

Monsters that Hurt Young People (1865)

In this lively account, dated 24 February 1865, Don Bosco speaks to his pupils about spiritual dangers and practical remedies. In these lines, the author recounts his stay with the Bishop of Cuneo and, above all, the nightmare in which he sees monstrous creatures invading the Oratory, symbolising the devilish snares that threaten young people. The abrupt transition from joyful recreation to anguished silence becomes a pretext for pointing out two decisive weapons: a well-received Communion and frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The introduction thus prepares the reader for a text that intertwines anecdote, educational affection and catechesis, inviting them to grasp its spiritual urgency and concrete daily choices.

I went to Cuneo and stayed a few days with the bishop who treated me royally. The first night, after an excellent supper, I went to bed toward eleven and fell asleep immediately. As usual, I began to dream, and since the tongue always turns to the aching tooth, as the saying goes, I dreamed that I was at the Oratory with my beloved boys. I seemed to be seated at my desk while you were having a world of fun playing, shouting and running about. I was very pleased with all the noise because I know that when you are playing the devil has no chance to harm you, no matter how hard he tries. I was rejoicing at this hubbub when suddenly all noise ceased and a deadly silence fell upon the playground. In alarm I stood up to find out what had happened.

As I crossed into the waiting room, a horrid monster burst in from the outer door. Seemingly unaware of my presence, head and eyes lowered to the ground, the monster advanced straightforward like a beast about to spring on its victim. Trembling for your safety, I looked down from the window to

see if anything had happened to you. The whole playground was full of monsters like the one in my waiting room, though smaller. You, my boys, had been forced back against the walls and porticoes, but many of you were lying on the ground, seemingly dead. This piteous sight so frightened me that I awoke screaming. I woke everybody else up too, from the bishop to the last servant.

My dear boys, generally speaking we must pay no attention to dreams, but when they teach us a moral lesson, we may give them a thought. I have always tried to learn why certain things happen, and I'll do so also as regards this dream. That monster may well be the devil who is ever trying to ruin us. Some boys fell victims to him, while others went unscathed. Shall I show you how not to fear him and successfully withstand him?

Listen. There are two things the devil is deadly afraid of: fervent Communions and frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Do you want Our Lord to grant you many graces? Visit Him often. Do you want Him to grant you only a few? Visit Him but seldom. Do you want the devil to attack you? Rarely visit the Blessed Sacrament. Do you want the devil to flee from you? Visit Jesus often. Do you want to overcome the devil? Take refuge at Jesus' feet. Do you want to be overcome by the devil? Give up visiting Jesus.

Visiting the Blessed Sacrament, my dear boys, is essential if you want to overcome the devil. Therefore, make frequent visits to Jesus. If you do that, the devil will never prevail against you.

Tomorrow our young clerics will take exams. I wish them luck. As I always do on such occasions, I will offer up my Holy Mass for their success.

I do hope everything will go well.

(MB VIII, 48-49 / MB EN VIII, 32-33)