

## St. Martin de Porres

*All Saints Pilgrimage Nov/2010*  
*Linda Kehoe*



**Born:** December 9, 1579 In Lima, Peru.

Mother was a freed colored person of Panama/Father was Spanish nobleman.

**Died:** November 3, 1639 (aged 59)

**Feast Day:** November 3

**1837** (198 years after his death) Venerated by Pope Gregory XVI

**May 6, 1962** (323 years after his death) Canonized by Pope John XXIII

The life of Martin de Porres is a beautiful story of his great empathy and compassion for the poor and marginalized. He endured hardships/rejection/beatings/neglect as a young child at the hands of not only his mother, but the people of Peru also. Their mother despised him and his younger sister; and blamed them for ruining her life. They were bullied in the streets for being mixed race and for not having a father present in their lives.

Turns out they were actually fathered by Don Juan de Porres, Knight of Alcantera, a very prominent Spaniard who eventually came back and rescued them from their mother and their situation. He provided a comfortable life, education and opportunity.

However, after a couple of years, Martin returned to his mother and dedicated his life to serving the poor. He could never turn anyone away – often giving away his own families food. Later he would find ways to feed 160 poor persons every day, and distributed a remarkable sum of money

every week to the indigent. He founded a home for orphans and abandoned children. He recognized that before you could preach about God to the poor, you had to feed and cloth them.

Although Martin spent all of his religious life in Lima at the convent of the Holy Rosary he was reported to have made unaccountable trips to Africa, France, China, Japan and the Philippines and Mexico. This ability to do away with space and time is called ubiquity.

He also had an uncanny ability to predict events – what someone would end up being in life, when they would die, even his own death. He always wore a tattered habit. He was personally clean, but chose to wear old habits. One day he dressed in a new clean habit. Everyone was surprised. When they asked him why, he said because that was the habit he would be buried in. Shortly thereafter he took ill and did in fact die.....but not before the company of saints visited him on his deathbed.

After his death it was discovered that he wore a hair shirt under his habit that rubbed his skin raw. He did this as penance in addition to whipping himself three times each evening. These acts of penance were for him, but also for all those who did no penance themselves. He is reported to elevate as he prayed.

### **Excerpted from ‘The Saint of the Day’**

With his daily work in the kitchen, laundry, and infirmary, Martin’s life reflected God’s extraordinary gifts: ecstasies that lifted him in to the air, light filling the room where he prayed, bilocation, miraculous knowledge, instantaneous cures and a remarkable rapport with animals. His charity extended to beasts of the field and even to the vermin of the kitchen. He would excuse the raids of mice and rats on the grounds that they were underfed; he kept stray cats and dogs at his sister’s house.

He became a formidable fundraiser, obtaining thousands of dollars for dowries for poor girls so that they could marry or enter a convent. Many of his fellow religious took him as their spiritual director, but he continued to call himself a ‘poor slave.’ He was a good friend of another Dominican saint of Peru, Rose of Lima. (August 23)

**Quote:**

In 1962, Pope John XXIII remarked at the canonization of Martin: “He excused the faults of others. He forgave the bitterest injuries, convinced that he deserved much severe punishments on account of his own sins. He tried with all his might to redeem the guilty; lovingly he comforted the sick; he provided food, clothing and medicine for the poor; he helped as best he could, farm laborers and Negroes, as well as mulattos, who were looked upon at that time as akin to slaves: thus he deserved to be called by the name the people gave him: ‘Margin of Charity.’”

**Patron Saint:** Black people, Barbers/hair stylists, innkeepers, mixed race people, Peru, poor people, public education, public schools, public health, race relations, social justice, state schools, television, Mexican Peruvian, Naval Aviators, Pan American College of Pharmacists.

**Prayer to St. Martin de Porres**

To you Saint Martin de Porres we prayerfully lift up our hearts filled with serene confidence and devotion. Mindful of your unbounded and helpful charity to all levels of society and also of your meekness and humility of heart, we offer our petitions to you. Pour out upon our families the precious gifts of your solicitous and generous intercession; show to the people of every race and every color the paths of unity and of justice; implore from our Father in heaven the coming of His kingdom, so that through mutual benevolence in God we may increase the fruits of grace and merit the rewards of eternal life, Amen.