see, the forces of the devil have always been the same, because the devil always has the same powers. What has grown immensely is another element: the number of open doors. Occultism was not practiced the way it is today. By occultism I mean magic, séances, Satanic sects, etc. All of that. Things were different when people went to church, prayed; families were together... You see what society is today? Young people are living together, not a care in the world for marriage. Gays are asking for their marriages to be recognized—they even ask for the right to adopt children. It's gotten to the point of such absurdities that would have been absolutely unthinkable when I was a boy!

All this magic, occultism, and spiritualism opens the doors. And once the doors are open, the devil's hands are free. It's not that he's stronger, it's that he is free to use his strength. Just think of how many cases we have of people who consecrate themselves to Satan.

They are many. I'm always burning more and more of those notes that say, Satan you are my god, I want Satan, I want to be with you always, I honor you, I adore you. And, give me, give me, give me. Give me riches, give me pleasures, give me success. The devil gives them these things, but he takes their soul in exchange. There is no possession in these cases because the devil already owns their soul, since they have chosen to give it to him. We must keep in mind that the devil, on his own, cannot reach into the soul: he can cause physical distress, but not reach the soul. He can only reach the soul if a man gives it freely and allows him to take control.

These notes I was speaking of were brought to me by persons who had consecrated themselves to Satan. They came to me for help, but were later frightened off, because it is very difficult to leave a cult! Just think, their testimonies say that in America, people who try to leave a Satanic sect can wind up killed. So, even the members themselves are very afraid.

And in Italy?

In Italy I don't know of any fatal cases. But, for all we know, people who leave sects are pursued, that's for sure, and they live in fear. They live very cautiously, full of fear in the face of former cult-mates. Here in Italy sects are very numerous: they say there are more than eight hundred, and maybe even more. In general, though, they're rather small, in terms of members; fifteen, twenty people at most. Sometimes there are barely ten. As a consequence, whoever leaves one can only be afraid of a limited number of people, so we can say it involves a pretty contained, controllable situation.

Then it must be clarified that not all cults are the same. Some are pure fairy tales, or really just clowning around. Some, on the other hand, are real, and terrible. And they even hold Satanic masses.

Possessed from infancy

This is the case of a boy who, in his early infancy, was entrusted to the care of his paternal grandmother, and it seems that she delivered him to malign spirits. At five years old, he had his first communion and began to attend the parochial church as an altar boy and the parish's altar server. It went on like this until he was thirteen or fourteen. On Easter Monday, the youth had a vision of a luminous cross; a voice told him, "You will suffer dearly." From then on, he complained of strange anomalies on his body: flagellations, scratches on his ribs, iconographic signs on his hands and feet. Then came the apparitions of Jesus and the Madonna.

A painting of the Sacred Heart wept and attracted the attention of a lot of people around him. The phenomenon gained public notice; the local newspapers wrote about it, there were interviews all the way up to the Episcopal curia. They opened up the investigation into the extraordinary events, but soon enough it all got filed away because, so they say, the signs seemed unreliable. The phenomena of the paintings weeping blood continued, however, and the youth remained at the center of attention in his social circle. The following year, the pattern of occurrences took a different turn. The boy met a pseudo-charismatic who prayed over him. The youth would levitate sometimes and the spectators would occasionally collapse during the prayers in a form of spiritual repose. The youth's attendance of the sacraments dwindled; he cut off all ties with the pseudo-charismatic.

One day, I don't recall the date exactly, some friends brought me to the boy to hear my opinion on the origin of the extraordinary phenomena, and for advice on what sort of path to pursue. The boy was smiling, witty, clean, calm, and quiet. He related the episodes of the weeping paintings and showed me the picture of the Sacred Heart, which he took out of a case and would display when he prayed. The painting shows visible signs of bloody tears that have congealed behind the glass. I asked some of his friends about the opinion of the Episcopal curia: they responded that they had some reservations about the supernatural origin of the phenomena. I enjoin the youth not to attach too much importance to those facts, not to display the painting, not to pray in public, and to act with caution, in the hope that the Lord would show his will on the matter.

The following year the parish priest and the curate of a neighboring parish came into the picture. The young man's father had turned to them for help, since the boy was ill and his own parish wasn't interested. The two priests took care of the youth and performed prayers of liberation over him because he seemed to be disturbed by the devil. One fine day they bring me in, convinced that he needs an exorcism.

I've performed five exorcisms for him since December of that year.

First exorcism. The two priests who accompany the boy are present, along with others who came with them. There's also a small group of Charismatics. At the beginning of the conversation, the young man's face is calm. After a few minutes there is some belching and some signs of uneasiness. He tells me that the strange phenomena started when he was just a baby, a few years before his first communion (received when he had just turned five). The host always tasted like rotten blood to him. When he made the consecration at mass, only blasphemous words came out, and during communion he had impure thoughts. The strange phenomena started at the age of thirteen: levitations, stigmata, iconographic signs on his body, statues that cracked and drip with blood, bodily cramps, palsy, visions, rosebuds and petals coming out of his mouth. I proceeded cautiously with an exploratory exorcism. The boy collapsed on the ground, rolling around, kicking violently, and grinding his teeth. He spat on me, tried to attack me; his voice was coarse and his eyes were red and full of hate. I proceed with an imperative exorcism. The holy water burned him. Four men were barely able hold him down. The reactions grew more violent when the Virgin of a local Marian sanctuary was named. After a quarter of an hour, a calm came over him. In a moment of relapse, the patient suddenly launched a new attack, striking by surprise, but he was easily tamed. He was then able to pray with the exorcism, but he was very tired. In parting he seemed content, but he let out a couple belches.

Second exorcism. The same people were present as before, and the same phenomena were repeated. An unexpected kick got me in the leg.

Third exorcism—February of the following year. The parish priest who followed him brought me six or seven paintings of varying size that depict the Sacred Heart or the Madonna. They were horribly disfigured and covered in dried blood from the weeping. I told him to lock them away in a box and keep them hidden, far from curious eyes. During this exorcism the reactions were less violent than the previous times, but the patient was still very dangerous and it took several muscular men to subdue the lunatic. There was a new development: he spoke in tongues.

Fourth exorcism—March of the same year, in the presence of about fifteen priests who were convened for a pastoral course in demonology. The demon manifested and said, "He's mine; he's been mine for some time now. Your exorcisms are useless. He is bound to me." The reactions were less violent. The relapse happened in shorter time. The boy didn't remember any of what happened; he only remarked that he felt like there was a manacle around his ankle.

Fifth exorcism, the following May. Almost all of the priests and the few laymen who attended the demonology course were present. The boy's reactions were even less violent. I had a conversation with the demon who affirmed that the boy had been his since infancy, and that he will not leave.

I asked the priest who accompanies the boy for a brief account. Here it is: “The undersigned is eye-witness to a number of phenomena. I have been called to his sickbed to bring him communion: he writhed in pain, and had scratches on his back; he took communion. Later I was called to investigate nocturnal noises at his friend’s house. The door was in pieces and the room in disorder. The boy wants nobody in his room; when all is finished, he is destroyed and exhausted under the bed. In this house there have been six of these terrible nights. Another three nights were in another house, at the end of July. In that house lives a lady who suffers from disturbances of possession.

The phenomena in this period are as follows: flying objects, destruction of furniture, scratches on the wall, sharp smell of sulfur. The youth suffers from bodily attraction, as if pushed by an invisible force. His friends have to hold him down on the bed with effort. There is hostile dialogue between him and an invisible presence. He says, “No, I don’t want to, I’ll never do it; go away, Satan.” I witnessed floral tributes: petals and rosebuds coming out of his mouth; on his body iconographic signs appeared, such as the monogram of the host (*In hoc signo...*) and the nodding face of a man on the upper part of his body....

His Christian life is sporadic and his behavior does not convince me... Now after the first encounter with the exorcist and with the prayers of liberation, it seems the reactions have diminished. Nocturnal disturbances persist, cold chills, the feeling of something clammy winding around him and saying, ‘You are ours.’”

A liberated sorceress

I was in the parish office when two women came in: the first I knew well, but the other I'd never seen before. The one I recognized said to me, "Father, this woman needs you." I turned to the newcomer and asked why she had come to me. I looked her in the eye; she made strange signs with her eyes and with her hands. Already it came to mind what she could be and I told her, "Madam, who are you afraid of? There is no devil here, only the Lord Christ." And I brought the crucifix that I keep on my desk before her eyes.

At that point the woman's agitation became violent, but I was prepared for the worst and cried, "You're a witch! What do you want with God?" At first she was taken aback, and then she said to me, "I want to be free of the devil, because my man is dying." I replied in a peremptory tone, "What is your man dying of? Perhaps you cast a spell, or put a curse on him?" And she answered, through tears, that she had yelled at him, out of spite, "I hope you get gangrene!" That curse came to fruition and her man was dying in the hospital, in the intensive care ward.

In a severe voice I told her, "I am not a saint and I can't perform miracles; I am an exorcist who, with help and in the name of God, can cast out demons. But I can't give your man his life back." At this point the woman leapt, landing on her knees on my desk, and reached out to grab me by the neck. I was prepared for such a reaction from the devil, and I had time to shout, "Stop, Satan, in the name of God!" She was struck motionless, with her eyes wide and her mouth open, and her arms still held out towards my neck: God had protected me. Then I shouted at the demon, "In the name of God, Satan, I order you not to move from this position."

I went to the church, put a consecrated host in a container and placed the container on my chest. When I returned to the parochial office the woman was still in the position I left her in. I ordered her to come down from the desk, sit down, and not attempt to come nearer to me than where we were seated. With the consecrated host I was more at ease, and with a resolute voice I said to her, "Instead of crying over your man, you should be crying over all the people you've hurt in your twenty-year career."

With a cavernous voice she bellowed, "If my man dies I'll hurt the entire city." I jumped up, grabbed her by the shoulders and shoved her out of the office and out of the church, shouting, "With all the hate in your heart, you don't deserve to be here." Then the woman who was with her told me, "Father, you treat everyone gently, and never send away those possessed by the devil. How could you cast this one out so cruelly?" I replied, "We exorcists can only liberate those who desire it. But those who have hate in their heart do

not deserve to be liberated. And you can be sure that within an hour this witch will come crawling back here.”

In fact, not much later she returned and I told her that if she wanted me to perform the exorcism she had to demonstrate to me that she wanted to be liberated by bringing me any magical object she owned. At 3 o'clock I reopened the church and saw that the two women were there waiting for me. They had two large plastic bags, filled to the brim. What came out of those bags gave me chills. Aside from various implements, like trays for burning incense, there were red and black candles, nails, pins, lemons, photos to cut people's portraits out of, and then dozens and dozens of already-cast spells. In addition, there were books on magic, witchcraft, spells, black masses, Satanic orgies, and a slew of other things.

After liberally sprinkling the lot of it with holy water and invoking God to nullify all evil spells, I locked all of the things in a chest where nobody could reach it. Then I invited the witch to come back that evening with four men, after the church was closed. They arrived punctually. I quickly realized there was no need to consult a psychiatrist, the demonic presence was so clear. I put on my vestments and began the exorcism. I immediately commanded the demon to do no harm to anyone present, and not to approach anyone, to remain at least a meter away from everyone. Then I began the ritual. Every so often the witch leapt to her feet, screaming and cursing; I pretended not to hear her. She thrust out her arms around her, but didn't touch anyone, until the demon screamed, “What have you put in front of me? I cannot pass!”

The demon interrupted the prayers often; he said there were thirteen of them, while I was only one and would never succeed in casting them out. I commanded them in the name of God to be silent; this command infuriated him, and one time he cried, “What have you put here between us? A sheet of crystal?” Finally he told me, “Just stop it! She doesn't want to be freed! Otherwise she would have brought you everything. But in the wardrobe in her room she has two bags of already-cast and ready-to-cast spells.” At this point the woman claimed to be tired, and unable to resist any longer. I took the opportunity to cut the exorcism short, telling her, “I don't fight tired demons. We'll resume tomorrow, but on the condition that tomorrow morning you bring me the two bags of spells that, as the demon told me, you have hidden in your wardrobe. I'll be expecting you tomorrow at seven.”

The next day at seven on the dot, she was at the door of the church with the two bags; in tears she told me, “My man is dying. They've put him in an iron lung.” And I told her: “Go now and see your man in the hospital. But he is in God's hands. Come back tonight at eight, with the men you brought yesterday.” By seven o'clock everyone was in the church. I closed the door, put on my vestments and prepared myself for battle. The witch did nothing but keep repeating that I should make it quick, because the doctors had given her man only one hour to live.

I recited some prayers, and then I quickly resumed the imperative formula. The woman screamed and began to vomit; clumps of brown dirt and saliva came out of her mouth. While I splashed her with holy water, I counted; this is the first demon. I continued to pray, to give orders, and one by one the other twelve demons came out. Then a cavernous voice cried to me, "I am Satan; you'll never cast me out!" I looked at the clock and saw that midnight had passed by about ten minutes. I said, "It's already the Feast of the Immaculate Conception." Satan, in the name of the Most Holy Immaculate Mary I order you to leave this woman and to go where God commanded you to go." I repeated this command a dozen times, until the demon's hoarse voice was heard again: "Enough with that name! I don't want to hear it anymore."

I replied, "Demon, I will repeat that name all night; if you don't want to hear me invoke the name of Most Holy Immaculate Mary Mother of Christ, leave this woman and be gone." Then the witch began to vomit again, and after a scream she fainted and collapsed on the ground. She was finally free of all of the demons. We set ourselves to cleaning while the witch slept. I used holy water, with a lot of alcohol, in a bucket; then I set fire to a piece of paper and threw it in the residue thrown up with the departure of the thirteen devils. Only once everything was cleaned up did I order the witch, in the name of God, to stand up. She rose very slowly, as if the devil had reduced her to pieces. I told her that I would expect her in church that morning; she had to confess and take communion.

So there it was done. After a few days, as I found myself in a house for a prayer of liberation, the telephone rang. The lady of the house went to answer it and then ran back to tell me, "That lady (who was a witch) told me to tell you that her husband is fine. The doctors, on the Feast of the Immaculate, were stupefied: they expected to find the patient dead, but he was better and wanted to eat. They moved him to the recovery ward, and he improved before their eyes and was eating regularly. By Christmas he had returned home a cured man."

On Christmas day, the husband and wife were in church. They then came to the parochial office to thank me, confessed, and took communion. God is great!

A pact in a tomb

One day, a man's wife called me. I went to their house, accompanied by a priest who had assisted me in the past. During the two days before my visit I had phoned several times. The wife told me that the man always knew it was me calling and he would begin throwing insults my way before she even picked up the receiver.

Anyway, I went to their place. We started the exorcism at six in the evening and it went on until the demon was expelled. There being two of us, we read the Rite together and at some points we switched off. The demon appeared more disturbed when we prayed together. The family offered us dinner, but we refused so that our hunger would facilitate the liberation. The parents and the wife were praying in a nearby room: we didn't want them present for those painful scenes.

During the litanies, the husband fell into a sort of trance; he had a serious reaction to the invocation of San Giacomo. A certain Giacomo, who worked at the bar where the man was employed, asked a mage to put a curse on the woman's husband in order to take his job at work. Long after the liberation, we told the man these things, as we had heard them from the devil. He confirmed that he had clearly perceived the moment when the devil had entered him at night. He tried to fight it, but it was already too late. According to what the demon had reported during the exorcism, it was done with a written pact deposited in a tomb. After a hard struggle in which we weakened the demon with the aid of sacramentals (holy water and salt, relics and medals), we compelled him to tell us the area, the cemetery, and the sarcophagus where the paper was hidden. He responded with precision. The next day the wife went to the indicated place and in the empty sarcophagus, in front of the entrance, in the middle of a bundle of papers, she found two notebook pages with no visible writing. She burned them.

When I took up the Rite to continue the exorcism, I searched for the place where I left off, and the man laughed mockingly at my efforts. On top of the insults, the possessed vomited and spat at us repeatedly; but we had been protected from this because it never reaches us. By then the devil was very weak; the husband managed to pray with us and asked me to hear his confession. I heard his confession without hesitation. After the final exorcism the reactions ceased. It was one in the morning. Fearing some trick, we started another big exorcism. This time, he had no adverse reaction.

Cult of Satan

The family is composed of two parents and five children: two male and three female. A Satanic cult had been formed in that house at the instigation of a boy who was in a relationship with one of the daughters and belonged to a sect called the “Black Cat.” This boy, taking advantage of the family’s credulity, had built a small shrine to Satan inside the house, and had used it to perform a kind of consecration on each of them: he cut his fingers to “baptize” them all with blood; the youth also engaged in obscene acts, like making them drink his urine mixed with sperm.

In short time the house had become a hell: constant screaming and fighting, furniture knocking against the walls, objects disappearing or breaking for no reason, violence against others, who suffer from constant suffocating. And more: water coming out of faucets after they’ve been shut off...

When they called me they were practically pulling their hair out. I started the exorcisms one at a time; those in the next room thrashed and cursed during the exorcism, trying to impede its execution. I exorcised the house and, on top of the prayers and sacraments, I made liberal use of oil and holy water. Of course, everything relating to the cult of the devil was destroyed. The pact with Satan was renounced and their baptismal vows renewed, on top of a consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I asked all of them, in addition to the holiday mass, to attend at least one more weekday mass a week. I held another mass in the house; everybody confessed and took communion.

To replace the shrine to Satan, they constructed a nice niche for the Madonna in the courtyard, in a prominent location, and at the entrance they put an image of Merciful Jesus—the one by Sister Faustina Kowalska.

Bit by bit, that hell came to a close, but I still continue to exorcise the persons. I’m an optimist, whether because of the results I’ve already obtained, or because I see it as my sincere duty.

Possession by betrayal

If the previous testimonies have accounted for the variety of cases that are brought before the eyes of an exorcist, perhaps even more touching will be the following testimony, left to us by a girl who was possessed by the devil.

“I have been completely liberated from Satan. For eighteen years I was under the influence of black magic, without my participating in it. I was betrayed and my soul was practically sold to Satan. I’m writing my story so that it can be an encouraging example of how even in times of tragedy, salvation can come. I cannot tell you the name of the exorcist who liberated me because he forbade it. This saintly priest held thirty masses for my liberation and performed thirty exorcisms and in doing so, he freed me completely from the malicious presences inside me. Then by telephone, because he is not from my city, he gave me another thirty exorcisms and liberated me completely from my external disturbances, too.

There are so many great priests who exorcise one person at a time, like the one who did for me. Who knows how many souls have been saved! Above all, I’m thinking of older priests. The one who liberated me was over eighty.

I’d like to reveal some of the cult’s secrets. When you make a pact with Satan, you come to know from the devil himself that the only true religion is the Catholic Christian one, loyal to the Pope. That’s why he fights so hard against it. The other Christian religions are just tolerated, but he favors Buddhism and “Mahometanism,” because they are false religions. The sects hide behind false names and false purposes, especially in the form of alternatives to medical science.”

Satanic rites in cemeteries

The person involved is a twenty-year-old young man. He came to me with his parents. He complained of piercing pains in his testicles and all over his body; he was screaming like a banshee. He was temporarily released from the hospital where he was being held so he could attend a prayer of liberation. The doctors were at a loss for the cause of his pain and it was the young man himself who asked for our intervention.

He told me his story laboriously between spasms, clutching his stomach.

“Around three years ago, I happened to attend some Satanic rites. I was invited by some friends my age. I didn’t believe in it and joined them out of curiosity. The ceremonies took place in a cemetery; there were ten of us and one was the leader. We were all wearing hoods for the sacrificial rite and the black mass. The sacrificial rites were performed in the cemetery vault, on the slab of an opened tomb. We did them intermittently, months apart. The sacrifice of animals involved killing cats, birds, and snakes, then mixing them with the bones of the dead, which we collected from an ossuary. We cooked the bird or cat meat over a fire, and then ate it mixed with snake blood and ground bones. I ate the bird and drank the snake’s blood. The emblem of the sect is a snake. Then, during the rite, we had sexual relations with a virgin girl we had lured there. The rites usually lasted around three hours. The sacrifice was offered to the god Abu Katabu, and we felt his presence, along with the Indian god Zei...

The most recent rite was last Sunday. I went on my own; my friends had not come to meet me beforehand. I felt them call to me, then I realized that I was an intended victim, and I’m afraid.

I asked, “How did you manage to enter the cemetery, open the ossuary, and accomplish the rites without the watchmen seeing?” He replied that he stole the key; that he knew the place well, and knew how to move the fence and put it back in place in the corridor of the vault, and then put everything back how it was after the rite, which was performed during the night.

I asked how they managed to lure the girls and violate them. He told me that the most common pretext was to invite them to pray in church or in the cemetery, over the tomb of an acquaintance. They bring them one or two at a time; they make them assist in the rite and then they unite themselves with them. They give them money in payment and swear them to silence. To hear the boy say it, the girls stay and sometimes come back, but the boys always want virgin girls for the rites. They use the others only if they can’t find any virgins.

I ask further what the sect is called, how one joins it, and if there is some pact among them. He responds that the cult is the “Black Serpent”; the god they worship is Abu Katabu. He also tells me that once a part of the sect it is hard to escape. Two boys left, and then the others cursed them during the rite. Just two days later one of the boys died in an accident on his scooter; the other broke his skull. The leader of the cult is twenty-four years old.

I wanted to know how the black masses were celebrated. He replied that they used stolen communion wafers. He himself had stolen some from his church, where he was well known, where he had been an altar boy, so he knew where they kept the keys. He took the wafers directly from the tabernacle. In later times it grew more difficult, so he would get in line for communion but slip the wafer into his pocket.

A former monk, who dresses in red for the occasion, leads the black mass. They spit on the hosts and then burn them. They use the bones of the dead to cast curses upon their enemies. He cast some against his family and according to him, the curses were always effective.

After this preliminary dialogue I proceed to the exorcism. Hearing the litany of the saints provokes the boy, he bucks and screams and grows dangerous. He invokes Abu Katabu. I sense certain demonic presences and splash some holy water. The youth screams and invokes his gods: Abu Katabu, Zei, and others. He screams at the pain in his testicles, rails against his mother and grandmother. The former is present and repeats to her son that his grandmother and aunt have always loved him. He responds that he wanted love from his mother, but not his grandmother and aunt, which is why he cursed them all. I perceive that there is a strong psychological element in the young man that drives him to react to a lack of affection. Following those curses, his grandmother soon had an operation in her chest for a tumor, his mother had an operation on her appendix, and his father had severe burns from an electric shock that was almost fatal. He attributes these misfortunes to his curses.

At a certain point he loses his sight; then he speaks in different languages, and throws the sign of the horns at me. He vomits, and thus begins to liberate himself; he feels lighter, he cries, asks for help, even manages to make the sign of the cross.

One of my assistants, a friend of the cemetery custodian, surveys the area and snaps a few photos. The particulars of the youth’s story correspond to the facts.

We come to the second exorcism. Piercing howls and excruciating pains in the abdomen; the boy invokes his gods and, during the exorcism, feels engulfed in scorching flames. He screams at the top of his lungs, begging us to pour water over his chest and shoulders. But the holy water only makes his pain worse. Then he lets it all out: he’s full of remorse. I still observe a strong psychological component in his torment. He says that he’d gotten a kick in the stomach from a girl during one of the sexual assaults. Now she’s in the hospital, after that Satanic ritual, in a state of coma.

Again the boy vomits; I fuel his vomiting by making him drink holy water. He calms down, returns to consciousness, begs to be saved. He wants to see his father, his mother, his grandmother, his brother. The scene is moving; he asks forgiveness of everyone, embracing them tearfully. He even hugs me, invokes the name of the Lord, and prays with

us.

He's still afraid of being killed. He believes he is a target and needs very special care and protection.

Satanists in the Vatican

Earlier, Don Gabriele, you told me that some cults are less serious, while some are much more terrible...

Certainly, some are terribly serious. And unfortunately, they're everywhere. I would say even in the Vatican.

Even in the Vatican?

Yes, even in the Vatican there are members of Satanic cults.

Who is involved? Are you talking about priests, or simply laymen?

There are priests, Monsignors, and even cardinals!

Pardon me, Don Gabriele, but...how do you know?

I know from people who have been able to relate it to me because they've had first-hand encounters. And it's one of the most commonly "confessed" things by the devil himself during exorcisms...

Has the pope been informed?

Of course he has! But he does what he can... It's chilling. Keep in mind that Benedict XVI is a German pope; he comes from a nation decidedly averse to believing these things... In fact, there are practically no exorcists in Germany...and yet the Pope believes in it. I had the opportunity to speak with him three times when he was still prefect at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He absolutely believes it! And he's spoken explicitly about it in public a couple of times. He received us, as the Association of Exorcists, and he made a very nice speech, encouraging us and praising our apostolate. And let's not forget that Pope John Paul II spoke a great deal about the devil and exorcism...

So then it's true what Paul VI said: that the smoke of Satan has infiltrated the Church...

Sadly, it's true; even in the Church there are followers of Satanic sects. This quote about the "smoke of Satan" came from Paul VI on June 29, 1972. Then, seeing how this sentence created an enormous scandal, on November 15 of the same year he dedicated a whole Wednesday sermon to the devil, with very strong words. However, this speech of his had no practical consequences. Sure, it broke the ice, lifting a veil of silence and censure that has lasted far too long, but it didn't have any practical consequences. It took someone like me, a nobody, not worth a thing, to raise the alarm, to get results...

A demon speaks of power over the Church

A husband, wife, and two children of twelve and fourteen years. Fifteen years of marriage. Before getting married, the wife had participated several times in séances. On the day of her wedding she found it impossible to pronounce her consent to the sacred union. Inside her she heard the voice of Asmodeus, by whom she felt completely seized, and who told her, “Say ‘I do’ to me, not your husband. I will make you happy in every way. I’ll give you sex, money, health, and whatever you wish. You are mine.”

Things unfolded in such a way that to this day she can’t say what she did during the sacramental rite. In one of the séances they fed her hexed food, which is why for twenty-three years she’s felt severe pains in her stomach and head.

She hated her husband, she hated her late mother-in-law to death, she even hated her youngest son and sometimes got very violent. But she loved her eldest son in a passionate way. Whenever he misbehaved when he was away from her—if he kept bad company, smoked joints, didn’t study or go to church—her spirit noticed and relished it. She was aware that her feelings corresponded with what her son was doing, as if there were some uncanny understanding between the two.

The house was infested, especially the bedroom of this son, who felt disturbed, oppressed, almost smothered. After placing half of a glass of exorcised water in his room, with a spoonful of salt in it (this was done in the evening), by morning the salt had jumped out of the glass and scattered all over the floor. Following that, the wife made a good confession and renewed her marital vows, she devoted herself to an intense Christian life, and to forgiveness. At this point I started to exorcise her. The reaction was immediately violent, and the names of various demons were pronounced.

I repeated the exorcism whenever the lady felt “invaded”—it wasn’t actually a case of continuous possession. The reactions were always violent, loaded with insults, with orders for her to reject and not forgive her husband. They repeated that they were fine where they were and would not leave, and that they would take her with them. I recorded it all, also because they gave news of their power within the Catholic Church at the time... The speaker was a liar, of course. When I couldn’t intervene in person, I proceeded with exorcism over the phone, to the same effect.

I am protected from on high...

Let's return now to your life, Don Gabriele. Do these sects of which you spoke ever try to harass you or hinder your activity in any way?

No, I am too well protected. I've never had any trouble from the devil, while many of my brother exorcists have had problems sometimes: noises at home during the night to keep them from sleep, disturbances of various kinds... But nothing's ever happened to me. So far.

One must consider that within the reality of the sects whole oceans of unscrupulous people are moving and acting: mages, fortune-tellers, clairvoyants... Well, 98 percent of these people are charlatans. They have just enough knowledge of psychology to understand people. Those who go to mages are already in a state of psychological weakness because they have a sickness or a problem, and they hope that he can cure it or resolve it. They're already in a unique situation and therefore are more disposed to do something foolish.

On that subject I can describe an episode that happened to me some time ago, the subject was an electrical engineer, not some ignorant old lady. This engineer went to a mage because some things weren't going well: trouble at work and with his health, but in his professional life above all. The mage gave him a little pouch to take with him everywhere, which he obediently kept in his pocket. Even when he went to bed he took it out of his jacket pocket and put it in the pocket of his pajamas. He had it at all times. When he finally came to me he brought it and I opened it. Inside there was a cord, with knots, and that's it. I told him, "I'm sorry, Mr. Engineer, but a man like yourself...don't you feel a little foolish?" And to think, he told me he paid 42 million old lire for it—that's over twenty thousand euro!

In short, being a mage pays... They offer their clients amulets specifically designed for the problem at hand and, ineffectual as they are, they make them pay out the nose.

Anyway, coming back to the engineer, he came to me after the mage made his situation worse, bringing him to a point of severe physical incapacitation and great professional difficulty. On top of all this, there could have been demonic influences, so I exorcised him, but only a few times because he didn't present any significant reactions. And if there is no reaction, it means that the trouble comes from other causes.

Diagnosis

What you said about the last case leads me to ask you to elaborate, for the benefit of our readers, on precisely this faculty of diagnosis that seems to be indispensable to exorcists in confronting the cases that present themselves. On that note, is it true what they say? That Padre Candido, simply by looking at a person, could tell if they had a particular problem?

Yes, indeed. Padre Candido had judgment, a gift, an absolutely extraordinary ability for diagnosis. Remember that he received only in the morning, and not on Sundays, and yet he was able to receive up to eighty people. In one morning. He took them two at a time, pronounced a brief prayer, and then said either, “Come back,” or, “Don’t come back.” “Come back” meant that there was something. “Don’t come back,” meant there was nothing diabolical.

Even just by looking someone in the face he could tell. And I’ll tell you what’s more: he was capable of making diagnoses just from photographs. Of course, you had to be able to see their eyes. Sometimes in pictures people’s eyes are a bit covered... But even from photos he could make diagnoses. Oh, how many people he cured of their tumors!

Something similar even happened to me: I actually happened to meet several afflicted women who later were cured of ovarian cysts. They had to be operated on, so they came to me, had exorcisms and said: “Bless me father. I have to have an operation.” I performed the exorcism as usual, then they went home and before their operation, when they were having final analyses done with the CT scan, they would discover that there was nothing there. In these cases the term “healing prayers” becomes more accurate.

It’s like this: I do prayers of healing and prayers of liberation. I join them in the exorcism. They’re often put together in the Gospel. The Lord often did two things: healed the sick and cast out demons. He did both for various persons, but he did them together. I perform the exorcism from the point where the Gospel says, “You will cast out demons and heal the sick,” but with the intention that this prayer will have a healing property. Thank Heaven, so far I’ve had light cases, not any as serious as the ones Padre Candido had, ones where people were cured of infirmities that seemed beyond hope.

I recall that Padre Candido met with people who suffered from strong headaches due to tumors. They went to him and after his prayer of exorcism, the tumor disappeared. Not right away, but after a few days. And then they phoned him and testified, “It only lasted until this evening,” or, “All the cures, all the medicines they gave me didn’t do a thing. But after your blessing...” You see, these cases, ones beyond medical symptomatology, could be a matter

of vexation. Very mild ones.

I, unlike Padre Candido, don't have a special ability for diagnosis, and to properly frame any given case I have to perform a "diagnostic" exorcism. In short, I need an exorcism to gauge the reaction, and then I also need to see the aftermath. Certain times, here and there, the exorcisms provoke no reaction. But then when the patient returns home, one day, or a couple days later, there's an improvement. And they tell me on the phone, as if it were something extraordinary. Then they come back, I do more exorcisms, and from that point the improvement is immediate, and the trouble goes away. But the first time they come, I watch their reaction, and nothing seems to happen. Yes, sometimes they move around, they scream, but for certain people you don't see a reaction followed by a change. Then some time later they say, "You got rid of the sickness that no one else could help, after you blessed me..." I call them blessings, so as not to frighten people with the word "exorcism," and they're so effective that the illness goes away. At times, after the first session the effect has a limited duration. They tell me, "Father, after your benediction I was fine for a month. Then the sickness came back." I reply, "We'll try again. It may mean you'll need a benediction every month..." Every case is different.

In general, though, I can confirm that the head and the stomach are the two most vulnerable points. However, the devil can still strike elsewhere: sometimes in the bones, sometimes the legs, often in the uterus or genitals. Many times men are unable to achieve erection. And after the benediction they return to normal.

The ways and the means of Evil

Don Gabriele, at this point could you offer some clarifications, as far as the diverse methods with which one can effect a curse? In what way, that is, can Evil strike at man?

To respond to this question, I can provide a blueprint of the curse, gathered by various authors and from personal reflections in light of direct experiences.

A “curse” is an illness procured by means of the devil.

Depending on the purpose, it has the following characteristics:

- Amorous: to facilitate or destroy an amorous relationship with a person.
- Poisonous: to procure a physical, psychological, familial, or economic misfortune.
- Binding: to impede action, movement, relationships.
- Transference: to transfer to a person the torments performed on a doll or photo of the person targeted.
- Putrefaction: to procure a mortal sickness, rotting a biological material.
- Possession: to introduce a demonic presence into the victim and cause a possession.

Depending on the method, it can be defined as:

- Direct: by means of contact between the victim and the object bearing the curse (for example, making the victim eat or drink something that has been cursed).
- Indirect: by way of evil actions performed on an object that represents the victim.

Depending on the operation:

- By puncture and torture: with pins, nails, hammer, blade, fire, ice.
- By tying or binding: with laces, knots, bridles, ribbons, bands, and hoops.
- By putrefaction: burying the object or a symbolic animal after slaughtering it.
- By malediction: directly upon the person, or on a photo, or on a symbol.
- By Satanic rite: for example, a Satanic cult or a black mass performed with the purpose of harming somebody.

Depending on the means:

- With spells: puppets or meat with pins, bones of the dead, blood, toads, chickens.
- With cursed objects: gifts, plants, pillows, dolls, ribbons, talismans.
- With a look (evil eye), a touch of the hand, an embrace.
- With the telephone: whether in silence, with a breath, or otherwise.

A death spell

After having presented the characteristics of curses, now here's the testimony of a case of a true magic spell. I say "true" because there are spells and antidotes (or rather counter-spells) cooked up by charlatans, cheats, and others like them. Those are the majority of cases. But there are also true spells, or rather, authentic *curses*, which means "misfortune caused by the intervention of the devil." I'm talking about true spells performed by true mages, or by people who have made a pact with Satan and follow his cult; they are often people who live on hate, envy, and treachery, just like the devil. It's important to say this because today there are many, even priests, who don't believe in the existence of spells; or rather priests who, to remove the false fears of those who are obsessed with spells, preach and write that spells do not exist. But you can never impart the truth by teaching falsehood.

A young woman had been feeling very ill for three years, but only at night. What would happen is, as she would enter her bedroom, she would lose consciousness. She would start to breathe heavily with increasing difficulty, almost suffocating, and then faint. Her mother took her to the emergency room where, as soon as she entered the hospital, all the trouble disappeared.

The doctors found nothing; they always found her in perfect health. As soon as she got home, the same old song and dance started up again, with the same disturbances; but only when she went into her bedroom, and especially when she lay her head on the pillow: agitation, retching, and unbearable headaches. She was so overcome with pain that she absolutely could not sleep or find even the slightest relief. Various specialists wrote and rewrote their case studies, concluding that it could be a matter of epileptic fits. But her disease never showed up on encephalograms or on other tests and medical examinations.

One day a friend of the family suggested she turn to an exorcist. The first three exorcisms and a blessing over the house did not provoke a reaction and there was no improvement: the troubles continued unabated. They were recommended a more rigorous and devoted Christian lifestyle, the use of holy water, and it was even suggested that she open all the pillows on the beds. This advice was because they thought that there could be some curse in the girl's pillows. But she would be humiliated if the test was only done for her, so it was done for the whole family. Note that all of the down cushions had been handmade by the girl's mother. While nothing suspicious was found in the other cushions, in this girl's pillow they found a black cloth, of mourning, as wide and long as the cushion itself, with many feathers tightly woven around it, like a funeral crown. She was told to sprinkle the pillow with holy water and then burn it completely. This may have been a mistake; she

could have kept that strange black cloth as proof, for those who don't believe in curses...

In any case, with this done, all trouble ceased: the young lady went back to sleeping normally and all her misfortunes disappeared at once. A few months have already passed since she burned the pillow. The young woman is fine, she's taken up all her normal routines, she lives restfully and peace has returned to the family.

Evidently this was a case of a mortal spell: that black cloth, introduced to the cushion by magic, was supposed to slowly bring the girl to desperation and death. They commenced a cautious and thorough investigation to determine who could have been involved in the curse. It was discovered that a neighbor family, out of pure hate and envy, had commissioned this mortal spell against the family, although only the girl suffered. Needless to say, the mother swore that she had sewn the girl's pillow the same as all the others, without inserting any foreign objects that could explain the presence of the black cloth found inside.

The time to liberation

Is it true that it takes longer to achieve liberation today than it did in the past?

The way I see it, this is because there is less faith, even on the part of the exorcists. The people who come to be exorcised, and their relatives, have less faith.

Remember the story in the Gospel, of the youth at the foot of Mount Tabor who nine apostles weren't able to liberate. "But we did it in the name of Christ," they say in their defense! And then they ask Jesus, "Why didn't we succeed?" and the answer is, "Because of your lack of faith." Another evangelist relates (all three of the synoptics report this episode) that Jesus replies, "This type of demon can only be cast out by prayer and fasting." We see, however, that for the Jews, prayer was also associated with fasting. Which is why the evangelist who speaks only of prayer still implies fasting. Nowadays, though, faith is lacking on the part of the exorcist and on the part of the exorcised, which is why it takes a long time.

The time it takes to achieve liberation also depends on the depth of the roots. I've had one case—just one!—of a little girl of fourteen years who was liberated with an exorcism of no more than ten minutes. How come? The day before, she attended a Satanic ceremony with a friend out of curiosity. When she returned home that evening, she screamed, bit, and kicked. It was evening: her father put her in the car right away—she didn't live far from Rome, this girl—and brought her to the *Scala Santa*. Naturally, it was closed. He had to wait until six in the morning for it to open. And when he asked about Padre Candido, they told him that he didn't perform exorcisms anymore, because he was ill. "Don Amorth has replaced him," they answered him. And they referred him to me.

She arrived here, a little after eight, and I had already started with the exorcisms, and I did them until after noon. Thank Heaven I wasn't alone, there was another exorcist with me, more gifted than I am, also a student of Padre Candido, who still exorcises. The porters told me, "Come, Don Amorth, see to them, too!" And I replied, "But I'm tired, it's noon..." And they said, "He's been waiting since 8 this morning, and he just got into Rome last night..." And I conceded, "All right, let's exorcise her." After ten minutes she collapsed. She fell into a trance. First she bit me on the hand—I wasn't quick enough to move it. And they told me, "You better be careful, now." Then the other exorcist, since he saw her fall, approached the bed and asked, "Are you powerless? Do you even have strength to speak?" She gestured "no" with her head. After three or four minutes she was running through the courtyard with her brother, completely cured!

In the case of that little girl, the devil had just arrived the day before, so it was a quick liberation. But the longer he stays, the deeper he digs his roots. And it's for just this reason that in the first exorcism we ask the Lord to pull up the roots and to make him flee. Then maybe a fifty-year-old man shows up, and when he tells his story you realize that he's been under a curse since he was a little boy, then maybe it takes five years... After all those years the devil has dug in very deep roots. You can understand why it takes all these years. If we reach liberation in five, six, seven years, I'm happy enough.

You would have to do an exorcism a day

How many exorcisms do you perform in the course of a year? And how long does an exorcism take, typically?

Let's see, an exorcism should be performed, if possible, if you only have one patient, every day. If not, then at least once a week. So, at least fifty exorcisms a year for the party involved. But I'll show you my calendar... At the top I write the morning appointments, at the bottom the afternoon ones. Look, you see the month of December, which wasn't even one of the busiest... All full, including Christmas day!

As far as the duration of an exorcism, in general I do them in half an hour, but sometimes it's not enough because you have to keep going until the person wakes up. If one goes into a trance, you have to wait till they come around. And we see that when they come back to themselves they are happy, content, they feel cured. But they aren't. All it takes is a few hours, or a day, and they fall back into the previous situation.

Listen, I had a case once, a unique one, the longest I've ever done. It was the eighth of December, a special day dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. It involved a lady who had already been exorcised for years by Padre Candido, who had then passed her on to me—and I saw her every week, once a week. With the help of another exorcist, we performed an exorcism of five and a half hours. At the end of it she really seemed free! Kisses, hugs, and happiness...she was really excited. After a week, though, she was just the same as before. It was a truly strange case. There were so many demons inside her, and the devil was already deeply rooted... But you see, still speaking of that lady that Padre Candido had in his care for years, with me after, I still don't believe she's completely free, even now that she's in her sixtieth year—despite whatever improvement she's had. She can do everything, lead an independent life, she's a good wife, she has children, she works...

At the beginning, when she came here from Padre Candido, she had pains everywhere, especially in the head. For no apparent reason: she had been inspected by a number of doctors and nobody could give any explanation! But the woman had been the victim of curses. You see, ninety percent of cases are the result of curses. Now, this lady told me something important, once when I went to her house to exorcise her—because when she was in Rome she came to me, and when I went to Capranica the exorcisms were done in her home. I was a bit demoralized, that day at Capranica, even if I didn't let it show. But that lady told me, “Don Amorth, you know that we are many brothers and sisters, all married, all with children. None of us prayed, none of us went to church! After I started to have these disturbances, everyone went to mass, everyone said the rosary together...” Then

they told me, “I understand, Lord, why it’s taken so long.” Because the Lord benefits spiritually from these sufferings. I saw families that were far from religion, completely transformed, because having a case like this among them made them all bring themselves to mass, to prayer, rosaries, pilgrimages, etc., etc.

Spiritual sufferings and gains

You've said that often the long periods required for the most difficult liberations bring a spiritual gain to the families of the possessed... Has this also had an impact on your life?

Without a doubt! I've seen the spiritual gains that the Lord grants in compensation for the suffering that these people endure. With the sufferings offered to God, souls are saved. And the Lord has many suffering souls.

I wrote *A Life Behind a Smile*, the story of a beatified woman, who will be canonized soon, Alessandrina Maria Da Costa, to whom we owe the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Well, several testimonies report that she lived the Passion, had stigmata, and in the last thirteen years of her life she took no food, but lived exclusively on the Eucharist alone. She suffered constantly: atrocities day and night, since she never slept.

This woman, following a revelation from the Lord, saved millions of souls. Think of Our Lady of Fatima, what she said to the three children: there are many who go to Hell because there's nobody to sacrifice and pray for them. Sacrifice comes before prayer. It's more powerful. I've met many hopelessly, incurably ill people who have told me, "I'm so thankful to the Lord for this disease, I offer everything to the Lord for the salvation of souls..." or, "I will not give it up, this is my mission for the salvation of souls." Bed-ridden people... The Lord gains spiritually from everywhere.

We are very tied to the earth, and to earthly things. But we don't often think about the fact that the earth doesn't last long, and eternity lasts forever. If you only knew how many pamphlets with the Ten Commandments I hand out! First things first, I see what medical attention they've received, documents and analyses. Then I interview them: I ask if they pray, if they go to mass. Whether they go to confession. I have a stack of these pamphlets. And I say, "Look at the Decalogue and study it well." I always start with the third commandment: keep the Sabbath holy. Then I go to the sixth—I don't dwell on every single one. "Do not commit impure acts." This is not the gravest sin, but there lies our weakness. The gravest sins are ones of pride and hubris. But the violation of the sixth commandment is the most common sin; so much that Saint Alfonso de' Liguori said, "One goes to Hell either for this sin, or not without this sin." All men have it: it's our greatest weakness.

Then, in the course of the conversation, I recount the episode of that youth who goes to Jesus, and asks, "Good teacher, how does one go to Heaven?" And Jesus replies, "Observe the commandments." And then he says, "You see that we don't stay long on earth. And afterward, there's no third path, Heaven or Hell. You cannot escape!"

Mages, witches, and powers

Returning to the subject of mages, you told me that 98 percent of them are charlatans. What can you say of the remaining two percent?

They are possessed, or in league with the devil. When one is in league with the devil, possession isn't necessary. They already belong to him.

Now, the devil has extremely great powers. He can even heal...whatever goods they ask of him, he gives: success, money, pleasure. So a very decadent life, all of the most illicit pleasures, all of them! These mages, bound to demonic power, also have certain powers with which they bind themselves to people and drag them to Satan.

I happen to have liberated a few of them, these people who are snagged in a mage's net. And, since I steal so many victims and "clients" from them this way, don't think they don't try to take it out on me, given that I impede them from bringing their filthy work to fruition... I don't dare think how much resentment these mages must hold for me, nor how many curses they may have hurled my way...but they never attack me directly. But then, you see, if one lives in the grace of God and leads a life of prayer, it's difficult for a curse to take hold. Very difficult.

Talismans in the wall

A girl of twenty-five years. Her parents run a grocery shop. She has a sister and a brother. But in the shop, everything's haywire: the slicer breaks, then the scales don't work, now the register is giving them trouble; worst of all, the customers stop coming. The neighboring shops are always full of people (it's a "supermarket"). By now it's standard for the refrigerator to only work erratically and for things to move around, no one knows how. During the remodeling of the shop, in the hope that it might put some wind in the business's sails, they walled up two talismans given to them by mages (one of whom is well-known on television).

The girl senses oppressive presences in her room, and voices. She sees strange things, she can't sleep, she can't study, she's decidedly depressed. At night she feels like there's an irritating body on top of her, crushing her, squeezing her. She went to Rome a few times, near the Colosseum, to see the mage...who had sexually abused her a dozen times. He took hair from her pubis, her armpit, her head; he took a photo, on which he wrote her date of birth. Whenever she starts to get emotionally involved with someone, everything breaks down; she feels tied to the mage. As you can see, she's made a few mistakes in her life.

I proceeded to exorcise the store, the house, and the girl, six or seven times, who went into a trance and spoke. Various demons appeared: Alef, spirit of pride and revenge; Namàr, a spirit who destroys all affection and impedes the forming of family (naturally, you know how to assess these claims). At the mere touch of the stole, and at the prayers, she felt pain, especially in her more sensitive areas.

At present, continuing with the exorcisms over the phone, some things have improved. The infestations in the shop, house, and bedroom have ceased. There are no more noises, presences, or voices. All the appliances work. The evil presences are still there in the girl, however. There are negative responses during the exorcisms: "She's mine, can't you see how you're hurting her! Only I'm good for her..." And always the refusal to renounce. She feels (even if less than before) oppressed by the terror of not knowing how to love another, of being destroyed, of being unable to free herself, of wanting to die. It will still take a long time and a lot prayer to reach complete liberation, but meanwhile this testimony should suffice to give fair warning against resorting to mages and fortune-tellers...

Black masses

To give our readers fair warning of the risks one runs in turning to mages, I'd like to ask you if the mages have certain schemes for luring—often unaware—clients into their evil traps.

Of course they have particular schemes! For example, they attack during moments of weakness. There are a few nightclubs—not all, no need to generalize—where there's a fixed routine. A boy or girl goes there, starts smoking, then moves on to drugs, then sex, then Satanic cults. Without fail. It ends with Satanic cults. I have many examples of the kind. The greatest disgrace for a youth is to meet people who give them drugs. And then they find out they're part of Satanic cults, black masses.

The principle characteristic of black masses is that there is always contempt for the Eucharist. Then in a true black mass, there's the nude woman who serves as an altar, who must be a virgin, and is first violated by the one serving as priest, and then by all the others, and then anything goes. I mean, it turns into an all-out bordello. That is why many people at the black mass just go for “the ending,” for the brothel.

And on those occasions there is a real danger of evil's “entry”?

Absolutely! There is the danger of a sinister breach, which often happens when you perform a black mass and offer worship to Satan. It's no joke! The devil takes things seriously. And God is not obliged to hinder him: he made us free. And the priests who should be preaching on these things don't do so... They're silent on the existence of Hell, on the existence of the devil, and on the dangers present in going down these roads: drugs, pot, mages, and fortune-tellers. Some statistics cite fourteen million Italians visiting fortune-tellers...

The risks of cards

So besides mages and cults, one must be careful of fortune-tellers?

Yes, because there are many of them and they are in league with Satan through a pact—a pact of friendship with Satan. They don't have a demon inside them, rather they are in league with Satan, and they predict through him, that is, we could say they “work” through him. People go to them and benefit from it, so they continue to go. And the people who go there end up touched by Satan, which in the first place distances them completely from God. Satan is not interested in possessing people. What he wants is to remove them from God and make them fall into sin, because he wants to bring people to Hell, while God, on the other hand, wants to bring them to Heaven. By tying yourself to a fortune-teller and abandoning prayer, you begin a fall from grace that leaves you in the hands of the Malign.

Fortunetelling is perhaps the most common form of superstition, and yet it's difficult to find it spoken of directly. For me the occasion arose when I received a letter of request from an Argentinean bishop. He says he was presented a case to settle. Given the great diffusion of reading cards (in Spanish “*tirar las cartas*”), it's astounding how fortunetelling is never, or almost never, discussed in ecclesiastical documents.

The case that the bishop presented me is the following. In his diocese he has a practicing catholic who reads the cards for her neighbor to help him, but not for profit, and without bringing in anything unwholesome. Is this practice legitimate? The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which was consulted with a letter written in Latin, has not responded.

I believe that they have not responded because they've never dealt with the subject. Which is why I based my response, which I said was purely of personal value, on the principle that I believe card-reading should be numbered among the forms of superstition, divination in particular.

We don't know the origin of card reading; it didn't exist among the Arabs, nor among the Jews. Maybe it was imported by the gypsies from India. We know with sufficient certainty that before they were used as playing cards, they were used as instruments of divination.

Common playing cards were used (and are still used), or special cards, but by far the most prevalent kind are Tarot. Their purpose is to see the future, or occult things: that's where the danger arises. The basis, and therefore the moral condemnation, is in the fact that you want to tell the future, or occult matters, using a method totally inadequate for the task. Or they attribute to these means a power indicative of reality or events, without taking into account that these are powers that cards don't have. Even if you don't invoke the devil,

explicitly or implicitly, and even if you don't use trinkets of the magical variety (colored candles placed in a certain position; herbs; a plate of water with a bit of oil, etc.) the fact remains that you're attributing to an object a power that it doesn't have, to know things only God knows... And this constitutes a grave moral fault—a sign of a rebellion against God, who is the only Lord of history—and the desertion of faith and prayer in favor of a psychological dependence on the reading of cards by some fortune-teller.

Operation: suicide

What is the final objective of mages', fortune-tellers', and Satanic cults' machinations...?

The final objective is death, because God is the god of life, while Satan is the god of death. How many suicides are inspired by the devil! Even mass suicides are inspired by Satan.

I've never had in my care a person who later committed suicide, though I've had many cases who have attempted suicide. Fortunately something happened which kept the suicide from succeeding. When one starts receiving exorcisms, it's almost impossible for them take their own life.

A typical case is that of a girl who I exorcised a number of times, she recovered completely, returning to a normal routine, and now she's a schoolteacher.

It took years and years. I don't quite remember how Satan entered her because I got her from Padre Candido, who had had her in his care for a long time, and then passed her to me when he was no longer up to the task of exorcising her.

Anyway, one time this girl, with a sleeping bag over her shoulder, walked down the tracks of the Rome-Livorno-Genoa line. Then at one of the larger curves she lay down on the tracks, in the dark, inside the sleeping bag. She wanted to kill herself, she wanted a train to run her over. For more than five hours she stayed stretched out on those tracks. The trains passed by on either side of her, but never over her. It's a case that can't be explained. It's inexplicable.

Another time, here in Rome, and also in other streets, she walked down the middle of a crowded road without watching the stop lights or anything else, trying to get hit, and was never touched once by a single vehicle. She tried to take her own life but never succeeded. This is because if one begins the exorcisms it means the person has the desire to break out, to free themselves, and therefore it is in essence an internal battle in which, if called, the Lord will not fail to extend the graces needed for liberation.

Do you happen to know of any examples that did not have a happy ending?

Padre Candido told me about the only case he's had in which the girl eventually did take her own life.

He exorcised her because she was possessed by the devil. This girl had a mother who was a fiend. Her mother once went to speak with Padre Candido, who explained to her what misfortunes the girl suffered from. The mother agreed, but Padre Candido understood that she didn't believe a word of it.

They lived in a sixth-floor apartment. One time this girl confided in her mother and said, "I just want to kill myself, I can't take it anymore..." And her mother answered, "Get out of here, you're good for nothing, you couldn't even do it if you wanted!" She went to the window and opened it...and the girl threw herself out.

It's the only case I know of a person under exorcism who's come to that end.

The temptation towards suicide in these persons is extremely strong, commonly suffering from great pain. But when a person begins to receive exorcisms, it's impossible, in my experience, for them to succeed in taking their own life. Maybe they'll make the attempt, but it never comes to fruition. There are many cases of those who have ingested poisonous substances... They're always caught in time, taken to the hospital, saved with a stomach pump. And I know many such cases. Satan pushes suicide because he's the god of death. Saint Augustine said if God didn't hold him back, the devil would kill everybody.

An averted tragedy

This is a case of a family composed of a husband (a dentist), a very bright housewife, and two girls. Strange things are happening in the house: the sound of footsteps, unidentifiable presences, violent banging, lights turning on and off on their own, and the same with the TV and radio, and then objects that move around by themselves...in one part of the bedroom you could feel an intense cold, like a refrigerator...

At some point, the wife began to feel sharp pains in her stomach and head, along with violent tendencies for vengeance, and intense hatred for her husband. Returning from a restaurant, she comes home obsessed with the idea of sexually assaulting the waiter, who had given her a bottle of perfume. It all becomes a bone of contention with the husband, who also carries feelings of hatred and spite.

Husband and wife have participated in various New Age lectures and meetings. They were about to reach the spiritual guide stage. At the same time, they participated in Holy Spirit renewal ministries. As a result, the wife grew more and more depressed and tried to kill her husband and then herself, going from desperate sobbing to maniacal laughter for no apparent reason.

When they turned to me, I suggested a good confession, communion, and heartfelt forgiveness as a starting point. Besides cutting off contact with the New Age group, I also suggested a temporary hiatus from the Renewal group because the excessive introspection in order to reach a judgment caused states of agitation and demoralization. I advised them to proceed on a path of simple and personal faith, with a more direct relationship with Jesus of the Eucharist; also a few weekly masses with communion, worship, and Eucharistic blessing after the service. At home: the rosary, the exorcism of Leo XIII (in the Italian form), as well as drinking holy water and exorcised oil.

So then I exorcised the house, confiscating a great quantity of dolls, puppets, and oriental masks from the daughters. I began the exorcisms on the wife. She spoke during the exorcisms: "We are Alef and Alimai; this one has given herself to Satan, she is ours and we won't give her up to you; we're welcome here."

After the return to the Christian life, after forgiveness and five exorcisms, things change radically. The noises and the fighting stopped; now they sleep through the night. The obsession over that waiter stopped and the spirit of spite has almost disappeared.

I'd say they've finally found peace. I've also found brief exorcisms over the phone very effective. Now I continue the exorcisms, confident in a complete and stable liberation.

The Church does not say enough

Does the Church, in your opinion, provide enough warning to its followers on the dangers relating to charlatans, mages, and fortune-tellers?

Sadly, no. They say that the most-read page in newspapers is the horoscope page. A certain part of the Church is the real problem because many priests don't believe in it, and in seminary they no longer study three important treatises.

In the first treatise, the *De Deo creante*, you study God's creation, and how God created the angels, the sin of the angels, the division between angels and demons... It's no longer read.

A second treatise was one on morals. It prohibited going to mages and fortune-tellers... With reference to the Bible: you shall not suffer a witch to live. They stoned them. Jesus was accused of being a mage: "You act in the name of Beelzebub." And he replies, "If the devil battles against himself, how can his kingdom stand? If instead I do these things in the name of God, it means that the kingdom of Heaven has come to you." In the treatise, all these things: going to mages, fortune-tellers, and so on, were brought to light and condemned. Well, none of this is studied anymore.

The third treatise was on spirituality. That text talked about the spiritual life, naturally, but also the assaults of the devil, and it also talked about exorcisms. It explicitly taught this material. Those are three treatises that practically no one talks about anymore, not even in the Pontifical Universities. One can leave the seminary and become a priest without ever having heard a word on the devil, a word on exorcisms, much less the danger of mages and other occult sciences. Or on demonic possession. And so they don't believe in it, they never preach it. Many times I've had priests come to assist me in my exorcisms, who have said to me, "Look, Don Amorth, at first I didn't believe it, but now I really do!"

Jesus did exorcisms in the street. Now we have to do them in hiding.

Medjugorje and Renewal through the Holy Spirit

At the beginning of our conversation, you spoke to me about Renewal through the Holy Spirit and about the prayer groups linked to Medjugorje. Why are you interested in, and dedicate your time, to these people?

Many Renewal groups interest me because they have the great advantage of having revived the reading of the Bible, revived the devotion to the Holy Spirit, and to doing prayers of healing and of liberation. That is why I send them all the people who write to me from overseas asking to be exorcised.

For example, there was a man from Australia who hounded me because many people believe they can just come, get an exorcism, and go home cured... When it takes years! I'm already content, as I told you, if someone is liberated in four or five years. There are also those who are liberated in eight or nine months; but those are rare cases. In general it takes four or five years, and many are never liberated completely.

I'm tied to these Renewal groups because they perform prayers of healing and liberation without being exorcists, or even priests. They pray in groups. Even here in Rome there are many of these groups. At Sant'Angelo in Pescheria, for example, there's Padre Ermete who is not an exorcist, but gives benedictions to great effect on Wednesdays and Saturdays. They start praying at six in the evening, but Padre Ermete is already there at four to bless and hear confession. He lives in Montesacro, where there's the Church of the Guardian Angels. In the morning he's there to confess and bless, and Wednesdays and Saturdays they do prayers of healing and liberation. And they work, they're effective.

On the other hand, I'm tied to the Medjugorje because I was the director of the Marian journal of the *Edizioni San Paolo*. When the apparitions started in June 1981, I was immediately busy, and I wrote the first article on Medjugorje in October of 1981. Then I wrote books and a bunch of articles on Medjugorje, and I went there all the time. I wanted to be sure of whether the apparitions were real or false.

Do you think they were real?

Absolutely! Over the years I made friends with the six boys, the witnesses, and I heard from the people. It's the one place in the world where there are the most confessions and the most conversions. More than Lourdes; more than Fatima. It has an absolute, visible, measurable primacy.

And as far as the fight against the devil goes, there are many who do prayers with priests, and also those who go to Medjugorje and join in prayer groups. In 1984 I founded a Medjugorje group here in Rome. Every last Saturday of the month we have three hours of prayer like they do at Medjugorje. It's a group born of people who used to go to Medjugorje, including myself.

In your exorcisms do you cite the Madonna of Medjugorje?

No, I don't invoke her. In general I invoke the Immaculate Madonna, the Mother of God. I'm also very devoted to the Madonna of Guadalupe, that Madonna there [he points to an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe] who converted Latin America, which otherwise would not have been converted. First there were the friars, who accomplished nothing, absolutely nothing. Then she appeared, and she appeared as a little Aztec girl—and remember that “our people,” who went to America from Europe, behaved horribly, thieves and murderers—but as soon as she appeared, the locals felt her as something of their own, not as a figure imported from across the ocean. And through the Madonna they came to God, and they converted. I'm very bound to Our Lady of Guadalupe also because the meaning of the name “Guadalupe,” in the old Indian language, is “She who crushes the head of the Serpent,” which is why I find her especially suitable as protectress of those who exercise my particular ministry.

The Milingo case

One man who waged a great war against the devil was Emmanuel Milingo.

Yes, it's true, and how much I've done alongside him! We're friends, we still are. Whatever happened with him is a question mark on which I won't comment. I can tell you that a few months ago he came here to find me, we chatted for two hours, reminiscing over the things we'd done together, the masses, the exorcisms, the prayers... I thought, "I won't ask him anything personal, if it will risk breaking our friendship." As long as I'm a friend to him, it's possible there will come a day when I can be helpful in his return. So I don't want to break off our friendship. Friendship is enough, we didn't talk of his personal business.

Personally, I retain that in his whole story—which made such a splash a few years ago, and has popped up again from time to time, even recently—undoubtedly the influence of the devil was there, because when there are faults, deviations, the devil tries to make us fall into sin, remove ourselves from God and the Church, so the influence of the devil was there for sure; but just the influence.

Oh, well! I pray for him constantly, for his return... There's no doubt he loved John Paul II, and the first time he returned was due to the love he held for John Paul II, who freed him from prison. This is his story, as it came down to me. He was archbishop and president of the Episcopal Conference, they called him to Rome, saying that he had to go and speak with the Pope. He came with a small suitcase, telling himself, "I'll be in Rome for three days." They came to get him, took him to the Passionists at the Caelian, and held him there. By chance, after three years, some people started to come to him to receive benedictions. And the Passionists let them. He blessed one man he'd never met, and this man turned out to be a person with a lot of influence in the Vatican, and had the ability to go to the Pope and speak to him. He went to the Pope, and told him the story of Milingo, and right away the Pope had him taken out of there, named him a citizen of the Vatican and gave him a position in Piazza San Callisto. It made sense that he loved John Paul II. Then he found himself again being treated like dirt by the bishops.

He had his faults, this is true. I'll tell you a story, as it was told to me. Every month he went to Desio, where they still have this big meeting once a month with a black priest, to have a day of prayer. Cardinal Martini, who was then archbishop of Milan, wrote to say that whenever he went there, he had to notify him first. He never wanted to do it. His friends told him: "What's the difference? Scribble two lines, we'll tell you what to say... Your Eminence, on such a day I will be at Desio. Period, signature, that's it!" But he never

wanted to. He had a lot of pride, and a lot of strength. To see himself treated like that, to see the doors of the church closed in his face...

We celebrated a mass in the gardens of Villa Doria Pamphili a number of times. In order to hold mass, a bishop without a church has no choice but to hold it in the fields with the permission of the socialist syndicate! The cruelest joke of all was the one they pulled at St. Paul's Basilica. That day, they came all the way from Sicily by bus. He came in from the back, crossed the church, through the applause, in an atmosphere of celebration! He went into the sacristy to get dressed and the abbot told him, "The order came down from the vicariate, forbidding you to preach." He went white as a sheet; so white they thought he fainted; and in fact they later had to hospitalize him. There were thousands of people waiting for him, and there was no respect, neither for him nor the people. They could have warned him a week or a day in advance. Instead they told him while he was in the sacristy, holding his amice, about to put it on.

Emmanuel Milingo speaks

I find it helpful to round out what has been previously said on Milingo. The following is an account published in the bulletin of the Association of Exorcists.

“In Lusaka, but also in many of the places in the world I’ve lived, I’ve found that many Christians don’t ask Jesus for help, but go to healers. It’s absurd. In the Gospel Jesus is the healer of all ills, the liberator from evil spirits. Why do Christians turn elsewhere? It’s obvious: they do so because the prevailing mentality says that the Gospel contains historical facts, which happened in a certain period, and is not a living reality.

I reflected, and convinced myself that to be a true Christian I had to believe unquestioningly in everything reported in the Gospel. I immediately began to act, seeking to resolve my problems with prayer, as Jesus taught. Right away I had amazing results in the realms of both illness and demonic possession. I realized that between the two kinds of suffering there was often a connection. Doctors sometimes found themselves faced with inexplicable illnesses. Most likely these are illnesses provoked by spirits of evil and therefore only prayer can cure them... In the months that followed, astounding and inexplicable things happened one after another with an impressive frequency. I abandoned myself completely to the arms of the Lord...

In the months of May and June 1973 I continued the healings and liberations; but I did them in private, in my home. On July 3, I attended a meeting of Catholic Action at the cathedral. I decided that that was the moment to step into the spotlight. I said: “Brothers, we have suffered for so long from *mashawe* (*mashawe* is when someone suddenly begins to exhibit animalistic behavior) and we have been driven to look for healers outside of our religion. I tell you that we can cure this disease in our Catholic Church. Jesus is the true healer... If one of you suffers from this infirmity, have no fear, bring yourself forward and we will try to help you.”

The first contact I had with supernatural powers from the world of shadows was in 1973. In April of that year I had a personal crisis. I had already been a priest for twenty-five years and a bishop for four. I labored for the Lord, but I was very ignorant of everything relating to the realm of Satan. I was familiar with the world of Satanism, the mobs of forsaken sufferers. I had terrifying experiences. I liberated people possessed by the spirits of the dead. I received photos of people with needles pierced through the image: in the eyes, the heart, in other vital parts. At times these photos are closed in bottles, sealed with a sort of paste stamped with a curse on the hated enemy. Then they’re thrown in a river or sealed in a tomb: this means the person is condemned to death.

A connection is created between the person who commissioned the vendetta and the person who carries it out; this tie is deleterious, it's the start of a conquest on the part of Satan and who knows where it will end.

...Of course, people disturbed by Satan are not as numerous as they are made out to be. But in every diocese there must be experts, ready to intervene. Instead, not only are there dioceses deprived of exorcists for years, but there are even bishops who prohibit their priests from getting involved in exorcisms. In reality, many ecclesiastics, even in the upper echelons of the Church, avoid talking about the devil. The devil has become an endangered animal and exorcists are considered poachers. Satan has the power to move as he pleases among Christians of the Catholic Church.

My convictions and my actions have been clear from the beginning. I am certain that if from the beginning of my enterprise I had sought the truth and not fantasized around errors, I would still be in Lusaka. But few have believed in my good faith; not even the Church believed it.”

I was never afraid

Don Gabriele, let's return to your own life. Have you ever been afraid?

I've always said that the devil is afraid of me. I've always said, when he sees me, he wets his pants. I've never had disturbances, nor fear of the devil.

But in other cases it doesn't always go that way... There are in fact exorcists who have had problems. Terrible problems. I'd like you to read a book by Renzo Allegri, *Cronista all'inferno*. Here in Rome you'll find an exorcist who was torn to pieces by the devil. Physically. He couldn't do anything. The Lord sometimes permits these things, always for the greater good. Who knows how much good has come from the suffering of this exorcist.

The role of sensitives

And the seers, the sensitives, what role might they have?

There's one charismatic; the only one I trust... There are many out there, but they are false charismatics. But there is one who I've sent many people to, who you can reach over the phone. He's in Le Marche. When you call him, at the start of the conversation he asks your name, he asks your age; and then he can tell your entire story. For instance, he'll say: "When you were six you received a curse from this person...this curse was repeated when you were twenty...and it took hold..." still over the phone, keep in mind, "place your hands on your right kidney, no, look, a little lower...press there..."

"Ahhh!..."

"Do you feel pain?" And the person feels tremendous pain.

He has a sensitivity of exceptional power...these are true charismatics. He's the only one I have faith in. It's rare, from the moment they started calling from all over Italy, to find the phone line free. There's the answering machine that tells you his receiving schedule in the morning and afternoon.

We've never met, unfortunately, but having spoken so much over the phone we do consider ourselves friends. And he sends me all the ones from Rome who call him for help.

This sensitive senses evil presences?

Always: when I send people to him, this professor from Le Marche, they have something wrong; and sometimes it's something very violent. And his diagnoses are accurate. "They've sent you death curses! They've sent you very powerful curses! You feel this and this..." He can say all this without seeing the person and without the person saying a thing.

There are others...for example one here in Rome who they say has extraordinary gifts. I've had some contact with him, but then I stopped calling...

The problem with “sensitives”

Reliable sources of judgment in the diagnosis of a particular case are a great aid for the exorcist, in so far as they reduce his dependence on his own judgment. Nevertheless, every mistake committed by the exorcist will be used against him, or against the possessed, by Satan. Some claim to be capable of deducing a person’s character or the story of a given place with certainty, as though they were watching a TV screen. Others claim the same certainty of diagnosis on the basis of a special ability they possess for interpreting the movement of a pendulum, the behavior of oil poured into water, etc. The notion that these abilities are on the same level as the criteria recommended by the Rite of 1614 is very common. But how can we be certain whether these gifts come from God, or from our human nature, or from angels, or demons?

Similar cases regarding seers and apparitions can be of use to us in deciding whether such gifts originate from God. In the judgment of “apparitions,” it’s helpful to ask the seer how he puts himself in contact with Jesus, or the Madonna, first, during and after the apparition. The purpose of this is ascertaining whether the “seer” becomes more aware of the necessity for heightened worship of Jesus. Veneration is humility in action, it’s something that cannot come from Satan, nor from ourselves. But even if he doesn’t improve in veneration of Jesus, this doesn’t mean that the apparitions or gifts necessarily originate from Satan, since they can also come from angels or from our own human nature.

Angels can help us ascertain the presence of the devil in many ways. But I don’t believe angels use methods that demons can easily imitate to our detriment. That means these gifts (pendulum, oil...) come either from demons or from our human nature. We humans possess a rich nature that cannot be explained. For instance, it’s common for twins to know where the other one is, what they’re thinking, etc. Often mothers intuit what’s happening to their children, especially if something troubling has happened. Such abilities may be natural; but after the original sin, men became much more attuned to the material than to the spiritual in our nature; they are therefore less inclined to develop their abilities in this direction. We see, for example, how the Curate of Ars was quite competent in the spiritual camp. Certainly no one can claim to have the same holiness. But the use of these abilities should be avoided, at least in the diagnosis of possessed individuals.

If an exorcist becomes imprudent, he probably won’t restrict himself to the use of these extraordinary phenomena. He might also overestimate his own investigative powers. For instance, the Malign would really love for an exorcist to attribute particular actions to particular demons, that way if the exorcist tries to cast out the mistaken demon, what will

the demon do if not remain, pretending to be gone?

It's important to note that among the rebel angels there is no democracy; it is a strict hierarchy. They act and speak according the will of their superior; this is the reason why many simple demons reveal their name. Otherwise they would act and speak according to the circumstances and requirements either of the particular person they're tormenting, or the particular exorcist.

A gift, but from where?

The particular sensitivities these persons possess come from nature, God, or the devil. If their abilities come from nature, the correct term for these people is “sensitives.” Take dowsers for example. It’s a unique type of sensitivity that sometimes appears as a sixth sense and can only pertain to natural things, which is why it is of no help in seeing whether there are malefic presences or influences.

If a particular sensitivity and perception comes from God, then you’re dealing with charisma, and we would not call them sensitives, but charismatics. I won’t pull out definitions and above all I won’t dwell on the important issue of diagnosis—sometimes they are too conditioned. That is why an exorcist can’t do without the fundamental rules of diagnosis that are indispensable aids in this difficult verdict. It’s happened to me more than once that I’ve accepted someone to help pray during my exorcisms, following information that seemed very good to me, and then had to exclude them in order to reach the best possible means.

If this particular sensitivity comes from the devil, then the term I propose to use is “occultists,” because in one way or another it involves operating in the occult, even if the ability is unknown to the person himself. I say that sometimes the person is unaware of his abilities because he performs magical actions without realizing it. Or sometimes they believe they have a guiding spirit who provides them the ability, or they receive the inspiration from sources they believe to be good (voices, dreams, presences) but which actually have sinister origins.

...For our specific ministry we’re not concerned with sensitives; we’re concerned with occultists so we can warn the public, even if, in many cases, people come to us who have received precise diagnoses of their condition from mages. We are mostly interested in charismatics, for the help they can give us either in diagnosis or in the course of the exorcisms. Particularly in the case of prayers of liberation.

The souls of the deceased

In your exorcisms have you ever encountered the souls of deceased people?

Not only will I say yes, but I'll tell you that I've also asked this same question at a conference and in the circular, having the exorcists with many years of experience write me their responses.

Few replied *no*; the majority said *yes*. Even I have encountered the souls of the damned. But I've always seen that there was a demon manipulating them. Or else they are Satan's slaves, at the mercy of the devil, sent to infest people. The devil uses them to disturb people; he is the one in command.

I managed to discover this because I compelled them to give their name. They didn't want to say it (their voices become a growl, an imitation of the one of the possessed), sometimes I suggested some names myself, and they fell for it. The most common are Satan, Lucifer, and then Asmodeus, and so many more, like Beelzebub... When they have biblical names they are powerful. There are also those who don't have much power and can be expelled in short time. Eventually the damned were obliged to tell me, "Yes, I am so and so..." When I asked, "Who is the one controlling you? Who commands you? Who maneuvers you?" after many attempts they finally tell me the name, and I manage to speak with the demon and perform the exorcisms on the demon himself.

So they can use the souls of the damned...

In my experience, yes. And also in the experience of others, among the most well-known. For instance Padre Matteo La Grua, a great Sicilian exorcist who is now very old and lives in Palermo. He's ninety-four years old. He only gives benedictions now; he no longer performs exorcisms. I could also turn to the experience of Padre Antonio, who is dead now. He was an exorcist in Benevento, and told me some very impressive things in along these lines.

On the problem of presences, on the basis of my limited experience, I've always detected the presence of a malign spirit, be it in the few cases of possession, or in the numerous cases of personal or local infestation. In only one case did the spirit claim to be a damned soul, revealing his name, last name, cause of death, and the reason for his presence in that man; but after an exorcism that seemed complete, I still didn't know anything. How to interpret the case? The devil can also masquerade as a damned soul, as the Rite confirms. When it comes to the penitent spirits I agree with what others before me

have said: they are holy souls and can do no harm.

The devil uses the souls of the damned?

The comments of various exorcists reveal that some of them have had dealings with probable tormented souls. In many cases I've dealt with, I've found there were definitely some souls of the dead that could be reclaimed but, due to their demonic obsession, have chosen to stay in one place and torment the people who live there.

In one case I had dealings with a man and two women who had died in a house. For some time they had tormented the family that inhabited it. Our prayers of exorcism, which were invaluable, had no effect on these souls. So, what you must do is adapt and utilize some of the prayers we recite over the dead while also speaking to these tormented souls, sending them away and making them understand that the family they are tormenting holds no hard feelings against them. That they are forgiven. In the course of the prayer I try to steer these souls into the light of Christ, where God may act according to his will.

It's a proven fact—and we know from many exorcists' cases and the accounts throughout history, in anthropology and in other religions—that not all souls go directly to Heaven, Purgatory, or Hell after death. Some remain “trapped” because of their material attachments and their resentment and hatred towards others, or because they have given themselves over to the devil. Occasionally, when dealing with these tormented souls, you may even discover that you have encountered a demon. In these situations you have to move carefully, because you're preparing for a battle where you effectively have the chance to liberate that soul, or else they'll go back to the devil. The devil is a master of lies and tries to deceive as much as possible. For our part, we must always recognize that the Lord allows these things to occur for a specific reason, and that we can benefit from the knowledge we gain from them.

In recent years the majority of cases seem to involve souls that had been possessed, and had been used and manipulated by the devil to torment or terrorize individuals and families. Sometimes these cases arise because of an old curse placed upon the family.

The question remains: are several exorcisms needed? This depends on the specific situation. If, for instance, you're dealing with someone who has been initiated into black magic as a form of service, to become priestess or priest, then you can expect it to take a lot of exorcisms. I have seen a very pious and devote exorcist who had to fast, pray, and repeat the exorcisms many times. I have seen pride and a kind of ambition manifest in some exorcists. The devil, when he sees pride and ambition in an exorcist, finds exactly what he's looking for: an opponent who isn't focused on his ministry. It's just like in the Gospel when the Lord's disciples ask why they haven't been successful in expelling demons:

“There are cases that require prayers and fasting.” This implies we should consider ourselves only an instrument of the redeeming presence of the Lord.

I believe we have to recognize that despite the advancement of modern technology, only exorcists are capable of distinguishing one thing from another when it comes to the dealings and situations we must confront. The devil knows no limits or barriers to subduing persons or souls. It seems that, from a historical perspective, when one compares the actual cases with the ones that have been published and are considered classical examples of demonic possession or vexation, a lot has changed: what seems to be considered this or that, is now considered a form of mental illness. But only when you check and provoke the individual by way of exorcism can you determine whether their affliction is really “mental illness” or if it’s an infernal illness. We must always base ourselves on either observable signs and phenomena, or on silent provocations (for example, carrying the Eucharist without telling anyone). Also the use of holy water with holy salt, and with water from the Easter liturgies. Observe which one they drink and which they refuse. They always recognize the holy water and salt. For years I’ve been getting spat on when there was a demonic presence in someone.

We must be careful because we live and work in a world where the devil wants to destroy the power of the Church, toppling the priesthood of Christ. We must also learn to work with our medical colleagues in the realm of mental health: they can offer a substantial service to the Church. We must learn to have faith in their claims, just as they must have faith in ours. After all, our goal is the same: the salvation of the individual as a person.

A soul in the dark?

We ask ourselves: do only demons cause a soul to suffer, or could damned souls do so as well? Keeping in mind the traps the devil sets for us, I do believe that the damned can be involved as well. We know that even demons have a hierarchy: why couldn't a demon chief command the damned to torment a soul? I deduced this from cases where I've encountered forces that are inferior to those I encounter when dealing with demons.

Wandering souls indeed exist, ones that have not yet received a specific destination. I'll relate a remarkable episode, of which I have the recorded tapes. One day a lady introduced herself to me, complaining of strange and terrible pains. I prayed and she went into a trance.

I interrogated the potential presence within her: "Tell me who you are in the name of God." He responded without much difficulty. He said he is an Albanian of Calabrian origin. He had come to Calabria for the Day of the Dead and was driving his car while intoxicated, and died in an accident, also killing another. I noticed that if I talked about demons and Hell, it terrified him. I asked, "Are you in Hell?" He responded forcefully, "No!" "Where are you?" "In the dark," he replied. I was perplexed. I asked him how he entered that woman, and he replied with a very detailed story, which the lady later confirmed when she came out of her trance. He said the custodian of the cemetery, who had made use of his cadaver for a curse, forced him into her.

I asked him if he wished to see God. He replied with a lengthy "yes" without fear and with great desire. One day I spoke to him of Most Holy Mary; he didn't know anything about her and told me that his mother was called Carmelina. I started to instruct him; he listened with interest. I began to doubt that he was in the dark (the Hebrew Sheol). When I asked if he was disposed to ask pardon from God for his sins, he said yes. I administered a rather generic confession under conditions, and I absolved him under conditions.

Then I asked him when he would be leaving. He answered, "Within twenty days." "And where will you go?" "To atone." To Purgatory, perhaps? That evening, when the lady came home, the character told her clearly, "I've made you suffer so much, but it wasn't my fault. When I am in Heaven I will pray for you."

The case poses gross theological problems. But even Saint Francis—as tradition says—revived a woman who had died in mortal sin, confessed her, and then she fell asleep again in peace.

Elvis' spirit guide

And now we must open the discussion to multiple personalities, which we discussed at an international conference of exorcists. I think it's largely a field for medical expertise. And then we must deal with the phenomenon of guiding spirits, who often claim to be the souls of the dead.

In Turin there's someone who claims to have Elvis Presley's guiding spirit, a suicide! I think that at the very most it could be the spirit of someone who was close to the singer and was able to transfer himself onto this man, a faith healer who admired Presley to the point of idolatry.

Another case of a spirit guide that ended up being rather dangerous is that of an artist who committed suicide at the age of forty. His art seemed so divine that the family of a girl considered him a god. In this climate of admiration-idolatry, the girl one day discovered that she had the spirit of the artist as a spirit guide, to her parents' great joy...until she was strongly tempted towards suicide, and was saved thanks to the prayer of liberation. Naturally the idolatry of that artist ceased in the family, and the girl, with no more spirit guide, lives a calm and balanced life.

There are many questions that still remain open in this field. The theologians I've been in contact with have told me that the authoritative rulings are too scattered, and the studies on this subject too few; the biblical commentary too scarce, patristic studies too rare, theological contributions minimal, which is why some have refused to give me a written response, or have told me, "You must be content with personal opinions, comparing them with the ideas of others; and only after a long journey can we hope to obtain decisive intervention on the part of the ecclesiastical authority..."

The problem for us exorcists arose when we tried to put together our experiences regarding the possibility of encountering deceased souls (damned? Not always) in some of the people we exorcise rather than demons or something of that order. There were clashing opinions, depending on the various experiences of each exorcist...

In anticipation of the Parousia, even the deceased live for a period I would call "intermediary," where even if their eternal fate is already decided, they haven't yet reached it for lack of a body. Likewise, the demons who are "chained in Tartarus awaiting Judgment" (Saint Peter and Saint Judah), still have a great deal of activity. We know some things about the blessed and the purging souls (they receive our prayers, our suffrages, they pray for us), but we don't know anything about the damned, who may also be in an intermediate stage. Is their use plausible? If any action for the good (for the souls in

Heaven and in Purgatory) is possible, why couldn't any action for the worse be possible for the damned? Could someone still be trying to decide?

They always send me away!

Don Gabriele, torniamo più da vicino alla sua esperienza. Lei è in una congregazione religiosa. Come apprezzano il suo lavoro?

Come le ho detto, quello dell'esorcista è un ministero difficile, incompreso. Anch'io sono così tanto amato che questo è il ventitreesimo posto in cui faccio esorcismi. Mandato via. Mandato via. Mandato via... Perché la gente non vuol sentire urla, sostanzialmente. Mandato via da tutti i posti in cui ho fatto esorcismi qui a Roma. È il ventitreesimo posto, quello in cui opero attualmente.

È difficile vivere con questa diffidenza da parte dei colleghi?

Ci fai il callo... ci fai il callo.

È veramente una battaglia su due fronti... chi ti dovrebbe aiutare invece...

È così. I vescovi, anche quelli che nominano esorcisti, in genere lo fanno malvolentieri. Non è che si informino su come vanno le cose, quanti ce ne sono, se ce ne vorrebbero di più, quanta gente è colpita, e non è che radunino gli esorcisti per esaminare la situazione. Niente di tutto questo. Nominano qualcuno, e poi l'esorcista si arrangi e basta. Non se ne occupano.

How many are possessed

Out of the thousands of exorcisms, how many are cases of real possession? A hundred?

More than that. I've done so many exorcisms, and am still doing so many, you've seen my calendar... I'm slowing down a bit now because I'm getting older, but only a little. I spend my days doing exorcisms, every morning, every afternoon, even Christmas day, even Easter Sunday. Always. Aside from the time dedicated to preaching and television broadcasts, and even these still pertain to this work.

Of all the exorcisms I've done, which by a rough calculation I'd say is over seventy thousand... Not seventy thousand people, naturally. I can't calculate how many people: I can calculate the exorcism sessions. So now I calculate that I've done—at first they were more numerous—about seventeen a day. Now, as I told you, I do a little less. For instance: in the morning, which I reserve for the “heavier” cases, I call five people. For those who don't make a reservation there's nothing to be done, otherwise I'd go insane.

It happens that one person might go through hundreds of exorcisms; this is why I say I can calculate in broad strokes how many exorcisms I've completed, but I'm not in a place to say how many people I've assisted. However, I've encountered well over a hundred possessed people. I kept track until I hit one hundred, but then I got tired of it and stopped counting. Then you must consider that, having been Padre Candido's successor, I found myself with all of Padre Candido's cases. I inherited all the people who were in his care, meaning all of them were definitely possessed or tormented by the devil. I found myself in charge of a crowd of people who were definitely disturbed by the devil. I had a “clientele” from the beginning. A few were possessed.

And there are those who have never been liberated. Saint Alfonso de' Liguori says, “It doesn't always come to total liberation, but it always does some good.” For instance, there's a lady who lives not far from here; she was liberated, but it took many years. First a priest who is now dead, a very dear friend of mine, exorcised her. He was parish priest and exorcist. He exorcised her over many years. Then for several years I exorcised her, until she was perfectly liberated.

I have no successors...

Do you have a successor, Don Gabriele?

No.

Why not? You're not "grooming" anyone?

It depends on the bishops. Here in Rome I told Cardinal Poletti, the one who appointed me, I told him: here in Rome it's a joke for a bishop to appoint an exorcist, with all the religious institutes there are! There are all the general houses and, more importantly, the provincial houses. Sometimes the "generals" don't really know the local situation of their own order, while the provincials do. So, what does it take to call someone? Here's an example: In Rome there are a great number of Jesuits. They have the church of Jesus, the church of Saint Ignatius, to the Holy Spirit they have the *curia generalizia*—various houses. What does it take to call a provincial of the Jesuits and tell him: "Listen, send a person to this shepherd..." At first there was no one, now there's one, at the *Chiesa del Gesù*. They appointed him a year or two ago, now maybe he's retired. What does it take to call the provincial of one of the major orders and say, "Send me one!"

Do you have a school?

I don't have a "school." For me, a class on exorcism means doing exorcisms, and having priests assist me.

I've had a few of them, priests, who came regularly and then became exorcists in their dioceses. They say, "I am a pupil of Don Amorth." And I tell them, "Get out of here!" I am a pupil of Padre Candido, that's all.

Speaking of schools, I should tell you there are Satanic schools in many cities, but they're hidden, ultra hidden. All it takes is showing up, join the group, participate in the cult of Satan, in the black masses, and become a practitioner that way. That's how you integrate yourself more and more. There are schools of Satanism and magic. I know that at one time they even gave out diplomas. And they make you pay...

In one of our publications you wrote, "Having even one wrong person present at an exorcism can nullify the effect." How come?

Because it only takes one person in league with Satan during an exorcism to cancel out the effect of the exorcism itself. Or to infect the others present. Sadly, you remember, there are a lot of people like that, in any large group; when, for example, we hold days of prayer. I don't hold many, but I hold a few.

In July, for instance, I go either to the stadium in Avellino or to the one in Salerno. It's always the same person who organizes them, he's a great charismatic named Padre Michele Vassallo, and he belongs to a religious congregation that was recently founded but is flourishing. He organizes these prayer days, and he organizes a lot of them; he has groups all over Italy and once a year he organizes the national convention, either in Avellino or Salerno. The stadium in Avellino is nicer because it's smaller and you can see the sanctuary of Montevergine, but there were problems with security. Last year we went to Salerno, and we'll go to Salerno this year. There are always between seven and eight million people. Well, even in the case of such oceanic crowds, one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch. And they can even contribute to upsetting the exorcism.

In general, however, at these mass gatherings there are always various mages and people who come to try and do some damage. They sit themselves next to someone and transmit negative energy. And this person feels disturbed. Often these disturbances continue afterward. Then, after going to doctors in vain, they end up turning to an exorcist; and then you see that they've truly come under a malign influence. It's rare for it to come to possession in these cases; very rare. But a malign influence, sure.

Killing curses

You've often spoken to me of curses. Do killing curses exist?

Yes, killing curses do exist, and I've come across them; but in my opinion they don't have a consistent effect. It's true, however, that there are people who attempt to place a killing curse... That charismatic I spoke of, the professor from Le Marche, uses this term, saying, "They've placed a killing curse on you." But often this term simply signifies a very grave curse. Dying because of a curse is not a given. Life is in God's hands.

What is the cost of a killing curse? You may be surprised. A few years ago a married couple came to me. The wife mentioned some disturbances; she'd been married for a year and a half and in all that time she'd stopped menstruating. Sometimes she fainted suddenly; she is allergic to foods seasoned with oil and fat, they give her diarrhea. I began the prayer and realized that something wasn't right. I moved on from the generic prayer to a prayer of healing and the effect was immediate: when she returned, she told me that she could eat seasoned foods without the usual problems.

I advised her to check her pillows. In one of them they found a "medallion," which the husband destroyed by the usual methods. Returning to the house afterwards, the husband found that the wife was very ill and vomited up a medal identical to the one just destroyed. The face had a stamped image of a monstrosity.

On the night between the tenth and eleventh of February (the anniversary of the apparition of Lourdes!) I got a call around one: the young wife was in a coma. I prayed over her and she woke up, but fell back into the coma shortly after. I prayed and she emerged from the state of coma, but was completely paralyzed. I prayed again, placing my hands on various parts of her body; after two and a half hours of prayer, she finally stood up and walked. The paralysis, especially in the extremities, repeated itself with some frequency. Sometimes it's enough for the husband to massage her with exorcised oil, reciting the prayers I'd given him, for her legs unlock; sometimes my intervention is necessary.

I followed up with this couple weekly; but going forward, things got worse. Liters and liters of diarrhea, in various colors; as if her body were a jug not big enough to hold the liquid coming out of it. The house was infested and the situation grew worse and worse. I saw the necessity of proceeding to exorcisms, but I had trouble; my brothers didn't want me to exercise this ministry, to which I had been authorized in the diocese where I had jurisdiction. The bishop seemed to have his hands tied, but in the end he gave me the authorization just for this case, and only after the repeated insistence of the parents of the

girl who, meanwhile, suffered from constant fainting. When the exorcisms started, the trouble worsened. She couldn't keep her food down and vomited continuously. I was convinced that it was not a matter of possession, but I continued the exorcisms, given the gravity of the situation. Then the wife began vomiting up the strangest things: glass, nails, bandages, metal buckles, little objects like animals...

In the span of fifteen days she went into a coma three times. The first time, after the prayers, I lifted her eyelids: you could only see the white, not the pupil. I showed her the crucifix reciting: "Fugite partes adversae..." And the wife came out of the coma. The second time, after the prayer, I invoked Padre Pius, placing a reliquary on her head. This alone took care of the coma. The third time, seeing the inefficacy of the recited exorcism, I said a rude phrase, which I sometimes use to a certain effect: "Saint Francis shits in your mouth!" (a phrase inspired from an episode of the *Fioretti*). Flailing about, the wife regained her senses. The young couple couldn't stay in the house for more than two hours at a time, and had to keep an empty stomach. They spent a few nights in their car to hide their condition from their relatives, and they made up excuses to explain the young wife's deterioration.

In November of the following year they moved into her parents' house, concealing the situation as much as possible. The almost-constant vomiting came back; the woman was forced to eat constantly. First she expelled the food, then the other strange things began to happen. One hundred thousand lira a day was not enough for food. The strangest thing was that pieces of paper began coming out with the vomit, and they fit together like a puzzle. First the image of a woman appears, in the form of a postcard; on top is written the name of the wife and the date of their wedding. Then sacred images and scenes of prayer show up: two icons, a crucifix from the 1700s, a face of Christ. They were images the parish priest had left behind to bless the house. We noticed a veil over the paper: with this removed, the mage's plan was revealed: a killing curse, with the schedule of events, dates, and termination. The young wife was supposed to die of a hemorrhage at some time in the twenty-four-hour period of March 17 of the following year. Another possessed person, in "trance" during an exorcism, put me on alert: "You must flee from Piedmont," and warned that the wife would die of a hemorrhage, even though the person in question didn't know anything about the case.

On the eve of the day set forth for her death, the couple and the girl's parents decided to go to Liguria. I accompanied them, after having assigned some cloister monasteries to pray. At 11:55 p.m. on the day of the 17th, after spending all day vomiting up food and pieces of paper with ballpoint writing, we were warned that if she faints, we have to unravel something pungent from her vagina. We pulled a tangled thread out of her, fifteen centimeters long. Death did not come as the mage had planned, but her liberation would. Her ordeal was not over. Her liberation was set back because whoever commissioned the spell from the mage poured a huge sum of money into it.

On other sacred images, thrown up piece by piece, emerged the person who provoked the curse: a spurned lover. He paid the mage another huge sum to place another curse. This curse was conquered when the couple left the parents' house, where they were supposed to stay another year, to go live somewhere else. Now we can say that the young wife is almost completely cured; she only has to take certain precautions.

We found out that for those two curses the client actually shelled out 3,800,000,000 lire (almost four billion!). Despite eating constantly, continually vomiting, the wife lost almost thirty kilograms of weight and suffered unspeakably. She recovered rapidly by drinking exorcised water. It's incredible that she didn't die in all those months, never able to nourish herself.

I can bring in the photocopies of the rejected lover's plan, with his signature and the signature of his father, who paid the mage. I also have the mage's program, signed by him. That lover might be dead now because he was supposed to die with his beloved. We're checking into it, but it's not easy. I could also bring you a selection of the objects thrown up. You could write a whole book on them.

Throwing up glass and nails

You've kept objects used for curses, and objects that materialized during exorcisms?

I have more than two kilos in my room. Nails this long [he made a gesture indicating about ten centimeters], plastic puppets, scraps of iron, lots of iron pieces, various objects... I've watched and felt with my hands as these objects materialize as they leave the mouth. If you took an X-ray of the patient only moments before the materialization, you wouldn't see a thing. And the size... I'm telling you, nails this big! And then, if you want to be an exorcist you have to be willing to get spat on constantly.

As far as these manifestations go, I can tell you a particularly remarkable story.

I was presented with the situation of an eighty-five-year-old man, perfectly healthy, as the doctors confirmed, who peacefully smoked his forty cigarettes a day. He was married and had a son. His wife, riding her bicycle one day, struck a wall, had a bad fall, and lost her life. The mother—or rather, mother-in-law—of the man I had been invited to take on, had another daughter and wanted the widower to marry her. It happened to be a girl who had gotten pregnant by another man; her mother forced her to have an abortion and throw the fetus in the sewer. To the proposition of marriage the man was decidedly opposed. In retaliation, this mother-in-law, who was dedicated to superstition and occultism, had a real killing spell commissioned against her son-in-law. A stuffed dummy was found, nailed to a piece of wood, with the stomach full of glass bottle shards.

At this point the man decided to abandon his deceased wife's country and return to his own. But he started to suffer: he threw up nails and glass, and they also come out anally; they came out of his pants, who knows how; sometimes, when he was lying on the sofa, he would stand up to find himself covered in pin pricks. It went on for years. He would fall to the ground, glass and nails scattering around him, some as long as twenty-five centimeters and as wide as your thumb. The doctors find nothing wrong with him; he even threw up glass in front of them. X-rays revealed nothing. Sometimes he would crawl on the ground like a snake, or fall as if he were tripped by something, without hurting himself. He received exorcisms two times from Padre Candido. He got exorcisms sometimes in person, sometimes long distance, resulting in powerful reactions, blasphemy, thrashing; he rarely got violent. But he felt stuck with nails in his intestines, his legs, various parts of his body; he felt cut by glass; he struggled to hold it in, but he would vomit. And he hurt himself with the shards of glass; even his son and I cut ourselves a little, taking them away from him.

Things are getting better now. He was finally able to take communion. Since then he's stopped vomiting objects and falling on the ground. But he still can't enter a church, because as soon as he reaches the door he feels a great force pushing him back.

Seeing as he lives in a foreign country, he mostly receives long distance exorcisms. He hears strange noises in his house, and objects move around. For a whole year, a person who lived with him was unable to leave the house: no matter how hard he tried he was stuck. After the house was exorcised, all these disturbances ceased.

He had a big vineyard; one day he noticed two vines had been severed. He thought it was some kind of prank, and for fifteen days and fifteen nights, he and his family kept a look out, but the vines kept getting cut down. In two weeks the vineyard was ruined.

He had bought a dairy goat; as soon as it entered the house it wouldn't eat or drink for fifteen days. After a benediction (or rather, an adapted exorcism, placing exorcised oil and water in the animal's mouth), the animal took to eating again, just when it was about to die. I think that all these phenomena depended on the negativity that this man carries about him even still.

The cursed suit

I find it useful to relate the following testimony of a person who achieved complete liberation.

>“I was ill for many years. I had a variety of baffling physical symptoms, which medical science was unable to diagnose. Only when I turned to an exorcist was I liberated from these strange illnesses. My first experience was just after I’d put on a suit. It was given to me by a lady who pushed me to put it on right away. Shortly after, with this suit on, I was struck with incredible agony. It was like my will was paralyzed, I could no longer react or speak. I also had other manifestations, as strange as they were painful. My body, down to the waist, was covered in enormous and impressive blisters that burned unbearably. They shifted about before my eyes and moved from my face to my waist, across my arms and torso. I was completely covered; this phenomenon lasted a few hours. I was freed of it by exorcisms. I had other very different symptoms—such as inexplicable panic attacks, sudden paralysis, sudden diarrhea—that doctors couldn’t understand. But I’m completely cured thanks to exorcisms.”

The risks of the job

What are the most common reactions from your “patients”? How does hostility towards the prayers of liberation manifest during the exorcism?

Well, there are a lot who spit. They look for the right moment and bam! They get you full on. Any exorcist with the slightest experience will try to defend himself from spitting; he knows that they spit, so he tries to keep a handkerchief in front of his face.

Anyway, I remember that with one of the spitters, I noticed just in time that he was about to do it and I put a hand in front of his mouth: and what came out, what materialized, were three nails. I still have them. I keep them in my room on the third floor. I’ve shown them on television a few times, because television needs to show it, to make people see.

Sure, we don’t know what these phenomena are caused by exactly. There are so many ways to cast a curse... The most common way is a cup of coffee, or a piece of candy, with the mixture inside... I always say: be careful of who you visit. If there’s a person you don’t trust, who you expect something sinister from, be careful. For instance, you go to your aunt, who has baked a cake, and there’s a piece set aside: “This one’s for you,” she says, and maybe the curse is inside it.

This seems like a dull case, but it’s happened many, many times! A piece of cake, a dessert set aside, or something to drink. “You don’t want a drink?” “No, I’m not thirsty...” “Oh come on, take it, try this...” and there’s the curse inside.

Curses are usually made with menstrual blood, because it has a connection with life. Or else they kill animals—chickens, cats, and dogs, mostly—and use the blood. Then they use soil taken from cemeteries. And they make potions that are undetectable, and inject them in a candy or something... “Have a chocolate.” “A cup of coffee!” and they put a few drops of this stuff in it, and the curse takes hold.

I’ve told so many people not to eat at their mother-in-law’s, and to not invite her over, close the door in her face. Cut off all relations. Sometimes it’s a good idea to do this even with the parents. But it also happens the other way around, that is, on the part of parents towards children who have given themselves to Satan, and have become evil. I say, “Kick them out of the house, don’t give them free access! Don’t call them, and if they call, slam down the phone when you hear their voice; don’t write to them...”

A mother-in-law occultist

On the subject of curses inflicted by relatives, I'll relate the testimony of a victim...

>“I was married for two years. My wife's family, especially my mother-in-law, who didn't even participate in her daughter's wedding, unfortunately never accepted my marriage. I'm writing my troubles because for four years, including the two years of our engagement, we've been living an unbelievable life.

The reasons for this unforgiving spite on the part of my mother-in-law are due to the fact that she had already arranged the marriage of her daughter to her ex-fiancé. But her daughter didn't want anything to do with him: he was the violent and possessive type, who kept his fiancée (or rather my wife) subdued with constant threats. She managed to stand up for herself and break it off with him.

I'll also add that my in-laws had struck up an incredible friendship with the family of this ex-fiancé. They realized they shared the same passion for occultism, for card reading in particular. Through some acquaintances we discovered that in frequenting various fortune-tellers, my mother-in-law had spent millions to bring about our divorce. I'm hesitant to tell you what this woman tried to do to my wife because it would seem absurd. Before we got married we were partners in a goldsmithing school. My mother-in-law told her daughter that something ugly would happen to the school. It seems like a made-up story: I had a series of unexplained troubles over the course of a few months, which forced me to close the school. I found myself suddenly jobless. I tried to carry on as best I could. We got married thanks to the help of one of my wife's uncles, her mother's brother.

My mother-in-law only ever piped in to declare that our marriage couldn't last, since I would no longer be able to support us. Since then, anything I try to start falls to pieces in a short time. And to think that my in-laws have a thriving business: they gave my wife's ex-fiancé a job and they won't give one to their own daughter. One time, when we were talking about our troubles to a priest, he advised us to turn to an exorcist; and, first things first, he advised us to have the house blessed, because our bed shakes at night. It was the first thing we did. The priest who came to bless the house didn't want to go inside; he stayed outside the door talking about Jesus Christ, while the smell of incense surrounded me. Then he decided to make a hasty benediction and ran off.

The things that are happening to us I can't tell you in a letter because it would be too long. If I told you, you'd think I was insane. My mother-in-law only wants one thing: our separation. We're tired, both physically and mentally. Sadly, the idea of divorce has crossed our minds, because this is no way to live, just a cruel survival.”

I picked this case because it's not rare. For now, after a year of exorcisms, they haven't had any positive results. But they carry on, with the assurance that God does not abandon his children who turn to him.

The most difficult case

The most difficult case you have on your hands?

I have some tremendous cases: three of them. And last Friday I made the mistake of having all three of them come on the same day, among my five morning patients. I had a good group of robust assistants helping me. Among them was a man who is not an exorcist, but has certain interesting powers. When he blesses, he also expels demons. He is a Passionist priest who helps me with great efficacy. He's also strong and helps me keep these people held down....

The worst case is a woman, who is better now after many exorcisms. She works as a nurse and does a good job. After years and years of exorcisms, she succeeded in obtaining a degree in nursing and carries out her work very well; she's a professional nurse in a hospital. Nobody at work has ever noticed a thing about this affliction of hers, but at home she's a disaster! She screams, breaks things, smashes plates and paintings. A terrible case of possession; when she comes to have her exorcism she's a wreck. She has a curse.

These three are cases of very powerful possessions. When I exorcise them, they need to be held down and tied. One of them is a woman who doesn't do anything, a girl of about thirty years. She is a victim of a terrible possession; even at home it's bad because she has herculean strength. She's large, heavy, breaks things, curses, and screams constantly. There's definitely the presence of the devil, and we even know the names of the demons inside her. The chief is Satan, and Satan is always involved in possessions...sometimes he makes use of others.

One time there was a possessed man, and while I was exorcising him I spoke to the demon: "Why don't you just go away?" I asked him. He said, "No, because Satan will punish me!" Yes, among the demons there is a hierarchy, just like among the angels. It's a hierarchy based on hate. They loathe each other, they're terrified of each other because the strongest one can hurt the weaker ones.

Finally, the third of the most difficult cases is another woman; another definite case of possession. Many times these people come here and they're already enraged. It's happened to me more than once that they become furious when they come inside, or when they lie out on the sofa. They go off when we tie them. More than once I've had cases of a very different type. Well, you can't do an exorcism against the patient's will. But it's enough for that will to be expressed even the day before, so to speak, then the following day the relatives bring them in by force, when they're having an episode. Indeed, many come to me being carried in arms and already enraged. But I've also had cases where they couldn't

even get the person out of the car. And in that case what happened was I got into the car and did the exorcism right there. There and then, they didn't take any notice of the benedictions, but at least they calmed down. An exorcism has to last until the person regains control of himself.

The most terrible of all, the truly most difficult case, I exorcised for half an hour and then had her brought into a neighboring room where there's a couch. They lay her out on the couch, still in a trance, and we kept going and going all night with prayers, benedictions, holy water, exorcised oil, until the moment she awoke from the trance. They were terrible hours: screaming, and blasphemies most of all! She's said all kinds of things, threats like: "You'll see, I'll make you pay... You'll see!" Things of that nature.

The young priests would like to, but the bishops...

Returning to the issue of “succession,” that is, the need to find new exorcists, I would like to ask you, Don Gabriele: are there no young priests interested in this ministry?

Many times there are young priests who see this problem and would like to make themselves useful, and the bishops forbid them. Then we have some bad examples... I mean, a bishop has debarred a very practiced and expert exorcist in his diocese to give the job to four novice priests. It's absurd! And this happened even though the New Rite states that a priest should have experience with exorcisms before being appointed to the practice. The bishop in question should have told these four: “Go and study with these more experienced colleagues.”

I can't say this enough—I've been very lucky! You see that painting there? It's Padre Candido Amantini, exorcist at the *Scala Santa* for thirty-six years. Cardinal Poletti nominated me to be the assistant to Padre Candido, which is why I've had the good fortune of gaining experience from the great master. He was a saintly man, and he had very unique charisma. He could make a diagnosis from just a photograph, so long as you could see the eyes clearly.

Many priests have come to me, and some are very much inclined; but there's one particularly talented one who has not been authorized to do exorcisms. Every candidate wishing to practice must present himself to an assembly of all the bishops of the diocese. Since this priest was opposed by one of the auxiliary bishops, the bench was opposed as well. Sadly, one auxiliary's opposition was enough to halt the process of nomination. And this priest would make a great exorcist, he's really very, very talented. But he helps me all the time anyway. He comes to help twice a week because they don't let me do the hard cases anymore. I do them anyway, but not with the “screamers” (though I do make some exceptions). Twice a week, Tuesdays and Fridays, I go to the Church of the Immaculate, where I have a cot and eight to ten people giving me a hand and helping me with prayers. This priest is always there, the young one, thirty-four years old. On those days we have the most difficult case come in: a madwoman. This priest asked the bishop of the woman's diocese for permission to do exorcisms on her and the bishop agreed. Many times bishops will grant the authority for a specific person. That's how he does exorcisms. This woman is an awful sight: the way she screams and moves with tremendous strength. We have to tie her and hold her down. There are several demons inside of her. There are usually more than one... When the big shots are there, they're always more numerous... Some are almost always present: Satan, Lucifer, Asmodeus—terrible!—Lilith, Beelzebub...

The strength of vexations and possessions

Do all these demons have the same objective, the same modus operandi?

Let's say every demon has his own diabolical assignment, although they all want to make the soul they've taken suffer. On that subject, it's helpful to remember that there are differences between the two principle actions of Satan, which manifest themselves as either possession or vexation. Possession is when the devil is present; vexation is when there is trouble caused by the devil. I'd say that possessions make up a relatively limited number, while vexations are much more common; and over ninety percent of them are caused by curses.

A common occurrence is when a youth decides to end a relationship with a girl after seven or eight years, thinking she's not his type. Then the girl's mother goes to a mage and has a curse cast against him so that he can't get married and can't find work. And the curse takes hold! For years and years this youth can't marry and can't find a job. To show the strength of these sinister actions, I can recall the case of a young woman in her thirty-fifth year. She works, and no trouble ever appears at work. She appears capable—happy, even. But when she came to me, I was never quite able to look her in the eye. She avoided me, hid her eyes. There was a curse was present, of the ugly and powerful type. Curses often lead to demonic infestation, and sometimes even possession. I exorcise this woman in the Church of the Immaculate only once a month, sadly, because she reacts to the exorcism prayers very violently.

At this point I have too many people, I can't take on any more... They should be exorcised once a week, minimum, and I'm forced to exorcise them once a month...[He shows his calendar, chock full of appointments and names of "patients" waiting to be received].

Demons can cause disasters

Can demons provoke disasters through curses?

Sure, they can bring on disasters. When certain cases have a light demonic influence, I can manage to liberate them with exorcisms. Noises, doors opening and closing, lights turning on and off, televisions turning on and off. Appliances malfunctioning: the electrician is called and sees that everything works fine. They hear the footsteps of the electrician leaving and the thing stops working again. Pranks. Those cases can be liberated eventually.

But in more serious cases you wind up saying, “My children, you have to move house,” because it can’t be cleansed. Take a house where séances, Satanic ceremonies, and black masses have been held for example; or a house where a witch or a mage lived—but one of the real ones, because 98 percent of cases, maybe 99 percent, are just clowns, charlatans. The ones who have given themselves to Satan, who are in league with Satan, have awful powers, and a house inhabited by one of these mages can become a house that can’t be liberated with exorcisms.

I have many cases of people who have fallen into misery and despair because they’re afflicted by curses that have completely blocked their business. A well-known shopkeeper with a busy store, a strong client base suddenly loses all his customers, none will come into the shop anymore. He receives benedictions, exorcisms: and nothing. Nobody comes in anymore.

Now, how to defend oneself? Well, I’ve already said that it’s more difficult for curses and other sinister troubles to take hold when one lives in the grace of God. However, they can still assail very good people, people of the Church. It’s possible. There have been many saints tormented by the devil. Just think how often they take aim at us exorcists. We go, we preach, we write. It’s been seventeen years that I’ve been speaking on Radio Maria once a month on the second Wednesday of the month for an hour and a half. You think they’ve never tried to curse me? I’m protected by the cloak of the Madonna.

Relics, saints, popes

Don Gabriele, you say that faith is the most important thing for exorcisms. But are there also symbols and objects that are tied to particular situations that can play an especially effective roll?

Yes, sometimes. For instance there are some relics that can be effective. The collar of San Vicinius in Sarsina is famous. But it's not like they always work. I'll give you an example. The oldest exorcist—it seems to me he's been an exorcist for fifty-seven years—is Padre Cipriano De Meo. He lives in San Severo di Foggia, near San Giovanni Rotondo. He's also the postulator for the cause of Padre Matteo, who lived in the 1600s. During exorcisms, he says, "Come, Padre Matteo!" It's marvelous how Padre Matteo's influence makes itself felt.

I attempted to invoke Padre Matteo a couple of times: nothing. Evidently what counts is the personal rapport which must be profound, powerful.

I always invoke Padre Pius, Padre Candido; I invoke John Paul II all the time: he is also very powerful. I've gotten responses from the devil. I remember two. "Why do you have it out for John Paul II so badly?" I asked. The first answer: "Because he foiled my plans." I think he was referring to the fall of communism. Other times he answered me, repeatedly: "Because he's robbed me of so many youths."

This brings me to say that the devil hates holy priests who are already dead, but he nurses an even more profound resentment for the living Church: the priests, the bishops, the Pope. In fact, these consecrated people are frequently attacked, and unfortunately, in the face of such a far-reaching assault, we have a clergy and an episcopate that is absolutely unfit not only to respond to requests for help, but even to listen to them. As soon as they hear talk of these problems, "It's all stories!" they say.

There are indeed a number of exorcists who just send people to the psychiatrist! "But I've already been to one," the poor people reply. "Go to a shrink!" And there are exorcists who have never exorcised. I wrote about it in one of my books, *Esorcisti e psichiatri*. The second chapter speaks against the French exorcists, particularly Isidoro Frock, who was the secretary, and boasted on television of having never performed an exorcism and that he never would. And he's a man who even wrote a book on exorcists many years ago... Bah!

Diverse powers and abilities

Do demons have different characters, and do they show it when you exorcise them?

Yes, they're different. And they also have different degrees of power and of suffering. Satan is undoubtedly the strongest, the captain, and he's also the one who suffers most of all. He is the most punished. They're not all equal. There are also some that are not worth much. But they're all stubborn. When I preach, I always say: "There are a lot of people who say, 'I believe in God but I'm not practicing.' I say they're a little stupid. The Gospel states: 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.'"

I've been an exorcist now for many years, and I can guarantee you I've never met an atheist demon. All demons believe in God; but no demon has ever been observant. They rebelled against God and experience first-hand the eternity of Hell.

I'll give you an example. I asked a demon—I asked this various times to various demons—"If you could go back, what would you do?" They all respond: "I'd do exactly what I'm doing now!" And they tell me: "Don't you understand that I had the courage to oppose God? Don't you understand that I am therefore stronger than him?" They believe their rebellion against God proves that they are stronger than their creator.

But they suffer for their desire to hurt, oh, do they suffer! They confess it openly. When I say, "Go to Hell!" they reply, "No, it's better here." Demons had told Padre Candido, "During your exorcisms I suffer more than in Hell." They're terrified of exorcisms. It's the presence of the holy that makes them suffer, the power of the words you say... "In the name of Christ, begone!" "By the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin, begone!" I have to say, one can only marvel at the reasons they give for not leaving. I say: "Begone, now, I command you, by the power vested in me by the Church, begone!" But still they stay.

It's a mystery. They know they've lost the battle against Christ, and what's more they're in bad shape, and they suffer from the exorcism...and yet they remain in the soul that they've occupied, or that they're vexing, and won't go away... I don't know why it takes so many years to reach liberation. But doubtless the holiness of the priest also matters. There are many saints who, without being exorcists, have liberated people from the devil...[he indicates a small photo on the end table that sits at the feet of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima]...I'd put Sister Erminia among them. The bishop of Rimini, whenever he had some person turn to him, sent them to Sister Erminia. She could not have been an exorcist, but she freed them, she sure did! There is also Saint Catherine of Siena... When an exorcist failed to liberate someone, he sent them to Saint Catherine, who was obviously not an

exorcist. And let's not forget who is considered, though never officially, the patron of exorcists, patron of the whole category: Saint Benedict. There's a famous coin, minted long after his time, which depicts him. In exorcisms I always use a crucifix with the Saint Benedict coin inlaid. He wasn't a priest either, he wasn't an exorcist, but he cast out demons. And those saints could drive out the devil right away, with a single prayer! We call it exorcism, but it was certainly not the prayer of the Rite. And it must be said that in the end it's not really worth that much, the text of the Rite... It's faith that counts.

If faith is the fundamental element, how important is it to follow the Rite step by step, and how much can the rite of liberation be modified?

The most noted exorcist in Sicily, Matteo La Grua, is the reference point for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement in Sicily. He is quite old now, so he doesn't do exorcisms, only benedictions, but he did not always use the Rite. One time I assisted in an exorcism of his and he didn't say the prayers of the Rite, he prayed "in tongues." Saint Augustine also talks about it, and calls them "prayers *in júbilo*." That's what it's called when you come to the point of pronouncing nonsensical words; essentially it has to do with prayers in adoration of God, words without any real concrete meaning. The first time I happened to hear these prayers I told myself, "Well, now I'm in a madhouse!" Then I got used to it. Personally I don't have the gift of praying in tongues, but I'll listen to it gladly. And anyway, it works!

Now, getting back to the saints who liberated without being exorcists, I have to say there are only a few. For example, Saint Vincenzo Pallotti... He freed so many possessed! And he also suggested a passage, which I've published in a few books. "See all that my Son has done and hold it in high regard! He did exorcisms and so you must keep the ministry of the exorcist in high regard." That was the Madonna.

Instead, exorcists are looked down on by the better part of the clergy, sometimes considered unstable and half mad, and yet they have to be the cream of the crop. To nominate someone to be an exorcist he must be a priest of prayer, of culture, of an irreproachable lifestyle.

They don't see the devil, but they suffer...

Do your patients tell you how they see the devil?

They don't see him. They have maladies. The average patient, in general, runs this course. They have terrible maladies, especially in the head and stomach. And first things first, they go to the doctor. The doctors give them treatments, which do not resolve the problem, and then they suggest: "Maybe it's better if you go to a psychiatrist." But even the psychiatrist, if there's something sinister, often can provide no solution to their suffering.

Then the patient realizes they feel some revulsion towards religion, while before they were religious. They're no longer able to go to church, to attend mass, to take communion; then they realize that they feel pain when they're prayed over. This often happens to people who have sufferings; they treat it in a medical way and never think for a moment that the devil has anything to do with it.

Then maybe they find themselves at mass, for instance a mass of liberation or healing. And then it happens that during the prayer of healing and liberation the person suddenly falls to the ground, screaming, rolling on the floor... They become aware in that situation that there is a "presence," and then they realize, in that moment, that the cause of their troubles is evil. This happens many times. Naturally a great deal of discretion is required, because in these big masses of healing and liberation, which I also hold and participate in, there are people yelling and flailing, there is hysteria, and sometimes there's just strange people. But sometimes there can be something serious. Various times people have come to me, from Sicily and from far away, accompanied by their exorcist, who tells me, "Look, this one here is someone I'm exorcising," and then during the prayer the patient is set off. But there, the problem was already confirmed.

Sometimes attendees who never thought for an instant that their trouble depended on anything but physical or medical issues realize that their maladies had quite a different origin. And then they start to get blessings and receive exorcisms.

Even benedictions are effective. I'd really like for priests to perform benedictions. If I were the pope I would give all priests the faculty to exorcise. It seems reductive that a priest can have the faculty to consecrate, to preach, and to absolve, and not the faculty to expel demons, which, along with everything else, is included in the mandate of Christ.

The power of sacred objects

Is there an exorcistic power in objects? The water, the stole...?

There is something, although it's hard to identify exactly what. For instance, there are people, who I seat right there [he indicates a black, faux-leather armchair, like something from an office or waiting room from the Sixties, covered by a kind of doormat] and go silent, even if they are strongly possessed, but they're not "screamers." Once in a while I take "screamers" here—I have some pitiful cases, how could I refuse them? I have a young man, married, he's just a housepainter, but he describes himself that way: a painter of walls. He can only come Sundays because he's employed with a construction company that requires him to work every Saturday. He screams. But how could I tell him not to come? Tuesdays and Fridays he works... And yet, I can't accept him anymore because my schedule is too full... People who would need an exorcism a minimum of once a week, I treat once a month!

Getting back to the objects, one of the principals is the stole... Some of my patients tear off the stole when I put it around their shoulders. And the water! Some have very powerful reactions to holy water, while others don't. The man who paints walls spits, foams, salivates in a terrible way, and has his own peculiar scream, rather loud, which he does often, like a chilling howl... I don't know why... At times I ask him, jokingly: "Do you feel any pain?" He responds by trying to minimize it. His wife told me he acts like this at home, but at work, nothing.

The devil tries to hide?

Demons try to stay hidden. They want to cause suffering without impeding the day to day. In the case of that woman who was cured by the young friar who had not been given permission to exorcise, she's a nurse and her work is impeccable.

How did that young man's possession come about?

Relatives, as it happens many times. Curses often come from relatives, people close to them; frequently because of a conflict of interests. I come from a family of lawyers and I've met quite a few families where everyone loved each other until it came time to divide the inheritance. Then they all turn into ferocious wolves. Sometimes because one son is a bachelor and the other is married. They only think of their new family, blowing off their own parents who may be miserable or abandoned.

What effect does the cross have?

The cross has an effect on some as well. Like the Most Holy crucifix, which I always carry with me. I put it on their head and ask, “What that’s the matter here? Is it you, oh Lord...” They’re perfectly cognisant... The purpose of the Eucharist is not to cast out demons, but yet the demons suffer from it because even if they can’t see God, they know full well that he exists! They absolutely know it! And they hate Him, they have the most burning hatred for God. An irreversible hatred. That’s the eternity of Hell.

I’ve gone to Medjugorje many times. I’m very bound to it. The first appearances were on the 24th of June 1981. My first article on Medjugorje is from October of 1981. I went there immediately. There was total misery and we brought clothes and food. There was a language problem but they were very hospitable. One time Mirjana asked the Madonna, “Dear mother, would it be possible for a damned soul to repent? And couldn’t he ask forgiveness? And God, couldn’t he take him from Hell and bring him to Heaven?” The Madonna replied, smiling, “God certainly could! But they are those who don’t want it.” And do you see the eternity of Hell, the deep roots of sin. Whoever doesn’t believe in the eternity of Hell doesn’t believe in the Gospel.

“I’ll have you dead...”

You talk about Satan and you talk about Lucifer... Is there a duality at the summit of evil?

Well, there’s Satan, who’s number one, and Lucifer, who’s number two. There’s a difference in the power they have; many times they don’t appear right away, but Satan is always there. So when you ask their name, they answer. Then there’s Asmodeus, who is often present. Other times the devil introduces himself with strange names.

I remember a famous case, from years ago, of the possessed girl of Piacenza. The demon said he was called “Ismo.” I’ve never encountered him before. He only appeared that one time. In the Twenties there were no recording devices, but they were still pretty clever. A priest who knew stenography was participating in the exorcism and he recorded all the exorcism sessions. That’s how we have everything that was said and done in those exorcisms word for word. Extremely interesting. We published it serially in *Orizzonti*, a journal that no longer exists. And then we published a book with the title of *An Interview with Satan*, I believe. I don’t know why, but it was never reprinted. It would be extremely topical today. He promised someone helping with the exorcism, “I’ll see you dead within the year.” The devil left that woman, but he did make that man die within the year. And he said the same thing of the bishop of Piacenza, who had given the authority to do exorcisms. “I’ll have you dead within the year”...and he died within a year.

So the devil also has the capacity to kill, but only if—listen well!—God gives him permission. Above all, we must not forget that God is the god of life, and Satan is the sovereign of death. He tries to drive his victims, these desperate, suffering people who have not been saved by exorcists, to suicide... However, when one undergoes exorcisms it’s impossible for him to fulfill his goal. At the last minute they’re saved.

I’ve heard talk of “closed” demons and “open” demons, demons who manifest right away and others who don’t like to talk...

Yes, there are demons that take time to manifest, but exorcisms always force the devil to manifest himself. Only sometimes it takes a long time. I had a patient, a lady, who later recovered perfectly, was completely liberated. Padre Candido began exorcising her, then we exorcised her together. The presence of the devil did not manifest, but Padre Candido told me: “Don Amorth, continue to exorcise her because, in my opinion, there’s something there.” I continued and one time, the demon erupted. From that time onward, whenever I

began to pray, the demon would go off, screaming and shouting. I spoke with him and in the end she was completely liberated.

During his outbursts he said things that demons are wont to repeat, and that case was no different from others. “This one is mine! They gave her to me! She belongs to me...” “When will you leave her?” “When I go I’m taking her back to Hell with me! She’s mine! She’s my possession.”

Cursed before birth

You've said a few times that it's very important to baptize infants shortly after birth, and that it would be useful do it even sooner... How come?

Sometimes there are people who will curse a child even before the birth. Several times I've asked the devil, "How long have you been in there?" and he has answered, "Since before he was born." Sometimes the devil possesses the fetus. This can happen when a curse is cast upon the mother, so that it falls on the child she carries inside. And then it manifests little by little.

There was a girl who came to me—she is now perfectly cured, totally liberated, married, with a normal life. She was born in a clinic or a hospital, I don't recall, where a nurse who was a Satanist was working. This awful woman would consecrate the babies to Satan as soon as they were born. I had a hard conversation with the devil during the exorcism. I told him: "She is in God's own image! She was baptized." And he replied, "I got there first! I got there first!" because she had not been baptized right away.

A baptism would prevent this because it contains a prayer of exorcism. Unfortunately, and even Paul VI lamented this, in the New Rite they've reduced it to a single prayer. However, in the early days of the Church they gave great importance to the exorcism in the Baptism. And the same thing happens with the renewal of baptismal vows. And now, even if it's been reduced to the fewest words possible, it's still there. However, it doesn't remove the presence of the devil, if there is the presence of the devil. The Baptism doesn't remove it. If there's a curse, it doesn't remove it. The effects of a curse manifest a little at a time; first when the baby is small, it behaves oddly, and they say, "Well, he'll grow out of it..." And the longer it goes on, the deeper the presence embeds itself. So a man in his fifties or sixties comes to me with a demonic possession, and comes to find that he got it as a baby, from a curse... Then it takes time, a long time, because the devil is very dug in. Only one time did I succeed in liberating a person with a ten-minute exorcism, a little girl, but I already told you that story. And in fact, the first exorcism says, "*Eradicare et fugare*": you ask God to uproot and drive out the devil. Because the longer you wait, the more difficult the liberation.

“I don’t want you, I want my real mom.”

Cases of possessed children are not very rare. We have a few children who already at two or three years old... Imagine a baby of two and a half years who absolutely does not want to go into the church, does not want to see priests, throws away the sacred images they keep in the house, and becomes furious and full of strength. At two and a half years old! I’ve had a few cases with small children. Also some a little older. Anyway, even with children I do a regular exorcism and observe the reactions that manifest.

The demons speak sometimes, and sometimes not, oftentimes the infants become mute. They stop speaking, and not just during the exorcism, but even in normal life. They stop speaking, and because of that, no school, nothing. As if the tongue or the mouth were tied. It takes a lot to liberate them; *a lot!* And we don’t always succeed. Most of the time it’s a matter of curses. If not, it has to do with the sins of someone who is close to the child and has participated in séances and consecrated himself to Satan. Or has visited mages, fortune-tellers, or is dedicated to the practice of occultism.

Regarding the possession of children, I can relate the following testimony.

It has to do with a family composed of a husband, wife, and three children. The husband, a doctor, once very religious, hasn’t attended church in ten years. The wife’s father has been living for twenty-five years with his secretary who participates in a Satanic cult that holds black masses. The wife had not been practicing, but on Ash Wednesday two years ago, when she went to church, she came out with her eyes swollen and painful, and the skin on her face was covered in scales.

In the house—a newly renovated and well-appointed house—everyone noticed strange phenomena. They often found trays of tarts, gelato, and similar objects on the furniture and on top of the tall wardrobes. It’s impossible for the kids to have done it. Several times the floor swelled up, even in the upper floors, impossible in those conditions. Walls in some of the rooms cracked, leaked, and then closed up on their own. The electrical appliances often malfunctioned. They would call the electrician and everything would work fine. The electrician would leave and then everything would stop working again. The electric gate would open in the mornings when the family left, but they couldn’t close it again, so it stayed open the whole day, and when they would come home in the evening, everything worked fine. Four times they found all the clothes in the wardrobes piled up at the bottom, fallen from the hangers. They also found drops of blood and huge bloodstains in the wardrobes on two occasions. Everyone kept hearing the rustling of shuffled papers, and footsteps, day and night, sometimes heavy and sometimes soft, as if a child were wandering

the house. They heard the sound of ping-pong balls, or billiard balls, bouncing and rolling on the floor here and there. The telephone kept calling numbers on its own. The television would turn on and off by itself during the night, without anyone touching it. The valves on the radiator opened on their own, even in the summer, without being touched; the radiators turned themselves on in the morning and turned off in the evening (always by themselves), creating a suffocating heat. It was impossible to remedy the situation.

It didn't end there. The husband and wife would hear the voices of the kids and other relatives even when they were absent. The youngest boy, who's four now, when he started to talk, often cried at night, screamed, hit his mother, pushed her away from himself screaming, "I don't want you; I want my mamma!" This happened a number of times. Various times they found balls of human feces among the kids' toys and on the ground. In the evening everything was clean, there was none of this stuff. These hateful manifestations only appeared in the morning. Then there started to be frequent quarrels between husband and wife over nothing. The oldest boy refused to go to church. Often the wife would search for the colander or something else when she needed it and couldn't find it; she would get the kids to help and they couldn't find the objects either. But when the serving woman would come, she found everything in its place.

That was a long list, but they're cases that exorcists hear about constantly. This mother was subject to strong temptations to suicide. Especially when she was driving. She thought her only solution was to throw herself off the road to finish it all.

After two days of a very high fever, they found a stitch in her underwear, done with a fat black thread. A surgeon friend whom they showed it to confirmed that it was indeed a surgical stitch, but done with a material not used in surgery; and this material crumbled in the surgeon's hands.

She went to receive a benediction from an unauthorized priest. I had the impression he was doing magic. In fact, he had them tell him some names of deceased people, especially if there were dead babies among the relatives. Then he invoked those names during the benediction to help expel the demons. With all these evocations of the dead without ever ordering the devil to be gone in the name of Christ, the woman's condition only worsened...

Finally, she came to see me. As soon as I formed the words, "*In nomine Patris...*" she went into a trance. Stretched out on the floor as if pinned there, she ground her teeth, tried to vomit, kept her eyes rolled back so you could only see the whites.

I had four people to help me and it took all four of them when she started to have violent reactions, to scream, whistle, refuse exorcised water, to rebel against the anointments, especially in the right ear and on the throat. I put a hand on her stomach: it swelled up, it grew hard, it seemed like there was a big ball, like a fist, moving around in there. When I compelled her to reveal a name, she strained and made attempts, but remained blocked. Then she began to roll around and writhe; she threw a strong man who was holding her by the feet to the ground. And finally, the usual phrases that demons say: "I'm not going, no way; this one is mine..." After an hour and a quarter she returned to normal and felt very

relieved at the reading of the supplication to Our Lady of Pompei...

The baby is walking now...

There was a baby girl who was two years and four months old, but she still wasn't walking. The parents brought her to a specialized pediatric clinic where she was subjected to every kind of diagnostic exam, even the most modern and risky for a girl that age. There was no result; the baby seemed perfectly healthy. If she were held up, she would walk, but if left alone she stopped. The parents were distressed and reached the limits of their nerves.

Given this unusual manifestation, they were advised to begin a cycle of prayers of liberation and healing, and wait to see if there were any result. They thought there could be something evil, perhaps a curse. The curse may have been provoked, incredibly, by one of the baby's grandmothers, who wanted to gain personally from the little one's suffering. She wanted to force her daughter to leave her far away home and return to live close to her mother. One of the reasons for this suspicion was that the grandmother, when her daughter was married, was put in the hospital for three months, prey to a mysterious disease, which no doctors were able to diagnose or cure. Was her daughter taken away from her because she did not approve of the marriage?

On the 23rd of December 1999, I asked a prayer group to start a cycle of prayers of liberation for the little one from the 23rd to the 29th of December. Some people kept going with the prayers until December 31st to make a complete *novena*; others are still praying. In any case, I feel a duty to communicate what happened. On the first of January 2000, the baby began to do what she had never done before, that is, to walk on her own across the entrance of the house under the stupefied gaze of her parents. Even today she continues to stand up on her own and walk, even if she may still be new to it. I never informed the parents of the special prayers, since they live a long way from Rome. I only asked them to relay me the baby's reactions.

At this point I invited the parents to contact an exorcist and showed them which one. It was no easy feat, because these were people completely unprepared for this sort of turn of events. But they relented. Now they are quite satisfied and happy with the attentions, with the work of the priest, and most of all with the results they obtained.

Levitation

Have your patients ever levitated?

Only one time. Only once. And to tell the truth, I didn't even notice it, because I was wrapped up in the prayer, in the exorcism. The patient rose, but not by much. He was a young boy, a strange case. It was one of the first cases I took on, and he was liberated in a few months. He was a unique case.

He came to receive the first exorcisms in February, accompanied by a Franciscan friend of mine who's a colossus. There were always four other people to hold the boy down because he was an unbridled force when he went into a trance. He received the exorcism while seated. I wasn't paying attention to him because I was focused on the prayer, when the others said, "Look, he's rising!" He levitated thirty or forty centimeters.

I've never had any major levitations, but they happen. It can occur. It's the devil showing off his power. But let's remember that the devil has no interest in possessing people; possession is an extraordinary activity. The devil is most of all interested in his ordinary action, and that is making people fall into sin. Sin and temptation, which we are all subject to, from birth to death. At times I've wondered: "Was the Madonna tempted by the devil?" I told myself, "Yes." "When?" "From birth to death. It's the human condition. Even Jesus was tempted by the devil. Mark clearly says so. He doesn't speak of the three temptations like Matthew, but he says that he went into the desert for forty days and was tempted by the devil. The whole time, and even after, forever, his whole life."

The devil is interested in making man fall into sin, but in the case of possession, he wants to show off his power. Returning to our times, it's interesting to observe the life of Mary the little Arab, the Carmelite nun, the only Arab saint, who was beatified by John Paul II. She was possessed on two occasions and needed exorcisms. During the exorcisms the devil suffered enormously. During the exorcisms she swore, did awful things... It wasn't her! And the devil tried to make her suffer enormously, to make her rebel against God. But at the end of the exorcism as she was liberated, the little Arab said, "Thank you, Lord... Praise you, Lord." The devil tried to make her fall into desperation, into rebellion against God. He promised, "I will possess you for forty days." He didn't succeed with making her fall into desperation. It got to a point where the devil couldn't take it anymore, wanted to leave, but had to remain just the same, because he had said forty days and forty days he had to stay.

During exorcisms, does God send angels to help battle the devil, or does he leave it all to you?

I've never been aware of the presence of angels during exorcisms. I know of an episode from the life of Padre Pius who was flayed to shreds by the devil. When the demon stopped hitting him, he asked his guardian angel, "But why didn't you intervene?"

The angel, who wept in sorrow, answered, "Because the Lord did not wish me to intervene." Padre Pius was whipped by the devil every day of his life from the time he was a baby, except for the few days after he had the stigmata. For those few days, he had no assaults from the devil. Then they started again, every day. After the devil's attacks, after these beatings, he would always have an apparition; either of the Lord, or of the Madonna. It was a consolation. It's clear how much Padre Pius suffered! He robbed Satan of souls and Satan took it out on him, and the Lord let it happen because he robbed Satan of souls. He made many converts! Oh, so many. So many!

Ghosts do not exist

E i fantasmi esistono?

No, they're pure fiction, or the devil's tricks, which appear in the form of so-called spirits or ghosts. Only angels, demons, and humans exist.

Have you ever had cases with succubus demons or incubi?

Succubi and other demons, yes. My goodness, yes! Take for instance when Padre Pius was at Venafro. The devil is purely a spirit; to be visible he must assume some kind of shape. And this also goes for the Madonna, angels, and saints. The case of the Archangel Raphael is emblematic. In order to take a journey with the son of Tobias, he assumed the shape of a young man in traveling clothes. Then in the end he revealed his identity... To scare Padre Pius, the devil would assume the form of a big snarling dog. To terrorize him, to deceive him he took the form of Jesus, of the Madonna, of his superior, his spiritual director, Father Guardiano. He went into the cell, gave him orders...then Padre Pius, perplexed, went to Father Guardiano and asked him: "But Father Guardiano, did you really tell me I had to do this and that?" "Why, no! I didn't come to you at all!" Then he understood that it had been the devil. At times the devil appeared in the form of beautiful, naked, provocative women to tempt him from chastity. Naked, tempting, doubtlessly beautiful women. And one time the devil told me, "There are so many women you would find beautiful with me in Hell." Think of women who cause scandals, actresses who have made pornographic films...a scandal for millions of people. All in Hell. But demons have never come to me in disguise.

The temptation of pride...

For a priest such as yourself, who battles demons, who performs exorcisms, who casts them out... Isn't there the danger of pride?

Absolutely! When I find myself doing exorcisms in the Church of the Immaculate and I have a dozen people following me, I think to myself: I am the one doing the exorcism... But during the exorcism my thoughts are always on the Holy Spirit... “Holy Spirit, come intervene,” I pray. “You know that I’m useless, you know I’m worthless... Come intervene.” I constantly petition this way because if you succumb to temptation... Even when I preach—I rarely do, only on special occasions—I have people assaulting me, trying to touch me. Bodyguards always surround me to protect me from the people who want to touch me... I say, “Oh, come on. Touch me, smell me, see that I stink like salami!”

But the temptation is there, for sure. And the devil’s greatest temptation really is pride. And the grossest sins are those of pride. It is at the root of all sins, even though the most common sin, not the most serious, but the most common, is that of impurity. I told you before, but it’s worth repeating, that Saint Alfonso de’ Liguori said: “One goes to Hell either for this sin, or not without this sin.”

As a remedy to this sin of pride, I’d like to recall a salutary kick...

During a prayer of liberation, knowing that the devil greatly dislikes the sincere confession of sins and repentance, we made a broad, and also public, confession of many sins (including those of our families, our deceased, and our community). Then everyone approached the priest for the personal story and absolution. At the end, I kneeled before the other priest who was officiating with me to ask forgiveness for all my sins, especially those that most hinder the efficacy of the ministry that has been entrusted to me.

At that point, I took a resounding kick across my shoulders from a “patient” who had escaped the grasp of my collaborators, with a sudden, rapid motion. That’s how the devil expresses his mood to me when we hear confession. For me, that kick was salutary. I extend its effects to all those who need an extra push to go and confess their sins.

The devil is not a comedian

Does the devil ever joke with you?

No, he doesn't have a sense of humor. Although... One time he did kind of make fun of me. We were exorcising a lady who had been exorcised many times by Padre Candido. I think it may be one of those cases where liberation will never come. Improvement, sure, she can do everything, live a normal life as mother, but total liberation, never. I was with another exorcist, a pupil of Padre Candido who is more talented than I am, and it was the only time, I believe, that we did an exorcism of five and a half hours. It was the Feast of the Immaculate, an evocative day... This exorcism lasted five and half hours—as I said—and it really seemed like the devil had left. There were emotional tears at the end, hugs, kisses. After a week, she was just like before. And Padre Candido told me, “You see, Don Amorth, performing longer exorcisms doesn't change anything...” I now perform half-hour exorcisms.

Why was the devil making fun of you?

I said to him, “You told me you'd leave on that day!” Basically, I scolded him. “You told me; and you didn't leave.” And he, in a suave voice, answered me, “Don't you know I'm a liar? Didn't they ever teach you that? I tell lies! I'm an imposter! Didn't they teach you?” I felt mortified, I wanted to crawl into a hole!

A mocking devil

The woman in question is a fifty-year-old widow with a daughter and two grandchildren. She said she had felt disturbed since just after her wedding. She suffered from asthma, she was subject to fainting, had intestinal and stomach pains; she vomited strange things like hair and raw beans...she heard knocking noises in the house and the furniture shook. She felt hated by various people: relatives and friends, but mostly by her mother-in-law who never accepted her as the wife of her only son.

A few minutes into the exorcism she went into a trance and spoke. The demon threatened the sick woman and her exorcist. I told him, "You mean nothing to me because I am a minister of Christ and you, without his permission, couldn't even say a word, or make a single gesture; you have to obey Him and you must also obey your commander Lucifer." He replied, "I am Lucifer." "Ah, you are Lucifer. Then this exorcism will be enough to deal with you." He reacted to the exorcism and he reacted to "God be praised," and "blessed be his holy and immaculate conception." Then I told him, "It makes you tremble, huh, the name of Mary? It makes you tremble because she never submitted to you with sin, because she is without original sin and with her son Jesus she crushed your skull." He interrupted me: "Do you know with which foot?" I humored him: "Let's hear which foot: I'd really like to know." "With the right," he tells me. I follow up, "Why the right?" He responded: "Because it's stronger and more decisive." I remained speechless and began to wonder if he just pulled one over on me. The next day I happened to speak with my bishop and I told him the story. He told me it was nonsense. The Madonna never crushed anything material and never used any foot; we're in the theological realm, not the physical. He was defeated, Satan, and his kingdom shattered; but on a spiritual level.

Eight days later during the next exorcism, the intruder began speaking words to distract the exorcist as the woman twisted like a serpent, convulsing with her eyes rolled back. I interrupted him, saying "Lucifer, speaking of feet last time..." The devil gave me a chilling reply, "I did it deliberately to make a fool of you." It was a lesson on avoiding questions asked out of curiosity.

Hate and conversion

Does the devil want to be hated?

No. He wants to hate, and to push everyone to hate. One of the obstacles to liberation is forgiveness from the heart. If you have any grudges against someone, grudges that can't be overcome, it's impossible to liberate you. You have to come to heartfelt forgiveness. It's a fundamental obstacle. Why does the Lord allow so many good people, or children, to be hurt like this? I don't know, but I know that exorcisms can bring a lot of good. The first thing I ask is: "Do you go to mass every Sunday? Do you confess often?" Most of the time, I hear "No." Then I give everyone the brochure with the Ten Commandments and I say, "You have to start from here." They tell me, "I'm living with someone." So many couples are living together! I can't do a thing if people are living in sin. But I see a lot of conversions. I've had many more conversions since I started doing exorcisms than before. It's a path of conversion, this one, and not only for those directly involved.

What do you ask the devil?

The conversations with the devil are always and exclusively related to the liberation of the afflicted person. In America they published a big book, which I read many years ago, by an exorcist and noted theologian who wanted to strike up conversations with the devil. The demon pulled the wool over his eyes! He's very intelligent. He's an angel! He retains all the intelligence, strength, and liberty of an angel. Never enter into a conversation with the devil. Only ask things that are useful for liberation. That way you come to know bit by bit when one was cursed, if it's a case of a curse; or how and why he entered, and when it happened.

And it's important to remember that the devil is a liar. His answers should be scrutinized and, if possible, verified. During an exorcism on one girl I asked, "When did you enter? How old was the girl?" "Sixteen," he responded. When the exorcism was over, I asked the girl, "When did you start to feel sick?" "When I was sixteen, father..." I asked the parents, "When did your daughter start to feel ill?" "When she was sixteen," they replied. Then I told myself, "All right, this time the devil was telling the truth." The information always needs to be checked. It's especially necessary to verify one very, very important fact, and that is the origin of the vexation or possession. Who the curse came from. It must be checked, because the demon wishes to create resentment, grudges. So maybe he'll say: the mother-in-law, the sister, the cousin, the aunt... And then you find out it's not true. Other

times, when you get to the root of it, you find that the mother-in-law was enraged, because she thought the girl had “stolen” her son... There are some mothers, at times, who are so jealous of their children that when their kids get married, it’s a disaster. And then if you continue to investigate and find that, let’s say, the mother-in-law was devoted to magic, or things of that nature, then one says: “Maybe it’s true.” And naturally you ask about the causes: to what end was the curse cast. As we’ve seen, sometimes a curse is cast so that the victim won’t find work, won’t ever marry again...

A short autobiography...

Now that we've reached the end of our journey into the ministry of exorcism, Don Gabriele, let's talk one more time about you, who have accompanied us in the discovery of this truth, which is as terrible to know as it is dangerous to ignore. How did you decide to become a priest?

I was born into a religious family. My parents and my four brothers, all males and all much better than me, were all religious. We were educated by our family and by the Azione Cattolica. In the parish. We were raised in Modena, in the Church of Saint Peter, where a Benedictine friend of mine is now. He is one of Modena's two exorcists. I had an intensely religious life. I spent my entire youth actively participating in Azione Cattolica, working as a catechist. At around fourteen years old I started to think of my vocation; and then a very dear friend of mine became a priest. We were schoolmates in a combined primary and secondary school until we graduated. Everyone knew he would be a priest. I think that was an influence.

A priest, then; but where? That was a problem. By fortuitous chance I had the occasion to meet Don Giacomo Alberione and he convinced me that I was a man of God, and I asked him where I should join, in which congregation, which institute. He told me: "Tomorrow morning I will hold mass for you." I got up early, because he held mass at four in the morning. "Ah, you're here!" he said. After mass he revealed to me, "He told me you should start in the *Società di San Paolo*." I was in my second year of secondary school. I said "All right: I'll take my exit exams, and then I'll join."

We stayed in contact from that time on, because after graduation there was the war. All five of us brother were old enough to be called to service. All five had our own adventures. I went to war as a partisan, I had some wild adventures, and I even got a medal of valor. I thought that it wasn't right to leave my family in that situation, and I told Don Alberione. I also asked what subject I should take at the university. "Whatever you want," he told me. I already had two brothers who graduated with degrees in law, and I took the same path. I did well because they practically gave it to me, the degree. I didn't study, I never went to lectures...they practically donated my passing grades because of the respect they had for my brothers. And I graduated on time.

I graduated in 1947 and then at twenty-two years old, I joined the Christian Democrats. I wouldn't have wanted to, but we were pushed into it by Dossetti, who had sort of become our leader. He was my professor of Canonic and Ecclesiastic Law, was a very good friend of the family. He came over many times to eat and sleep at our house. He pushed all of us

into working in politics. Our ringleader in Modena was Ermanno Gorrieri. He was a very good friend of mine since our school days. Good, humble, but very driven. Since he was our leader during the partisan war, he became the leader of our chapter of the Christian Democrats, which we'd founded. In my position in the Lower Modena area, I founded chapters of Christian Democracy, something that was completely unheard of. This made me feel a little bit like my father, who was a friend of Don Sturzo, and was one of the founders of the *Partito Popolare* in Modena. He was immediately elected when they held the elections for the provincial council. And on the fiftieth anniversary—De Mita was there, the secretary of the CD—they came just to award De Mita, to award the ones first elected fifty years ago.

And then I was pushed—Dossetti put me up to it—to be the national vice delegate of the *Gioventù democristiana*, which at that time was very important. I came to Rome and stayed for a few months. The delegates were Giulio Andreotti and then me. I did everything all by myself because he was totally dedicated to De Gasperi. He also neglected his youth groups. So when he was first nominated to government, as undersecretary to the President of the Council, he resigned from his post as the national delegate. I knew that they would nominate me national delegate next; and I also understood that if I embarked into politics, I would never get out of it, so I took the opportunity to resign as well, at the same time as him. That's how I got out.

I stayed in contact constantly with Don Alberione. I knew that he had made vows to the Madonna: if all the members of the Pauline family came home safely from the war, he would build a sanctuary to the Madonna Queen of the Apostles. And he built it, here, there are three sanctuaries, one on top of the other, not three churches, but just three sanctuaries! I knew this, and I asked him: "Put me and my brothers, all five of us, among your sons, protected by the Madonna during the war." The five of us had adventures! One of my brothers, one of the two who are still alive, came just about to the feet of Karlovac in Yugoslavia... We all had our adventures and misadventures, but we were all saved.

I've always remembered the day I became a priest; the day of my ordination was January 24, 1954, and the ordination was delayed because Don Alberione wanted us to be ordained on the centennial of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. After the mass, we had our photos taken and then each of us new priests, with our families, went into Don Alberione's study to greet him. I went too, with my four brothers and my mother. Right away he asked me, "How did you get by during the war?" He remembered well the promise he'd made to include me and my brothers in the protection of the Queen of the Apostles.

At that moment I had the confirmation that it truly was Jesus who told Don Alberione that I should enter the *Società di San Paolo*. And I never looked back.

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