

CHAPTER SIX

THE MIRACLES OF ST. DOMINIC

Narrated by **SISTER CECILIA**

INTRODUCTION

Blessed Cecilia was a young woman, not yet twenty, when she received her Dominican habit from St. Dominic at Rome and witnessed the foundation of the monastery of San Sisto. In 1223 she went with three other sisters to the new monastery of St. Agnes in Bologna to help train Blessed Diana and her community in the Dominican life. She remained a member of the Bolognese monastery until her death. Among the treasures Cecilia brought from Rome were her recollections of the Holy Founder. Late in life, some time between 1272 and 1288, Cecilia dictated her reminiscences of St. Dominic to Sister Angelica. This was the origin of the *Miracles*.

This piece was a family document intended for the edification of the sisters at St. Agnes. The two nuns did not set out to write history in the modern sense. Cecilia has a blithe unconcern about chronology which leads her to jumble her anecdotes indiscriminately. Probably Sister Angelica took them down during recreation when Cecilia was entertaining the community with her stories about their Holy Father. This carelessness about dates has driven historians to distraction. They find it necessary to rearrange the chapters in the following sequence: 3, 4, 11, 12, 13, 1, 14, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10,6,7,15.

Like all good story-tellers, Cecilia unconsciously embroidered a bit. Compare what Jordan of Saxony says about the healing of Cardinal Stephen's nephew (no. 100) with Cecilia's account of the same event (no. 2). Jordan's restrained, historical recitation of the bare facts has become a highly dramatized narration filled out with details which remind us of the miracle worked by Eliseus in the Old Testament. The reader might also look at the two descriptions of the miraculous provision of bread for the friars at San Sisto: the factual statement given by Brother Bonvisus before the canonization commission at Bologna (no. 22) and Cecilia's more colorful report (no. 3). But, after all, she was not testifying in court, she was talking familiarly with her sisters.

Cecilia also had a flair for the marvelous. She wants to tell her listeners about Dominic's sanctity, about his power over the evil one. The result is found in anecdotes which strike the modern reader as somewhat extreme and highly imaginative. But men of today must remember that Satan does exist, that demons do torment the saints (witness the blows they rained on the Curé d'Ars and the devil sitting on the breviary of St. Teresa of Avila). As Father Jarrett reminds us: "The Gospels even contain an apparition of the devil himself. Is it true [he asks] that there are ages when the spiritual forces engaged in battle around us become more evident, when the walls that shut material life off from the immaterial are more diaphanous, when the eager eyes of daring men pierce through appearances more readily and arrive more clearly

at realities behind? Are there psychic periods as well as psychic people? Is a generation of artists more sure in its intuitions than an age of industrialists in its statistics? Who knows? But the industrialists only understand their statistics, and artists their intuitions, and the mediaevalists their dainty yet virile faith".(30)

The faults of Cecilia have disconcerted critically minded readers, beginning with the learned Melchior Cano, O. P., in the sixteenth century. They have written off Cecilia's memoirs as worthless. One modern historian puts them down as the maundering of a woman in her dotage. Another challenges her description of the physical characteristics of St. Dominic (no. 15).(31)

Nevertheless, Cecilia must be taken seriously. More recent historians (with the benefit of new findings, it is true) respect her. They will not base themselves on what she says, but they can often fill in their account with data she supplies. They can show that she knew what she was talking about. She knew the Roman topography. There were canals at San Sisto. There was a bridge on the Nomentana. We are more certain now, than ever before, that her description of Dominic is accurate. When his relics were scientifically examined, between 1943-1946, the scientists discovered that Dominic did have "reddish hair" (or auburn, as others prefer to say). He was "slender and of medium height." His large eye sockets show that Cecilia judged with a woman's unerring instinct in these matters when she said, "His eyes were beautiful"(32) . Furthermore, the people who move through her narrative are historical. There was a Cardinal Stephen of Fossanova; there was a nephew, a Brother Tancred, etc.

Cecilia was not a trained historian, but a beloved daughter looking back over fifty years to the time of her youth when she personally knew a beloved Father who was now canonized, his sanctity tried and proved. She permits us to see clearly the loving concern St. Dominic had for the temporal and spiritual welfare of his daughters. Was it not like a father, coming home from Spain, to bring spoons as a gift for each of the sisters"? She shows his zeal for souls. Through her eyes we watch him preaching to the people, visiting and ministering to the recluses who lived near the walls of Rome. He instructs them, consoles them, heals their diseases, brings them Communion. Cecilia is painting the picture of a soul. It was a great soul, a saintly soul. Can we blame her if, in her enthusiasm, she embellishes when she sings his praises, when she tells us of his warm, kindly, tender, human heart?

TEXT

THE MIRACLES OF BLESSED DOMINIC

The following miracles which Blessed Dominic, our father, worked in Rome were narrated by Sr. Cecilia of Rome. She was sent by Pope Honorius, of happy memory, with three other sisters from San Sisto to teach the community of St. Agnes in Bologna about the Order of Preachers, during the days of venerable Father Master Jordan.

Sister Cecilia received the habit from Blessed Dominic's hands and made profession into his hands three times. She is still living in that same convent and is highly esteemed for the vigor of her holiness.

1. How Blessed Dominic Raised a Widow's Son from the Dead

A certain widow, a Roman citizen of the Buvallsco family, by the name of Lady Tuta, from the parish of the Holy Savior in Pensilio, held Blessed Dominic in great veneration. She had a small son, her only child, who was seriously ill. One day when Blessed Dominic was preaching in her city in the Church of St. Mark, this woman, in response to a strong impulse to hear the word of God from his lips, left her sick child at home and went to the church where Blessed Dominic was preaching the Lord's word. When the sermon was over, she returned home to find that the child had died. Although she was beside herself with grief, she managed to conceal it in silence and trusted in the power of God and the merits of Blessed Dominic. She called her maidservants and, taking her dead child with her, proceeded to the church of San Sisto, where St. Dominic was then living with the brethren. Because this convent was being altered to receive the sisters, not only the workmen, but other people, as well, were going in and out. When she entered, she found him standing by the door of the chapter-hall as though waiting for someone. Seeing him, she placed her child at his feet and, prostrating herself before him, begged him with tears to restore her son. Then Blessed Dominic, moved by the sight of her great grief, retreated a short distance and prayed for a few moments. Then he arose and, coming near the child, he made a Sign of the Cross over him. Then taking his hand, he raised him from the ground restored to life and health and gave him to his mother with orders not to tell anyone. But when she returned home, in her great delight she reported what had happened to her and her child, so that the story reached the ears of the Supreme Pontiff, who wanted to proclaim this miracle to everyone in a public sermon. But Blessed Dominic, who sincerely loved and wished to safeguard his humility, objected and declared that, if this were done, he would stay no longer in that place, but would go to the Moslems across the sea. Fearing this, the Pope promised not to make it known. But Our Lord, Who said in the Gospel that whosoever humbles himself shall be exalted, and Who customarily extols and exalts His servants against their intentions and plans, so aroused the devotion of the people and ruler to revere Blessed Dominic, that they followed him everywhere as though he were an angel and would consider themselves blessed if they could but touch him or own a shred of his clothing as a relic. This is why they cut pieces from his capuce and cape until it scarcely reached his knees. When the brethren forbade this, the blessed father, sympathizing with their devotion, said, "Let them do it to satisfy their devotion." Those who witnessed this great miracle were Brother Tancred, Brother Otto, Brother Henry, Brother Gregory, Brother Albert, and many others who later gave the details to Sr. Cecilia, who was then living in the monastery of St. Mary in Tempulo, as well as to a number of other nuns.

2. How Blessed Dominic Restored to Life the Nephew of Lord Cardinal Stephen.

Pope Honorius of holy memory commissioned Dominic to assemble all the nuns scattered in monasteries throughout the city and establish them in the convent of San Sisto, which was then being repaired. To accomplish this great task, Blessed Dominic requested that a few others suitable to himself be assigned to help him. Accordingly, the Pope assigned as his companions

Bishop Ugolino of Ostia, who later became Pope, and Lord Stephen of Fossa Nuova, Cardinal of the title of the Holy Apostles, and Lord Nicholas, Cardinal-bishop of Tusculum. They were to help him as need arose.

From the beginning, all the nuns opposed the plan and absolutely refused to obey the Pope and Blessed Dominic in this matter. The one exception was the abbess of St. Mary in Tempulo and her nuns, all but one of whom offered themselves to Blessed Dominic with all the possessions and revenues that belonged to their monastery. Thereupon Blessed Dominic, with the approval of the three cardinals who were his companions, ordained that on the first day of Lent, after the imposition of ashes, all were to assemble at the house of San Sisto, so that, in their presence and that of all her nuns, the abbess could resign her office and yield all the rights of their monastery to him and his companions.

When Blessed Dominic and the three cardinals took their seats and the abbess, with her nuns, stood before them, a man rode up pulling his hair and yelling: "Alas! alas!" When he was asked what the trouble was, he answered: "Cardinal Stephen's nephew fell from his horse and is dead." The nephew's name was Napoleon. When his uncle, the Cardinal, heard this, he fell backwards against Blessed Dominic prostrate with grief. Then, as the others supported him, Blessed Dominic arose and blessed him with holy water. Leaving them, he went to the scene, where he found the dead young man horribly crushed and badly lacerated. He had him carried to a house nearby, with instructions to leave him there. Dominic told Brother Tancred and the others present to prepare themselves for Mass. Present were Blessed Dominic, the cardinals and their retinue, and the abbess with her nuns. Blessed Dominic and the cardinals held her in high esteem for her sanctity. Then, with tears, Blessed Dominic started to say Mass. Coming to the elevation, he held the Body of the Lord in his hands and was elevating it according to custom, when all were astonished to see Blessed Dominic raised to a height of one foot above the ground. When Mass was over, he and the cardinals with their companions, together with the abbess and her nuns, returned to the body of the dead young man. With his blessed hands he arranged all the crushed and lacerated members from the head to the feet. Then with much groaning, he knelt down to pray near the coffin. For a second and third time, he repeated the process of arranging the lacerated face and body and then kneeling down to pray. Then arising, he made a Sign of the Cross over the body and, standing at the head of the corpse, he raised his hands to heaven and, being himself raised more than a foot from the ground, he shouted with a loud voice: "Young man, Napoleon, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I say to thee arise." At once, before the eyes of those who had come to this great spectacle, he arose sound and healthy and said to Blessed Dominic "Father, give me something to eat." Then Blessed Dominic gave him food and drink and returned him in gay spirits to his uncle with not even the slightest mark of injury. The young man had been dead from morning to three o'clock in the afternoon.

This very great miracle, as herein described, was related by Sr. Cecilia who was present and observed all the details with her own eyes and ears.

3. Of the Bread and Wine Miraculously Multiplied and Distributed to the Brethren Through His Prayers

When the brethren were still living at the Church of San Sisto and formed a community of about one hundred, Blessed Dominic one day sent Brother John of Calabria and Brother Albert of Rome into the city to beg. From morning to noon, they went from house to house, but all in vain. As they were returning home without anything, they passed by the church of St. Anastasia where they met a woman who had a great love for the Order. Seeing that they had received no alms, she gave them one loaf of bread, saying, "I would hate to see you return empty-handed." They thanked her for the bread and continued on their journey home. Soon they were met by a handsome youth, who earnestly begged an alms of them. But they explained that having almost nothing for themselves, they could hardly give anything to him. As he continued to press them, they said to one another, "How far would a loaf of bread go with us? Let's give it to him for the love of God." No sooner had they given him the bread than he disappeared so quickly that they did not even know in what direction. When they reached the priory, the first one they met was Blessed Dominic who already knew, by a special revelation, all that had happened. He smiled and said, "I see you have nothing, my children," and they answered, "No, father." Then they hold him what they had received and of the beggar to whom they gave the bread. But he said to them, "It was an angel of the Lord. Nevertheless, the Lord will feed His servants. Let us go and pray." After they said a brief prayer in the church, he told them to summon the community for their meal. But they reminded him, "Holy Father, how can you tell them to come, when we have nothing to serve them?", and he answered, "The Lord will feed His servants." But when they continued to dilly-dally, he called Brother Roger, the procurator, and ordered him to call the brethren to the refectory, because the Lord would provide for His servants. So they set the tables and, when the signal was given, the community entered the refectory. After the blessing of the meal by Blessed Dominic, the brethren sat down and Brother Henry of Rome began to read. At his table Blessed Dominic joined his hands in prayer. Then the promise he had made through the Holy Spirit began to be fulfilled, for, in the middle of the refectory, there suddenly appeared two handsome youths from whose shoulders hung, in front and in back, two beautiful baskets filled with bread. Serving the youngest first, they began, one on the right and the other on the left, to distribute to each of the brethren one whole loaf of bread of marvelous appearance. When they reached Blessed Dominic and gave him a loaf, they bowed and disappeared. No one to this day knows whence they came or where they went. Then Blessed Dominic said to the brethren, "Come, brethren, eat the bread which the Lord has sent you."

Then he told the brethren who were serving to get some wine for the brethren. But they answered, "Holy father, there is no wine." Then filled with a prophetic spirit, Blessed Dominic told them to go to the wine-cask and draw off the wine the Lord has put there. They went and found the cask filled to the top with wine. Drawing some off, they served it to the brethren. And Blessed Dominic said, "Come, brethren, drink the wine which the Lord has sent." Thus they ate and drank as much as they needed that day and the next and the day after. When the meal was over, he ordered that all the unused bread and wine be given to the poor, because he did not want anything to remain in the house. But for those three days he sent no one out to beg, because the Lord was supplying them with bread and wine from heaven in abundance. Later the blessed father gave the brethren a beautiful sermon exhorting them never to lose their trust in God's providence, even in the direst need.

Later on, Brother Tancred, prior of the brethren, Brothers Odo and Henry of Rome, Brother Lawrence of England, Brother Gaudio, Brother John of Rome, and many others described this

famous miracle to Sister Cecilia, who was living in the convent of St. Mary in Tempulo, and to other nuns. To them they gave some of the bread and wine, which they kept for many years as relics.

The Brother Albert whom Blessed Dominic had sent with a companion for alms was one of the two brethren whose happy death at Rome Blessed Dominic foresaw. The other was Brother Gregory, a very handsome and gracious friar, who, having received the sacraments with great devotion, was the first to make his journey to the Lord. Just three days later Brother Albert, after receiving the sacraments, exchanged this dark prison for a palace in heaven.

4. Of the Demon Who Appeared in the Form of an Ape to Blessed Dominic as He Wrote

One night, when the brethren were still living at San Sisto, the blessed father, after spending a long time in prayer, left the church and, lighting a candle, sat down at one end of the dormitory to write. Suddenly a demon in the form of an ape stood before him and began to prance up and down, grimacing and taunting him with jesting verses. Whereupon Blessed Dominic motioned for him to stand still and, taking the lighted candle, handed it to the demon to hold before him. With the candle in his hand, the demon stood before him and continued to grimace and recite his verses. As the candle burned down, the ape's fingers began to burn. At once he began to howl and twist and turn, as though anyone who had experienced the hell of eternal fire would be bothered by earthly fire. But Blessed Dominic motioned for him to be quiet. What could he do? He stood holding the candle until his index finger was seared down to where it meets the hand. This made him howl and twist all the more. Then Blessed Dominic took the ferule he always carried with him and gave the ape a whack and said, "Go away, evil one." The blow sounded as though someone had struck a bladder filled with air. The ape flung himself through the nearest wall and never returned, but the stench he produced left no doubt as to its true identity.

Sister Cecilia heard the blessed father tell this story to the brethren and sisters and saw him mimic the ape's gestures and grimaces.

5. How He Cast Seven Devils From a Certain Woman

After the sisters had moved into the church of San Sisto, the same blessed father announced that a solemn sermon would be held there on the second Sunday of Lent, when the Gospel of Cana is read. On the day scheduled, a large group of men and women, young and old, had assembled and Blessed Dominic stood near the cloister door, where the sisters could see and hear him. As he preached the Lord's words, he was interrupted by the loud cries of a woman filled with demons; she claimed there were seven of them. "Ribald, ribald," she cried, "through your deceptions you have taken four from me. They were mine and you took them from me." When the people told her to be quiet and not interrupt the sermon, Blessed Dominic said to her, "Silence, silence." But the demons speaking through her mouth answered, "You won't cast us out from here. She is ours and we won't go. There are seven of us who entered into her one way or another." And each began to tell how he entered. As the people grew more excited on account of the interruption she made, Blessed Dominic raised his hand and, making a Sign of the Cross, said, "In the name of

Our Lord Jesus Christ, I command you to depart from her and molest her no more.” Then she began to shake and to vomit a large quantity of blood and charcoal, so much so that she seemed to be dead. Then Blessed Dominic ordered her carried outside the church into a house where she could be given care until completely recovered and gave her the name Sister Amata. Later on, when Sister Cecilia and her companions, in obedience to the Lord Pope’s command, were living at St. Agnes in Bologna, this same woman, now perfectly cured, made a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James the Apostle and, on the way, visited the sisters and appeared very cheerful and gay.

This miracle was performed by Blessed Dominic as he stood preaching near the cloister door in the Church of San Sisto, and was witnessed by Sr. Cecilia and other sisters who saw him standing by the door and, in great fear, heard him order the demons to depart.

6. Of a Multiplication of Wine. Of the Angel Who Guided Him One Night. Of the Novice Whom He Freed From a Temptation

It was the same venerable father’s unvarying custom to spend the entire day on behalf of souls in diligent preaching, hearing confessions, or performing other works of charity. In the evening, he would visit the sisters and, in the presence of the brethren, instruct them about the Order. One evening, when it grew so late that it seemed certain he would not come, the sisters finished their prayers and retired to the dormitory. Suddenly the brethren rang the bell which was the signal to summon the sisters whenever the blessed father came to visit. When they heard it, all the sisters hurried to the church and, opening the door, they found him sitting with the brethren waiting for them. Blessed Dominic said to them, “My daughters, I have been fishing and the Lord has given me a very large fish.” He was referring to Brother Gaudio, a Roman, just received into the Order, the only son of a famous noble named Alexander. Then he gave them a lengthy conference which brought immense consolation. After finishing, he said, “It would be a good thing, my daughters, to taste a little wine.” Then he called Brother Roger, the cellarer, and told him to bring some wine and an empty cup. When the brother brought them, he told him to fill the cup. After blessing it and drinking some himself, he passed it along to all the brothers present. Counting both the clerical and lay brothers, there were twenty-five present, and, although each one drank as much as he wanted, the cup never became empty, but remained entirely full. After all the brethren had taken theirs, Blessed Dominic said, I want my daughters to taste some.” Then he called Sister Nubia and said to her, “Go to the cask with a cup and give all the sisters some wine.” She left with another sister and returned with the cup filled to the brim; and although it was completely full, not one drop spilled. Then all the sisters took some: first the prioress, then the others, as much as they wanted, while Blessed Dominic kept saying all the while, “Drink up, my daughters.” In all there were one hundred and four sisters and each of them took as much as she wanted of the wine; yet the cup remained full, as though new wine were continually being poured into it. Then he had them return the extra cup which remained as full as it was when they first brought it. No one knows to this day what happened to those two cups.

When this was over, Blessed Dominic said, “The Lord wants me to go Santa Sabina” When they heard this, Brother Tancred, the prior, Brother Odo, chaplain of the sisters, the other brethren and the prioress and sisters tried to dissuade him: “Holy father, it is almost midnight. It would not be advantageous to leave here now.” But he would not listen to them and said, “Since it is the Lord

Who wants me to set out, He will send His angel to escort me.” Seeing that he would not change his plan, Brother Tancred, the prior of the brethren, and Brother Odo, chaplain of the sisters, set out with him.

When they reached the door of the church, there suddenly appeared, in keeping with Blessed Dominic’s promise, a handsome youth standing near the door and holding in his hand a staff , as though prepared for a journey. Then Blessed Dominic told his companions to walk behind the youth, while he himself would walk behind them. When they reached the church of S. Sabina, they found its doors closed and securely barred. But the youth who had led the way pulled on one of the doors, which immediately opened. Then he entered, followed by the two brethren and Blessed Dominic. When all were inside, the youth departed and the door was closed and left in the same condition as they had found it. Then Brother Tancred asked Blessed Dominic, “Holy father, who was the young man who came with us?” And he answered, “My son, it was an angel of the Lord Who sent him to guide us.”

When the bell sounded for Matins, the brethren came to choir, and, finding Blessed Dominic and his companions there, they wondered how they could have entered with the doors barred.

Now there was in that convent a young novice from Rome by the name of Brother James who, as the result of a severe temptation, had decided that, as soon as the doors of the church were opened after Matins, he would leave the Order. When this was revealed to Blessed Dominic, he decided to forestall him. Accordingly, when Matins were over, he called the young man and spoke to him very kindly, pleading and exhorting him not to be misled by the tricks of the enemy into leaving this holy society, but to persevere in the service of Christ. But his pleas and advice fell upon deaf ears, for the young man stood up and, removing his habit, declared that he had made up his mind to leave the Order. Then, with fatherly understanding of the violent temptation assailing the young man, Blessed Dominic said to him, “My son, just wait a few minutes. After that, do as you wish.” Then he prostrated himself in prayer. What followed gives us an idea of the influence Blessed Dominic had with God and how easily he could obtain from God whatever he wished. Hardly had he finished his prayer than the young man who had been so sorely tried burst into tears and, falling at his feet, asked for forgiveness and for the return of the habit he had flung aside under the onslaught of temptation, promising never again to leave the Order. Then the venerable father reclothed him with the habit of the Order, at the same time warning him never to yield to such temptations but to remain firm in the service of Christ. Aided by the merits of his intercessor, that novice from then on spent a long and laudable life in the Order.

In the morning Blessed Dominic returned with his companions to San Sisto. There, in his presence, the companions told Sister Cecilia and the other sisters everything that had happened. To all of it Blessed Dominic nodded assent and added, “My daughters, God’s enemy planned to snatch one of the Lord’s sheep, but the Lord freed him from his hands.”

7. How the Blessed Virgin Appeared to Him in Prayer and Revealed Her Protection Over the Order

One night, after prolonging his prayers until midnight, he left the church and came to the dormitory, where he completed what he had come to do and, taking his place at one end of the dormitory, continued to pray. As he stood praying, he glanced at the other end of the dormitory and saw three beautiful women enter, but noticed that the one in the middle was a venerable lady far more beautiful and dignified than the other two. One of them was carrying a beautiful, shining vessel and the other an aspersorium which she handed to the lady in the center, who went from bed to bed sprinkling the brethren with holy water and blessing them. As she went along in this way, she passed by one of the brethren without sprinkling him or blessing him. Blessed Dominic observed this and took note of the brother they had neglected. Then rising from his prayer and walking as far as the lamp which hung from the middle of the dormitory, he fell at the lady's feet and began to entreat her to tell him who she was, although he already knew. At that time the beautiful and devotional antiphon *Salve Regina* was not being sung but only recited kneeling, by the brothers and sisters in Rome. When the lady answered, she said to Blessed Dominic: "I am the one you call upon in the evening. When you say, 'Turn therefore most gracious advocate thine eyes of mercy toward us,' I prostrate myself before my Son and ask him to preserve this Order." Then Blessed Dominic asked her about her companions. "One is Cecilia and the other Catherine," she answered. After that Blessed Dominic inquired about the brother she had passed by as she had sprinkled and blessed all the others. "Because he was not properly disposed," she said. After this she continued to sprinkle and bless all the others and then disappeared. When she was gone Blessed Dominic returned to pray in the place he stood before. Suddenly he was rapt in spirit before God and saw Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin sitting at His right. It seemed to Blessed Dominic that Our Lady was wearing a cape of bright blue, the color of sapphire. As Blessed Dominic looked around, he could see religious of all the orders but his own around the throne of God, so that he began to weep bitterly and stood far away, not daring to approach the Lord and His mother. Then Our Lady motioned for him to come near. But he would not dare, until Our Lord Himself also called him. Then Blessed Dominic cast himself before them weeping bitterly. But Our Lord told him to rise, and when he did, Our Lord asked him, "Why are you weeping so?" "I am weeping because I see all the other orders here but no sign of my own." And the Lord said to him, "Do you want to see your Order?" and he answered, "Yes, Lord." Then Our Lord, putting his hand upon the shoulders of the Blessed Virgin, said to Blessed Dominic, "I have entrusted your Order to my Mother." Then he asked him again, "Do you still wish to see your Order?" and again he answered "Yes, Lord." Then the Blessed Virgin opened the cape which covered her and spread it out before Blessed, Dominic, to whom it seemed vast enough to cover the entire heaven and, under it, he saw a large multitude of the brethren. Then prostrating himself, Blessed Dominic gave thanks to God and to Blessed Mary His Mother. After that the vision disappeared and he returned to himself just as the bell rang for Matins.

When Matins were over, he called the brethren to chapter and gave them a long and beautiful talk, exhorting them to love and pay reverence to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Among other things he related this vision to them. After chapter, he summoned the brother whom the Blessed Virgin did not bless and asked him in a very kindly way if he had a secret sin he was keeping from him, for that same brother had made a general confession to him. His reply was, "Holy father, I find nothing on my conscience except that, when I awoke for Matins, I discovered that I had been resting without my tunic on."

This vision Blessed Dominic narrated to Sister Cecilia and the other sisters of San Sisto as though it had happened to someone else, but the brethren who were with him and heard it from his own lips implied to the sisters that it was he. It was on this occasion that Blessed Dominic ordained that all the brethren throughout the Order were to sleep in their habits and their shoes.

8. How the Demon Who Appeared in the Form of a Lizard Tried to Obstruct his Preaching

One day after his Mass, Blessed Dominic went outside and, standing by the door, told the sisters to come to the stream where the mill was, for he intended to preach the word of God. But knowing what was about to happen, he said, "My daughters, if the enemy of the human race tries to terrify you by appearing in some strange shape, do not be afraid." So the sisters went along to the place Blessed Dominic described wondering why he wanted to preach to them in such an unusual place. Since the mill was being repaired at that time, he and several of the brethren went through the sisters' cloister to get to the place where the sisters had gathered. After they took their places along the stream, Blessed Dominic began to speak very strongly about the deceits and tricks of the devil. As he spoke, the devil suddenly appeared in the form of a horrible, black ugly lizard with two heads and two tails. It crawled along the bank of the stream, rapidly lifting its heads and tails and then slapping them on the ground. Then it headed toward the sisters as though to attack them. But, knowing through the Holy Spirit what it was, Blessed Dominic looked squarely into its wild eyes and its shaking head and said, "You enemy, you enemy." Then, turning to the sisters, he said, "Don't be afraid; he can't harm you." But, seeing that some of the sisters had already become so terrified that they arose and fled, he said to it, "I command you, enemy of the human race, to cast yourself into this water." And he immediately threw himself into the water and never reappeared.

At this miracle were present Sister Cecilia and the other sisters of San Sisto, as well as a number of the brethren.

9. How Blessed Dominic Cured Three Sisters of a Fever

One day Blessed Dominic happened by the turn-wheel and called Sister Constance, the portress, to ask her whether Sister Theodora and Sister Thedranna and Sister Nympha were in good health. She replied that all three were sick with fever and that one of them, Sister Theodora, has remained in great pain. Blessed Dominic said to her, "Go and tell them for me that I command them to be sick no longer." The remarkable thing was that no one had told him that these sisters were sick, but he knew it through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The sister went while Blessed Dominic waited at the turn-wheel and told them that he said for them to stop suffering from fever. At once they were freed of their infirmity, arose, and went about the house in the sight of all the other sisters who were mystified at such a marvel. When the sister returned, she told Blessed Dominic what had happened and he left the turnwheel thanking God.

10. Of the Demon Who Turned Over a Lamp as He Was Preaching But it Continued to Burn

One time Blessed Dominic returned from a trip to Spain bringing each of the sisters a wooden spoon as a gift. So one day, after many hours of preaching and performing other works of charity, he came to visit the sisters in the evening and brought the spoons he had obtained in Spain. As he sat near the window with some of the brethren, he began to preach to the sisters about the snares of the enemy and told them that, in order to deceive, Satan would not only transform himself into an angel of light, but, if he could hinder preaching and other good works, would assume the shape of the most trifling things, even a sparrow. The venerable father had scarcely spoken these words when the enemy of the human race did appear in the form of a sparrow and began to fly over the heads of the sisters low enough to be snatched at with their hands if they wished to do so and interrupt the sermon. When Blessed Dominic noticed this he called Sister Maximilla and told her, "Catch it and bring it to me." She got up and caught the sparrow without any trouble and handed it through the window to Blessed Dominic, who held it in his hands and began dexterously to pluck out its feathers, saying, "Enemy, enemy." By this time, all the brothers and sisters were laughing as he plucked out everyone of its feathers and chattered in a plaintive voice as he did so. Then he released it with the words, "Fly now, if you can, enemy of the human race. You can make all the noise you want to disturb us, but you can't cause us any harm." But after the sisters had settled back for the rest of the sermon, it returned through the window and settled on the brass vessel which hung on a small chain in front of the Blessed Virgin's altar. In it was a burning lamp filled with oil which turned over as the bird crashed into the chain. But even though the lamp became detached from its brass container, it neither broke nor went out. Instead it stood inverted in mid-air with its mouth down and its base uppermost. After the crash, the sisters raised their heads and were astonished to see the lamp standing in mid-air without any support. But this was exactly as Blessed Dominic had predicted. For, although the lamp remained upside down, it continued to burn and not one drop of oil spilled.

Even the grain which had been scattered in the basin under the lamp to protect it did not scatter. In a word, everything continued as though nothing had been disturbed. When Blessed Dominic and the brethren saw this, they gave thanks to God. Then Blessed Dominic ordered Sister Sabina, whom he had appointed sacristan at the time when he was assigning all of the officials for San Sisto, to restore the lamp to its proper place. This she did. And so it came about that a hoax which the enemy of the human race had, in his envy, intended as a hindrance and a source of harm was turned to God's glory. As for the sparrow which had flown in that night, it disappeared, no one knows where.

When Blessed Dominic preached to the sisters in the evening the brethren outside and the sisters inside lit large lamps so that they could more easily see what was taking place in the church.

This delightful miracle Blessed Dominic performed in the Church of San Sisto near the cloister-window, in the presence of Sister Cecilia and the other sisters of San Sisto.

11. How Our Lord, Through the Merits of Blessed Dominic, Marvelously Encouraged a Novice in the Order

The same blessed father had received into the Order a fine-looking young man of Rome by the name of Brother Henry. He was of noble birth and still nobler character. When his relatives learned of it, they planned to take him by force and return him to the world. When this was revealed to Blessed Dominic, he sent the youth with some companions to another priory outside the city. But the relatives heard of it and followed. The novice and his companions reached the stream which is called the *Pons Quarti*(33) near the Via Nomentana. After crossing the river, they could see their pursuers had already reached the bank which they had left. Then, seeing that they were so near, the novice commended himself to God and to the Merits of Blessed Dominic, to save him from his pursuers. Then a remarkable thing was done by Him Who alone works miracles. For, as soon as the pursuers on horseback entered the stream to cross it, the waters rose so high that they were unable to ford it. Recognizing what had happened, they were stunned and returned to their families, leaving the novice undisturbed in the Order. Then the brethren and the novice with them, seeing that they had given up the chase, decided to return to Blessed Dominic. When they returned to cross the river, the water at once receded to its normal height and afforded them safe passage. This miracle was related to Sister Cecilia and the other sisters of San Sisto by the novice concerned, as well as by the brethren who had been with him.

12. Through His Merits He Cures a Recluse of a Horrible Malady

In Rome, a very holy and devout woman by the name of Sister Bona was living by herself in a tower near the Lateran Gate and another woman by the name of Jacobina used to wait upon her. Blessed Dominic had a high regard for her sanctity and often visited her to hear her confession and bring Communion. This holy recluse was suffering from an unfortunate malady so that her chest and breasts swarmed with countless vermin. Yet if one of these creatures fell off, she would pick it up and return it to its place.

One day, when, according to his custom, Blessed Dominic was visiting her for Communion, he sat near the little window and spoke consoling and edifying words to her. Among other things, he asked her to show him the place of her affliction. She opened her tunic and showed him how her chest and breasts were filled with worms. Seeing this condition, he commiserated with her and said, "May I ask you, as a special favor, to give me one of those worms?" She at first refused, but finally consented on condition that he return it. When he promised, she took one of the creatures from her breast and passed it to him through the little window. It was of fair size and had a black head. As Blessed Dominic turned it over to examine it, it suddenly changed into a very beautiful jewel. When the brethren with him saw this, they told him not to return it. Then she began to weep and begged him to return her precious jewel to her. So Blessed Dominic raised his hand to the little window and returned it. Then he and his companions saw her restore it to her breast in the place from which she had taken it. It immediately changed back into a worm. Then Blessed Dominic gave her absolution, blessed and left her.

Shortly after he departed, the woman's breasts and the vermin thereon fell from her body. The worms died and that area of her body healed and she began to develop breasts as healthy as those of a twelve year old girl. A few days later, Blessed Dominic again visited her and found her completely restored to health. She showed him that the area was now completely healed and that

her breasts had been renewed. She admitted to him and his companions that it was through his merits that Our Lord had freed her of her malady.

Blessed Dominic himself and Brother Tancred, who had been with him and was an eye-witness, related this miracle and all the facts herein mentioned to Sister Cecilia and the other sisters of San Sisto.

13. How Our Lord, Through the Merits of Blessed Dominic, Cured the Arm of Another Recluse

Behind the Church of Santa Anastasia lived another recluse named Sister Lucy, whom Sister Cecilia had seen many times before entering the convent. This recluse suffered severe infirmity in one of her arms. It was a disease that so ravaged her flesh and skin that nothing but bone was left from her shoulder to her hand. Since Blessed Dominic passed by her home whenever he journeyed to San Sisto, he frequently stopped in to visit her. One day, as he was visiting her in the company of Brother Bertrand of Spain and some of the other brethren, he made her show him the arm in which she had the infirmity. As she was showing it to him, he made the Sign of the Cross, blessed it and left. Then she discovered that, through the merits of Blessed Dominic, she had received a complete cure.

This miracle Blessed Dominic himself and Brother Bertrand, an eye-witness, related to Sister Cecilia and the other sisters of San Sisto.

14. How Blessed Dominic Established the Convent of San Sisto for the Sisters and Transported to it an Image of the Blessed Virgin.

When Blessed Dominic was carrying out Pope Honorius' command to assemble all the nuns residing in various convents in Rome and establish them in the Church of San Sisto, where the brethren were then living, one of those affected was the abbess of St. Mary in Tempulo, which housed the statue of the Blessed Virgin that is now in the Church of San Sisto. This abbess promised that she and Sister Cecilia and all the other nuns but one would enter and make profession into the hands of Blessed Dominic, if that image of the Blessed Virgin would remain with them in the Church of San Sisto. But if that image were ever returned to its former place, she and all the other sisters would be absolved of their profession. This condition was willingly accepted by Blessed Dominic.

After their profession, Blessed Dominic told them that he did not want them to leave their cloister to visit their relatives and friends. When the relatives heard of this, they came to the convent and began to upbraid the abbess and nuns very severely for letting such a noble monastery fall into disuse and for willingly putting themselves in the hands of that coarse and offensive nobody. As a consequence, some of them repented of the profession they had made. Therefore, Blessed Dominic, knowing of this through the Spirit, went to them one morning and after Mass said to them, "My daughters, already you have changed your mind and wish to walk no longer on the Lord's highway. Now I want everyone of you who still wishes to enter of her own will to repeat her profession into my hands." Then the abbess and the others, even those

who had previously repented but were recalled by his merits, made profession once more into his hands.

When all were professed under the same condition as before, Blessed Dominic collected all the keys of the convent and, from then on, assumed full control of the convent. Then he appointed lay brothers to guard the convent day and night, to provide food and all necessities for the sisters and not to permit them to speak with their relatives or other persons, unless others were present.

Then, after the Lord Pope had given the Church of Santa Sabina to the brethren and they had carried all their utensils and books and other things from San Sisto, Blessed Dominic wanted the abbess and the other sisters to move into the Church of San Sisto. This they did on the first Sunday of Lent. Sister Cecilia, who was then seventeen years of age, was the first to receive the habit from Blessed Dominic as he stood at the front door. For the third time, she made profession into his hands. After her came the abbess and all the nuns of her convent, and finally a number of other religious and lay women, so that their number totaled forty-four.

On the evening of the day following their profession the image of the Blessed Virgin was brought to the church of San Sisto. But, for fear of the Roman people who opposed its removal on the ground that it was easier for them to see it where it was, Blessed Dominic and two cardinals — Lord Nicholas and Lord Stephen, whose nephew he had restored to life — preceded and, followed by many other persons carrying lighted torches, marched barefoot carrying the image on their shoulders to the Church of San Sisto. There they were met by the sisters who had removed their shoes and were praying as they waited. With great reverence, the statue was installed in the sisters' Church where it still stands to this day to the honor of Our Lord Jesus Christ to Whom be honor and glory forever. Amen.

15. *A Portrait of Blessed Dominic*

I would describe the appearance of Blessed Dominic in the following way. He was slender and of medium height. His face was handsome and somewhat ruddy. His hair and beard were reddish and his eyes beautiful. From his brow and eyes emanated a kind of radiance which drew everyone to revere and love him. He was always cheerful and gay, except when he was moved to compassion at the sight of someone's affliction. His hands were long and well-formed and his voice was of a pleasing resonance. He was never bald, although he wore the full corona, which was sprinkled with a few grey hairs.

All the above statements about Blessed Dominic were made by Sister Cecilia, who testified so firmly to their truth that, if it were necessary to repeat them under oath, she would do so. But because she is such a holy and religious person and it is so easy to believe her simple words, this account which she gave from her own lips has been put in writing by Sister Angelica of the same convent of St. Agnes for the honor and praise of Our Lord Jesus Christ, our Blessed Father Dominic and for the consolation of the brethren. Pardon the style of the compiler, for she is woefully ignorant of grammar.