

# Monthly Commemoration of Don Bosco (#9-September)

## THE MYSTERIOUS DOG

The story of these attacks introduces what may be the strangest series of events ever recorded in the life of any man. So strange, indeed, are they that if documents and sworn testimony of eyewitnesses did not exist to support them they would not be believed.

They concern a dog named by those who had seen him, Grigio, or "Grey" which in size and appearance looked something like an Irish wolfhound and a mastiff. None one knew where he had come from and, once he had completed his mission of protecting Don Bosco, no one ever found out where he went.



At the time of his first appearance, the Oratory stood outside the city limits and in the area that was unsafe after dark. On one particular night when Don Bosco was returning from a sick-call, since he had already been attacked more than once in that neighborhood, he wondered if this time he would get through unharmed. That was when the dog appeared.

At first he feared it was about to attack him. Instead, the dog showed every sign of wanting to be friendly, snuggling his nose into Don Bosco's hand, pawing his soutane and wagging his tail. When Don Bosco resumed his journey, Grigio walked behind him right up to the Oratory gate. Then, without as much as a farewell bark, he disappeared.

From then on, every time Don Bosco had to stay out late, Grigio appeared at his side as if from nowhere and accompanied him home. Mamma worried about her son being out so late, would sometimes send some of the bigger boys to meet him. But when they saw Grigio loping by Don Bosco's side they felt they were not needed.

Charles Tomatis, a boy at the Oratory, remembers one night in particular when he met Don Bosco and Grigio. "I saw a large, strong looking beast," he said, "that made me think of a wolf. He had grey hair and a big head; his ears were straight and pointed and he stood a little over three feet high."

On seeing Grigio for the first time, Mamma Margaret exclaimed, "What a fierce-looking beast!"

One night I returned to the Oratory very late – says Don Bosco, describing his relations with the dog - and I was lucky to have a friend with me for most of the road. But when I came to the dangerous part of the journey, my friend and I had to go our separate ways. I recommended myself to our Lady and my Guardian Angel, and had barely finished when Grigio trotted up. My companion was terrified.

"Don't worry," I assured him. "Grigio is my friend." My companion was not satisfied. He tried to chase Grigio away but the dog paid no attention to him. He even tried throwing a few stones at him but no matter how many times he struck him, Grigio showed not the slightest reaction.

Amazed at this strange occurrence, he cried out, "It can't be a real dog., Don Bosco! It's a ghost!"

In order to see what would happen, he kept walking behind Grigio and myself until we reached the Oratory. At that moment Grigio disappeared.

"What's this?" he wanted to know. "Where did he go? Was he a real dog?" By now he was so upset and grew so frightened he began to tremble. In the end I had to ask two boys to accompany him all the way home!

Not only did Grigio escort Don Bosco on dangerous trips, but he often stopped him from setting out on them. One evening, Don Bosco, having forgotten to do something important in the city, was getting ready to go back even though it was very late. Mamma Margaret did all she could to stop him, but it was useless. Insisting that he simply had to go, he called for volunteers to accompany him. At the gate of the Oratory, however, lay Grigio.

"Been there quite a while," the boys told him. "We tried to get rid of him a couple of times and even took a stick to him, but he kept coming back."

"You don't have to worry about Grigio," said Don Bosco. "Now I can leave without fear. Let's go Grigio!"

Instead of faithfully trotting by Don Bosco's side, Grigio's body stiffened, his lips curled into an ugly snarl, and he let out a deep throated growl.

Don Bosco was surprised. "Don't you know me any more, Grigio?" He touched the dog lightly with the toe of his shoe and Grigio growled a second time. He tried to climb over him but the dog retreated and kept on growling, and when Don Bosco tried to go around him, Grigio rose and blocked his path. The boys who were with Don Bosco shouted at the dog, but that was as far as anyone dared to meddle with an angry Grigio.



Hearing the noise, Mamma Margaret came out to investigate. "That dog has more sense than you, John!" she scolded. "I wouldn't go out if I were you!"

Finally persuaded to stay home, Don Bosco returned to his room. He had not been there many minutes before he was disturbed by a noisy commotion below.

"Don't let Don Bosco go out tonight!" he heard someone shout above the din. "Three or four men are hiding in the old house at the end of the road, and they've sworn to kill him as soon as he leaves the Oratory!"