

STAMPATO NEGLI USA IL LIBRO DI DON MARCELLO STANZIONE SU PADRE AMORTH

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Father Gabriele Amorth, who founded the International Association of Exorcists in 1994, said he can even purge a demonic possession via a Skype session, though most exorcisms take more than a single session. "I am content if, in a mildly serious case, a person is liberated within four or five years of exorcisms," he said. "I have had rare cases of liberations in a few months." Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images...

In 1997, when a young, slim peasant man was escorted into the small room where Father Gabriele Amorth conducted his exorcisms in Rome, the priest felt immediately confronted by evil. Amorth said he asked for the help of Jesus, and the young man began to curse and spit, using English instead of his native Italian. "His curses and threats were aimed solely at the exorcist; then he began spitting at him and preparing to attack him physically," writes Marcello Stanzone in "The Devil is Afraid Of Me: The Life and Work of the World's Most Famous Exorcist" (Sophia Institute Press), out now. "Screaming and howling, the demon burst forth and looked straight at him, drooling saliva from the young man's mouth." Amorth said he returned fire with prayers and other ritual recitations, demanding that the demon reveal its name. "Unclean spirit!" Amorth bellowed.

"Whoever you are and all your companions who possess this servant of God … I command you: Tell me your name, the day and the hour of your damnation." The man fixed him with a glare and snarled: "I am Lucifer." Amorth was shocked. He "did not expect to receive such a terrifying response," Stanzone writes. "But . . . he was convinced he had to keep going as long as he had the strength." Amorth, the official exorcist for the diocese of Rome, claimed to have performed about 60,000 exorcisms before his death in 2016.

Born in Modena, Italy, on May 1, 1925, he knew from around age 10 he was destined for the priesthood. Amorth said he has seen all manner of shocking behavior from his patients, and claimed that spitting has long been a tool used by demons of possession. Shutterstock/UVgreen In 1986, he began an exorcism apprenticeship with Rev. Candido Amantini and went on to found the International Association of Exorcists in 1994, where he served as its long-term president, while breaking new ground by speaking openly about his work in the Italian media. Stanzone, a priest and prolific author who collaborated with Amorth on various writing projects over the past three decades, spoke with him extensively over the years about his process. Amorth claimed his exorcisms lasted about 30 minutes on average, and he would often conduct five over the course of a morning, by appointment only, with breaks in between for paperwork. He thought it just as effective to conduct his exorcisms by telephone or Skype. Amorth said an exorcism could be anything from a simple prayer to the full-blown casting out of demons, as depicted in the 1973 Hollywood film "The Exorcist," and noted that an exorcism is not a one-time process, but a practice that is regularly performed on a possessed person, sometimes over a period of years.

"I am content if, in a mildly serious case, a person is liberated within four or five years of exorcisms," he said. "I have had rare cases of liberations in a few months." For in-person exorcisms, Amorth was usually assisted by four laymen who could escort patients to his exorcism room of about 9-feet-by-15-feet, which was situated away from the Roman streets so that "no one can hear the screams." He used an armchair for "less agitated patients," a bed, and a box with "tape and belts used to tie the more robust patients." "Unclean spirit!" Amorth bellowed.

"Tell me your name." The man fixed him with a glare and snarled: "I am Lucifer." - Father Amorth's tale of how he once confronted the devil himself during one of his exorcisms. A photo of St. John Paul II adorned the walls, since "demons become very irritable before him," and Amorth always carried "two wooden crucifixes, an aspergillum for sprinkling holy water, and a vial of consecrated oil." But when he supposedly met the devil in Rome, Amorth said he mostly used prayer as his weapon, reciting verses of liberation from the Roman Rite of Exorcism. In return, "the demon resumed his shrieks, making the possessed turn his head back and his eyes roll. He remained like this with his back arched for a quarter of an hour." As this continued, "the room became extremely cold and ice crystals formed on the windows and the walls." As Amorth continually commanded the demon to leave the host, "the young man's body stiffened so much that he became hard and began to levitate. For several minutes, he remained hovering 3 feet in the air." Finally, the man dropped into a chair, Stanzone writes. Amorth said he left for the day but continued to regularly visit the man and pray over him until he was met with no resistance. When he at last sensed the man was at peace, Amorth asked how Lucifer had left his body. The man said he "began to howl like never before. Then, at the end of this, he felt new and light," Stanzone writes. In his line of work, Amorth said he has seen all manner of surprises, and claimed that spitting has long been a tool used by demons of possession. "There are very many who spit, and they try to guess the exact moment to get you," Amorth said. Amorth also believed that wizards shouldered blame for satanic influence, including everyone's favorite: Harry Potter. ©Warner Bros./courtesy Everett C

"An exorcist with a little experience learns to defend himself from the spitting, so he tries to put a handkerchief or tissue in front of his face. I recall one who always spit, and I would see it coming in time, so I would put a hand in front of my mouth." Once a possessed person spit at Amorth and "three nails materialized in his mouth. I still have those nails," he told Stanzone. Amorth also claimed that people become possessed in a variety of ways.

"The most frequent case — I put it at 90 percent — is that of the evil spell," Amorth once told an Italian journalist named Marco Tosatti. "It happens when someone sustains an evil caused by the demon that has been provoked by some person who has turned to Satan or someone who has acted with Satanic perfidy," he said. "The remaining 10 to 15 percent regard persons who have participated in occult practices, such as seances

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or satanic sects, or have contacted wizards and fortune-tellers.” Early in his career, Amorth heard from Rev. Faustino Negrini, a priest near Brescia, Italy, about a 14-year-old girl named Agnese Salomon, who had been “struck by demonic possession.” Amorth accompanied Negrini to one of his sessions with the girl. When Negrini asked the demon, “Why have you taken this girl?” it responded, “Because she is the best of the parish.” Negrini said he was unable to liberate the girl until she was 26 years old. Led by Pope Francis, the Catholic church is reportedly sending exorcists to an institute that trains spiritual warriors, as the world sees a rise in exorcisms. Getty Images Today, exorcisms are on the rise worldwide, including in the United States, with the Catholic Church reportedly sending their exorcists to a new institute that trains spiritual warriors. Though no statistics are available, Catholic leaders say there are more exorcists in the US now than in any time in recent memory. And, in his lifetime, Amorth laid part of the blame on pop culture. “Forms of Satanism are . . . spread by stars and celebrities who have a huge following, such as Marilyn Manson and other satanic rock musical groups,” he said. “I have nothing against rock music; it is very respectable music. I am against satanic rock.” Amorth also believed that wizards shouldered blame for satanic influence, including everyone’s favorite: Harry Potter, who he worried could push kids “toward a morbid interest in the occult,” Stanzione writes. “If we truly wish to help children and young people turn away from books poisoned by occultism, it is necessary that parents and teachers have them read good books … where the presence of magic is solely an instrument for the moral of the story and not the substance on which the story is centered.” By the end of his life, Amorth, who died at age 91 of pulmonary-related illness, had helped discussions of exorcism become more widespread in his home country. Stanzione’s book is intended as a memorial tribute, and a way to keep his memory and teachings alive. “I always say to whoever questions my way of doing things that I wish to bring Jesus everywhere, even to the doors of hell,” Amorth once said. “Only in this way does one build the Kingdom of God bringing Him everywhere, without fear.”