

Montfort EurHope: A Montfortian Exorcist

SANTERAMO IN COLLE, Italy - *Our confrere Father Daniele Carraro, SMM, 73 years of age is in charge of the ministry of exorcism in a diocese of southern Italy for more than 25 years. With him, we try to understand the meaning of this mission.*

Father Daniel, how would you define the ministry of exorcism?

This ministry is seen today as an expression of consolation especially for those who experience problems related to the world of the occult. Those who have this type of problem, if on one hand need a psychiatrist, may also need a priest, who unfortunately, because of the complexity of their situations, sometimes washes his hands. This ministry is to be rediscovered in its most ecclesial value and is less esoteric than showing these people as needing help, support and listening.



How were you appointed to this ministry?

It was the bishop who asked me for this service for his diocese of Altamura. At that time, I told him that I didn't even know what this world was and that he still had to consult the provincial superior. But after ten days, he sent me an Italian boy who, in England for studies, had attended seances and suffered from psychiatric disorders. So, I talked to the superior and then the bishop started to send me more people. I had everything to learn but the first thing I started to do is listening to these people. Listening is the first relief because it puts the person at ease. In fact, these people are ashamed to talk about certain things that live with the fear of being judged as "crazy". Thus, the place that welcomes them is first and foremost a listening center. In the meantime, I started reading, documenting, and attending training sessions to develop a just and pastoral approach. I understand that exorcism is sacramental that discerns and cares, but it is not an automatic thing and alone is not enough. I started to use prayer groups to support the exorcism, and also the path of those who want to change their lives.

What's the approach with the person who comes for an exorcism?

Every weekday, I welcome people. Those who approach exorcism often come up with a "magic" mentality that would like to get the miracle instantly. As a priest, I invite them to a journey of conversion, of reconciliation with Christ and of prayer.

Every Friday, I introduce a day of prayer led by some collaborators for those who want to make a journey and learn to pray. In the meantime, I make myself available for confessions with the help of some other priests due to the presence of many people in these prayer meetings.

Every Tuesday morning, we propose a catechesis in a room offered in a female religious community. This is to help understand that our point of reference is Jesus and not the devil, thus shifting attention from the problem to the path of conversion. One Saturday a month, we organize a retreat in a Marian shrine with Mass and adoration. Pilgrimages to Marian shrines are also proposed.

Do you have collaborators for all these initiatives?

This style of collaboration is present from the beginning. A group of collaborators who have made a journey are committed to welcoming people and ensuring discretion. Others have helped to renovate the premises by creating waiting rooms, prayer rooms with 200 seats, a room suitable for exorcism,

etc. There are volunteers who provide secretarial services while preserving privacy. They also do screening to discern whether people really need the exorcist or should be directed to another type of help. A psychologist is present twice a week. Some collaborators guide the moments of prayer. Other priests and confreres help me with confessions. Now, there is another exorcist priest who receives people part-time.

Engaged partners and couples who start a journey of faith also land in this listening center. But everything is thought with the attention that they can rediscover a sense of belongingness in the parish life.

What is the good news from this experience?

People who come, start to see the positive aspect again. They pass from darkness to light. A father who had brought his daughter to me said he had passed from curse to blessing. The fact of being accompanied in their fragility raises them. But we must help them with patience and a sense of acceptance.

Which link do you see with the mission of Montfort?

Montfort went to the countryside to visit the poor who had not been evangelized and often abandoned by the church. Bringing the faith back to them and reopening them to hope is a Montfortian mission. The presence of Mary in the ministry of exorcism is essential. Satan is in battle with God and with Mary, he is a loser! The devil cannot bear Mary for her humility and purity.

Plans for the future?

I have a dream that these people can smile and find the light of God. Knowing that this reality is very widespread and draws many people into Europe, I would like to continue with simple means to indicate a path of light especially for young people and to always be an open door for these people.

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