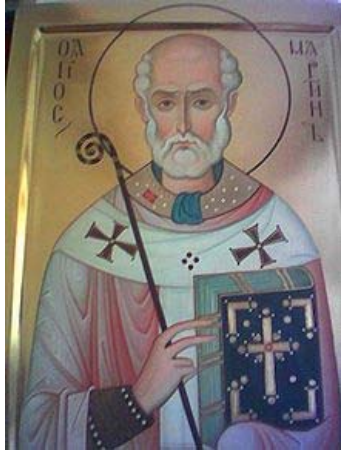


St. Martin of Tours

Feast Day November 11

All Saints Pilgrimage Nov/2010

Linda Kehoe



St. Martin as a bishop: modern icon in
The chapel of the Easter Orthodox
Monastery of the Theotokos and
St. Martin. Cantaque Provence

A conscientious objector who wanted to be a monk; a monk who was maneuvered into being a bishop; a bishop who fought paganism as well as pleaded for mercy to heretics—such was Martin of Tours, one of the most popular of saints and *one of the first not to be a martyr*.

Born of pagan parents in what is now Hungary and raised in Italy, this son of a veteran was forced to serve in the army against his will at the age of 15. He became a Christian catechumen and was baptized at 18. It was said that he lived more like a monk than a soldier. At 23, he refused a war bonus and told his commander: "I have served you as a soldier; now let me serve Christ. Give the bounty to those who are going to fight. But I am a soldier of Christ and it is not lawful for me to fight." After great difficulties, he was discharged and went to be a disciple of Hilary of Poitiers (January 13).



The Charity of St. Martin, by [Jean Fouquet](#)

On a bitterly cold day, a famous legend goes, Martin met a poor man, almost naked, trembling in the cold and begging from passersby at the city gate. Martin had nothing but his weapons and his clothes. He drew his sword, cut his cloak into two pieces, gave one to the beggar and wrapped himself in the other half. Some of the bystanders laughed at his now odd appearance; others were ashamed at not having relieved the man's misery. That night in his sleep Martin saw Christ dressed in the half of the garment he had given away, and heard him say, "Martin, still a catechumen, has covered me with his garment."

He was ordained an exorcist and worked with great zeal against the Arians. He became a monk, living first at Milan and later on a small island. When Hilary was restored to his see after exile, Martin returned to France and established what may have been the first French monastery near Poitiers. He lived there for 10 years, forming his disciples and preaching throughout the countryside.

The people of Tours demanded that he become their bishop. He was drawn to that city by a ruse—the need of a sick person—and was brought to the church, where he reluctantly allowed himself to be consecrated bishop. Some of the consecrating bishops thought his rumpled appearance and unkempt hair indicated that he was not dignified enough for the office.

Along with St. Ambrose (December 7), Martin rejected Bishop Ithacius's principle of putting heretics to death—as well as the intrusion of the emperor into such matters. He prevailed upon the emperor to spare the life of the heretic Priscillian. For his efforts, Martin was accused of the same heresy, and Priscillian was executed after all. Martin then pleaded for a cessation of the persecution of Priscillian's followers in Spain. He still felt he could cooperate with Ithacius in other areas, but afterwards his conscience troubled him about this decision. As death approached, his followers begged him not to leave them. He prayed, "Lord, if your people still need me, I do not refuse the work. Your will be done."

Comment:

Martin's worry about cooperation with evil reminds us that almost nothing is either all black or all white. The saints are not creatures of another world: They face the same perplexing decisions that we do. Any decision of conscience always involves some risk. If we choose to go north, we may never know what would have happened had we gone east, west or south. A hypercautious withdrawal from all perplexing situations is not the virtue of prudence; it is, in fact, a bad decision, for "not to decide is to decide."

Patron Saint of:

Horses
Soldiers

From 'Saint of the Day' www.americancatholic.org

Prayer to St. Martin of Tours

Dear well - beloved Saint, you were first a soldier like your father.
Converted to the Church, you became a soldier of Christ, a priest and then a
Bishop of Tours. Lover of the poor, and model for pagans and Christians alike,
protect our soldiers at all times. Make them strong, just, and charitable, always
aiming at establishing peace on earth. Amen.