

Chief exorcist says Devil is in Vatican

The Devil is lurking in the very heart of the Roman Catholic Church, the Vatican's chief exorcist claimed on Wednesday.

By **Nick Squires** in Rome

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St. Peter's Square in the Vatican

Photo: REUTERS

Father Gabriele Amorth said people who are possessed by Satan vomit shards of glass and pieces of iron.

He added that the assault on Pope Benedict XVI on Christmas Eve by a mentally unstable woman and the sex abuse scandals which have engulfed the Church in the US, Ireland, Germany and other countries, were proof that the Anti-Christ was waging a war against the Holy See.

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"The Devil resides in the Vatican and you can see the consequences," said Father Amorth, 85, who has been the Holy See's chief exorcist for 25 years.

"He can remain hidden, or speak in different languages, or even appear to be sympathetic. At times he makes fun of me. But I'm a man who is happy in his work."

While there was "resistance and mistrust" towards the concept of exorcism among some Catholics, Pope Benedict XVI has no such doubts, Father Amorth said. "His Holiness believes wholeheartedly in the practice of exorcism. He has encouraged and praised our work," he added.

The evil influence of Satan was evident in the highest ranks of the Catholic hierarchy, with "cardinals who do not believe in Jesus and bishops who are linked to the demon," Father Amorth said.

In a rare insight into the world of exorcism, the Italian priest told **La Repubblica** newspaper that the 1973 film *The Exorcist* gave a "substantially exact" impression of what it was like to be possessed by the Devil.

People possessed by evil sometimes had to be physically restrained by half a dozen people while they were exorcised. They would scream, utter blasphemies and spit out sharp objects, he said.

"From their mouths, anything can come out – pieces of iron as long as a finger, but also rose petals," said Father Amorth, who claims to have performed 70,000 exorcisms. "When the possessed dribble and slobber, and need cleaning up, I do that too. Seeing people vomit doesn't bother me. The exorcist has one principal duty - to free human beings from the fear of the Devil."

The attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II by a Turkish gunman in 1981 and recent revelations of "violence and paedophilia" committed by Catholic priests against children in their care was also the work of the Devil, said Father Amorth, who has written a book about his vocation, *Memoirs of an Exorcist*, which was published recently.

Father Amorth, who is the president of the Association of Exorcists and fought as a partisan during the war, has previously claimed that both Hitler and Stalin were possessed by the Devil.

In an interview with Vatican Radio in 2006, he said: "Of course the Devil exists and he can not only possess a single person but also groups and entire populations.

"I am convinced that the Nazis were all possessed. All you have to do is think about what Hitler and Stalin did."

He also condemned the Harry Potter books, saying they were dangerous because they dabbled in the occult and failed to draw a clear distinction between "the Satanic art" of black magic and benevolent white magic.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/vaticancityandholyysee/7416458/Chief-exorcist-says-Devil-is-in-Vatican.html>