

February 21

Peter Damian (1007-1072) monk and pastor

Today the Roman and Ambrosian calendars commemorate Peter Damian, a hermit and bishop who lived in the eleventh century.

Peter was born in Ravenna, Italy, in 1007. He lost his parents while he was still young, but was able to receive a classical education in Faenza and Parma with the help of his brother Damian. As a gesture of gratitude he added his brother's name to his own.

He grew up surrounded by the enthusiasm for the eremitical life that the figure of Romuald had inspired, and when he was almost thirty years old he entered the hermitage of Fonte Avellana. Later, he became prior and wrote a rule for the community. During the years he spent at Fonte Avellana, he also wrote the *Vita beati Romualdi*, a document of fundamental importance for our understanding of eleventh-century monastic ideals. A man of extraordinary vigor, tending to the extreme in all that he did, Peter Damian managed to reconcile in his own existence a passion for the solitary life, of which he is perhaps the West's most convinced theorist, with an ecclesiastical and political career that took him all over Europe and led him to act as peacemaker in difficult situations involving popes, bishops, monks, and rulers of every kind.

He fought vehemently for a reform of the corrupt customs of the clergy. After being elected bishop of Ostia and cardinal around the year 1057, he also learned to show compassion towards others in their weaknesses, thus managing to resolve highly painful conflicts.

He resigned from the cardinalship after several years in order to regain his peace and freedom, but continued to undertake conciliatory missions when the need arose.

After returning from one of his countless missions in the service of peace, Peter Damian died in Faenza during the night between February 22 and 23, 1072. His mortal remains rest in Faenza's cathedral.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Ez 3:16-21; Lk 12:32-34

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Peter Damian, bishop and doctor of the Church (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

Hilary of Poitiers (d. 367), bishop (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS ED ETHIOPIANS (13 amsir/yakkatit):

Sergius of Atripe (III-IV cent.), martyr (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Lars Levi Laestadius (+1861), witness to faith in Lapland

MARONITES:

Eustatius (d. 337), patriarch of Antioch and martyr

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Timothy of the Symbols (d. 795), monk

Eustatius, patriarch of Antioch

Sava II (d. 1271), archbishop of Serbians (Serbian Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:

Germanus, abbot, and *Randoald* (d. 675), monk, martyrs