

Saint Thomas Aquinas

1221-1274

PURGATORY

The great Doctor of the Church Saint Thomas Aquinas had a sister named Marotta, who in 1253 was the abbess in the Monastery of Santa Maria in Capua. The sister died while Saint Thomas was in Paris. Gerard Frachet in his *Brotherly life (Vitae fratrum)* recounts that the abbess appeared to her brother to ask him to celebrate some Masses to liberate her from Purgatory. Saint Thomas invited his pupils to pray for his deceased sister. Also Guglielmo Tocco narrates this event in the *Life of Saint Thomas Aquinas*.

When Saint Thomas returned to Rome, his sister appeared to him again and told him that she had been liberated from Purgatory thanks to the Masses that she had requested and now she was in Paradise. Then the Saint asked for information regarding his state and Marotta answered: "You, brother, are in a happy condition and you shall soon come to us. But to you is reserved a glory greater than ours. Just preserve what you have." Saint Thomas asked for news of two deceased brothers: Landulfo, who Marotta said was in Purgatory and Reginaldo, who she revealed to be in Paradise.

Guglielmo Tocco also related another vision experienced by Saint Thomas: "Another and more marvelous one was revealed to Master Thomas, that was not simply like a dream, instead it was physical and real. As he was praying in the church of the friary of Naples, there appeared to him his fellow friar and Master of Theology Romano of Rome (Romano Rossi Orsini, nephew of

Pope Nicholas III). Thomas told the one who appeared to him: *Welcome! When did you arrive here?* The man answered: 'I have departed from earthly life. As a result of your merits it was granted me to appear to you.' Then Saint Thomas recovered from the astonishment of that sudden apparition which had overwhelmed him and answered: *If it pleases God, then I implore you to respond to my question: how is it going with me? Are my works pleasing to God?* Romano answered: 'You are in a good position and your works are pleasing to God!' The angelic doctor then asked: *And how is it going with you?*

And the man answered: 'I am in Eternal Life, but I was for fifteen days in Purgatory, due to negligence, of which I was guilty regarding a will, that the Bishop of Paris had ordered me to draft as soon as possible; but I delayed due to negligence its' draft.' Saint Thomas still asked him: *How it is going with that matter which we have often discussed between us, that is if the mastery of knowledge which is acquired down here, remains over there in the Fatherland?* And the man answered: 'Brother Thomas, I see God, and you must not search anything else in regard to this matter!' And then Thomas: *How do you see God? Tell me whether you see Him without an interposed image or by likeness?* And he answered: 'Like we have heard, thus we see in the city of the Lord of hosts!' Immediately afterwards he disappeared. But Thomas was touched by such a marvelous and unusual apparition and content for such reassuring responses."

