

Blessed Peter of Geremia, Friar and Priest

October 25



God has a mission for each of us and has given us the gifts to successfully complete the purpose for which He created us. Our job is to discern our role in His creation. The gifts He has given us can be the instrument of our damnation when used against His purposes; when we discern correctly through prayer and spiritual direction these same talents and abilities can sanctify us and those around us. It's not too late to seek God's will for your life—in fact, we should attempt to understand His will for our every action, each day, using all the gifts his has given us.

Peter Geremia was unusually gifted. He was sent early to the University of Bologna, where he passed his studies brilliantly, and attracted the attention and praise of all. On the brink of a successful career as a lawyer, he experienced a sudden

and total conversion.

Having retired one night, he was pleasantly dreaming of the honors that would soon come to him in his work, when he heard a knock at the window. As his room was on the third floor, and there was nothing for a human to stand on outside his window, he sat up, in understandable fright, and asked who was there.

A hollow voice responded that he was a relative who had just died, a successful lawyer who had wanted human praise so badly that he had lied to win it, and now was eternally lost because of his pride. Peter was terrified, and acted at once upon the suggestion to turn, while there was still time, from the vanity of public acclaim. He went the next day to a locksmith and bought an iron chain, which he riveted tightly about him. He began praying seriously to know his vocation.

Soon thereafter, God made known to him that he should enter the Dominican Order. He did so as soon as possible. His new choice of vocation was a bitter blow to his father, who had gloried in his son's achievements, hoping to see him become the most famous lawyer in Europe. He angrily journeyed to Bologna to see his son and demanded that he come home. The prior, trying to calm the excited man, finally agreed to call Peter. As the young man approached them, radiantly happy in his new life, the father's heart was touched, and he gladly gave his blessing to the new undertaking.

Peter's brilliant mind and great spiritual gifts found room for development in the order, and he became known as one of the finest preachers in Sicily. He was so well known that Saint Vincent Ferrer asked to see him, and they conversed happily on spiritual matters. He always preached in the open air, because there was no church large enough to hold the crowds that flocked to hear him.

Being prior of the abbey, Peter was consulted one day when there was no food for the community. He went down to the shore and asked a fisherman for a donation. He was rudely refused. Getting into a boat, he rowed out from the shore and made a sign to the fish; they broke the nets and followed him. Repenting of his bad manners, the fisherman apologized, whereupon Peter made another sign to the fish, sending them back into the nets again. The records say that the monastery was ever afterwards supplied with fish.

Peter was sent as visitator to establish regular observance in the monasteries of Sicily. He was called to Florence by the pope to try healing the Greek schism. A union of the opposing groups was affected, though it did not last. Peter was offered a bishopric (and refused it) for his work in this matter.

At one time, when Peter was preaching at Catania, Mount Etna erupted and torrents of flame and lava flowed down on the city. The people cast themselves at his feet, begging him to save them. After preaching a brief and pointed sermon on repentance, Peter went into the nearby shrine of Saint Agatha, removed the veil of the saint, which was there honored as a relic, and held it towards the approaching tide of destruction. The eruption ceased and the town was saved.

This and countless other miracles he performed caused him to be revered as a saint. He raised the dead to life, healed the crippled and the blind, and brought obstinate sinners to the feet of God. Only after his death was it known how severely he had punished his own body in memory of his youthful pride (Benedictines, Dorcy).

Born: Palermo, Sicily, Italy, in 1381

Died: March 7, 1432

Beatified: Pius VI confirmed cultus in 1784