



The priests of the Society of the Most Sorrowful Mother are, from left, Father Daniel McEhleron, Father Chad Ripperger and Father Frank Parrinello.

Bringing the deliverance of Christ to the afflicted

Society of the Most Sorrowful Mother
established in Diocese of Tulsa

By Mason Beecroft, Photography by Dave Crenshaw

On Friday, March 27, Bishop Edward J. Slattery celebrated a Solemn Pontifical Mass at Holy Family Cathedral in Tulsa in celebration of the official founding of the Society of the Most Sorrowful Mother (SMD) as a Society of Apostolic of Diocesan Rite.

"We are a new society. To our knowledge, this is the first time that a Society of Diocesan Rite that does exorcisms has ever been established," said Father Chad Ripperger.

A Society of Diocesan Rite is an order that is invited by the local bishop and established to perform a specific mission. The priests of SMD, also known as the "Doloran Fathers" from the Latin word for "sorrow," now work in cooperation with Bishop Slattery to provide assistance to some of the most spiritually afflicted souls. Because a good deal of prayer is required to support their challenging mission, their life is semi-contemplative.

"We help people in spiritual need, which includes deliverance and exorcism, but also deals with spiritual combat and other issues. We meet people who think their issues are diabolical, but in fact they have just had trauma in their life, so we help them process their issue and give them educational and psychological insight," explained Father Chad Ripperger.

Since the ministry of Christ, the Church has been involved in the mission of deliverance from the demonic. Unfortunately, there is widespread misunderstanding among the faithful, as well as the larger society, surrounding diabolical activity. Father Ripperger believes that these misconceptions have been largely perpetuated by Hollywood.

"The movie 'The Exorcist' is fairly close," he said. "'The Exorcism of Emily Rose' is fairly accurate, although there are some historical inaccuracies because it is based on a book rather than the actual case. Most have little resemblance to reality, though."

"One misconception is that most people think the exorcist goes in scared of this powerful demon. It is the opposite. The demon is scared of the exorcist because he knows he is going to take a rather severe beating through this process and it is going to be painful for him. In the end, he is going to be humiliated and defeated. It is opposite of how it is portrayed in Hollywood."

Moreover, Hollywood portrayals of exorcism are often exaggerated and tend toward the sensational. Father Ripperger says that such extreme cases of possession are rare. In fact, in some 150 interviews the SMD conducted last year, only three were found to be cases of demonic possession.

"(Possession) is exceedingly rare, but it does exist," stated Father Ripperger. "And when it does exist, you witness things

that are outside of human capacity. Possessed people will speak languages they have never learned. You may see levitation, which is rare. The possessed may change shape or have cult knowledge that is beyond our capacity. We are not talking about something that is purely natural. However, when you start talking about certain types of diabolical influences, you have to reassure the faithful that it is rare.”

The SMD goes through a rigorous and prayerful interview process with each person who comes to them for assistance to determine the exact nature of their affliction.

“The first contacts and initial discussions help you determine if there is a spiritual issue,” explained Father Ripperger. “You ask them if something preternatural is occurring. You ask about their past history and any psychological issues. There is a vetting process that takes place. If there may be something wrong, we immediately ask them to say a certain set of prayers. If the person is unwilling to pray, then we know they are not serious. If they are willing and the problem persists, then it helps us with our diagnosis. What we will do then is continue having discussions. If it is something spiritual, then we make an appointment for them to come to us.”

When a person goes to see the Doloran Fathers, they go through a three-day evaluation consisting of further interviews and periods of prayer. After this evaluation, they are usually able to make a diagnosis of the person on four basic levels: psychological illness, diabolical oppression, diabolical obsession and diabolical possession.

Explaining the different types of diabolical activity, Father Ripperger said, “There is temptation, which everyone is subject to. There is oppression, obsession and possession. Possession is rare, but diabolical obsession is increasing because of the rise of the occult in our culture. Oppression is more common because of issues around finances, relationships or life circumstances.”

In the rare instance when a person is diagnosed as demonically possessed, the ministry of the exorcist consists of sessions of formal rites of exorcism and prayer established by the Church. The time it takes to complete an exorcism depends on each case.

“It can really vary,” said Father Ripperger. “It can be one or two sessions of saying minor exorcisms over people, or it can be years. I



Bishop Edward J. Slattery presents a decree to the priests of the Society of the Most Sorrowful Mother.

know exorcists who have been working on cases for years. The average case, if there is such a thing, usually lasts two to 10 months, depending on how much they pray and how often you are able to meet.”

“They have to fight the demons,” he continued. “I tell people that 90 percent of the work is theirs. They have to fight their way out through prayer. Ten percent of the work is mine, although it is rare that people are liberated without the rites of the Church. Unless they do their part, it is not going to go anywhere.”

Father Ripperger has found that there has been a rise in the number of cases of possession and an overall increase in diabolical activity in our culture.

“I think it has to do with the fact that, let me put it bluntly, the culture is very sinful, he stated. “Mortal sin opens the door to demons and that is why we are seeing more and more people having diabolic influence.”

One of the missions of the society is to educate the faithful about diabolical activity. Father Ripperger believes that once people are educated, then diabolical activity is demystified and there is less skepticism. Moreover, it should provide confidence and security for Catholics.

“Don’t be concerned about diabolical activity if you are leading a good Catholic life by going to Mass on Sunday and on days of obligation, going to Confession, saying prayers and avoiding mortal sin,” assured Father Ripperger.

The semi-contemplative nature of the society is primary to their mission. The Doloran Fathers spend three to four hours in prayer every day.

“Our prayer life is tailored to provide us protection for the work that we do.

Our obligation is first to pray and then help other people. When we maintain our prayer life, the diabolic attacks are insignificant at best. Prayer life also allows us to pray for the people we are working with so that they can be delivered more rapidly,” said Father Ripperger.

When Father Ripperger entered the priesthood, he never imagined that he would serve the Church as an exorcist. He performed his first exorcism 10 years ago. At that time, there were only 10 exorcists in the entire country. Now there are 75 to 80.

“This is not the type of work that you would choose. If you did, I would wonder about you,” he laughed.

Several years ago, Bishop Slattery contacted Father Ripperger about a possible case of possession. After making his diagnosis, he sent Bishop Slattery a letter indicating that the case would take an incredible amount of effort, which he didn’t have because of his parish responsibilities. Father Ripperger agreed to come to Tulsa to offer his expertise and train a local priest. It was at that time the idea for the SMD was first raised.

“We discussed starting something like this society,” recalled Father Ripperger. “When I returned to Idaho, I sent Bishop Slattery a letter asking for permission and he responded positively.”

In August 2014, Father Ripperger and Father Frank Parrinello moved into their motherhouse, located on a 116-acre farm that used to be a bed and breakfast. Father Daniel McEhleron joined them this past October.

They are currently renovating the chapel to make it suitable for the Blessed Sacrament and changing the cabins into long-term residences for the priests. There will be five hermitages and rooms for guests, along with the necessary space to support their ministry.

“We prefer that people go to their local exorcist. Normally, people should be cared for locally but if they can’t, then they can come to see us,” said Father Ripperger.

“Christ will bring people to the exorcist. My attitude is that Christ will send me the cases He wants me to work – no more and no less. I also find that He tailors my cases based on how much time is available. Christ controls every facet of the spiritual battle,” he concluded.

For more information about the Society of Our Sorrowful Mother, visit dolorans.com. †