

Saint Dominic and the possessed Albigensian

One day in 1215, Saint Dominic was preaching the Holy Rosary near Carcassonne. There were more than twelve thousand men to hear him. An Albigensian heretic possessed by the devil was brought to him. The Saint exorcised him in the presence of all the people. The demons, who possessed this poor wretch, being obliged to answer in spite of themselves to the interrogations which the Saint made to them, affirmed: 1) that there were fifteen thousand of them in the body of this miserable man, because he had attacked the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary; 2) that Dominic, by the Rosary he preached, put terror and fear into the whole of hell, and that he was the man of the world whom they hated most because of the souls he took away from them through the devotion of the Rosary.

Saint Dominic, having thrown his Rosary around the neck of the possessed man, asked this legion of demons who, of all the saints in heaven, they feared more and who should be more loved and honored by men.

At this questioning, they made such frightful cries that most of the listeners, seized with fear, fell to the ground. Then these evil spirits, in order not to answer, wept and lamented in such a pitiful, touching manner that many of those present, seized with fear and extreme sadness, wept themselves.

Through the mouth of the possessed, the infernal spirits said in a lamentable tone of voice: "Dominic, Dominic, have mercy on us, we promise you that we will never harm you. You who have so much pity on sinners and wretches, have pity on us miserable wretches. Alas, we suffer so much, why do you take pleasure in increasing our pains? Be content with the pains we endure. Mercy! Mercy! Mercy!"

The Saint, unmoved by the touching words of these wicked spirits, replied that he would not cease to torment them until they had answered the question. Exasperated by the constraint, the demons finally told him that they would answer it, but in secret and in his ears, and not in front of everyone. In the name of God, the Saint insisted and commanded them to speak and answer out loud.

The devils continue to remain obstinately silent, despite Dominic's urging. Then the Saint gets down on his knees and makes this prayer to the Blessed Virgin: "O most holy Virgin Mary, by the virtue of the holy Rosary, command these enemies of the human race to answer my question."

This prayer being made, behold, a burning flame came out of the ears, nostrils, and mouth of the possessed man, a sight that made everyone tremble, but yet hurt no one.

Then the devils cried out: "Dominic, we beg you, by the Passion of Jesus Christ and by the merits of His Holy Mother and all the Saints, that you allow us to leave this body without saying anything; for the angels, when you wish, will reveal it to you. Are we not liars? Why do you want to believe us? Do not torment us any further, have mercy on us."

"Wretched men that you are, unworthy to be heard," said Saint Dominic, who, still kneeling, continued his prayer to the Blessed Virgin: "O most worthy Mother of Wisdom, I pray for this people here present who are already instructed in how to say the Angelic Salutation well. Force your enemies to confess in public the whole and sincere truth on this point."

No sooner had he finished his prayer, than he saw the Blessed Virgin near him, surrounded by a great multitude of angels. With a golden rod which she held in her hand, she struck the demoniac, saying to him: "Answer my servant Dominic, according to his request."

It should be noted that the people neither heard nor saw the Blessed Virgin; Saint Dominic alone enjoyed this privilege.

Then the demons uttered new cries that frightened the witnesses and said: "O our enemy, O our ruin, O our confusion, why did you come from heaven on purpose to torment us so much? Must we, in spite of ourselves, O advocate of sinners who remove them from hell, O most assured way to Paradise, be obliged to tell the whole truth? Must we confess in front of everyone what will be the cause of our confusion and ruin? Woe to us, woe to our princes of darkness.

"Listen then, Christians. This Mother of Jesus Christ is all-powerful to prevent her servants from falling into hell; it is she who, like a Sun, dispels the darkness of our schemes and machinations; it is she who clears our mines, breaks our traps and renders all our temptations useless and without effect.

"We are compelled to confess that none of those who persevere in His service are damned with us.

"One single sigh of hers, which she offers to the Holy Trinity, surpasses all the prayers, wishes and desires of all the Saints.

"We fear her more than all the blessed together and we can do nothing against her faithful servants.

"Many Christians even who invoke her at death, and who should according to our ordinary laws be damned, are saved by her intercession."

They continued angrily: "Ah, if this Mariette (that is what their rage made them call her) had not opposed our designs and efforts, we would long ago have overthrown and destroyed the Church and made all her Orders fall into error and infidelity.

"We protest moreover, by the violence done to us, that none of those who persevere in saying the Rosary which Dominic preaches are damned; for Mary obtains for her devout servants a true contrition of their sins by which they obtain pardon and indulgence."

Then Saint Dominic had all the people recite the Rosary, very slowly and devoutly, and at each Hail Mary that the Saint and the people recited, a great multitude of demons came out of the body of the unfortunate possessed man, in the form of burning coals.

When the demons were all gone and the heretic was completely delivered, the Blessed Virgin gave her blessing, albeit invisibly, to all the people, who felt a very sensitive joy.

This miracle caused a great number of heretics to abjure their errors, to be converted and to commit themselves to reciting the Holy Rosary every day.

Thus spoke the demons through the mouth of a man possessed in Carcassonne, who had blasphemed Mary and the Holy Rosary. Let us therefore redouble our fervor and trust in the devotion of the Rosary. O Mother of our salvation! Who could fail to have recourse to such an easy means of honoring you, of pleasing you and of deserving your favors?