

Exorcist fascinates audience with demonic details

Audience members at Church of the Annunciation, Rosedale, were so intently focused on Father Thomas J. Euteneuer's exorcism talk Oct. 21, that when someone in the crowd muffled a sneeze – they flinched.

About 130 people attended “An Evening with an Exorcist,” listening carefully as Father Euteneuer talked about how demons target their victims and how an exorcism takes place.

Father Euteneuer, a priest for the Palm Beach, Fla., diocese who is living in the Archdiocese of Arlington, Va., said he's been involved in exorcisms for nearly five years and has performed three or four that expelled demons as well as several deliverances, which use prayer teams for people who aren't fully possessed.

The priest, who heads the pro-life organization Human Life International, said he is investigating three current cases of possession.

“The church does not have a magic wand they wave ... exorcism and its deliverance from evil is a process,” he said.

Demons tempt and persecute people, he said, but if they get inside the person, that's obsession; when the devil has complete control over the person, that's possession.

“If you live in a state of grace, you have no problem with the devil getting in you,” Father Euteneuer said. “I don't want people to think because the devil is so powerful there's a demon around every corner.”

But people unwittingly invite a demon in, through an Ouija board, a séance or “New Age stuff,” he said, adding, “if you live a life of totally unrepentant mortal sin for a length of time, that's an invitation.” People who are victimized can be targeted because of their vulnerability, and demons also prey on people not in a state of grace who have contact with someone practicing the occult.

Sometimes God allows the possession, and he cited an example of an exorcism in

Germany that ultimately increased faith and spirituality there.

Before an exorcism is considered, doctors must rule out physical causes or mental illness. He detailed the case of an 18-year-old who initially was diagnosed with schizophrenia, but no drug could stabilize him, and when asked to read the Bible, he read it in a language that he didn't speak.

Speaking a language the person doesn't know is a classic sign of possession; others include knowledge of things or events they couldn't possibly know, being told what to do by beings and a failure to respond to all forms of medical treatment.

If an exorcism is warranted, it must be approved by the bishop; Father Euteneuer estimated only about 5 percent of all cases investigated are strictly demonic possession.

The question-and-answer period lasted as long as the lecture, with participants asking everything from has anyone ever died during an exorcism to what Father Euteneuer thought of Harry Potter to why isn't the Eucharist used on the possessed person during an exorcism.

One woman, dressed from head to toe in black, with pronounced black eyeliner and black fingernails, identified herself as a paranormal researcher and began to ask about demons growling. But Father Euteneuer cut off her questions.

"Let me encourage you to stop doing this - this kind of fascination is not normal," he told her. When she tried to continue, he said, "I reiterate my request that you get out of this completely because this can seduce you."

When the event, sponsored by Friends in Faith, concluded, the audience still had so many questions that Father Euteneuer continued to answer them while everyone enjoyed light refreshments.

"I've never seen a captive audience stay more than two hours - the installation of our new archbishop went on for two hours flat," said Annunciation pastor Father William P. Foley.

"It spooks you a little bit but it reinforces some of the notions you have," said Matthew Marshall of St. Thomas Aquinas, Hampden, who is participating in 40 Days

for Life. "It's an awareness-raiser."

"I found it very interesting - it's certainly informative," said Jennifer Schmidt of St. Casimir, Canton, who came because she'd recently read a book on exorcism. "He's a very good speaker."