Subtitles

Dedication: In Memory of D. Lalá, Judge of Saint Elesban, who passed away just a few days after the making of this movie.

- I’m a member … from here, from this Church -
Saint Elesban, Saint Ephigenia and the Lord of Bonfim.
I’m also a member of Saint Benedict
of the Black Men, down there on Uruguaiana Street,
Our Lady of the Rosary.

[Downtown Rio de Janeiro]

- When they took the Africans from their land,
they weren’t Catholic, they were of another belief,
(I’m sure you know of the belief). But when they arrived here
in Brazil, they had to adopt Catholicism.
They had to, there was a church on the plantation.
They had separate churches:
a church for the white people and a church for the black people.
So, black people were obligated to participate in the Catholic religion.
That’s why there are people who say that spiritism
also came from Catholicism.
And then when night fell they practiced their own beliefs.

DEVOTOS DA COR – DEVOTEES OF COLOR

- Saint Elesban is the protector of travelers and navigators -
on land and sea. He is the protector of sailors too.
He performs many miracles and there is nothing that a person asks of
Saint Elesban and does not receive.

- Saint Ephigenia is that beautiful, beautiful, beautiful image
that everyone knows and her story is very profound
because she chose not to marry the man her father
wanted her to and went to a convent.
And that’s the story.
And then her father, angry at her,
ordered that the chapel where she wanted to become a nun be set on fire.
And she held onto the chapel that was on fire and the fire overcame her.
Everyone who needs comfort,
a house, have difficulties, then, turns to Saint Ephigenia.
And it’s wonderful to see how many little wax houses she receives here per week.

- The brotherhood came from the need for black people
to unite more and even had several groups
in that time period. And a group of Mina blacks
resolved to start their own brotherhood.
And in the Church of Saint Dominic they decided to create
The brotherhood of Saint Elesban and Saint Ephigenia
because they are two black saints.
Even though without any relation,
but both were black saints who spoke more
to their needs.
That was the initial idea behind why a group
of approximately 14 black people
created a foundation, the brotherhood of Saint Esleban
and Saint Ephigenia. That was in 1740 that the brotherhood was created.
I’m now going to read a list from the year 1845 from one brother.

“‘Manoel Antônio da Costa’ of the Minas GG Nation (free) enlisted as a brother in this brotherhood of Saint Elesban and Saint Ephigenia, resident of Flores Street number 12 subjecting himself to the laws of our statutes. He provided this amount.”

- The main idea behind the creation of this church was that the black people of that period didn’t have dignified burials. So they also created next to the church a cemetery so that they could have eternal, more peaceful rest and something more social. This was one of the main reasons for the creation of the church here on this land that was outside the urbanized part of the city.

- Created by black men right in the midst of slavery the brotherhoods were one of the few social spaces allowed to the slaves and they flocked to them with permission from their masters who wanted them to be Christian and submissive. These brotherhoods conceived by the masters, the crown and the church resulted in a space of organization and construction of their very freedom giving sustenance to the abolitionist movement.

- This chapel belonged to the ex-slaves. There is a chain that belonged to the ex-slaves inside. You go and make a request
pull on it and you will get it.
Go take a look in there,
go inside to film in there
so you can see how beautiful it is!
The cemetery was here and this church was built
on top of the cemetery. That’s why it has bones.
They are there to announce that it was the ex-slaves
that died and it is their bones that are buried there.

- Adding regular importation
to clandestine traffic and contraband after 1850,
colonial society and later the Empire of Brazil
witnessed the landing of approximately 4 million Africans.

- (Ave Maria Prayer)
And now the blessing of the relics of the slaves
that gave their lives here for their Christian faith
and for this brotherhood.

- [telephone ringing]

- Hello brotherhood of Saint Ephigenia Saint Esleban.
Go ahead.
The festival of the Lord of Bonfim is today.
High mass will be at 10:00.

- I’m here because it is the festival of the Lord of Bonfim.
This festival is dedicated to that one there, Jesus,
The sacred heart of Jesus.
That’s what the festival is. You know they have all of this in Bahia, right?
There in Bahia they have the festival for the Lord of Bonfim.
- I am Roberto Machado Passos, current provider of the festival of the Lord of Bonfim – until when, I don’t know, but until the day that God allows it or that someone substitutes me.

- This is one of the greatest relics, one of the greatest things that we have inside this church, because it is where there is the greatest number of black people coming from Bahia and that also were the founders of the brotherhood Saint Elesban and Saint Ephigenia, Our Lady of the Rosary also. The majority of us are brothers in all of these brotherhoods and here thanks to God we conserve our devotion to the Lord of Bonfim.

- Virtue has no relation to color, because the soul does not participate in such light accidents and just as God makes no distinction between people, to virtue also there is no difference between colors.

- The purpose here, passed almost from father to son, from relative to relative, is the attempt that the church not disappear, or better, that the brotherhood not disappear. Though with much difficulty,
our struggle is the attempt to ensure that
the brotherhood continue,
and that it carry on as it began:
a brotherhood of black people.
Although many white people are born,
the directory of the church is all black.

- When I arrived here I was working
and I didn’t have time to go to mass,
so I am here now to pray on my own.
[I have] nothing else of greater importance to declare.

In Memory of D. Lalá, Judge of Saint Elesban, who passed away just a few days after the
making of this movie.

- So since I arrived here, in this church,
I have received many many immense graces in health
and other things.
I even was with my husband who was very bad, toward death,
and then I came here and he seems to have new life.
And it’s for that reason that I live here inside the church
and I won’t leave it as long as I have life. I will live
in this church eternally.