

The Exorcism of Emily Rose

On September 9, 2005 Sony Pictures will release a new horror movie based on the true story of a German girl named Anneliese Michel about Exorcism entitled *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*.

Historical Background of the True Story:

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Anneliese Michel (September 21, 1952 - July 1, 1976) was a German college student who died during an exorcism. Her parents and the priests who carried out the exorcism were later convicted of manslaughter.

From her birth on the 21st of September, 1952, Anneliese Michel enjoyed the life of a normal, religiously nurtured young girl. Without warning, her life changed on a day in 1968 when she began shaking and found she was unable to control her body. She could not call out for her parents, Josef and Anna, or any of her 3 sisters. A neurologist at the Psychiatric Clinic Wurzburg diagnosed her with Grand Mal epilepsy. Because of the strength of the epileptic fits, and the severity of the depression that followed, Anneliese was admitted for treatment at the hospital.



Soon after the attacks began, Anneliese started seeing devilish grimaces during her daily praying. It was the fall of 1970, and while the young people of the world were enjoying the liberal freedoms of the time, Anneliese was battling with the belief that she was possessed. It seemed there was no other explanation for the appearance of devilish visions during her prayers. Voices also began following her, saying Anneliese will "stew in hell." She mentioned the "demons" to the doctors only once, explaining that they have started to give her orders. The doctors seem unable to help, and Anneliese lost hope that medicine was going to be able to cure her.

In the summer of 1973, her parents visited different pastors to request an exorcism. Their requests were rejected and they were given recommendations that the now 20 year old Anneliese should continue with medication and treatment. It was explained that the process by which the Church proves a possession (Infestatio) is strictly defined, and until all the criteria are met, a bishop can not approve an exorcism. The requirements, to name a few, include an aversion to religious objects, speaking in a language the person has never learned, and supernatural powers.

In 1974, after supervising Anneliese for some time, Pastor Ernst Alt requested a permit to perform the exorcism from the Bishop of Wurzburg. The request was rejected, and a recommendation soon followed saying that Anneliese should live even more of a religious lifestyle in order to find peace. The attacks did not diminish, and her behavior become more erratic. At her parents house in Klingenberg, she insulted, beat, and began biting the other members of her family. She refused to eat because the demons would not allow it. Anneliese slept on the stone floor, ate spiders, flies, and coal, and even began drinking her own urine. She could be heard screaming throughout the house for hours while breaking crucifixes, destroying paintings of Jesus, and pulling apart rosaries. Anneliese began committing acts of self-mutilation at this time, and the act of tearing off her clothes and urinating on the floor became commonplace.

After making an exact verification of the possession in September 1975, the Bishop of Wurzburg, Josef Stangl, assigned Father Arnold Renz and Pastor Ernst Alt with the order to perform "The Great Exorcism" on Anneliese Michel. The basis for this ritual was the "Rituale Romanum," which was still, at the time, a valid Canon Law from the 17th century. It was determined that Anneliese must be saved from the possession by several demons, including Lucifer, Judas Iscariot, Nero, Cain, Hitler, and Fleischmann, a disgraced Frankish Priest from the 16th century, and some other damned souls which had manifested through her. From September '75 until July '76, one or two exorcism sessions were held each week. Anneliese's attacks were sometimes so strong that she would have to be held down by 3 men, or even chained up. During this time, Anneliese found her life somewhat return to normal as she could again go to school, take final examinations at the Pedagogic Academy in Wurzburg, and go to church.

The attacks, however, did not stop. In fact, she would more often find herself paralyzed and falling unconscious than before. The exorcism continued over many months, always with the same prayers and incantations. Sometimes family members and visitors, like one married couple that claims to have "discovered" Anneliese, would be present during the rituals. For several weeks, Anneliese denied all food. Her knees ruptured due to the 600 genuflections she performed obsessively during the daily exorcism. The process was recorded on over 40 audio tapes, in order to preserve the details.

The last day of the Exorcism Rite was on June 30th, 1976, and Anneliese was suffering at this point from Pneumonia. She was also totally emaciated, and running a high fever. Exhausted and unable to physically perform the genuflections herself, her parents stood in and helped carry her through the motions. "Beg for Absolution" was the last statement Anneliese made to the exorcists. To her mother, she said, "Mother, I'm afraid." Anna Michel recorded the death of her daughter on the following day, July 1st, 1976, and at noon, Pastor Ernst Alt informed the authorities in Aschaffenburg. The senior prosecutor began investigating immediately.

A short time before these final events unfolded, William Friedkin's "The Exorcist" (1974) came to the cinemas in Germany, bringing with it a wave of paranormal hysteria that flooded the nation.

Psychiatrists all over Europe reported an increase of obsessive ideas among their patients. Prosecutors took more than 2 years to take Annaliese's case to court, using that time to sort through the bizarre facts. **Anneliese's parents and the two exorcists were accused of negligent homicide. The "Klingenberg Case" would be decided upon two questions: What caused the death of Anneliese Michel, and who was responsible?**

According the forensic evidence, Anneliese starved to death. Specialists claimed that if the accused would have begun with forced feeding one week before her death, Anneliese's life would have been saved. One sister told the court that Anneliese did not want to go to a mental home where she would be sedated and forced to eat. The exorcists tried to prove the presence of the demons, playing taped recordings of strange dialogues like that of two demons arguing about which one of them would have to leave Anneliese's body first. One of the demons called



himself Hitler, and spoke with a Frankish accent (Hitler was born in Austria). Not one of those present during the exorcism ever had a doubt about the authenticity of the presence of these demons.

The psychiatrists, whom had been ordered to testify by the court, spoke about the "Doctrinaire Induction." They said that the priests had provided Anneliese with the contents of her psychotic behavior. Consequentially, they claimed, she later accepted her behavior as a form of demonic possession. They also offered that Anneliese's unsettled sexual development, along with her diagnosed Temporal Lobe Epilepsy, had influenced the psychosis.

The verdict was considered by many to be not as harsh as they expected. **Anneliese's parents, as well as the exorcists, were found guilty of manslaughter resulting from negligence and omitting first aid. They were sentenced to 6 months in jail and probation.** The verdict included the opinion of the court that the accused should have helped by taking care of the medical treatment that the girl needed, but instead, their use of naive practices aggravated Anneliese's already poor constitution.

A commission of the German Bishop-Conference later declared that Anneliese Michel was not possessed; however, this did not keep believers from supporting her struggles, and it was because so many believed in her that Anneliese's body did not find peace with death. Her corpse was exhumed eleven and a half years after her burial, only to confirm that it had decayed as would have been expected under normal circumstances. Today, her grave remains a place of pilgrimage for rosary-praying and for those who believe that Anneliese Michel bravely fought the devil.

In 1999, Cardinal Medina Estevez presented journalists in Vatican City the new version of the "Rituale Romanum" that has been used by the Catholic Church since 1614. The updates came after more than 10 years of editing and is called "De exorcismis et supplicationibus quibusdam," otherwise known as "The exorcism for the upcoming millennium." The Pope approbated the new Exorcism Rite, which is now allowed for worldwide use. This new form of exorcism came after the German Bishop-Conference demanded to ultimately abolish the "Rituale Romun." It also came more than 20 years after Anneliese Michel had died.

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