

## **From the Pastor November 11, 2020**

### ***O MARTINE, PARS APOSTOLI!***

*Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary His Most Holy Mother!*

As everyone knows, November 11<sup>th</sup> we celebrate Veterans' Day. We all pray for the members of the armed forces of our nation and we pray for all those who have given their lives for our country, making the supreme sacrifice. Some parishioners may recall when the holiday was called Armistice Day. My father always referred to it by the former name until the day of his death. The origin of the holiday goes to the year 1918 (102 years ago) when at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month the armistice was signed ending what we call today the First World War. But the day itself was sacred long before that, for it is the Feast of the great Soldier-Saint, St. Martin who is the only saint given the wondrous title *Equal to the Apostles*. (In Latin he is called *Martinus, Pars-Apostoli!*).

In 1918 November 11<sup>th</sup> was on a Monday. The hostilities of the First World War had ceased on Friday November 8, 1918. The German Emperor fled to Holland on Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup>, and the last Austrian Emperor, the Blessed Karl of the House of Austria (beatified in 2004) and his family left Vienna on Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup>. But the warring parties made the solemn agreement that the armistice would wait to be signed until Monday, the Feast of the great St. Martin. For he is the Patron of all soldiers and the patron of both Germany and France. The armistice went into effect at the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month of 1918. Who was this saint upon whom history waited and what is his story?

St. Martin lived at the end of the fourth century and was from the Roman province of Pannonia (in present day Hungary). As a young man he enlisted in the Roman Army and was a centurion assigned to the province of Gaul (present day France) where there was fierce fighting. He was considered the bravest and most valiant soldier serving in the Imperial Army at that time.

Soon he heard of the preaching of the Faith and became a catechumen, one preparing for baptism. One day the great Martin entered a French village where he found an old man freezing in the cold. He immediately drew his sword and with one graceful swoop, cut his red military cloak in two, giving half of it to the shivering man. That night in a dream Our Lord appeared to Martin wearing the half cloak. And Our Lord said to him, "Martin whatever you have done for the least of my brethren, you have done for me. From now on you shall be a soldier in my army, marching beneath the Cross." Martin was immediately baptized and began to live in the forest as a monk.

Soon his reputation for holiness became so great, that when the city of Tours needed a Bishop the townspeople came looking for him to be their Bishop. Rather than seeking this honor, he fled from them and actually hid in a barn under a bale of hay. When the people entered the barn in search of him, he almost eluded them until suddenly a flock of geese ran into the barn, making their characteristic honking noise near the bale of hay and betraying him. He was discovered and the people brought Martin back to Tours there to be made Bishop. He became the holiest Bishop in the world and was noted for his love for the poor and his desire for the priests to live exemplary lives. The bravest soldier of the Roman army now became the greatest bishop in the history of the Church.

There are several charming customs that have grown up around the figure of this great Saint. On his feastday, it is the custom in Germany, France and Austria that families gather in a similar way to our American Thanksgiving and one can guess what is served as the family feast? **ROAST GOOSE.** (Some say it is to honor the geese for leading the faithful to Martin; others say it is a punishment for their treachery that they are eaten!)

On St. Martin's Day in Italy the first of the new wine is drunk, wine that had been grapes on the vine just a few weeks earlier. There is an Italian Proverb that goes:

*Nella festa di San Martino  
Si beve il buon vino!*  
(On St. Martin's Feast,  
one drinks the good wine!)

Finally, St. Martin's last gift to us is the unusual meteorological phenomenon that occurs each year in mid-November in the Northern Hemisphere. At that time there is a slight warming of the earth, almost two months into the autumn season. This is called St. Martin's Summer. We have been experiencing it very noticeably this year. How happy I was when one of our dear parishioners told me this day (I write on Tuesday November 9<sup>th</sup>) that the 72-degree temperature was due to St. Martin's Summer.

***O Glorious St. Martin, Equal to the Apostles, pray for us and save us. Watch over our armed forces and watch over our children! May You who gave your life to doing good, and still do so from heaven, bless and protect us. Warm the coldness of our hearts so we may love God as did You. Help us to see Our Lord in the poor and suffering as You did. O St. Martin bring peace to the nations of the world and save us who pray to You!***

May I then on this Veterans' Day extend the gratitude of the parish to all of our own parishioners serving in the armed forces and to all our (and my fellow) veterans. (I had the honor to serve in the USAF for eight years, separating from the USAF as a captain: 03). This is the equivalent of a full lieutenant in the Navy.

And dear fellow veterans, you are probably aware of the kindness that Lowes shows to us every day in giving a little discount to veterans. Dunkin Donuts gives a free coffee for Veterans Day. Also, Ben's Kosher Deli gives a discount. Last year I showed them my Military I.D. with picture in uniform and they would not believe it was really me. I was 42 pounds lighter and had black hair! But they gave me the free pastrami sandwich anyway (which thrilled my good cardiologist). May God bless them and may God bless us all.

In Jesus and Mary  
*Monsignor James F. Pereda*