

# HE IS RISEN, ALLELUIA! JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!

By Fr Emil Blaser OP

As with many Christian feasts Easter has been hijacked by the commercial world. It is a time of celebration and making money as with no other faith. Weeks before Christmas and Easter supermarkets are decorated for these festivities.

Thanks be to God, Holy Week is a time that draws many people to church. On the international stage some time is given to snippets of news from the Vatican, especially the Pope's *Urbi et Orbi* blessing - his blessing to the city of Rome and the world. Christians of all denominations will flock to their churches at Easter and in the Catholic Church, Good Friday seems to draw most people to the commemoration of the suffering and death of our Lord.

Indeed, Jesus is the central figure during Holy Week and all the liturgical ceremonies are truly very moving and beautiful. The central message that we are encouraged to profess is that Jesus Christ suffered, died and rose on Easter Sunday.

The message is: **HE IS RISEN, ALLELUIA! JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!**

This is the central message we proclaim on Easter Sunday. It is a statement of objective fact which we believe as Christians. This is what we believe and what we state on our billboards, so to speak. The emphasis is not on "Jesus is mine" but that "He is Lord".

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early in the morning, only to discover that he was not there!

She recognised Him beyond doubt when she spoke to Him, thinking He was the gardener. He called her by her name! And then excitedly she ran to share the news with the apostles. John followed by Peter came running to the tomb and acknowledged that He was indeed risen.

Then followed several post-resurrection encounters with the Lord bringing incredible joy to those early disciples. This is what we are remembering on this day, 2000 years ago. And in the face of this happening we too say: **HE IS RISEN, ALLELUIA! JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!**

And let it be said, we can only say this under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Now, this victory of Christ over suffering and death, manifested in his resurrection, is a victory that we need to show in our lives today. We manifest this victory when we turn from selfishness, bribery and corruption and every form of sin that we know of in our day and age.

The manifestation of the risen Christ would be to some extent manifested if we lived what we call in South Africa, *Ubuntu*. Living according to *Ubuntu* values would certainly pave the way to acknowledging the dignity of people and burying every form of sin and death and enabling a new heaven and a new earth to break through. But it is not that our salvation is in *Ubuntu*.

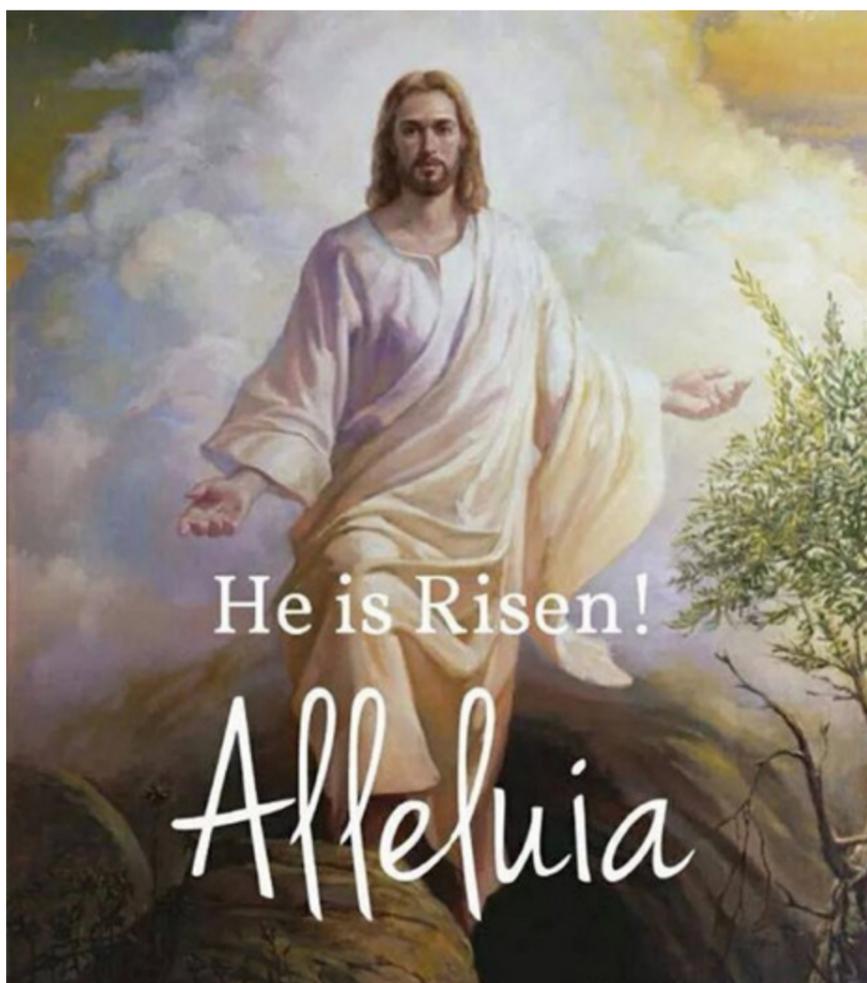
Christ has shown that He alone is risen from the dead and has overcome every form of sin and death. And His resurrection is experienced in our lives when, through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us and through us, we overcome every form of selfishness and sin.

These are our little victories over death. And as we live out these victories we will become more and more empowered to face the ultimate victory over death, which will facilitate us saying: "I am ready, Lord. Take me to yourself".

**You Christ, are Lord.  
You are truly risen. Alleluia!**

This message you will not find in supermarkets but in the very depths of your heart.

**A Happy and Blessed Easter to all our readers!**



# Martin - Holistic Healer

**M**artin de Porres is known for many special gifts, but it is an instrument of God's healing love that is perhaps best known and revered.

We can be quite sure that Martin's tremendous gifts as a healer flowed from his own experience of inner healing. He who had been loved into wholeness by God wanted nothing more than to pass that same healing love of God on to others. Though he had a special concern for the poor, especially Blacks and Indians, Martin's healing knew no borders. Mixing ancient African and indigenous medicinal wisdom with his faith in Jesus Christ, Martin is an example of a true holistic healer, one concerned with the well-being of body, mind and spirit.

One day Martin went to visit Father Pedro Montes de Oca, who was in bed because of an illness of the leg. A silly remark made by Martin angered the priest, who then called Martin "a mulatto dog" and other bad things.

Martin left the cell laughing, and the next day returned with a salad of capers. (Capers are pickled buds of flowers used as ingredients in food preparation.)

## FOCUS: SPECIAL GIFTS

"Well, father, are you still mad? Eat this little salad of capers which I bring you." The priest was amazed, "for he had wanted such a salad all day being so sick from this illness, suffering from hunger, and also the pain of knowing his leg was to be amputated the following day ..."

Thinking this an act of God, he asked pardon of Brother Martin for the anger and the words. He then asked Martin to take pity on him. Martin laid his hands on the leg, and the Friar was healed and freed from danger.

## HEALING WITH GOD'S LOVE

There are hundreds of stories told of Martin healing the sick and wounded. What makes the preceding story so powerful is that Martin's love healed even those who treated him with disrespect. His patience and humour with Father Pedro were about much more than just healing a bad leg. Martin wanted to heal the whole person and, in the process, bring healing and reconciliation to the community. A healing in one place brings healing to the whole world.

Martin's gifts of healing began to be nurtured during his early years. In the Malambo neighbourhood, he apprenticed under two healers, the first being an *herbalista* or *boticario*, named Matteo Pastor, who taught him the art of preparing herbal medicines. Having learned much about herbs and healing from his mother, Martin was quick to learn the recipes for making creams, salves, and ointments from the abundant flora found on the hills and mountains surrounding Lima. Our Creator God has blessed Creation as a source of nutrition and wellness for all living beings. It is only in sharing creation's riches that we show respect to the God who made them.

Martin later spent several years as an apprentice to the barber/surgeon, Marcello de Ribera, who became one of Martin's lifelong friends. It was this experience that perhaps best prepared him for his many years as the assistant infirmarian of the Dominican priory. A *barbero* in Martin's day did just about everything a family doctor and dentist and pharmacist

and nurse and physical therapist would do today – and a bit more. They cut hair, pulled teeth, treated burdens, dressed and stitched wounds, let out blood, fixed fractures, did minor surgeries and prescribed medicines. It was a kind of one-size-fits-all mobile clinic for aches and pains!

For Martin, it was his way of caring for God's people, being the hands and heart of Christ in the world. For him it was never a job or a career; it was a divine calling. Martin knew well that he was an instrument of God's healing power, and he would often say to those who were healed,

"I cure you; May God heal you."

Between Martin and the head infirmarian of the convento, Brother Fernando Aragonés, more than two hundred friars and hundreds of poor people who flocked to the priory in search of healing were cared for.

Sometimes Martin stayed late into the night caring for a sick Friar or some poor person wounded in a fight.

"He slept wherever the night found him," said one of his brothers in community, "on a bench, in the Chapter hall, or at the bedside of one of his patients."

The image of Martin faithfully standing watch over the sick late into the night witnesses to his devotion to Christ, who said, "I was sick and you took care of me" (Matt 25:36).

For Martin, he was more than just curing the physical ailment. It was his presence, his faithfulness to being with the sick, that communicated God's healing love to them.

"He served (the sick) on his knees, taking care of them throughout the night, one or two weeks at a time, according to each one's needs. He lifted them up, helped them lie down, washed them – even those with the most awful infirmities – his heart aflame like that of an Angel."

We see this very same healing presence exemplified in a scene from our own times. Pierre Claverie was a Dominican Friar and Bishop of the Diocese of Oran - a region in Algeria racked by reli-

## The Life of St Martin - 4

gious fundamentalism and war. Preaching in June 1996, the bishop spoke of his own desire to be faithful to his Christian vocation in a country so sickened by violence, and what it means to "stand watch" alongside the poor and the vulnerable:

"People have often asked me: 'What do you do there? Why do you stay? ... Go back home!' Home .... Where is our home? .... We are there (in Algeria) because of this crucified Messiah. Because of nothing else and no one else! .... We are there like someone at the bedside of a friend, or of a sick brother, in silence, holding his hand, and wiping his brow. Because of Jesus, because it is he who suffers there, in this violence that spares no one, crucified anew in the flesh of thousands of innocent people.

### "We are there because of Jesus."

This is what it means to be present to those who suffer. This is the healing love that Martin so beautifully expressed with his life. Five weeks after preaching this homily, on August 1, 1996, Bishop Claverie was assassinated in front of his home in Oran. Like Martin, he had kept the vigil through the long, dark night – there – alongside his people.

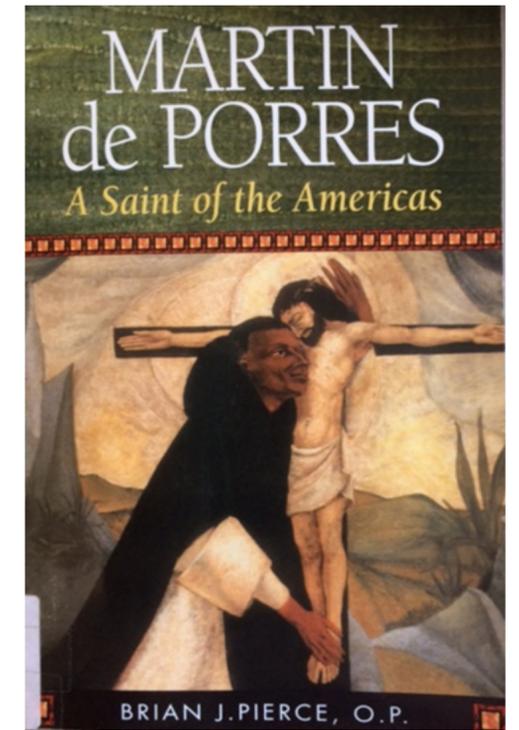
Martin, too, was faithful – always there – for the poor and the sick. One day they brought him an African slave, who had been wounded in a fight, his entrails

hanging out. Martin immediately ran up to his cell and brought down some wine and rosemary.

He knelt down next to the black man and began to suck the blood from the gaping wound. He then washed it with the wine and dressed the wound with rosemary which he chewed into a paste. Four days later the man was well. We certainly are not accustomed to such vivid images – sucking blood from a wound – but we must not fail to see what lies hidden in it: Martin kneeling at the bedside of a bloodied body, kissing the wounds, healing with them with the same wine that is used in the celebration of the Eucharist. As Bishop Claverie said, "it is Jesus who suffers there .... crucified anew in the flesh of thousands of innocent people".

Martin often used herbs and natural remedies in his healings, many of which he grew himself in the priory garden. Like Jesus, who used mud, saliva, and water, Martin used paste from ground almond and melon seeds, alfalfa, chamomile, and rosemary, even hot bricks which he placed over the cramps. He was *curandero* and saint all in one. This was the way he communicated the unconditional love and consoling presence of God to others.

Today we might imagine Martin supporting many of the alternative paths of healing that have their roots in ancient wisdom: naturopathic and herbal medicine, acupuncture and Reiki, massage and reflexology, twelve-



step groups, meditation and hospice care. Martin, like Jesus, frequently healed through touch. Are we aware of the power and reverence of human touch? Does it not remind us that we have been fashioned by the hand of a loving God?

Mary Ellen is a modern-day healer. Each year, on Holy Thursday, she and her companions give massages through healing touch to street people in a poor neighbourhood in San Francisco.

Like Jesus, who washed the feet of his disciples on that day, Mary Ellen pours her love out through the power of human touch to give back to the abused and battered poor their very own human dignity.

She, like Martin, preaches the Good News through her hands.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*What is the healing that I most desire? Have I considered asking St. Martin to intercede for me? When I ask God to heal others, am I willing to be God's instrument? How can I make use of the natural and holistic avenues for healing? Read the story of the ten lepers healed by Jesus (Lk 17:11-19). Is there a healing in my life for which I want to give thanks to God? Have I ever considered myself a healer? How can I give to others the healing love that flows from the heart and hands of Christ?*

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*To be continued.*

## Thank You, Dominican Sisters!

Dear Editor ....

After reading your magazine issue 39, I felt compelled to write and thank you for a most interesting and enlightening issue. Being a catechist I derived some material for my lesson on Lent and promoting Saints from African descent, from your magazine.

I was educated by Dominican sisters at, what was then called, St. Thomas Aquinas convent in Witbank.

When one spends five years of one's youth in a Dominican educational institution (for others it was 12 years) run and taught by Dominican sisters, it is most likely that you

are "branded" in one form or another as Dominican.

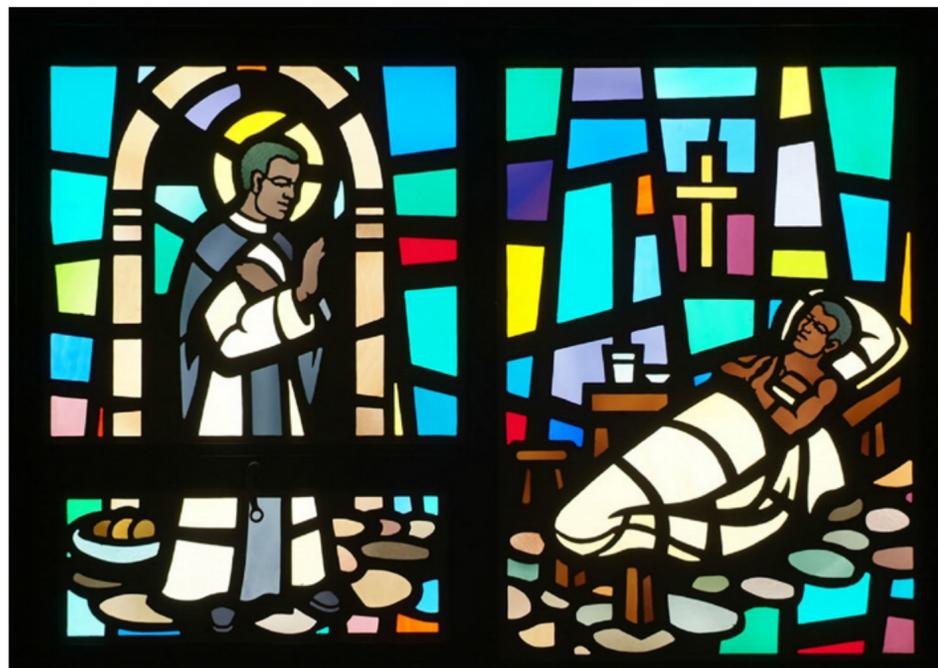
Back in the late 70s early 80s we had a protected life as scholars, in the sense that inside those convent walls we were all equal as one human race. Most scholars were from the privileged few or had been awarded scholarships. We could only compete against other convents in sport and cultural activities, as the government schools refused to invite us due to our multiracial policy.

Thank you to the Order of Dominican Sisters, (who, back in the day, I thought were

Hitlers personified as most of them were German) for your leap of faith, strength and courage in continuing to educate during politically turbulent times. Thank you for being friends of our childhood and guides of our youth, educating us into becoming women of substance and staying true to our motto of truth.

Congratulations to the Dominican Order of Friars on celebrating your Centenary this year. May God bless you and guide you in maintaining your Veritas motto – Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare.

Anon

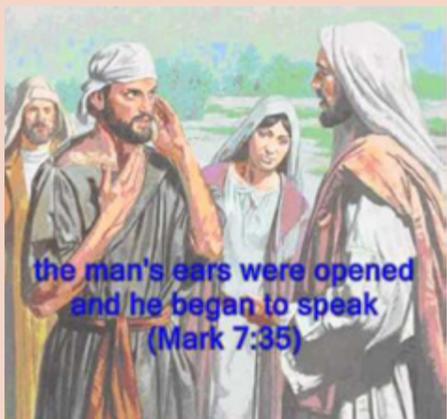


# Help Fr Mark Minister to the Deaf!

In this issue there is a letter to the editor from someone who looks back with much appreciation to her education at a Dominican school. During her schooling the sisters inculcated in her a deep appreciation of her dignity and potential.

St. Martin's life is full of incidences where he reached out to touch people in their brokenness. He had a keen awareness of the dignity of people and the potential that lay hidden in them. And this sensitivity in Martin grew through the interaction between his deep life of prayer and his encounter with broken people. He spent hours and even days ministering to broken people.

When reading chapter 4 of Brian Pierce's book in this issue, one squirms at the depths to which he went in touching the lives of broken and wound-



Fr Mark James OP (right), with deaf and blind Redemptorist priest Fr Cyril Axelrod CSsR

ed people. Upon being healed, these very same people, risen from the dead, so to speak, would ever look back with heartfelt gratitude to Martin for his love and down-to-earth service. The young lady from the Dominican school mentioned in the letter to the editor, would know something about this gratitude.

There are thousands of deaf people in our country. For many years they have been to some extent sidelined. Many left the Catholic Church and went to where they were cared for and loved, even though our Catholic history in South Africa gives us a sense of pride when we see the incredible work done by the Dominican sisters and others amongst the deaf. Many of our deaf community look back with

gratitude to their formation in places like St. Vincent's School for the Deaf in Johannesburg.

We are happy that one of our own brothers, Fr Mark James OP, has seen the need of a chaplain to the deaf community and has made himself available to serve in this capacity. The Dominican Friars have freed him to some extent to fulfill this ministry while at the same time carrying on as a parish priest. So committed has he been that he has completed a degree in ministry to the deaf and has learned their language. Many of our deaf Catholics in many parts of southern Africa are looking back with gratitude to what Fr Mark has committed himself to.

There are two other chaplains to the deaf in South Africa.

## APPEAL FOR HELP FOR FR MARK'S MINISTRY

St. Martin Centre would like to launch a campaign, through the intercession of St. Martin, to raise the necessary money to minister to the deaf community.

Most of you reading this will no doubt be able to hear but just imagine for a moment that you were deaf, needing help and encouragement.

A willing chaplain is available but is desperately in need of funds to fulfill this ministry. We could go even further and consider ministries to other handicapped people. We at St. Martin Centre believe that we can at least try to help in the ministry to the deaf. There is a tremendous need.

The deaf will look back with gratitude on what you have done and many more people will be drawn to an appreciation of the intercession of St. Martin.

Please speak to your friends about this and deposit your donations into our account with your name, telephone number and "Deaf" as reference. Your help will intensify the work of Fr Mark.

Thank you.

## PRAYER TO ST MARTIN DE PORRES FOR OUR PETS

**G**entle St Martin, you loved the animals God gives to us in the wonders of creation. Watch over the animals Our Loving Father has provided for our use and welfare.

*Bless also our pets.*

*Intercede that all disease and harm may be averted since on them so much of our livelihood and joy depends.*

*Help us never to be cruel to them or neglectful of them.*

*May we always, following your example, attend our daily tasks with gratitude and with ever growing love for God and for one another.*

*And may we know the joy of animals and pets kept safe by your powerful intercession.*

*We make this and all our prayers through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*



St Martin Centre  
46 Derby Avenue  
PO BOX 303  
Springs 1560  
South Africa

[www.stmartincentre.org.za](http://www.stmartincentre.org.za)  
[stmartincentre@gmail.com](mailto:stmartincentre@gmail.com)  
Tel: 011 362 4482  
Fax: 011 362 4369

Acc Name: St Martin Centre  
Bank: Standard Bank,  
Branch: Springs  
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Acc. No: 020858647

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