

Cantiga 11: The Drowned Almoner

*Even though a man fall into sin by his own folly,
he should not lose hope of Our Lady's favour.*

So I will tell you how there was an almoner in a monastery, a monk who performed his duties most badly, to the peril of his soul, wicked man

His folly was such that he went off every night to see his woman and make sport with her, but first he would always say an Ave Maria with all his heart.

And when he was about to go he would not ring the chapel bells but would open the doors to go off to his foolishness; but this night he fell into the river he had to cross and drowned.

As his soul departed his body the Devil seized it and with great glee went to cast it into the fire of hell; but a company of angels came hotfoot to help him.

A great quarrel arose there, as the Devil said to them "Go on your way, for it is my right to have this soul, as he did evil works night and day at my behest and to please me."

When the angels heard this they departed in great sorrow, for they saw that the Devil was in the right; but the Virgin who is our guide would not abandon her devotee.

She came and argued her case, to take back from them the soul of the wayward monk, saying "How dare you lay hands on one of my faithful?"

When the Devil heard these words he fled in terror, but an angel hastened to catch the soul with great jubilation, and returned it the body to make him come back to life.

The monastery was waiting for the bell summoning them to prayer, for they had been awake for some time. And so with haste they went to the chapel, and saw the sinner lying in the chilly water.

All that company of monks at once read the litany over him, to ward off the wicked demon, but this found favour with God, who brought the dead man back to life.