



“Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”

(Mt 25:45)

Divine Liturgy
 Sunday at 11:30 am
 Our Lady of Victory
 1559 Roxbury Rd.
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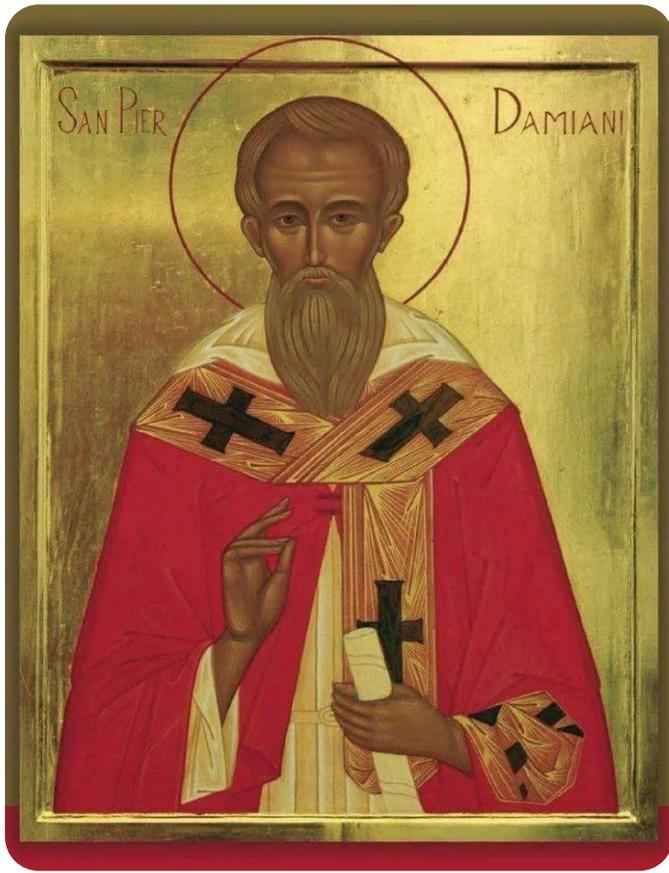
New Testament Reading: Hebrews 12:18-24

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. (For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death.") Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

The Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Saint Peter Damian - Feast Day: Feb. 21



Orphan, laborer, student, monk, hermit, priest, theologian, teacher, writer, poet, ascetic, penitent, prior, reformer, bishop, cardinal, saint...these are but a few words to describe today's courageous saint.

Peter was the youngest child born into a poor but noble family in Ravenna, Italy. His parents died when he was young, so he went to live with one of his older brothers who mistreated him and forced him to labor as a swineherd. Eventually, another brother, a priest from Ravenna named Father Damian, took him in and provided him with an excellent education in which he greatly excelled. Peter was so grateful to his priest brother that he added his brother's name to his own, making him Peter Damian.

Upon the completion of his education, Peter Damian began to teach with much success. However, he soon found that the university setting was not for him, so he withdrew to a monastery in Fonte-Avellana for a forty-day retreat. Upon completing his retreat, he discerned a call to monastic life and received the habit.

As a monk, Peter Damian lived a secluded life of prayer and extreme penance. His penances were so severe that they affected his health more than once. Eventually, his intellectual gifts were used once again when he was asked to teach his fellow monks. For the next few years, he taught in his own and neighboring monasteries and also began to write. One of his first works was the Vita, or "Life" of Saint Romuald, a recently deceased monk from his monastery known for his exceptional holiness.

In 1043, at the age of thirty-five, Brother Peter Damian was named the prior of his monastery. He led the brothers with zeal and fidelity to their rule. He also began founding new hermitages in the surrounding villages.

At that time, Pope Benedict IX was a truly scandalous Pope who had obtained the papacy through bribery and lived an immoral life. In 1045, the Pope decided to leave the papacy to marry his cousin. Before doing so, he wrote to his godfather, Father John Gratian, for advice. Being a holy man, Father Gratian encouraged him to resign, which Benedict did, leaving the papacy to Father Gratian, who became Pope Gregory VI. Brother Peter Damian was overjoyed at the change and wrote to the new pope, encouraging him to tackle corruption and scandal within the Church. In the years that followed, more than one Pope called on Brother Peter Damian to help accomplish that very goal. He wrote many letters in an attempt to bring about reforms of the clergy, fought against simony (the selling of Church offices and spiritual favors), addressed sexual abuses, challenged the bishops, reformed monasteries, and gave a spectacular personal witness of holiness.

In 1057, Brother Damian was made the Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia by the Pope, despite his attempts to turn down the position. As a new cardinal, he quickly challenged his brother cardinals and tried to weed out corruption.

He would eventually return to his hermitage and resume his life of prayer, but his fervor in fighting against the evils of the time continued. Pope after Pope called on him for help, even while other Church leaders opposed him.

In 1072, at the age of sixty-five after battling one corruption after another, Cardinal Peter Damian fell ill. After a week of illness in a monastery near his hometown, the cardinal died while the monks chanted around his bed.

Every age of the Church has different needs. In the eleventh century, the Church needed an unwavering and courageous voice for reform. Saint Peter Damian was that voice. Though his heart was most at home in his monastery doing penance and chanting the psalms, his body was actively eradicating the mold that had covered the Church. Through his valiant efforts, many parts of the Church began to radiate as the Bride of Christ once again.

Each of us is called to be a reformer in one way or another. First, we must seek to reform our own souls by eliminating sin through prayer, penance, and fidelity to God's Law. From there, God will use us to extend His reform to others. Ponder any ways that you need to reform your own life, and then offer yourself to God's service so that He can use you to weed out the evils you encounter in your daily life.

Prayer: Saint Peter Damian, you were drawn to a life of solitude, prayer, and penance. From that hidden life as a monk, God sent you forth to reform His wounded Church. You answered the call with courage and zeal. Please pray for me, that I will never shy away from reforming my own life and that I will always answer the call to be an instrument of that reformation wherever I am sent.

Saint Peter Damian, pray for me. Jesus, I trust in You.

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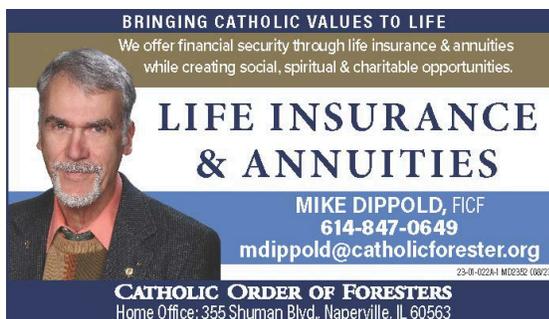
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