

MIRACULOUS STORIES OF THE ROSARY

by Saint Louis de Montfort

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7. Two little girls, who were sisters, were saying the Rosary very devoutly in front of their house. A beautiful lady suddenly appeared, walked towards the younger girl, who was only about six or seven, took her by the hand, and led her away. Her elder sister was very startled and looked for the little girl everywhere. At last, still not having found her, she went home weeping and told her parents that her sister had been kidnapped. For three whole days the poor father and mother sought the child without success.

At the end of the third day they found her at the front door looking extremely happy and pleased. Naturally they asked her where on earth she had been, and she told them that the lady to whom she had been saying the Rosary had taken her to a lovely place where she had given her delicious things to eat. She said that the lady had also given her a baby boy to hold, that he was very beautiful, and that she had kissed him again and again.

The father and mother, who had been converted to the Catholic faith only a short time before, sent at once for the Jesuit Father who had instructed them for their reception into the Church and who had also taught them devotion to the Rosary. They told him everything that had happened, and it was this priest himself who told me this story. It all took place in Paraguay.

11. Saint Dominic, seeing that the gravity of people's sins was hindering the conversion of the Albigensians, withdrew into a forest near Toulouse, where he prayed continuously for three days and three nights. During this time he did nothing but weep and do harsh penances in order to appease the anger of God. He used his discipline so much that his body was lacerated, and finally he fell into a coma.

At this point our Lady appeared to him, accompanied by three angels, and she said, "Dear Dominic, do you know which weapon the Blessed Trinity wants to use to reform the world?"

"Oh, my Lady," answered Saint Dominic, "you know far better than I do, because next to your Son Jesus Christ you have always been the chief instrument of our salvation."

Then our Lady replied, "I want you to know that, in this kind of warfare, the principal weapon has always been the Angelic Psalter, which is the foundation-stone of the New Testament. Therefore, if you want to reach these hardened souls and win them over to God, preach my Psalter."

So he arose, comforted, and burning with zeal for the conversion of the people in that district, he made straight for the cathedral. At once unseen angels rang the bells to gather the people together, and Saint Dominic began to preach.

At the very beginning of his sermon, an appalling storm broke out, the earth shook, the sun was darkened, and there was so much thunder and lightning that all were very much afraid. Even greater was their fear when, looking at a picture of our Lady exposed in a prominent place, they saw her raise her arms to heaven three times to call down God's vengeance upon them if they failed to be converted, to amend their lives, and seek the protection of the holy Mother of God.

God wished, by means of these supernatural phenomena, to spread the new devotion of the holy Rosary and to make it more widely known.

At last, at the prayer of Saint Dominic, the storm came to an end, and he went on preaching. So fervently and compellingly did he explain the importance and value of the Rosary that almost all the people of Toulouse embraced it and renounced their false beliefs. In a very short time a great improvement was seen in the town; people began leading Christian lives and gave up their former bad habits.

12. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, instructed by the Blessed Virgin as well as by his own experience, Saint Dominic preached the Rosary for the rest of his life. He preached it by his example as well as by his sermons....

One day he had to preach at Notre Dame in Paris, and it happened to be the feast of St. John the Evangelist. He was in a little chapel behind the high altar prayerfully preparing his sermon by saying the Rosary, as he always did, when our Lady appeared to him and said: "Dominic, even though what you have planned to say may be very good, I am bringing you a much better sermon."

Saint Dominic took in his hands the book our Lady gave him, read the sermon carefully and, when he had understood it and meditated on it, he gave thanks to her.

When the time came, he went up into the pulpit and, in spite of the feast day, made no mention of Saint John other than to say that he had been found worthy to be the guardian of the Queen of Heaven. The congregation was made up of theologians and other eminent people, who were used to hearing unusual and

polished discourses; but Saint Dominic told them that it was not his desire to give them a learned discourse, wise in the eyes of the world, but that he would speak in the simplicity of the Holy Spirit and with his forcefulness.

So he began preaching the Rosary and explained the Hail Mary word by word as he would to a group of children, and used the very simple illustrations which were in the book given him by our Lady.

14. Carthagera, the great scholar, quoting Blessed Alan de la Roche in *De Dignitate Psalterii*, describes how this took place.

"Blessed Alan writes that one day Father Dominic said to him in a vision, 'My son, it is good to preach; but there is always a danger of looking for praise rather than the salvation of souls. Listen care-fully to what happened to me in Paris, so that you may be on your guard against this kind of mistake. I was to preach in the great church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and I was particularly anxious to give a fine sermon, not out of pride, but because of the high intellectual stature of the congregation.

"An hour before the time I had to preach, I was dutifully saying my Rosary - as I always did before giving a sermon - when I fell into ecstasy. I saw my beloved friend, the Mother of God, coming towards me with a book in her hand. "Dominic," she said, "your sermon for today may be very good indeed, but no matter how good it is, I have brought you one that is very much better."

"Of course I was overjoyed, and I took the book and read every word of it. Just as our Lady had said, I found exactly the right things to say in my sermon, so I thanked her with all my heart.

"When it was time to begin, I saw that the University of Paris had turned out in full force, as well as a large number of noblemen. They had all seen and heard of the great things that the good Lord had been doing through me.

"I went up into the pulpit. It was the feast of Saint John the Evangelist but all I said about him was that he had been found worthy to be the guardian of the Queen of Heaven. Then I addressed the congregation:

"My Lords and illustrious doctors of the University, you are accustomed to hearing learned sermons suited to your refined tastes. Now I do not want to speak to you in the scholarly language of human wisdom but, on the contrary, to show you the Spirit of God and his greatness."

Here ends the quotation from Blessed Alan, after which Carthagera goes on to say in his own words,

"Then Saint Dominic explained the Angelic Salutation to them, using simple comparisons and examples from everyday life."

15. Blessed Alan, according to Carthagera, mentioned several other occasions when our Lord and our Lady appeared to Saint Dominic to urge him and inspire him to preach the Rosary more and more in order to wipe out sin and convert sinners and heretics.

In another passage Carthagera says, "Blessed Alan said our Lady revealed to him that, after she had appeared to Saint Dominic, her blessed Son appeared to him and said, 'Dominic, I rejoice to see that you are not relying on your own wisdom and that, rather than seek the empty praise of men, you are working with great humility for the salvation of souls.

"But many priests want to preach thunderously against the worst kinds of sin at the very outset, failing to realize that before a sick person is given bitter medicine, he needs to be prepared by being put into the right frame of mind to really benefit by it.

"That is why, before doing anything else, priests should try to kindle a love of prayer in people's hearts and especially a love of my Angelic Psalter. If only they would all start saying it and would really persevere, God in his mercy could hardly refuse to give them his grace. So I want you to preach my Rosary."

16. In another place Blessed Alan says, "All priests say a Hail Mary with the faithful before preaching, to ask for God's grace. They do this because of a revelation that Saint Dominic had from our Lady. 'My son,' she said one day, 'do not be surprised that your sermons fail to bear the results you had hoped for. You are trying to cultivate a piece of ground which has not had any rain. Now when God planned to renew the face of the earth, he started by sending down rain from heaven - and this was the Angelic Salutation. In this way God reformed the world.

"So when you give a sermon, urge people to say my Rosary, and in this way your words will bear much fruit for souls.'

"Saint Dominic lost no time in obeying, and from then on he exerted great influence by his sermons." (This last quotation is from "The Book of Miracles of the Holy Rosary," written in Italian, also found in Justin's works, Sermon 143.)

19. Later on, when these trials were over, thanks to the mercy of God, our Lady told Blessed Alan to revive the former Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. Blessed Alan was one of the Dominican Fathers at the monastery at Dinan, in Brittany. He was an eminent theologian and a famous preacher. Our Lady chose him because, since the Confraternity had originally been started in that province, it was fitting that a Dominican from the same province should have the honour of re-establishing it.

Blessed Alan began this great work [the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary] in 1460, after a special warning from our Lord. This is how he received that urgent message, as he himself tells it:

One day when he was offering Mass, our Lord, who wished to spur him on to preach the holy Rosary, spoke to him in the Sacred Host. "How can you crucify me again so soon?" Jesus said. "What did you say, Lord?" asked Blessed Alan, horrified. "You crucified me once before by your sins," answered Jesus, "and I would willingly be crucified again rather than have my Father offended by the sins you used to commit. You are crucifying me again now because you have all the learning and understanding that you need to preach my Mother's Rosary, and you are not doing it. If you only did that, you could teach many souls the right path and lead them away from sin. But you are not doing it, and so you yourself are guilty of the sins that they commit." This terrible reproach made Blessed Alan solemnly resolve to preach the Rosary unceasingly.

20. Our Lady also said to him one day to inspire him to preach the Rosary more and more, "You were a great sinner in your youth, but I obtained the grace of your conversion from my Son. Had such a thing been possible, I would have liked to have gone through all kinds of suffering to save you, because converted sinners are a glory to me. And I would have done that also to make you worthy of preaching my Rosary far and wide." Saint Dominic appeared to Blessed Alan as well and told him of the great results of his ministry: he had preached the Rosary unceasingly, his sermons had borne great fruit and many people had been converted during his missions.

He said to Blessed Alan, "See what wonderful results I have had through preaching the Rosary. You and all who love our Lady ought to do the same so that, by means of this holy practice of the Rosary, you may draw all people to the real science of the virtues."

25. The chronicles of St. Francis tell of a young friar who had the praiseworthy habit of saying [the Rosary] of our Lady every day before dinner. One day, for some reason or other, he did not manage to say it. The refectory bell had already been rung when he asked the Superior to allow him to say it before coming to the table, and, having obtained permission, he withdrew to his cell to pray.

After he had been gone a long time, the Superior sent another friar to fetch him, and he found him in his room bathed in a heavenly light in the presence of our Lady and two angels. Beautiful roses kept issuing from his mouth at each Hail Mary, and the two angels were taking them one by one and placing them on our Lady's head, while she smilingly accepted them. Finally, two other friars who had been sent to find out what had happened to the first two saw the same scene, and our Lady did not leave until the whole Rosary had been said.

28. Blessed Thomas of St. John was well known for his sermons on the holy Rosary, and the devil, jealous of his success, tortured him so much that he fell ill and was sick for such a long time that the doctors gave him up. One night, when he really thought he was dying, the devil appeared to him in the most terrible form imaginable. There was a picture of our Lady near his bed; he looked at it and cried with all his heart and soul and strength, "Help me, save me, my dearest Mother." No sooner had he said this than the picture seemed to come alive and our Lady put out her hand, took him by the arm and said, "Do not be afraid, Thomas my son, here I am and I am going to save you; get up now and go on preaching my Rosary as you used to do. I promise to shield you from your enemies."

When our Lady said this, the devil fled and Blessed Thomas got up, finding himself in perfect health. He then thanked our Lady with tears of joy. He resumed his Rosary apostolate, and his sermons were wonderfully successful.

29. Our Lady not only blesses those who preach her Rosary but she highly rewards all those who, by their example, get others to say it.

Alphonsus, King of Leon and Calicia, very much wanted all his servants to honour the Blessed Virgin by saying the Rosary, so he used to hang a large rosary on his belt, though he never said it himself.

Nevertheless, his wearing it encouraged his courtiers to say the Rosary devoutly.

One day the King fell seriously ill and when he was given up for dead he found himself, in spirit, before the judgment-seat of our Lord. Many devils were there accusing him of all the sins he had committed, and our Lord was about to condemn him when our Lady came forward to speak in his favour. She called for a pair of scales and had his sins placed in one of the balances, while she put the large rosary which he had always worn on the other scale, together with all the rosaries that had been said through his example. It was found that the Rosaries weighed more than his sins.

Looking at him with great kindness, our Lady said, "As a reward for the little service you did for me in wearing my rosary, I have obtained a great grace for you from my Son. Your life will be spared for a few more years. See that you spend those years wisely, and do penance."

When the King regained consciousness he cried out, "Blessed be the Rosary of the most holy Virgin Mary, by which I have been de-livered from eternal damnation."

After he had recovered his health, he spent the rest of his life in spreading devotion to the Rosary, and said

it faithfully every day.

31. While St. Dominic was preaching the Rosary in Carcassone, a heretic made fun of his miracles and the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, and this prevented other heretics from being converted. As a punishment God allowed fifteen thousand devils to enter the man's body.

His parents took him to Father Dominic to be delivered from the evil spirits. He started to pray and he begged everyone who was there to say the Rosary out loud with him, and at each Hail Mary our Lady drove a hundred devils out of the man, and they came out in the form of red-hot coals.

After he had been delivered, he abjured his former errors, was converted and joined the Rosary Confraternity. Several of his associates did the same, having been greatly moved by his punishment and by the power of the Rosary.

32. The learned Franciscan, Carthagenia, as well as several other authors, says that an extraordinary event took place in 1482. The venerable Fr. James Sprenger and the religious of his order were zealously working to re-establish devotion to the Rosary and its Confraternity in the city of Cologne. Unfortunately, two priests who were famous for their preaching ability were jealous of the great influence they were exerting through preaching the Rosary. These two Fathers spoke against this devotion whenever they had a chance, and as they were very eloquent and had a great reputation, they persuaded many people not to join the Confraternity. One of them, the better to achieve his wicked end, wrote a special sermon against the Rosary and planned to give it the following Sunday. But when the time came for the sermon he did not appear and, after a certain amount of waiting, someone went to fetch him. He was found to be dead, and he had evidently died without anyone to help him.

After persuading himself that this death was due to natural causes, the other priest decided to carry out his friend's plan and give a similar sermon on another day, hoping to put an end to the Confraternity of the Rosary. However, when the day came for him to preach and it was time to give the sermon, God punished him by striking him down with paralysis which deprived him of the use of his limbs and of his power of speech.

At last he admitted his fault and that of his friend and in his heart he silently besought our Lady to help him. He promised that if only she would cure him, he would preach the Rosary with as much zeal as that with which he had formerly fought against it. For this end he implored her to restore his health and his speech, which she did, and finding himself instantaneously cured he rose up like another Saul, a persecutor turned defender of the holy Rosary. He publicly acknowledged his former error and ever afterwards preached the wonders of the Rosary with great zeal and eloquence.

48. One day, when St. Mechtilde was praying and was trying to think of some way in which she could express her love of the Blessed Virgin better than before, she fell into ecstasy. Our Lady appeared to her with the Angelic Salutation written in letters of gold upon her breast and said to her, "My daughter, I want you to know that no one can please me more than by saying the greeting which the most adorable Trinity presented to me and by which I was raised to the dignity of the Mother of God.

"By the word Ave, which is the name of Eve, Eva, I learned that God in his infinite power had preserved me from all sin and its attendant misery which the first woman had been subject to.

"The name Mary, which means 'lady of light,' shows that God has filled me with wisdom and light, like a shining star, to light up heaven and earth.

"The words, full of grace, remind me that the Holy Spirit has showered so many graces upon me that I am able to give these graces in abundance to those who ask for them through my mediation.

"When people say, The Lord is with thee, they renew the indescribable joy that was mine when the eternal Word became incarnate in my womb.

"When you say to me, Blessed art thou among women, I praise the mercy of God who has raised me to this exalted degree of happiness.

"And at the words, Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus, the whole of heaven rejoices with me to see my Son Jesus adored and glorified for having saved mankind."

Seventeenth Rose

49. Blessed Alan de la Roche, who was so deeply devoted to the Blessed Virgin, had many revelations from her, and we know that he confirmed the truth of these revelations by a solemn oath. Three of them stand out with special emphasis: the first, that if people fail to say the Hail Mary, which has saved the world, out of carelessness, or because they are lukewarm, or because they hate it, this is an indication that they will probably be condemned to eternal punishment.

The second truth is that those who love this divine salutation bear the very special stamp of predestination. The third is that those to whom God has given this favour of loving our Lady and of serving her out of love must take very great care to continue to love and serve her until the time when she shall have had them placed in heaven by her Son in the degree of glory which they have earned.

56. Blessed Alan also relates that a nun who had always had a great devotion to the Rosary appeared after her death to one of her sisters in religion and said to her, "If I were able to return in my body to have the chance of saying just a single Hail Mary, even without great fervour, I would gladly go through the sufferings that I had during my last illness all over again, in order to gain the merit of this prayer" It is to be noted that she had been bedridden and suffered agonizing pains for several years before she died.

79. Whatever you do, do not be like a certain pious but self-willed lady in Rome, so often referred to by speakers on the Rosary. She was so devout and fervent that she put to shame by her holy life even the strictest religious in the Church.

Having decided to ask St. Dominic's advice about her spiritual life, she made her confession to him. For penance he gave her one Rosary to say and advised her to say it every day. She excused herself, saying that she had her regular exercises, that she made the Stations of Rome every day, that she wore sack-cloth as well as a hair-shirt, that she gave herself the discipline several times a week, that she often fasted and did other penances. Saint Dominic urged her over and over again to take his advice and say the Rosary, but she would not hear of it. She left the confessional, horrified at the methods of this new spiritual director who had tried so hard to persuade her to take up a devotion for which she had no taste.

Later on, when she was at prayer she fell into ecstasy and had a vision of her soul appearing before the Supreme Judge. Saint Michael put all her penances and other prayers on one side of the scales and all her sins and imperfections on the other. The tray of her good works were greatly outweighed by that of her sins and imperfections.

Filled with alarm, she cried for mercy, imploring the help of the Blessed Virgin, her gracious advocate, who took the one and only Rosary she had said for her penance and dropped it on the tray of her good works. This one Rosary was so heavy that it weighed more than all her sins as well as all her good works. Our Lady then reproved her for having refused to follow the counsel of her servant Dominic and for not saying the Rosary every day.

As soon as she came to herself she rushed and threw herself at the feet of Saint Dominic and told him all that had happened, begged his forgiveness for her unbelief, and promised to say the Rosary faithfully every day. By this means she rose to Christian perfection and finally to the glory of everlasting life.

80. Few saints have reached the same heights of prayer as Saint Mary Magdalene, who was lifted up to heaven by angels each day, and who had the privilege of learning at the feet of Jesus and his holy Mother. Yet one day, when she asked God to show her a sure way of advancing in his love and arriving at the heights of perfection, he sent the archangel St. Michael to tell her, on his behalf, that there was no other way for her to reach perfection than to meditate on our Lord's passion. So he placed a cross in the front of her cave and told her to pray before it, contemplating the sorrowful mysteries which she had seen take place with her own eyes.

86. Blessed Alan relates that a man he knew had tried desperately all kinds of devotions to rid himself of the evil spirit which possessed him, but without success. Finally, he thought of wearing his rosary round his neck, which eased him considerably. He discovered that whenever he took it off the devil tormented him cruelly, so he resolved to wear it night and day. This drove the evil spirit away forever because he could not bear such a terrible chain. Blessed Alan also testifies that he delivered a great number of those who were possessed by putting a rosary round their necks.

87. Father Jean Amat, of the Order of St. Dominic, was giving a series of Lenten sermons in the Kingdom of Aragon one year, when a young girl was brought to him who was possessed by the devil. After he had exorcised her several times without success, he put his rosary round her neck. Hardly had he done so when the girl began to scream and cry out in a fearful way, shrieking, "Take it off, take it off; these beads are tormenting me." At last, the priest, filled with pity for the girl, took his rosary off her.

The very next night, when Fr. Amat was in bed, the same devils who had possession of the girl came to him, foaming with rage and tried to seize him. But he had his rosary clasped in his hand and no efforts of theirs could wrench it from him. He beat them with it very well indeed and put them to flight, crying out, "Holy Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary, come to my help."

The next day on his way to the church, he met the poor girl, still possessed; one of the devils within her started to jeer at him, saying, "Well, brother, if you had been without your rosary, we should have made short shrift of you." Then the good Father threw his rosary round the girl's neck without more ado, saying, "By the sacred names of Jesus and Mary his holy Mother, and by the power of the holy Rosary, I command you, evil spirits, to leave the body of this girl at once." They were immediately forced to obey him, and she was delivered from them.

88. Our Lady one day revealed to Blessed Alan de la Roche that, after the holy sacrifice of the Mass, which is the first and most living memorial of our Lord's passion, there was indeed no more excellent devotion or one of

greater merit than that of the Rosary, which is like a second memorial and representation of the life and passion of Jesus Christ.

89. Fr. Dorland relates that in 1481 our Lady appeared to the Venerable Dominic, a Carthusian devoted to the holy Rosary, who lived at Treves, and said to him:

"Whenever one of the faithful, in a state of grace, says the Rosary while meditating on the mysteries of the life and passion of Christ, he obtains full and entire remission of all his sins."

She also said to Blessed Alan, "I want you to know that, although there are numerous indulgences already attached to the recitation of my Rosary, I shall add many more to every five decades for those who, free from serious sin, say them with devotion, on their knees. And whosoever shall persevere in the devotion of the holy Rosary, with its prayers and meditations, shall be rewarded for it; I shall obtain for him full remission of the penalty and the guilt of all his sins at the end of his life.

"And let this not seem incredible to you; it is easy for me because I am the Mother of the King of heaven, and he calls me full of grace. And being filled with grace, I am able to dispense it freely to my dear children."

98. The saintly Blanche of Castille, Queen of France, was deeply grieved because twelve years after her marriage she was still childless. When St. Dominic went to see her he advised her to say the Rosary every day to ask God for the grace of motherhood, and she faithfully carried out his advice. In the year 1213 she gave birth to her eldest child, who was called Philip. But when the child died in infancy, the Queen sought our Lady's help more than ever, and had a large number of rosaries given out to all members of the court and to people in several towns in the Kingdom, asking them to pray to God for a blessing which this time would be complete. This was granted to her, for in 1215 St. Louis was born, the prince who was to become the glory of France and the model of Christian kings.

99. Alphonsus VIII, King of Aragon and Castille, had been leading a disorderly life and had been punished by God in several ways, and he was forced to take refuge in a town belonging to one of his allies.

St. Dominic happened to be in this town on Christmas Day and he preached on the Rosary as he usually did, and spoke of the graces that we obtain through this devotion. He mentioned, among other things, that those who said the Rosary devoutly would overcome their enemies and regain all they had lost.

The King listened attentively and sent for St. Dominic to ask whether what he had said about the Rosary was really true. The Saint assured him that nothing was more true, and that if only he would practice this devotion and join the Confraternity, he would see for himself. The King resolved to say the Rosary every day and persevered for a year in doing so. The very next Christmas, our Lady appeared to him at the end of his Rosary and said, "Alphonsus, you have served me for a year by saying my Rosary devoutly every day, so I have come to reward you. I have obtained the forgiveness of your sins from my Son. Here is a rosary, which I present to you; wear it, and I promise you that none of your enemies will be able to harm you."

Our Lady vanished, leaving the King overjoyed and greatly encouraged; he immediately went in search of the Queen and told her all about our Lady's gift and the promise that went with it. He touched her eyes with this rosary, for she had lost her sight, and she was cured.

Shortly afterwards the King rallied some troops and with the help of his allies boldly attacked his enemies. He forced them to give back the territory they had taken from him and make reparation for his losses. They were completely routed, and he became so successful in war that soldiers came from all sides to fight under his standard, because it seemed that, whenever he went into battle, the victory was sure to be his.

This is not surprising because he never went into battle without first saying his Rosary on his knees. He made certain that the whole of his court joined the Confraternity of the Rosary and he saw to it that all his officials and servants were devoted to it.

The Queen also joined the Confraternity, and they both persevered in the service of Blessed Virgin and lived very holy lives.

100. St. Dominic had a cousin named Don Perez or Pedro, who was leading a highly immoral life. When he heard that his cousin was preaching on the wonders of the Rosary and learned that several people had been converted and had amended their lives by means of it, he said, "I had given up all hope of being saved but now I am beginning to take heart again. I really must hear this man of God."

So one day he went to hear one of St. Dominic's sermons. When the latter caught sight of him, he struck out against sin more zealously than ever before, and from the depths of his heart he besought God to enlighten his cousin and let him see what a deplorable state his soul was in.

At first, Don Perez was somewhat alarmed, but he still did not resolve to change his ways. He came once more to hear the Saint preach and his cousin, realizing that a heart as hardened as his could only be moved by something extraordinary, cried out with a loud voice, "Lord Jesus, grant that this whole congregation may see the state of the man who has just come into your house."

Then everyone suddenly saw that Don Perez was completely surrounded by a band of devils in the form of hideous beasts, who were holding him in great iron chains. People fled in all directions in abject terror, and

Don Perez himself was even more appalled when he saw how everyone shunned him. St. Dominic told them all to stand still and said to his cousin, "Unhappy man that you are, acknowledge the deplorable state you are in and throw yourself at our Lady's feet. Take this rosary, say it with devotion and with true sorrow for all your sins, and make a resolution to amend your life."

Don Perez knelt down and said the Rosary; he then felt the desire to make his confession, which he did with heartfelt contrition. St. Dominic ordered him to say the Rosary every day; he promised to do this and he entered his own name in the register of the Confraternity. When he left the church his face was no longer horrible to behold but shining like that of an angel. Thereafter he persevered in devotion to the Rosary, led a well-ordered life and died a happy death.

101. When St. Dominic was preaching the Rosary near Carcassone, an Albigensian was brought to him who was possessed by the devil. The Saint exorcised him in the presence of a great crowd of people; it appears that over twelve thousand had come to hear him speak. The devils who were in possession of this wretched man were forced to answer St. Dominic's questions in spite of themselves.

They said:

- 1 That there were fifteen thousand of them in the body of that poor man, because he had attacked the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary;
- 2 That by the Rosary which he preached, he put fear and horror into the depths of hell, and that he was the man they hated most throughout the world because of the souls he snatched from them by the devotion of the Rosary.
- 3 They revealed several other things.

102. St. Dominic put his rosary round the neck of the possessed man and asked them who, of all the saints in heaven, was the one they feared most, who should therefore be the most loved and revered by men. At this they let out such unearthly screams that most of the people fell to the ground, seized with fear. Then, using all their cunning so as not to answer, the devils wept and wailed in such a pitiful way that many of the people wept also, out of pure natural pity. The devils, speaking through the mouth of the Albigensian, pleaded in a heart-rending voice, "Dominic, Dominic, have pity on us, we promise you we will never harm you. "You have always had compassion for sinners and those in distress; have pity on us, for we are in grievous straits. We are suffering so much already, why do you delight in increasing our pains? Can't you be satisfied with the pains we now endure? Have mercy on us, have mercy on us!"

103. St. Dominic was not in the least moved by the pathetic words of those wretched spirits, and told them he would not let them alone until they had answered his question. Then they said they would whisper the answer in such a way that only St. Dominic would be able to hear. The latter firmly insisted upon their answering clearly and audibly. Then the devils kept quiet and would not say another word, completely disregarding St. Dominic's orders.

So he knelt down and said this prayer to our Lady: "Oh, most glorious Virgin Mary, I implore you by the power of the holy Rosary command these enemies of the human race to answer my question."

No sooner had he said this prayer than a glowing flame leaped out of the ears, nostrils and mouth of the possessed man. Everyone shook with fear, but the fire did not hurt anyone. Then the devils cried, "Dominic, we beseech you, by the passion of Jesus Christ and the merits of his holy Mother and of all the saints, let us leave the body of this man without speaking further; for the angels will answer your question whenever you wish. After all, are we not liars - so why should you want to believe us? Do not torment us any more, have pity on us."

"Woe to you, wretched spirits, who do not deserve to be heard," St. Dominic said, and kneeling down he prayed to the Blessed Virgin: "O most worthy Mother of Wisdom, I am praying for the people assembled here, who have already learned how to say the Angelic Salutation properly. I beg you for the salvation of those here present, compel these adversaries of yours to proclaim the whole truth here and now before the people."

St. Dominic had scarcely finished this prayer when he saw the Blessed Virgin near at hand surrounded by a multitude of angels. She struck the possessed man with a golden rod that she held and said, "Answer my servant Dominic at once." (It must be noted that the people neither saw nor heard our Lady, only St. Dominic.)

104. Then the devils started screaming:

"Oh, you who are enemy, our downfall and our destruction, why have you come from heaven to torture us so grievously? O advocate of sinners, you who snatch them from the very jaws of hell, you who are a most sure path to heaven, must we, in spite of ourselves, tell the whole truth and confess before everyone who it is who is the cause of our shame and our ruin? Oh, woe to us, princes of darkness.

"Then listen, you Christians. This Mother of Jesus is most powerful in saving her servants from falling into hell. She is like the sun which destroys the darkness of our wiles and subtlety. It is she who uncovers our hidden plots, breaks our snares, and makes our temptations useless and ineffective.

"We have to say, however, reluctantly, that no soul who has really persevered in her service has ever been

damned with us; one single sigh that she offers to the Blessed Trinity is worth far more than all the prayers, desires, and aspirations of all the saints. We fear her more than all the other saints in heaven together, and we have no success with her faithful servants.

"Many Christians who call on her at the hour of death and who really ought to be damned according to our ordinary standards are saved by her intercession. And if that Marietta (it is thus in their fury they called her) did not counter our plans and our efforts, we should have overcome the Church and destroyed it long before this, and caused all the Orders in the Church to fall into error and infidelity.

"Now that we are forced to speak, we must also tell you that nobody who perseveres in saying the Rosary will be damned, because she obtains for her servants the grace of true contrition for their sins by which they obtain pardon and mercy."

Then St. Dominic had all the people say the Rosary very slowly and with great devotion, and a wonderful thing happened: at each Hail Mary which he and the people said, a large number of devils issued forth from the wretched man's body under the guise of red-hot coals. When the devils had all been expelled and the heretic completely delivered from them, our Lady, although invisible, gave her blessing to the assembled company, and they were filled with joy.

A large number of heretics were converted because of this miracle and joined the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary.

105. It is almost impossible to do credit sufficiently to the victories that Count Simon de Montfort won against the Albigensians under the patronage of Our Lady of the Rosary. They are so famous that the world has never seen anything to match them. One day he defeated ten thousand heretics with a force of five hundred men; on another occasion he overcame three thousand with only thirty men; finally, with eight hundred horsemen and one thousand infantrymen he completely routed the army of the King of Aragon, which was a hundred thousand strong, and this with the loss on his side of only one horseman and eight soldiers.

106. Our Lady also protected Alan de l'Anvally, a Breton knight, from great perils. He too was fighting for the faith against the Albigensians. One day, when he found himself surrounded by enemies on all sides, our Lady let fall a hundred and fifty rocks upon his enemies and he was delivered from their hands.

Another day, when his ship had foundered and was about to sink, this good Mother caused a hundred and fifty small hills to appear miraculously above the water and by means of them they reached Brittany in safety. In thanksgiving to our Lady for the miracles she had worked on his behalf in answer to his daily Rosary, he built a monastery at Dinan for the religious of the new Order of St. Dominic and, having become a religious himself, he died a holy death at Orleans.

107. Othere, also a Breton soldier, from Vaucouleurs, often put whole companies of heretics or robbers to flight, wearing his rosary on his arm and on the hilt of his sword. Once when he had beaten his enemies, they admitted that they had seen his sword shining brightly, and another time had noticed a shield on his arm on which our Lord, our Lady and the saints were depicted. This shield made him invisible and gave him the strength to attack well.

Another time he defeated twenty thousand heretics with only ten companies without losing a single man. This so impressed the general of the heretics' army that he sought out Othere, abjured his heresy and declared that he had seen him surrounded by flaming swords during the battle.

108. Blessed Alan relates that a certain Cardinal Pierre, whose titular church was that of St. Mary-beyond-the-Tiber, was a great friend of St. Dominic's and had learned from him to have a great devotion to the holy Rosary. He grew to love it so much that he never ceased singing its praises and encouraging everyone he met to embrace it. Eventually he was sent as legate to the Holy Land to the Christians who were fighting against the Saracens. So successfully did he convince the Christian army of the power of the Rosary that they all started saying it and stormed heaven for help in a battle in which they knew they would be pitifully outnumbered. And in fact, their three thousand triumphed over an enemy of one hundred thousand.

109. In 1578, a woman of Antwerp had given herself to the devil and signed a contract with her own blood. Shortly afterwards she was stricken with remorse and had an intense desire to make amends for this terrible deed. So she sought out a kind and wise confessor to find out how she could be set free from the power of the devil.

She found a wise and holy priest, who advised her to go to Fr. Henry, director of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, at the Dominican Friary, to be enrolled there and to make her confession. Accordingly, she asked to see him but met, not Fr. Henry, but the devil disguised as a friar. He reproved her severely and said she could never hope to receive God's grace, and there was no way of revoking what she had signed. This grieved her greatly but she did not lose hope in God's mercy and sought out Fr. Henry once more, only to find the devil a second time, and to meet with a second rebuff. She came back a third time and then at last, by divine providence, she found Fr. Henry in person, the priest whom she had been looking for, and he treated her with

great kindness, urging her to throw herself on the mercy of God and to make a good confession. He then received her into the Confraternity and told her to say the Rosary frequently.

One day, while Fr. Henry was celebrating Mass for her, our Lady forced the devil to give her back the contract she had signed. In this way she was delivered from the devil by the authority of Mary and by devotion to the holy Rosary.

110. A nobleman who had several daughters placed one of them in a lax monastery where the nuns were concerned only with vanity and pleasures. Their confessor, on the other hand, was a zealous priest with a great devotion to the holy Rosary. Wishing to guide this nun into a better way of life, he ordered her to say the Rosary every day in honour of the Blessed Virgin, while meditating on the life, passion and glory of Jesus Christ.

She joyously undertook this devotion, and little by little she grew to have a repugnance for the wayward habits of her sisters in religion. She developed a love of silence and prayer, in spite of the fact that the others despised and ridiculed her and called her a fanatic.

It was at this time that a holy priest, who was making the visitation of the convent, had a strange vision during his meditation: he saw a nun in her room, rapt in prayer, kneeling in front of a Lady of great beauty who was surrounded by angels. The latter had flaming spears with which they repelled a crowd of devils who wanted to come in. These evil spirits then fled to the other nuns' rooms under the guise of vile animals. By this vision the priest became aware of the lamentable state of that monastery and was so upset that he thought he might die of grief. He sent for the young religious and exhorted her to persevere. As he pondered on the value of the Rosary, he decided to try and reform the Sisters by means of it. He bought a supply of beautiful rosaries and gave one to each nun, imploring them to say it every day and promising them that, if they would only say it faithfully, he would not try to force them to alter their lives. Wonderful and strange though it may seem, the nuns willingly accepted the rosaries and promised to say the prayer on that condition. Little by little they began to give up their empty and worldly pursuits, letting silence and recollection come into their lives. In less than a year they all asked that the monastery be reformed.

The Rosary worked more changes in their hearts than the priest could have done by exhorting and commanding them.

113. I, who write this, have learnt from my own experience that the Rosary has the power to convert even the most hardened hearts. I have known people who have gone to missions and heard sermons on the most terrifying subjects without being in the least moved; and yet, after they had, on my advice, started to say the Rosary every day, they eventually became converted and gave themselves completely to God.

When I have gone back to parishes where I had given missions, I have seen tremendous differences between them; in those parishes where the people had given up the Rosary, they had generally fallen back into their sinful ways, whereas in places where the Rosary was said faithfully I found the people were persevering in the grace of God and advancing in virtue day by day.

128. Blessed Alan de la Roche and other writers, including Robert Bellarmine, tell the story of how a good priest advised three of his penitents, who happened to be sisters, to say the Rosary every day without fail for a whole year. This was so that they might make a beautiful robe of glory for the Blessed Virgin out of their Rosaries. This was a secret that the priest had received from heaven.

So the three sisters said the Rosary faithfully for a year, and on the feast of the Purification our Lady appeared to them at night when they had retired. St. Catherine and St. Agnes were with her, and she was wearing a dress brilliant with light, on which was written in letters of gold the words "Hail, Mary, full of grace." Our Lady approached the eldest sister and said, "I greet you, my daughter, who have greeted me so often and so well. I want to thank you for the beautiful robes you have made me." The two virgin saints who accompanied our Lady also thanked her and all three disappeared.

An hour later, our Lady, with the same two companions, entered the room again, but this time she was wearing a green dress which had no gold lettering and did not shine. She went to the second sister and thanked her for the robe she had made by saying her Rosary. But since this sister had seen our Lady appear to the eldest sister much more magnificently dressed, she asked the reason why. Our Lady answered, "Your sister made me more beautiful clothes because she has been saying the Rosary better than you."

About an hour after this, she appeared to the youngest of the sisters wearing tattered and dirty rags. "My daughter," she said, "I want to thank you for these clothes you have made me." The young girl, feeling ashamed, cried out, "O my lady, how could I have dressed you so badly! I beg you to forgive me. Please grant me a little more time to make you a beautiful robe by saying my Rosary better." Our Lady and the two saints vanished, leaving the girl heartbroken. She told her confessor everything that had happened and he urged them to say the Rosary for another year and to say it with more devotion than ever.

At the end of this second year, on the same day of the Purification, our Lady, clothed in a magnificent robe, and again attended by St. Catherine and St. Agnes, wearing crowns, appeared to them in the evening. She said to them, "I have come to tell you that you have earned heaven at last, and you will all have the great joy of

going there tomorrow." The three of them cried, "Our hearts are ready, dearest Queen, our hearts are ready." Then the vision faded. That same night they became ill and sent for their confessor, and received the last sacraments, after having thanked him for the holy practice he had taught them. After Compline, our Lady appeared with a large company of virgins and had the three sisters clothed in white robes. While angels were singing, "Come, spouses of Jesus Christ, receive the crowns which have been prepared for you for all eternity," they departed from this life.

Some important truths can be learned from this story: 1) How important it is to have a good director who will counsel holy practices, especially that of the holy Rosary; 2) How important it is to say the Rosary with attention and devotion; 3) How kind and merciful is the Blessed Virgin to those who are sorry for the past and are firmly resolved to do better; 4) How generous she is in rewarding us in life, at death, and in eternity for the little services that we render her with fidelity.

132. Public prayer is more powerful than private prayer to appease the anger of God and call down his mercy, and the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, has always advocated it in times of disasters and general distress. In his [document] on the Rosary, Pope Gregory XIII declares that we must believe, on pious faith, that the public prayers and processions of the members of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary were largely responsible for the great victory over the Turkish navy at Lepanto, which God granted to the Christians on the first Sunday of October 1571.

153. Flammin and a great number of other writers tell the story of a young girl of noble station named Alexandra, who had been miraculously converted and enrolled by St. Dominic in the Confraternity of the Rosary. After her death, she appeared to him and said she had been condemned to seven hundred years in purgatory because of her own sins and those she had caused others to commit by her worldly ways. So she implored him to ease her pains by his prayers and to ask the Confraternity members to pray for the same end. St. Dominic did as she had asked. Two weeks later she appeared to him, more radiant than the sun, having been quickly delivered from purgatory by the prayers of the Confraternity members. She also told St. Dominic that she had come on behalf of the souls in purgatory to beg him to go on preaching the Rosary and to ask their relations to offer their Rosaries for them, and that they would reward them abundantly when they entered into glory.