

Mon. Mass of St. Blais  
p. 741; 2nd coll., IV-Sun.  
p. 140; 3d, of saints, p. 660.

University of Notre Dame  
Religious Bulletin  
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Blessing of throats to be  
announced at Masses tomorrow.

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The Strange Earling Exorcism.

In bold type on the front page of the Denver Register last Sunday, Monsignor Mathew Smith told the weird story of a recent exorcism. He drew the story from a pamphlet entitled, "Begone Satan"; the pamphlet bears the imprimatur of the Bishop of St. Cloud, the nihil obstat of the Rt. Rev. John P. Durham, and the permission to print of the Abbot of Saint John's, Collegeville, Minnesota.

The exorcism took place in Earling, Iowa, in 1928; it was performed by Rev. Theophilus Riesinger, a Capuchin, who in recent years has handled 19 cases of diabolical possession. The subject of the exorcism was a 40-year-old, unnamed woman. Doctors had examined her and found her not abnormal. Although she was apparently a good woman, she found herself held away from prayer, church services, and Holy Communion by strange inner powers. She understood languages that she had never read nor heard. When she was blessed in Latin she understood what the priest declared and foamed and became enraged. This was particularly significant because when the priest spoke in classical Latin, not praying, she lost her rage.

When the lady first arrived at Earling, she was filled with hatred against those who met her, although she wanted to undergo the exorcism. The exorcism began as usual, under permission of the Bishop, with Mass (in the parish church). After Mass the lady was taken to the convent at Earling for the actual rite of exorcism, which consists in certain prayers for divine aid and formal commands of the devils to depart. The strongest nuns were delegated to handle the lady. Her arms and dress were bound. Soon after the prayers began the woman became unconscious. Suddenly "with lightning speed, the possessed dislodged herself from her bed and from the hands of protectors, and her body, carried through the air, landed high above the door of the room and clung to the walls with catlike grips." It was necessary to use force to dislodge her. A loud shrill rent the air. To those in the room it seemed afar off; but despite closed windows, the noises ran through the village and groups came in terror to the outside of the convent. Even the nuns and the pastor had to leave the room occasionally to recuperate, but the Capuchin went on undisturbed. Several times, however, he was twisted around like a whirlwind. By special permission, Father Theophilus wore, for protection, a pyx containing the Blessed Sacrament. Horrible excrements, obviously preternatural in their volume and filth, were ejected by the possessed woman, as the devils endeavored to hit the Blessed Sacrament (although they always missed it). This kept up 10 to 20 times a day during the 23 days of the exorcism. Father Theophilus addressed the demons in English, German, and Latin, getting answers in the language he used. Voices, which differed as different spirits spoke, came from the mouth of the woman, often with her mouth altogether closed, and never with movement of her tongue or lips. If Father Theophilus through fatigue made a mistake in any of the languages, immediately he was derided with such terms as "Dumbbell!" Three of the possessing spirits identified themselves as condemned human beings: one was Judas Iscariot; one was Jacob, deceased father of the possessed woman, the man who had cursed her for not sinning with him and who was now trying to get revenge on her for the fact that he had been damned because of this sin; and the third was Mina, who had been Jacob's concubine for years.

Blessings with the Holy Sacrament pained the devils most. They also raved and squirmed when the woman was blessed with a relic of the True Cross. The intercession of "Mary the Immaculate Conception" caused a bloating of the woman's body and then a sudden relaxing as if the demons had been struck on the head with a club. The end of the Earling exorcism came when, for the first time during the long rites, the woman opened her eyes and mouth and smiled. "My Jesus, mercy! Praised be Jesus Christ!" she declared--the first time in 12 years she had pronounced the Holy Name.---Skeptics might write to the publisher of the pamphlet, Rev. Celestine Kapsner, C.S.B., St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., for further information.

SUNDAY, MASS OF PURIFICATION, p. 738; 2nd collect of IV-Sunday, p. 140.

PRAYERS: Ill, Pete Kern (seriously ill).