

Saint Martin - 11th November 2020

Liturgical colour: red (the fire of the Holy Spirit and the Church, the love of God, and the blood of the Martyrs) or white (the colour of Christ, white like cleansed from all sins, the colour of the redeemed, the colour of peace with God, heaven, and eternity)

Each year on 11th November the Church remembers Saint Martin of Tours. Usually, we commemorate Saints on the anniversary of their death if we know the date. Especially for Saints from the ancient times it is often the only reliable biographical information we have. Since Saint Martin was already very popular in his lifetime we not only know his day of death, 8th November, but also the day of his funeral, 11th November 397, which became his day of commemoration.

Born as *Martinus* around the years 316/317 in *Savaria*, which is *Szombathely* in Hungary today, as the son of a Roman military officer, he was educated in his father's homeland in Pavia in upper Italy and came in contact with the Christian faith. Against his own will, he followed his father's wish and the Roman law that a son of an officer also must become an officer and at the age of 15 became one of the lifeguards of Emperor Konstantin II in Milan. Later he served in Gallia (France) and Germany under Emperor Julian, called "Apostata", which means that Julian denied the Christian faith. In the area of the military camp which is today the city of Worms in Germany, Martin refused to fight against the Germans with the statement that he now is a "soldier of Christ" and not longer a soldier of the Emperor.



He asked for suspension from the military service which he had to wait for a long time. After being released after 25 years of military service in the year 356, he went to Bishop Hilarius of Poitiers (Gallia/France), who had baptised him a few years earlier, to study and then became first a hermit and monk near Genoa (Italy), converted his mother who still lived in Pannonia (Hungary) and finally moved back to Gallia where in 361 he established the first monastery of Western Europe in Ligugé. In 372 he was consecrated as Bishop of Tours and established the abbey of Marmoutier in 375. He brought the Christian faith to the simple people around Tours and took care of them as a popular helper and healer. He rather lived in simple wooden cabins than in the city and embodied the ideal way of ascetic life of a bishop and priest. Martin was the connection between Rome and the realm of the Franks.

Theologically, he proclaimed the suffering Christ and an ascetic way of life for the needy in the discipleship of Christ according to the **Old Testament Reading** of this day, taken from the book of the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 58, verses 6-11: God, the Lord, says: 6 "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, 10 if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.

11 And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

And also the Lord Jesus Christ himself tells this in **the Gospel Reading**, according to St. Matthew, chapter 25, verses 31-40: Jesus says: 31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’

37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40 And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,[6] you did it to me.’

On 8 November 397 Martin died at the age of 81 on a visitation journey and was buried on 11 November with great sympathy of the local people. He was the first Christian who was called “example” and “Saint” who died a natural death and was not murdered like the Martyrs. – Because of his different stations of his life in Hungary, Italy, France, and Germany, and his big influence on the European Church with his life and foundations of churches and abbeys, he became very popular and a patron of many European cities and areas. He also became national patron of the Franks. Today we could say he was “a real, exemplary European” and as a Christian in the sense of the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Ephesians, 8, 7-9, the Epistle Reading of this day:

7 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you[3]—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Because of the preferably fast baptisms in the Middle Ages and the tradition to name a child after the Saint of the baptismal day, Martin Luther (born on 10 November 1483) was baptized ‘Martin’ after Saint Martin on 11 November 1483. And Saint Martin’s cape, in Latin “cappa”, became an important part of the imperial insignia and was taken by the Franks’ kings and later German kings and emperors with them on their journeys. There the cape was stored in special rooms – the “chapel” (German “Kapelle”), which were called after the “cappa” and the clergies who took care of it were called chaplains (German “Kaplan”).

In the past, Saint Martin’s Day was the traditional end of the agricultural year, which also means the end of the economic year. It was payment day and the day to end or start contracts. Today, there are special Saint Martin traditions in Sweden, Slovakia, Austria, Switzerland, and Germany. A traditional meal are geese. In Germany and Switzerland, little children go for an evening procession in the dark with nicely decorated lanterns (because Martin's funeral cortege was accompanied by a light procession) and get sweet bread.



Saint Martin reminds us of a life in the discipleship of Christ to follow Jesus in all life situations, also against resistance. He teaches us what it means to take care of the needy and the poor and what really matters in life. Therefore we can pray and sing the Psalm of this day joyfully:

Psalm 146

1 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

2 I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

3 Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.
4 When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.
5 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God,
6 who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever;
7 who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free;
8 the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.
9 The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
10 The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!

Prayer for Saint Martin's Day

Father, by his life and death Martin of Tours offered you worship and praise.

We thank you for his way against his pagan environment to stay steadfast in faith and to bring the good news of your love and mercy to so many people in word and deed.

Let him also become an example of faith and life for us that we always see the needy among us and that we open our hearts and hands to them.

Renew in your hearts the power of your love, so that neither death nor life may separate us from you.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with favour and + give us peace. Amen.



ALL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BRUSSELS

This compilation comes from **All Lutheran Church of Brussel**, www.alcb.be

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the selection of the readings follows the German Protestant Series of the Biblical Readings for the Sundays and Church Feasts based on the "Ancient Church Series", last review in 2018

the Biblical passages are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV)