

Is Pope Francis Casting Out Devils?

Some have begun to ask if Pope Francis is an exorcist after he laid hands on a young, wheelchair-bound man after Sunday's Mass in St. Peter's Square.

"The young man heaved deeply a half-dozen times, shook, then slumped in his wheelchair as Francis prayed over him," the Associated Press reports.

"The television station of the Italian bishops' conference reported Monday that it had surveyed exorcists, who agreed there was 'no doubt' that Francis either performed an exorcism or a prayer to free the man from the devil."

The Vatican appeared more cautious, saying in a statement that Francis "didn't intend to perform any exorcism. But as he often does for the sick or suffering, he simply intended to pray for someone who was suffering who was presented to him."

Adding to the speculation is Francis' reported fascination with Satan, a topic he frequently preaches about.

"In his very first homily as pope on March 14, Francis warned cardinals gathered in the Sistine Chapel the day after he was elected that 'he who doesn't pray to the Lord prays to the devil,'" the AP report says.

According to the U.K.'s *Daily Mail Online*, Francis would not be the first pope to publicly perform an exorcism.

"In 2000, Pope John Paul II performed an exorcism on a young woman who screamed and uttered blasphemies during a weekly audience," *Daily Mail* reports. "He spent half an hour praying with the woman, who had a history of possession, before leaving. However, the exorcism did not work and she remained

possessed.”

Click below to watch the video.