

Saint John of Matera

1070-1139

He was born around the year 1070 in Matera, in the region of the Basilicata in Italy, to a noble family. He left everything behind while still a young man and embraced the monastic life. Subsequently he founded the Abbey of Pulsano after the invitation of Our Lady and Saint Michael the Archangel who had both appeared to him.

Around him were gathered monks and hermits who gave life to the “Pulsanesi,” inspired by the rule of Saint Benedict. He died in Foggia in 1139. His life was marked by numerous angelic visions but also by ferocious attacks from the devil. Here are three citations taken from his biography in which the Saint guards his followers from attacks of the devil:

“A young man, to get a woman, sold his soul to the devil: but, having become tepid, he regretted it. The demon, eager for that soul, cast him into a ravine, where a venerable monk appeared to the poor thing, admonished him and advised him to go to Pulsano to get salutary advice. Saved by a miracle from the precipice, he went there and was amazed to recognize in our Abbot the monk who had appeared to him down in the ravine. He took off his garments and clothed himself with a habit and lived in the Order humbly and holy and died in that way.”

And another: “Sabino, devoted to him and already very much a close friend of his, was at the end of his life. The monks around his bed were in tears waiting for his death, when he was enraptured in ecstasy. Upon returning, he recounted that it seemed to him that he was dead and was caught by two horrible devils that wanted to drag him into hell. At that point Saint John Matera appeared, and with a haughty scowl he attempted to snatch away their prey. They attacked and flung themselves on him: the Saint with a resolute air confronted them: the demons, given their arrogance, tried to show while thumbing through their wicked book that the monk deserved eternal punishment. The Priest, upon the revelation of the failings committed by him, was left perplexed; when there appeared the Holy

Virgin who noticed the servant of God, chased away the demons, liberated the wretched man and disappeared. The Priest meanwhile warned the friar to admonish his two companions to repent of their sins, if they did not want to come to a bad end. Of the two, one confessed humbly all his guilt



and was preserved in goodness, the other rejected and finished badly.”

On another occasion he freed his fellow friars from a diabolical infestation: “In the forest the monks were working to knock down and square off some tree trunks; the Father was not with them. Along comes a rabble of soldiers who threw themselves upon them. But they were not soldiers but demons. All of sudden they backed off, since Saint John Matera rushed to their aid. Imagine how they surrounded him. But the sweet Father, comforting them with gentle cautions, disappeared. The monks were astounded. One of them returned to the monastery the next day to tell what had happened. The man of God with his arms raised thanked the Lord and reaffirmed that it was not for his merits, but for the merits of their obedience that the Lord performed such a miracle.”