

November 11

## FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT MARTIN

### 189.1 <sup>883</sup> First Point

While still quite young Saint Martin became a soldier and was a soldier until he was 40; but he had even more care to enroll in the Christian militia than in that of the emperor. Although born of a pagan father, he had his name entered in the Church on the list of catechumens when he was only eleven years old. Afterwards he devoted himself entirely to piety and to the service of God in such a way that he was admired for his virtue even among those who had already received the grace of baptism.

He had especially such great tenderness for the poor, that, when he was still in the military and had come upon a naked man who begged him for something to cover himself, Saint Martin cut his own mantle in two and gave the beggar half. This led Jesus Christ to let him know that he acknowledged this gift as made to himself, and appeared to him the next night wearing the half-mantle, saying, Martin, although he is only a catechumen, clothed me with this mantle.

You, who are enrolled in the army of Jesus Christ, are in his service, and, as it were, on his payroll, do you have the service of God as much at heart as Saint Martin did? Are you also as charitable toward the poor as he, even though he was still only a catechumen? Every day you are with the poor and you are commissioned by God to clothe them with Jesus Christ himself and with his Spirit. Have you been careful, before undertaking such a holy ministry, to clothe yourselves with him<sup>884</sup> in order to communicate this grace to them? For, says Saint Paul, no one knows who God is save the Spirit of God, and it is this Spirit of God who, he adds, penetrates everything, even the deepest and most hidden mysteries in God.<sup>885</sup>

Pray, therefore, the Spirit of God to make known to you the gifts that God has given you,<sup>886</sup> as Saint Paul says, so that you may announce them to those whom you are commissioned to instruct, not with discourses that use human wisdom, but with that which the Spirit of God inspires in his ministers.<sup>887</sup>

### 189.2 Second Point

Having left the army, Saint Martin went to find Saint Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, and built a monastery near that city, where he withdrew with many religious. There he lived with them a very austere life, in such great piety and in such great separation from the world that it seemed they no longer had any contact with the world, except that some of them went out for the ordinary needs of life, and this as rarely as possible. It was in this seclusion that Saint Martin gave himself entirely to God, devoted himself to prayer with much fervor, and acquired there a great habit of remembering the presence of God.

It is in seclusion that we learn to find God; it is there that we come to enjoy God through the ease we have there to practice prayer, after we have severed all communication with the world. It was also by these means that Saint Martin prepared himself to do great things, especially by filling himself with the Spirit of God and with zeal, which was necessary for him in order to labor as usefully as he did for the salvation of souls.

As you need both these things, you also have need for seclusion and separation from the world, for neither of these things can be found in the world. The world, as Jesus Christ says, cannot receive the Spirit of God because it does not know him,<sup>888</sup> and because the maxims and practices that the Spirit of God inspires are entirely opposed to those of the world.

### 189.3 Third Point

The result that seclusion produced in Saint Martin was that God destined him, and the clergy and people of Tours chose him, to be their bishop. It was in this holy office that he exercised his zeal for the destruction of the worship of idols, which was still prevalent in France, whose kings had not yet become Christians. But since he knew that it was up to God to establish his religion, and that people are only his ministers to preach it and make it known, he devoted himself constantly to fasting and prayer, without ever losing his attention to God.

This saint had a tireless vigilance for all the needs of his church, considering himself responsible before God to provide what was needed. He knew that a bishop needs to do two things: beg God for the salvation of souls and carry out God's orders in order to procure this salvation. For this reason Saint Martin divided his time between these two things:

1. a great part of the time he kept his hands lifted up to heaven to draw down the grace and blessing of God for the conversion of souls;

2. he devoted himself to this task with such zeal and assiduity that, even at the hour of his death, in the ardor he had for the salvation of souls he told God that if he was still needed by his people, he did not refuse the work.

Let all your time, following the example of Saint Martin, be spent in these two things: asking God insistently for the salvation of those who are under your guidance, and seeking and helping them use these means.

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Martin (Ca. 315 - 397) was born at Salaria in Hungary and became a catechumen at an early age despite the fact that his father was a pagan. Conscripted in the Roman army, he became a Christian after a vision of Christ rewarding him for his generosity to a poor beggar needing warm clothing. He left the army after a miraculous victory over the barbarians in which, unarmed, he led the Romans. Coming under the guidance of Saint Hilary of Poitiers, he built a monastery near that town. Later he was chosen to be Bishop of Tours. Sulpicius Severus (360 - 406) wrote a biography of Saint Martin which has preserved the details of his life.

883 Number 188 is part of the Additions which are at the end of the original edition and of this edition also.

884 Rom 13:14  
885 1 Cor 2:10-11  
886 1 Cor 2:12  
887 1 Cor 2:4, 13

888 Jn 14:17