

## **Pope Gregory: From the Roman Lenten Synod of 1076**

### **Excommunication of Henry IV**

O blessed Peter, prince of the Apostles, mercifully incline thine ear, we [sic] pray, and hear me, thy servant, whom thou hast cherished from infancy and hast delivered until now from the hand of the wicked who have hated and still hate me for my loyalty to thee. Thou art my witness, as are also my Lady, the Mother of God, and the blessed Paul, thy brother among all the saints, that thy Holy Roman Church forced me against my will to be its ruler. I had no thought of ascending thy throne as a robber, nay, rather would I have chosen to end my life as a pilgrim than to seize upon thy place for earthly glory and by devices of this world. Therefore, by thy favor, not by any works of mine, I believe that it is and has been thy will, that the Christian people especially committed to thee should render obedience to me, thy especially constituted representative. To me is given by thy grace the power of binding and loosing in Heaven and upon earth.

Wherefore, relying upon this commission, and for the honor and defense of thy Church, in the name of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through thy power and authority, I deprive King Henry, son of the emperor Henry, who has rebelled against thy Church with unheard-of audacity, of the government over the whole kingdom of Germany and Italy, and I release all Christian men from the allegiance which they have sworn or may swear to him, and I forbid anyone to serve him as king. For it is fitting that he who seeks to diminish the glory of thy Church should lose the glory which he seems to have.

And, since he has refused to obey as a Christian should or to return to the God whom he has abandoned by taking part with excommunicated persons, has spurned my warnings which I gave him for his soul's welfare, as thou knowest, and has separated himself from thy Church and tried to rend it asunder, I bind him in the bonds of anathema in thy stead and I bind him thus as commissioned by thee, that the nations may know and be convinced that thou art Peter and that upon thy rock the son of the living God has built his Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it

## **To the German Princes, Giving an Account of Canossa**

**Book IV, 12, p. 311. End of Jan., 1077.**

Whereas, for love of justice you have made common cause with us and taken the same risks in the warfare of Christian service, we have taken special care to send you this accurate account of the king's penitential humiliation, his absolution and the course of the whole affair from his entrance into Italy to the present time.

According to the arrangement made with the legates sent to us by you we came to Lombardy about twenty days before the date at which some of your leaders were to meet us at the pass and waited for their arrival to enable us to cross over into that region. But when the time had elapsed and we were told that on account of the troublous times—as indeed we well believe—no escort could be sent to us, having no other way of coming to you we were in no little anxiety as to what was our best course to take.

Meanwhile we received certain information that the king was on the way to us. Before he entered Italy he sent us word that he would make satisfaction to God and St. Peter and offered to amend his way of life and to continue obedient to us, provided only that he should obtain from us absolution and the apostolic blessing. For a long time we delayed our reply and held long consultations, reproaching him bitterly through messengers back and forth for his outrageous conduct, until finally, of his own accord and without any show of hostility or defiance, he came with a few followers to the fortress of Canossa where we were staying. There, on three successive days, standing before the castle gate, laying aside all royal insignia, barefooted and in coarse attire, he ceased not with many tears to beseech the apostolic help and comfort until all who were present or who had heard the story were so moved by pity and compassion that they pleaded his cause with prayers and tears. All marveled at our unwonted severity, and some even cried out that we were showing, not the seriousness of apostolic authority, but rather the cruelty of a savage tyrant.

At last, overcome by his persistent show of penitence and the urgency of all present, we released him from the bonds of anathema and received him into the grace of Holy Mother Church, accepting from him the guarantees described below, confirmed by the signatures of the abbot of Cluny, of our daughters, the Countess Matilda and the Countess Adelaide, and other princes, bishops and laymen who seemed to be of service to us.

And now that these matters have been arranged, we desire to come over into your country at the first opportunity, that with God's help we may more fully establish all matters pertaining to the peace of the Church and the good order of the land. For we wish you clearly to understand that, as you may see in the written guarantees, the whole negotiation is held in suspense, so that our coming and your unanimous consent are in the highest degree necessary. Strive, therefore, all of you, as you love justice, to hold in good faith the obligations into which you have entered. Remember that we have not bound ourselves to the king in any way except by frank statement—as our custom is—that he may expect our aid for his safety and his honor, whether through justice or through mercy, and without peril to his soul or to our own.

## **The Canticle of the Sun**

### **Saint Francis of Assisi**

*Here begin the praises of the creatures which the Blessed Francis made to the praise and honour of God while he was ill at St. Damian's:*

Most high, omnipotent, good Lord,  
Praise, glory, and honour and benediction all, are Thine.  
To Thee alone do they belong, most High,  
And there is no man fit to mention Thee.

Praise be to Thee, my Lord, with all Thy creatures,  
Especially to my worshipful brother sun,  
The which lights up the day, and through him dost Thou brightness give;  
And beautiful is he and radiant with splendour great;  
Of Thee, most High, signification gives.

Praised be my Lord, for sister moon and for the stars,  
In heaven Thou hast formed them clear and precious and fair.

Praised be my Lord for brother wind  
And for the air and clouds and fair and every kind of weather,  
By the which Thou givest to Thy creatures nourishment.

Praised be my Lord for sister water,  
The which is greatly helpful and humble and precious and pure.

Praised be my Lord for brother fire,  
By the which Thou lightest up the dark. And fair is he and gay and mighty and strong.

Praised be my Lord for our sister, mother earth,  
The which sustains and keeps us  
And brings forth diverse fruits with grass and flowers bright.

Praised be my Lord for those who for Thy love forgive  
And weakness bear and tribulation.  
Blessed those who shall in peace endure,  
And by Thee, most High, shall they be crowned.

Praised be my Lord for our sister, the bodily death,  
From the which no living man can flee.  
Woe to them who die in mortal sin ;  
Blessed those who shall find themselves in Thy most holy will,  
For the second death shall do them no ill.

Praise ye and bless ye my Lord, and give Him thanks,  
And be subject unto Him with great humility.

From *The Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi*, trans. Father P. Robinson (Philadelphia: Dolphin Press, 1906) .