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No 'Exorcism Files' on Discovery, Vatican says

by John L. Allen Jr.

NCR Today

By JOHN L. ALLEN JR.

Despite titillating news stories over the weekend, the Vatican has denied that it is collaborating with the U.S.-based Discovery Channel on a series to be called the "Exorcist Files."

In comments that first appeared in *Entertainment Weekly*, Discovery Channel President Clark Bunting reportedly claimed that the network has secured the Vatican's cooperation for the project, including access to its secret archives.

The idea, as Bunting described it, would be to document cases of demonic possession investigated by the Catholic church — including, apparently, joining real exorcists for "ride-alongs" as they perform the church's rituals for casting out demons.

"The Vatican is an extraordinarily hard place to get access to," Bunting was quoted as saying. "But we explained we're not going to try to tell people what to think."

The Vatican, however, says that no such project is the works.

In a statement on Saturday to NCR, Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesperson, said that neither the Pontifical Council for Social Communications nor Vatican TV, the offices that normally deal with television networks around the world, nor the Press Office of the Holy See, "have received any request for collaboration" from the Discovery Channel.

"While it's possible they may have had contact with some individual," Lombardi said, "it does not seem that any Vatican institution is working with them."

As a result, Lombardi said, it's not correct to claim that the Discovery Channel has any agreement with the Vatican or the Catholic church.

Press spokespersons for the Discovery Channel did not respond to NCR requests for clarification. However, a Discovery spokesperson was quoted in another news outlet as saying that the network is working with Catholic priests at parishes all over the world for the show and look forward to telling their stories.

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