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To: spiritandlife@lists.hli.org
Subject: Fr. Thomas Euteneuer: Exorcisms and Abuses
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Spirit & Life®

"The words I speak to you are spirit and life." (Jn 6:63)

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HLI PRESIDENT

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Exorcisms and Abuses

One of the three commands that Jesus gave to the disciples was to "drive out demons" (Mk 16:17) in His Name. "Heal the sick" and "preach the good news" (Lk 10:9) are regular ministries of the Church, but the ministry of exorcising demons has received less attention. It is my view that the next decade will force the Church - and priests in particular - to embrace this ministry of casting out demons with professionalism and zeal as we will have to deal with the nuclear fallout of the pervasive occultism in our society now. In order to do that however, the Church needs to give people a proper understanding of spiritual warfare against the devil and his minions.

Unfortunately, many false and illusory images of fighting the Evil One define people's thinking about exorcism and demonic possession. The only correct view of the power of evil comes from faith, not the culture. Popular movies like *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (2005), while containing some truthful elements, create the picture that even when the Church "wins" an exorcism battle, the Church is somehow damaged and the devil gets his hour of glory. Hollywood would have us believe that Christ's Church cowers before the power of the devil - nothing could be further from the truth!

I am also concerned about real abuses that happen in spiritual warfare when people are trying to deal with evil without the protection of the Church. They may have a legitimate desire to be

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free from demonic forces but they can unwittingly get caught up in the very evil they are trying to quell. Some recent reports of "exorcisms" or allegations of possession are listed below but only for the purposes of indicating what happens when exorcisms are attempted without the shield of the spiritual authority that Christ gave to His Church. These have all occurred within the past couple of years and are *not* exorcisms - they are abuses - but it is easy to see how the devil might use these distortions to further his purpose of leading people away from authentic faith:

- In 2007 there was a disturbed man in Phoenix, Arizona trying to violently "exorcise" his three-year-old granddaughter while the girl's unclad mother participated in the bizarre and bloody ritual. The girl was injured and traumatized and the perpetrators went to jail;
- A 58-year-old central Iowa man set his couch on fire and burned down his house, according to him, as a way to get rid of demons in the home.
- In New Zealand, a 22-year-old woman was killed by drowning in a native Maori "makutu-lifting" ritual after having her eyes gouged out because, it was said, that the devil could be seen in her eyes. Forty family members watched the killing and then attempted to do the same to her 14-year old niece.
- A 70-year-old Tunisian grandmother was killed in a mental hospital in France by her daughter and a friend who suffocated her with a plastic bag trying to "trap the devil" inside of her.
- A 44-year-old Haitian man in Florida thought his girlfriend was possessed and hit her in the head with an iron in order to "release the demons that were inside her." When his mother tried to fend off the attack, he bit off her fingertip and started to actually pull out his own teeth. As he fought with police he was chanting "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," and praying in Creole.
- A 33-year-old Washington D. C. woman killed her four teenage and pre-adolescent daughters with blunt force trauma, strangulation and stabbing claiming that all four of them were possessed. She stored their bodies for four months in her house until they were discovered by police in a badly decomposed state.
- The videos of "exorcisms" that are available on the Internet are utterly dehumanizing and abominable, but the "entertainment" value of such postings, in the modern mind, is immense for a faithless age.

Due to the mysterious nature of evil, possession and exorcism will never be entirely removed from popular distortions, but the Church has an obligation to give a correct understanding of what is a legitimate pastoral ministry and a Gospel imperative of the Church. A correct understanding of exorcism can also divest many of an unholy and dangerous fascination with the occult. No sane person who truly understood the nature of demons would be fascinated with them!

If you have not had the chance to purchase my new book, *Exorcism and the Church Militant*, please do so today! You can find

it at www.exorcismbook.com and make sure to buy its companion edition called *Demonic Abortion* where I explain the satanic nature of the abortion industry. Hopefully it will build your faith and lead you a greater awareness of the power of Christ operative through His Church!

Sincerely,

Rev. Thomas J. Euteneuer

Rev. Thomas J. Euteneuer,
President, Human Life International



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