



LEAGUE OF THE IMMACULATE HEART

Newsletter
"My Immaculate Heart will Triumph"

Volume 6, Issue 18 ~ July, 2003

February 23
Saint
Peter Damian,
Cardinal-Bishop
of Ostia
(A.D. 1072)



eter Damian was born in 988 in Ravenna, of a good family. He was the youngest of many children, and, after losing his father and mother at a very young age, was left in the hands of a married brother, in whose house he was treated more like a slave, rather than a brother. When he reached adulthood, he was sent to keep swine. One day, he came into some money, and rather than spend it on something for his own use, he chose to bestow alms on a priest, asking him to offer up his prayers for his father's soul.

He had another brother called Damian, who was arch-priest of

Ravenna, and afterwards a monk; who, taking pity of him, had the charity to give him an education. Having found a father in this brother, he seems to have taken from him the surname of Damian, though he often styles himself the Sinner, out of humility. Damian sent Peter to school, first at Faenza, afterwards at Parma. It was not long before he found himself in a capacity to teach others, which he did with great praise.

To arm himself against the allurements of pleasure and the temptations of the devil, he began to wear a rough hair shirt under his clothes, and to accustom himself to fasting, watching, and prayer. In the night, if any temptation of lust arose, he got out of bed and plunged himself into the cold river. After this he visited churches, reciting the psalter until the church office began.

He not only gave much away in alms, but was seldom without some poor person at his table, and took pleasure in serving such, or rather Jesus Christ in their persons, with his own hands. But thinking all this to be re-

moving himself from the deadly poison of sin but by halves, he resolved entirely to leave the world and

embrace a monastic life, and at a distance from his own country, for the sake of meeting with fewer obstacles to his design. While his mind was full of these thoughts, two religious of the order of St. Benedict belonging to Font-Avellano, a desert at the foot of the Apennine in Umbria, happened to call at his home; and being much edified at their disinterestedness, he resolved to embrace their institute, which he did soon after.

This hermitage had been founded by blessed Ludolf about twenty years before St. Peter came, and was then in the greatest repute. The hermits here remained two and two together in separate cells, occupied chiefly in prayer and reading. They lived on bread and water four days in a week: on Tuesdays and Thursdays they ate legumes and herbs: on their fast days all their bread was given them by weight. They never used any wine (the common drink of the country) except for Mass, or in sickness: they went barefoot, used disciplines, made many genuflections, struck their breasts, stood with their arms stretched out in prayer, each according to his strength and devotion. After the night office they said the whole psalter before day. Peter watched long before the signal for matins, and after with the rest. These excessive watchings brought on him an insomnia, or wakefulness, which was cured with very great difficulty. But he learned from this to use more discretion.

He gave considerable time to sacred studies, and became as well versed in the Scriptures and other sacred learning as he was before in profane literature.

His superior ordered him to make frequent exhortations to the religious, and as he had acquired a very great

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character for virtue and learning, Guy, Abbot of Pomposia, begged his superior to send him to instruct his monastery, which consisted of a hundred monks. Peter stayed there two years, and was then called back by his abbot, and sent to perform the same function in the abbey of St. Vincent, near the mountain called Pietra Pertusa, or the Hollow Rock.

His love for poverty made him abhor and be ashamed to put on a new habit, or any clothes which were not threadbare. His obedience was so perfect that the least word of any superior, or signal given, according to the rule of the house, for the performance of any duty made him run that moment to discharge, with the utmost exactness, whatever was asked. Being recalled home some time after, and commanded by his abbot, with the unanimous consent of the hermitage, to take upon him the government of the desert after his death, Peter's extreme reluctance only obliged his superior to make greater use of his authority till he acquiesced. Wherefore, at his death in 1041, Peter took upon himself the direction of that holy family, which he governed with the greatest reputation for wisdom and sanctity.

He also founded five other hermitages; in which he placed priors under his inspection. His principal care was to cherish in his disciples the spirit of solitude, charity, and humility. Among them many became great lights of the Church. For twelve years he was employed in the service of the Church by many zealous bishops, and by four popes successively, namely, Gregory VI, Clement II, Leo IX, and Victor II. Their successor, Stephen IX, in 1057, prevailed with him to quit his desert, and made him Cardinal-bishop of

Ostia. But such was his reluctance to the dignity that nothing less than the Pope's commands, in virtue of obedience, could induce Peter to submit.

Stephen IX dying in 1058, Nicholas II was chosen Pope, a man of deep penetration, of great virtue and learning, and very liberal in alms, as our saint testifies, who assisted him in obliging John, Bishop of Veletri, an anti-pope, set up by the magistrates in Rome, to quit his usurped dignity.

Upon complaints of simony in the church of Milan, Nicholas II sent Peter as his legate, who chastised the guilty. Nicholas II dying, after having sat two years and six months, Alexander was chosen Pope, in 1062. Peter strenuously supported him against the emperor, who set up an anti-pope, Cadolaus, Bishop of Parma, on whom the saint prevailed soon after to renounce his pretensions in a council held at Rome; and engaged Henry IV, King of Germany, who was afterwards emperor, to acquiesce in what had been done, though that prince, who in his infancy had succeeded his pious father Henry III, had taken in very early the corrupt maxims of tyranny and irreligion. But virtue is amiable in the eyes of its very enemies, and often disarms them for fury.

St. Peter had, with great persistence, solicited Nicholas II for leave to resign his bishopric, and return to his solitude; but could not obtain it. His successor, Alexander II, out of affection for the holy man, was prevailed upon to allow it, in 1062, but not without great difficulty, and the reserve of a power to employ him in Church matters of importance as he might have occasion hereafter for his assistance. The saint from that time thought himself discharged, not only from the burden of his flock, but also from the quality of superior, with regard to the several

monasteries the general inspection of which he had formerly charged himself with, reducing himself to the condition of a simple monk.

In this retirement he edified the Church by his penance and compunction, and labored by his writings to enforce the observance of discipline and morality. His style is copious and vehement, and the strictness of his maxims appears in all his works, especially where he treats of the duties of clergymen and monks. He severely rebuked the Bishop of Florence for playing a game of chess. That prelate acknowledged his amusement to be a faulty sloth in a man of his character, and received the saint's remonstrance with great mildness, and submitted to his injunction by way of penance, namely, to recite three times the psalter, to wash the feet of twelve poor men, and to give to each some money. He shows those to be guilty of manifold simony who serve princes or flatter them for the sake of obtaining ecclesiastical preferments.

This saint recommended the use of disciplines whereby to subdue and punish the flesh, which was adopted as a compensation for long penitential fasts. Three thousand lashes, with the recital of thirty psalms, were a redemption of a canonical penance of one year's continuance. Sir Thomas More, St. Francis of Sales, and others testify that such means of mortification are great helps to tame the flesh and inure it to the labors of penance; also to remove a hardness of heart and spiritual dryness, and to soften the soul into compunction. But all danger of abuses, excess, and singularity is to be shunned, and other ordinary bodily mortifications, as watching and fasting, are fre-

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quently more advisable.

The holy man reconciled discords, settled the bounds of the jurisdiction of certain dioceses, and condemned and deposed in councils those who were convicted of simony. He notwithstanding tempered his severity with mildness and indulgence towards penitents where charity and prudence required such a condescension.

Henry IV, King of Germany, at eighteen years of age, began to show symptoms of a heart abandoned to impiety, infamous debauchery, treachery, and cruelty. He married, in 1066, Bertha, daughter to Otho, Marquess of Italy, but afterward, in 1069, sought a divorce by taking his oath that he had never been able to consummate his marriage. The Archbishop of Mentz had the weakness to be won over by his artifices to favor his desires, in which view he assembled a council at Mentz.

Pope Alexander II forbade him ever to consent to so enormous an injustice, and appealed to Peter Damian for his legate to preside in that synod, it being sensible that a person of the most inflexible virtue, prudence, and constancy was necessary for so important and difficult an affair, in which passion, power, and craft made use of every means in opposition to the cause of God. The venerable legate met the king and bishops at Frankfort, laid before them the orders and instructions of His Holiness, and in his name conjured the king to pay a due regard to the law of God, the canons of the Church, and his own reputation, and seriously reflect on the public scandal of so pernicious an example.

The noblemen likewise all rose up and entreated his majesty never to stain his honor by so foul an action.

The king, unable to resist so cogent an authority, dropped his project of a divorce; but, remaining the same man in his heart, continued to hate the queen more than ever.

St. Peter hastened back to his desert of Font-Avellano. Whatever austerities he prescribed to others he was the first to practice himself, remitting nothing of them even in his old age. He lived shut up in his cell



Saint Peter Damian

as in a prison, fasted every day, except festivals, and allowed himself no other subsistence than coarse bread, bran, herbs, and water, and this he never drank fresh, but what he had kept from the day before.

He tortured his body with iron girdles and frequent disciplines, to ren-

der it more obedient to the spirit. He passed the three first days of every Lent and Advent without taking any kind of nourishment whatsoever; and often for forty days together lived only on raw herbs and fruit, or on legumes steeped in cold water, without touching so much as bread, or anything which had passed the fire.

A mat spread on the floor was his bed. He used to make wooden spoons, and such-like useful lowly things, to exercise himself at certain hours in manual labor.

Henry, Archbishop of Ravenna, having been excommunicated for grievous enormities, St. Peter was sent by Pope Alexander II, in quality of legate, to adjust the affairs of the church. When he arrived at Ravenna, in 1072, he found that unfortunate prelate just dead, but brought the accomplices of his crimes to a sense of their guilt, and imposed on them a suitable penance. This was his last undertaking for the Church, God being pleased soon after to call him to eternal rest, and to the crown of his labors.

Old age and the fatigues of his journey did not make him lay aside his accustomed mortifications, by which he consummated his holocaust. On his return towards Rome, he was stopped by a fever in the monastery of Our Lady without the gates of Faenza, and died there on the eighth day of his sickness, whilst the monks were reciting matins round about him. He passed from that employment which had been the delight of his heart on earth to sing the same praises of God in eternal glory, on February 22, 1072, at 83 years old. He is honored as patron at Faenza and Font-Avellano on the 23rd of the same month. †



Father Nicholas Gruner,

I hope this letter finds you, and those close aiding you, well and greatly succeeding in the St. Padre Pio project.

I would also like to take a moment to tell you of a miraculous occurrence that my sister and grandmother had concerning St. Padre Pio's gloves. When my oldest sister was 17 (in 1980 I believe), she and my grandmother went to one of our local Catholic churches, one day or evening in honoring St. Padre Pio. There, the church had St. Padre Pio's gloves. My sister and grandmother at one point went up to kiss his gloves. My sister immediately smelled flowers. Unsure if that was really so, she re-smelled them four times, each time smelling flowers. My grandmother also kissed his gloves and she smelled flowers as well.

My sister remembers that when they were having a talk on St. Padre Pio that some people have been known to smell flowers

when coming in contact with his gloves.

I believe she was a bit stunned that she too and my grandmother, has experienced that as well.

Also, at the time of this experience, she remembers no one else there experienced the smell of flowers, only she and my grandmother did, she believes.

Since you have a special devotion to St. Padre Pio, Father, I thought you would appreciate hearing of this miracle. Very beautiful, isn't it? What a beautiful saint. "St. Padre Pio pray for us."

God Bless you Father Gruner, in Our Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Leanne S., Hampton, VA

Father Gruner and All Our Lady's Workers,

Thank you! You do good work. We are with you and praying hard for the Consecration of Russia, both my sister and me.

Listen to this and see if maybe Our Lady is using a lot of us worthless people for just this purpose.

Three years ago I was diagnosed with cancer (terminal) and was sent home to die as it was too far advanced for treatment. Fine, God's will is my will. But I told Our Lady I'd be willing to suffer as long as Jesus needed because I offered every moment for lost souls and for the completion of the Consecration. I'm still alive, still have cancer, still getting no treatment and the doctors are stunned. It's been no lark, believe me, but I never thought a soul this side of Heaven could be so happy.

Just writing this to encourage you to keep working hard! Our Lady obviously has a plan.

God bless you.

Virginia and Marnell B., MT



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Community of Prayer

Please give us the names of people you would like members of The League of the Immaculate Heart to Pray for. We will include them in an upcoming Newsletter and ask all members to join together in a true community of prayer and sacrifice, praying for these people, for one another, and for the sanctification of the world under the Mantle of Our Lady of Fatima. †

We'd like to hear from YOU! Write or call:

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