

## LEAGUE OF SAINT PETER DAMIAN

April 23, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Welcome, once again, to the League of Saint Peter Damian.

Two-thousand nineteen *anno Domini* is the year of the League's formation.

Catholics who register with the League during 2019 are considered founding members.

This month's Study Guide #2 centers on the role of the Catholic hierarchy in the battle against the forces of organized perversion within and without the Roman Catholic Church – specifically the dual vices of homosexuality and pederasty.

Although Saint Peter Damian's *Book of Gomorrah* was written almost 1000 years ago, it remains the best blueprint available today for the moral and spiritual reform of the Catholic priesthood and religious life.

I believe you will be strengthened in your faith when you read later in this series, Peter Damian's support for the faithful laity even when that support meant coming into conflict with fellow bishops who were unworthy of their office.

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# STUDY GUIDE #2

*"It is truly great to die for Christ, but not less noble to live for Him"*

## Biographical Notes on Saint Peter Damian (continued)

### True Church Reform Begins with the Vicar of Christ

Saint Peter Damian would never had been able to carry out his program for the moral and spiritual reform of religious and the secular diocesan clergy without the support and cooperation of another future saint, Pope Leo IX, a German aristocrat who worthily occupied the Chair of St. Peter from February 12, 1049, until his death on April 19, 1054, at the age of 51.

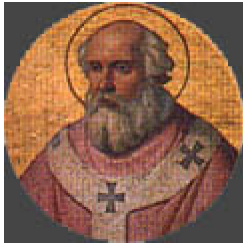
In the closing segments of his *Book of Gomorrah*, which was addressed to Pope Leo IX, Peter Damian pleaded with the Holy Father to use the papal office to reform and strengthen the decrees of the sacred canons with regard to the disposition of clerical sodomites including religious superiors and bishops who sexually violate their "spiritual sons."

Peter Damian asked the Holy Father to "diligently" investigate the four forms of the vice of sodomy cited at the beginning of his treatise and to provide him (Damian) with definitive answers to the following questions by which the "darkness of uncertainty" might be dispelled and an "indecisive conscience" freed from error:

- Is one who is guilty of these crimes to be expelled irrevocably from holy orders?
- Whether at a prelate's discretion, moreover, one might mercifully be allowed to function in office?
- To what extent, both in respect to the methods mentioned above and to the number of lapses, is it permissible to retain a man in the dignity of ecclesiastical office?
- Also, if one is guilty, what degree and what frequency of guilt should compel him under the circumstances to retire?

Damian closed his famous letter by asking Almighty God to use Pope Leo IX's pontificate "to utterly destroy this monstrous vice, that a prostrate Church may everywhere rise to vigorous stature."

### **Pope Leo IX —The Precursor of Gregorian Reform**



Bruno, Count von Egisheim of Dagsburg, entered the world under much more favorable material circumstances than those of Peter Damian. He was born near the border of Alsace on June 21, 1002. At the age of five, his illustrious and pious parents committed him to the care of the energetic Berthold, Bishop of Toul, who had a school for the sons of the nobility. The future Pope's principal biographer and intimate friend, Wilbert, records that the youth was handsome, intelligent, virtuous and kindly in disposition, a description which later manifested itself in the distinguishing title given him when he served as chaplain at the Imperial Court — "the good Bruno."

In 1027, Bruno became Bishop of Toul, the frontier town of his youth, that was plagued by both war and famine. He remained at this rather obscure See for more than twenty years until his ascendancy to the papacy on February 12, 1049.

After his election in Worms, when the saintly Bruno entered Rome dressed humbly in a friar's robe and barefooted, he was greeted by a cheering populace who acclaimed with one voice that they would have no other but Bruno as their new pope. Little wonder as under the on-again off-again reign of the dissolute Benedict IX (1032-1044, 1045, 1047-1048) the papacy had fallen into serious disrepute. Bruno's predecessor, Damasus II, the Bishop of Brixen, had died of malaria after only twenty days in office.

Like any pontiff determined to reform abuses within the Church, Pope Leo IX immediately surrounded himself with like-minded virtuous and able clerics including the saintly Benedictine, Hildebrand of Tuscany, and the saintly monk, Peter Damian.

Only four months after coming into office, Pope Leo IX convened the famous Easter Synod of 1049 which condemned two of the most notorious evils of the day — **simony** (the buying, selling or exchange of ecclesiastical favors, offices, annulments and other spiritual considerations) and **clerical sexual incontinence** (concubinage/married priests). The new pope demanded a more perfect observance of celibacy, a life-long state of self-denying continence, down to the rank of the subdeacon.

Immediately following the April synod, the new pope began his journeys through Europe to carry out his message of reform. In May 1049, he held a council of reform in Pavia, which was followed by visits and councils in Cologne, Reims and Mainz before returning to Rome. It was during the second half of Leo IX' first year as pope, mid-1049, that Peter Damian brought his *Book of Gomorrah* to the pontiff's attention

### **Pope Leo IX Rules on Clerical Sodomy**

Pope Leo IX responded to Peter Damian's concerns in the form of a lengthy letter (JL 4311; *It Pont* 4.94f., no.2), which is generally attached to manuscripts of the *Book of Gomorrah*.

Pope Leo IX opened his letter to "his beloved son in Christ, Peter the hermit," with warm salutations in recognition of Peter Damian's pure, upright and zealous character. He agreed with Damian that clerics, caught up in the "execrable vice" of sodomy ... "verily and most assuredly will have no share in His inheritance, from which by their voluptuous pleasures they have withdrawn. Such clerics indeed, profess if not in words, at least by the evidence of their actions, that they are not what they are thought to be," the pope declared.

Reiterating the category of the four forms of sodomy which Peter Damian elucidated in his treatise, the Holy Father declared that it is proper that by "our apostolic authority" we intervene in the matter so that "all anxiety and doubt be removed from the minds of your readers."

"So let it be certain and evident to all that we are in agreement with everything your book contains, opposed as it is like water to the fire of the devil," Pope Leo IX continued. "Therefore, lest the wantonness of this foul impurity be allowed to spread unpunished, it must be repelled by proper repressive action of apostolic severity, and yet some moderation must be placed on its harshness."

Next, Pope Leo IX gives a detailed explanation of the Holy See's authoritative ruling on the matter:

In light of divine mercy, the Holy Father commands, without contradiction, that those who, of their own free will, have practiced solitary or mutual masturbation or defiled themselves by interfemoral coitus, but who have not done so for any length of time, nor with many others, shall retain their status, after having curbed their desires and atoned for their infamous deeds with proper repentance.

However, the Holy See removes all hope for retaining their clerical status from those who alone or with others for a long time, or even a short period with many, have defiled themselves by either of the two kinds of filthiness which you have described, or, which is horrible to hear or speak of, have sunk to the level of anal intercourse.

Pope Leo IX warned potential critics, that those who dared to criticize or attack the apostolic ruling stood in danger of losing their rank.

Pope Leo IX praised Peter Damian for teaching by example and not mere words, and concluded his letter with the beautiful hope that when, with God's help, the monk reaches his heavenly abode, he may reap his rewards and be crowned, "... in a sense, with all those who were snatched by you from the snares of the devil."

### **Differences on the Matter of Discipline**

Clearly, on the objective immorality of sodomy, that is, anal penetration, Peter Damian and Pope Leo IX were in perfect accord. However, in terms of Church discipline, the pope appeared to have taken exception with Damian's appeal for the wholesale deposition of all clerics who committed acts of anal coitus. I say, appeared, because I believe that even in the matter of punishing known clerical offenders, both men were more in agreement than not.

Certainly, Peter Damian, who was renowned for his exemplary spiritual direction of the novitiates and monks entrusted to his care, was not unaware of certain mitigating circumstances that would diminish if not totally remove the culpability of individuals charged with acts of sodomy, broadly defined. For example, there were situations where novices or monks may have been forced or pressured by their superiors to commit such acts. No doubt, it was circumstances such as these that prompted Pope Leo IX to use the term, "who of his own free will" which distinguishes a cleric who was forced to participate in these sexual acts from one who voluntarily engaged in sodomy

and who had become habituated to the grave sin. Also among the four varieties of sodomy described by Peter Damian in his introductory remarks to the *Book of Gomorrah*, the holy monk stated that two grave sins of interfemoral and anal coitus are to be judged **more serious** than acts of solitary or mutual masturbation.

All in all, what this writer found to be most remarkable about Pope Leo IX's letter to Peter Damian, was the absolutist position the pontiff took concerning the ultimate responsibility of the offending cleric's bishop or religious superior. If the latter criticized or attacked this apostolic decree, he risked losing **HIS** rank! "For he who does not attack vice, but deals lightly with it, is rightly judged to be guilt of his death, along with the one who dies in sin," voiced the pope.

Pope Leo IX was canonized by Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) in 1082. His feast day is April 19<sup>th</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

Certainly, Damian's reputation and credibility were not diminished in the minds of the great and holy men of his day by either the writing or the publication of his treatise on sodomy. Pope Leo IX and future Popes continued to seek out his services and advice including Pope Nicholas II (1059-1061) and Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085). Also, Pope Stephen X (1057-1058) consecrated Peter Damian Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia in 1057 and appointed him administrator of the Diocese of Gubbio.

## Saint Peter Damian On The Spiritual Life

### **Fraternal Correction is a Spiritual Good**

Not surprisingly, Saint Peter Damian suffered his share of criticism and opposition to the *Book of Gomorrah* from his fellow bishops and secular contemporaries.

Here is how the holy monk responded:

If, indeed, this small book should come into the hands of anyone whose conscience rebels and who perhaps is displeased by what is contained above, and he accuses me of being an

informer and a delator of my brother's crime, let him be aware that I seek with all my being the favor of the Judge of conscience. I have no fear, moreover, of the hatred of evil men nor of the tongue of detractors. I would surely prefer to be thrown innocent into the well like Joseph who informed his father of his brothers' foul crime, than to suffer the penalty of God's fury, like Eli, who saw the wickedness of his sons and remained silent. For since the voice of God threatens in words of terror through the mouth of the prophet [Ezek 3.18], "If you should notice your brother's wickedness and you do not warn him, I will hold you responsible for his death.

Who am I, when I see this pestilential practice flourishing in the priesthood to become the murderer of another's soul by daring to repress my criticism in expectation of the reckoning of God's judgment? I should become responsible for another's crime in which I was in no way involved. ...

How, indeed, am I to love my neighbor as myself if I negligently allow the wound, of which I am sure he will brutally die, to fester in his heart; if, moreover, I am aware of these wounds of the spirit and fail to cure them by the surgery of my words. ...

Consequently, if you think it proper to reprimand me for reproofing others, or to blame me for my presumptuous subtlety in argument, why do you not correct Jerome who contended with all sort of heretical sects in highly corrosive language? Why do you not rail at Ambrose who spoke publicly against the Arians? Why not take Augustine to task for acting the stern prosecutor of Manichaeans and Donatists? You say to me: It was proper for them because they opposed heretics and blasphemers; but you dare to lacerate Christians. ...

I might also add, that if blasphemy is a terrible thing, I am not aware that sodomy is any better. The former indeed causes a man to err; the latter brings him to perdition. The one separates the soul from God; the other joins it to the devil. The former expels one from heaven; the latter buries him in hell. The one blinds the eyes of the soul; the other hurls one into the abyss of ruin. And if we are careful to investigate which of these crimes is the weightier in the scales of divine scrutiny, a search of Sacred Scripture will provide a

satisfactory answer. There, indeed, we find that the children of Israel who blaspheme God and worshiped idols were taken into captivity; but we notice that sodomites were devoured in the sulphurous flames of a fire from heaven. ...

So let no man condemn me as I argue against this deadly vice, for I seek not to dishonor , but rather to promote the advantage of my brother's well-being. Take care not to appear partial to the delinquent while you persecute him who sets him straight.

Saint Peter Damian's last sentence is rather prophetic given the preference of the current occupant of the Chair of Saint Peter for clerical sodomites and pederasts over faithful priests and laymen who seek to promote the spiritual well-being of those caught up in this monstrous vice.

[Note: Text taken from the translation of Peter Damian's *Book of Gomorrah* by Owen J. Blum, O.F.M., *Peter Damian, Letters 31-60*, part of the Fathers of the Church - Medieval Continuation Series issued by the Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1990.]

## Special Considerations for the Month of May – The Month of Mary

### **Praying for the Poor Souls in Purgatory –**

#### **Make It a Habitual Practice**

*It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead,  
that they may be loosed from sins. 2 Maccabees 12:46.*

### **Introduction**

From the many comments and suggestions received from League members in the United States and abroad to our initial mailing, it is manifestly clear that devotion to the poor souls in Purgatory should be one of the foundational aspects of the League of Saint Peter Damian.



This brief commentary is intended to shed additional light on the Catholic Church's traditional teachings on Purgatory and the holy practice of offering prayers, alms, acts of penance and fasting, and most importantly, the offering up of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the suffering souls in Purgatory that they may be loosed from their sins and claim their place in heaven.

### **Church Doctrine on Purgatory**

Council of Trent [Fifth Session 1563] Decree on Purgatory:

The Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Spirit and in accordance with Sacred Scripture and the ancient Tradition of the Fathers, has taught in the holy Councils and most recently in this ecumenical Council that there is a purgatory and that the souls detained there are helped by the acts of intercession (*suffragia*) of the faithful, and especially by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar.

Therefore this holy Council commands the bishops to strive diligently that the sound doctrine of purgatory, handed down by the Holy Fathers and the sacred Councils, be believed by the faithful and that it be adhered to, taught and preached everywhere.

But let the more difficult and subtle questions which do not make for edification and, for the most part, are not conducive to an increase of piety (cf. I Tim. 1:4), be excluded from the popular sermons to uneducated people. Likewise they should not permit opinions that are doubtful and tainted with error to be spread and exposed. As for those things that belong to the realm of curiosity or superstition, or smack of dishonorable gain, they should forbid them as scandalous and injurious to the faithful.

Related Canon 30 from the Council of Trent's Decree on Justification (Sixth Session, 1547)

30. If anyone says that after the grace of justification has been received the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out for any repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be paid, either in this world or in the

other, in purgatory, before access can be opened to the kingdom of heaven, anathema sit ["let him be anathema" or excommunicated].

It is interesting to compare the above decree on Purgatory enunciated at the Council of Trent with the statement that appears in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992) where all references to the absolute necessity of believing in Purgatory have been abjured:

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1031. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. [Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1304; Council of Trent (1563): DS 1820; (1547): 1580; see also Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000.] The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire. [Cf. 1 Cor 3:15; 1 Pet 1:7.] As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come. [St. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4, 39: PL 77, 396; cf. Mt 12:32-36.]

1472. To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that sin has a double consequence. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the 'eternal punishment' of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the "temporal punishment" of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain. [Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1712-1713; (1563): 1820.]

The early Church Fathers including Saint Ambrose, Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, Saint Leo the Great and Saint Gregory the Great, have been in agreement on the following basic statements regarding the existence and nature of Purgatory:

- Between Heaven and Hell is a middle state or condition called Purgatory for the souls that die justified, but are still in need of final purification.
- It is only by the special favor of the goodness and mercy of God that we are permitted to shorten the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory.
- All Catholics have a real duty towards the suffering souls in Purgatory.
- The fire of Purgatory is a material fire.
- Unlike the torments of hell which are eternal, the torments of Purgatory are temporary.
- The devils in hell have no power to tempt or inflict punishment on the souls in Purgatory as they have already won heaven.
- The duration and intensity of punishment in Purgatory is based on the measure of sin and the penance of each person.
- Indulgences may be applied to the poor souls in Purgatory providing all conditions are met.
- At the Last Judgment, the condition of purification comes to an end for all souls in Purgatory as there will be only heaven and hell.

### **Why Purgatory?**

The purpose of Purgatory is to provide a means whereby the souls of the faithfully departed who are destined for heaven can expiate their venial sins and/or undergo the temporal punishment due for past transgressions or both. The suffering souls fully understand that they cannot enter into heaven until they have paid “the last farthing.” They grieve for their past sins which have resulted in this spiritual exile, but are grateful and willingly to pay the price – whatever it is and for as long as it takes – to see, at last, the face of God.

### **Two Types of Pain in Purgatory**

The greater pain and torment of Purgatory is the pain of loss, that is, the pain of delay in coming to the beatific vision of God.

Then there is the pain of sense, that is, the pain the suffering souls endure from a purifying fire as a consequence of their sins.

Not all sins are equal – the more habituated and intense the venial sins, the longer the period in Purgatory.

St. Thomas Aquinas writes that “the least pain in Purgatory exceeds the greatest we can suffer in this world, that is, greater than any pain experienced from bodily members immerse in an earthly fire.

### **Some Thoughts to Ponder on Purgatory**

Remember that the suffering souls in Purgatory are unable to do anything for themselves, but are dependent on the suffrages (Masses, prayers, or acts of piety) offered by the living Catholic faithful.

In reading the classic works on Purgatory, one is surprised to learn that one reason why some seemingly good souls are detained in Purgatory for a long period is that their virtues have been over estimated and/or their venial sins underestimated by the living, who assume they are already in heaven. Hence, these poor souls in Purgatory are often neglected, and no one prays for them.

This is particularly true where the deceased is a priest, or bishop or even a pope.

Also, since only God reads and knows the entire history of the life of a soul and who will be cast down to Hell or find himself in Purgatory, it is salutary to also pray for one’s enemies keeping in mind Saint Thomas More’s prayer from the Tower of London (1534) which includes an admonition “To think my most enemies my best friends, for the brethren of Joseph could never have done him so much good with their love and favor as they did him with their malice and hatred.”

### **Ways of Developing a Habitual Devotion to the Poor Souls**

It used to be easy to remember the dearly departed, especially at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, when every Catholic boy or girl or man or woman had their own missal filled with Mass cards of

deceased relatives, friends, and clerics. One of the tragedies of the Novus Ordo has been the disappearance of the Sunday missal and personal prayer books, and the almost complete absence of sermons on Hell and Purgatory even on All Souls Day.

There are numerous ways of becoming habituated to praying for the poor souls in Purgatory in daily life. Here are a select few that are particularly applicable to the lay state:

- Offer a Mass stipend for the suffering souls in Purgatory especially those who have no one to pray for them.
- Say a Rosary for the poor souls.
- Light a candle in church for the forgotten suffering souls.
- Every time you make the sign of the cross at the holy water font, touch the holy water to your lips in memory of the suffering souls, and say a short ejaculation in the name of Jesus, or Our Lady, or the holy angels, or your patron saint.
- Every time you are **waiting in line**, especially with a frayed disposition, remember the poor souls in Purgatory who have been **waiting many lifetimes** to be loosed of their sins, but who have been abandoned by everyone, and remembered by and prayed for by no one – except you. Can you imagine the gratitude of these souls towards you when they reach heaven?

### Action Line for May 2019

Each month, the League asks its members to carry out a specific request related to the future disposition of the League. For the coming month of May we are asking the following:

- That at each priest associated with the League resolve to preach at least one sermon on the subject of Purgatory in 2019.
- That every lay member offer a Mass stipend for a deceased family member, friend, priest, or acquaintance during the month of May.
- In keeping with the work of Saint Peter Damian, that every member remember among the poor souls in Purgatory the victims of clerical sex abuse as well as any cleric who before his death experienced true contrition for his crime and sought and obtained absolution through the Sacrament of Confession.

There are many fine inexpensive books available on the subject of Purgatory which you may want to consider adding to your Catholic library including *Charity for the Suffering Souls - An Explanation of the Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory* (1994) by Rev. John A, Nageleisen which was used in the preparation of the above text on Purgatory.

The End