

Capitulary on Doing Justice (21 May 996—23 January 1002)  
Emperor Otto III

Trans. W. North from the edition of L. Weiland, MGH *Constitutiones. Legum Sectio IV.1.*  
Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung 1893. Document 22, p. 48. This text is  
preserved in the legal collection Liber Papiensis.

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HERE BEGINS THE CHAPTER OF LORD OTTO III, MOST PIOUS AND AUGUST EMPEROR.

Every day people act against the laws, every day evil men are not afraid to do evil. Therefore, by this law that shall, with divine aid, endure for all ages we decree that throughout the entire year judges shall be permitted to handle cases, to resolve disputes, to put an end to and decide the confusions of judicial inquiries, so that those who daily give offense to the law, may daily be punished by the law's judgment. Indeed, those who at no time cease sinning, should certainly not escape the law's decree at the time of harvesting grain or grape. For to act well, to tell the truth, to love justice, to judge rightly is and shall be permitted to all at all times, because we have learned from our catholic faith that we should never rest from good works and always rest from evil ones and we have proclaimed by God's authority and our imperial majesty that this principle should be preserved at all times. David, king and prophet, also says: *Blessed are those who guard their judgment and do justice at all times.* (Ps. 106: 3)

On the birthday of the Lord, on Epiphany, during Lent, on Easter, on the Ascension, on Pentecost, on Sundays and principal feast days, and established days of fasting, however, we utterly forbid judicial actions to be brought or the public courts of inquiry to be sought so that these solemn festivals—which are the mark of Christians—may be celebrated with complete vigilance.