

WEDNESDAY OF 32ND WEEK IN OT St. Martin of Tours November 11, 2020

Some might wonder why, when we celebrate Mass on so many weekdays of the year, why does the Church ask us to pray to, honor and emulate some saint, who like today's saint, Martin of Tours, may have lived some 16 centuries ago. I think it is because, going way back to Mary and the Apostles, our Church has a human, as well as a divine foundation. Each generation rests on the shoulders of the saints who have preceded them. Though he lived entirely in the 300's, Martin was the Church's first great truly popular saint in the manner of a Francis or Anthony or Christopher or Jude or Therese of Lisieux. Incidentally, her family name and that of her also canonized Father and Mother, Louis and Zelig, was Martin [mar-TAH in French]. Even today you can go into many supermarkets and buy votive candles dedicated to St. Martin *Caballero* [St. Martin on horseback] who is quite popular with Hispanics.

Though Christianity had just been made legal in 312, there were not too many Christians around, especially in the Roman army in Hungary where Martin's father was an officer. At age 10, Martin began attending Mass and joined the equivalent of RCIA. At age 15, as the son of an officer he was required to join the army, and he was soon stationed in France. One day while on horseback, *caballero*, he met a scantily clad beggar and cut his own cloak in half and shared it with him. That night in a dream he heard Jesus say: "Here is Martin the soldier not baptized; yet he has clad me." Martin's half-cloak would become one of the most precious relics of the French nation, often carried into battle. From the French word for "little cloak" eventually came into English our words chapel (little church) and chaplain. At 18 Martin was baptized. Two years later he became a conscientious objector. We know so much about Martin's life with great accuracy because his biographer was a contemporary friend. After some years in the first abbey in France, he was the Bishop of Tours for the last 26 years of his life. From shortly after his death, Martin's feast day has been celebrated on November 11. For most of the Middle Ages he was

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one of the most popular, if not the most popular saint in Europe, especially in France, with more churches dedicated to him than to any other saint.

In the early 800's, Blessed Alcuin of Tours, considered the "brains" behind the many Church reforms begun under Charlemagne, would die in 804 as Abbot of the monastery begun there on the Loire River by St. Martin.

How appropriate then that this Memorial of the special patron saint of soldiers is also for the USA our Veterans Day. You probably know that this holiday began as "Armistice Day" which ended World War I on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. Some say the French specifically chose this armistice to happen on the Feast of St. Martin, so popular in France.

So today say a fervent prayer to this soldier-saint for all of our country's veterans and for all those who are still serving in the Armed Services.

Today in our First Reading St. Paul reminds Bishop Timothy with some detail that in spite of how wicked and even evil some new Christians had been, that when the KINDNESS AND GENEROUS LOVE OF GOD APPEARED, BECAUSE OF HIS MERCY, HE SAVED US THROUGH THE BATH OF REBIRTH [BAPTISM] AND RENEWAL BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Finally, in our Gospel today Jesus cures ten socially distancing lepers. However, only one returns to thank Him. Jesus lets him -- and us to -- know how much He appreciates being thanked for the blessings Jesus grants us in answer to our prayer requests. So, we say now, individually, with great fervor and devotion, for any times we may have forgotten to express our gratitude: THANK YOU SO MUCH, JESUS. WE LOVE YOU TRULY!