

ST MARTIN DE PORRES

MAGAZINE



Christian Living through the Eyes of Saints Dominic and Martin

By Br Isaac Mutelo OP

One of the major challenges confronting Christians today is how to live out the Christian faith amidst various challenges that confront modern societies.

South Africa, like many other African countries, has historically been struck by a litany of tragedies and suffering. Several forms of injustice and social evils continue to escalate. Certain forms of injustice lead to economic imbalances, which broaden the gap between rich and poor people. Such problems are often experienced by people who are part of marginalised groups by virtue of their gender, race, ethnicity or status in society – in the end, everyone is affected in one way or another. In some cases, one may think that there is no remedy to such distressed situations, causing many questions to arise. How can one make one’s faith relevant and appealing in a troubled society? What fosters different forms of injustice and suffering, and how can a Christian challenge the forces of suffering and injustice through an authentic Christian life of witnessing?

As Catholics join the Dominican friars in celebrating a hundred years in Southern Africa this year, it is important to reflect on St Dominic de Guzmán and St Martin de Porres (two great Dominican saints) with regard to Christian living today.

St Dominic, who lived about 800 years ago, was himself committed to fervent and itinerant preaching for the salvation of souls. When he embarked on the mission of converting a Christian sect that had been proliferating erroneous teachings, Dominic was convinced that preachers with true humility, ardent prayer and sanctity were suitable for the mission. He realised that only preaching that is rooted in authentic Christian living and charity would be relevant and convincing. According to Guiraud, Dominic spent the last few moments before his death “exhorting his followers to have charity, to guard their humility, and to make their treasure out of poverty”. In this same spirit, how can one reach out to people who are hungry, dehumanized and suffering as a Christian today?

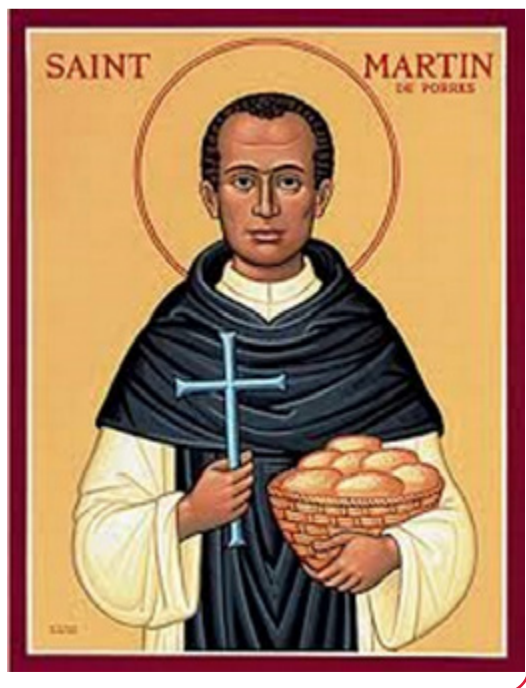
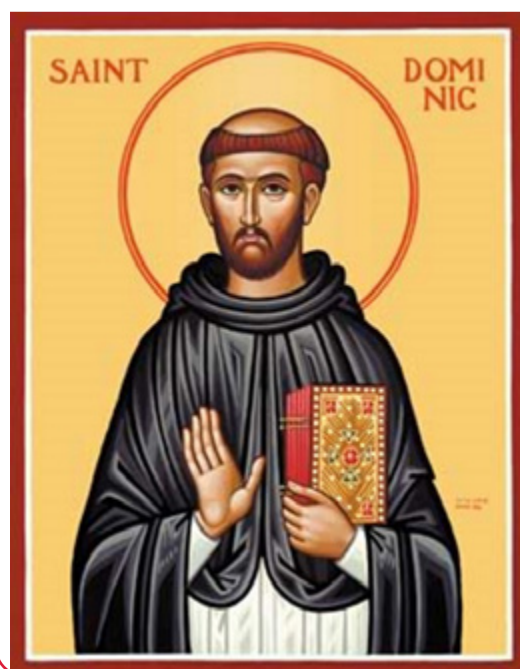
Many people whom Christians encounter today are interested with how Christians

live out their faith, rather than in what they believe. The book of James (2:26) explicitly attests that “faith apart from works is dead”, an idea which is captured by a beautiful Dominican phrase: “to contemplate truth and to share with others the fruits of this contemplation”. It is by practically sharing with others the fruits of faith that Christian living becomes more evident. It is no longer a matter of preaching or sharing the Christian faith with Pentecostal or Muslim neighbours; but rather, living out the dictates of the Christian faith. More people are attracted by the exemplary life of Christians, not by learning what Christians believe. Not all Christians are rich enough to donate large sums of money to orphanages or charity organisations, just as not all Christians are prominent so as to challenge the government at high levels. But it does not mean that one should do nothing. Also, it is not a matter of being angry at the injustices or taking up arms against social evils – it is a matter of doing something about it.

Like St Dominic, the image of St Martin as a humble and compassionate man is appealing to modern societies. Through the menial responsibilities that he had committed himself to at the Dominican Convent of the Rosary in Lima, St Martin showed great humility, unconditional love and care for people he encountered, regardless of their race, ethnic background or status in society. That explains why St Martin is patron saint of

barbers, public health workers, people of mixed race and innkeepers. Modern society needs Christians who preach by witnessing to their faith. The sick want to see Christians visiting them, giving them comfort and healing; the poor want to see Christians supporting them; while those who are racially or ethnically segregated want to see Christians welcoming and being friendly to them. Surely, St Dominic and St Martin stand out as practical examples of what it means to preach at grassroots through a true Christian living. They stand as icons promoting the fullness of human life; fighting against all forces that diminish human dignity. Recognition of the suffering, poor and marginalised ought to arouse one’s instinctive compassion for them and thus motivate in one the desire to take positive action. May St Dominic and St Martin pray for us!

Join us for the Special Mass for the Feast of St Martin on November 4th! See back page for details!



God's Creatures

FOCUS: LOVE FOR ALL

Everyone knows St Francis of Assisi and his love songs to brother sun and sister moon. In our days of growing ecological consciousness (in response to the constant assault on the earth and her resources), we need the symbol of St Francis to encourage us in the struggle.

Martin had his own way of loving creation and celebrating God as creator. As a friar of the

Order of Preachers, Martin's friendship with animals and all of God's creatures was not just a hobby. It was a kind of catechesis for Martin, a holy preaching that always pointed to God and the all-inclusiveness of God's kingdom of love. In the end, the stories about Martin's affection for God's creatures are really stories about us and for us. They are the

gospel, the good news according to Martin.

Martin's friend, the barber/surgeon Marcelo de Ribera, recalls the time that some bulls and calves were brought to the Priory so that the professed brothers could play with them during their recreation.

Martin heard, though, that the animals had been without food or water for four days, and this pained him deeply. Martin quickly began to collect barrels of water and hay that he brought over from the Priory stables.

After midnight, when all the friars were asleep, Martin distributed the water and hay to the hungry animals, each according to its age. The wild animals became tame, and some, it is said, came to Martin and kissed his habit. One friar, Diego de la Fuente, was standing at his window and overheard Martin say to the bulls, "Now, brother, you are older, let the younger ones eat."

CHRIST EVERYWHERE AND ALWAYS

"Let the younger ones eat." We glimpse here not only Martin's tender affection for God's creatures, but we hear him preaching on the need to be attentive to the youngest and the least among us, as well. The story is similar to Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats and the coming of the reign of God: "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). When Martin tells the bulls not to forget the little ones, we, who hear the story many centuries later, are privileged to overhear the conversation and the gospel message it proclaims.

It is important, then, for us to hear the stories not as if we were looking at a family album and seeing photographs of "darling little Martin," surrounded by animals at the local petting zoo. Martin's animals are the world. He loved them because he loved the world and all that God had made. When Martin spoke to his furry friends, he was speaking from the depths of his heart



Prayer to Saint Martin De Porres

Most glorious Martin De Porres, whose burning charity embraced not only your needy brethren, but also the very animals of the field, splendid example of charity, we hail you and invoke you!

From that high throne which you do occupy, listen to the supplications of your needy brethren that, by imitating your virtues, we may live contented in that state in which God has placed us and carrying with strength and courage our cross, we may follow in the footsteps of Our Blessed Redeemer and His most afflicted Mother, that at last we may reach the Kingdom of Heaven through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

We share with you here the financial situation of St Martin Centre.

We are very grateful to 53 donors who have generously been supporting our Centre. Altogether we have approximately 200 clients to whom we send our newsletter each month by post. Many of these good people are not able to contribute financially and we are happy that our newsletter brings them inspiration and hope. Some write to us seeking advice.

We are very happy that Mr John Shalala of Jetline has been printing our newsletter free of charge. Prior to this printing costs were high. This is a tremendous donation and we are very grateful. At present we are printing about 1500 newsletters which are being distributed amongst our clients and to parishes dedicated to St Martin de Porres. Glancing at our financial statement you will notice that printing expenses are high and this is due to us paying off the hire of a printer/scanner. We thank you our donors for your great generosity and ask that those who have fallen behind with their monthly pledges might catch up soon. We invite those of you who are reading this and are new to St Martin Centre to make a monthly contribution that

Our Financials

we might be able to reach out to the needy. Many requests have come our way and we have been able to help these people with other funds, not of St Martin Centre. We hope that in the coming months our income will increase so that we might be able to reach out with greater assistance. We were also blessed with a magnificent donation from Germany.

We are trying to generate considerable income which will be used in ministries to the vulnerable. Up to now the response has been poor and we hope in the future to be able to report greater success. At the moment we have to be careful to use our reserves wisely.

We are grateful to Mavis Ngwenya and Mary Lamprecht for taking care of our financials.

Fr Emil Blaser OP
Director

St Martin Centre - Nov 2016 - Aug 2017		
INCOME		
Monthly pledges		169 837,00
Interest		7 111,41
Repository		545,00
Extraordinary donation		30 830,00
Special Ministries		1 050,00
Sundry		450,00
EXPENDITURE		
Remuneration	71 423,70	
Pension/UIF	7 895,00	
Printing	57 434,58	
Bank charges	3 582,21	
Telephone	10 169,99	
Rent	5 380,00	
Website	6 792,00	
Mass stipends	500,00	
Postage	3 578,20	
Refreshments	798,70	
Repository	180,00	
Travel	7 380,00	
Sundries	5 943,02	
Nett profit	28 766,01	
	209 823,41	209 823,41
Net profit		
		28 766,01
Retained Income	67 647,09	
Bank	51 624,17	
Petty cash	634,41	
Market link	171 513,48	
Opening balance		262 653,14
	291 419,15	291 419,15

The Life of St Martin - 7

and soul. It was his preaching, preaching intended for his Dominican brothers and for us. Every word from Martin's mouth must be heard in this way. He was, after all, a friar preacher; his whole being was saturated with the gospel of Christ.

This is not to say that Martin did not have fun "horsing around" with his animal friends, and that it was all serious business. Not at all! He genuinely loved them, and that is why they were the means he used to preach the gospel. Once, while Martin was frolicking with a bunch of calves on a farm outside of Lima, his friend Juan Vasquez de Parra said, "Father, be careful that they don't knock you down." Martin responded, "Don't worry, I promise you that I haven't had a better day in all my life!" Martin's love for animals was genuine, because his love was genuine.



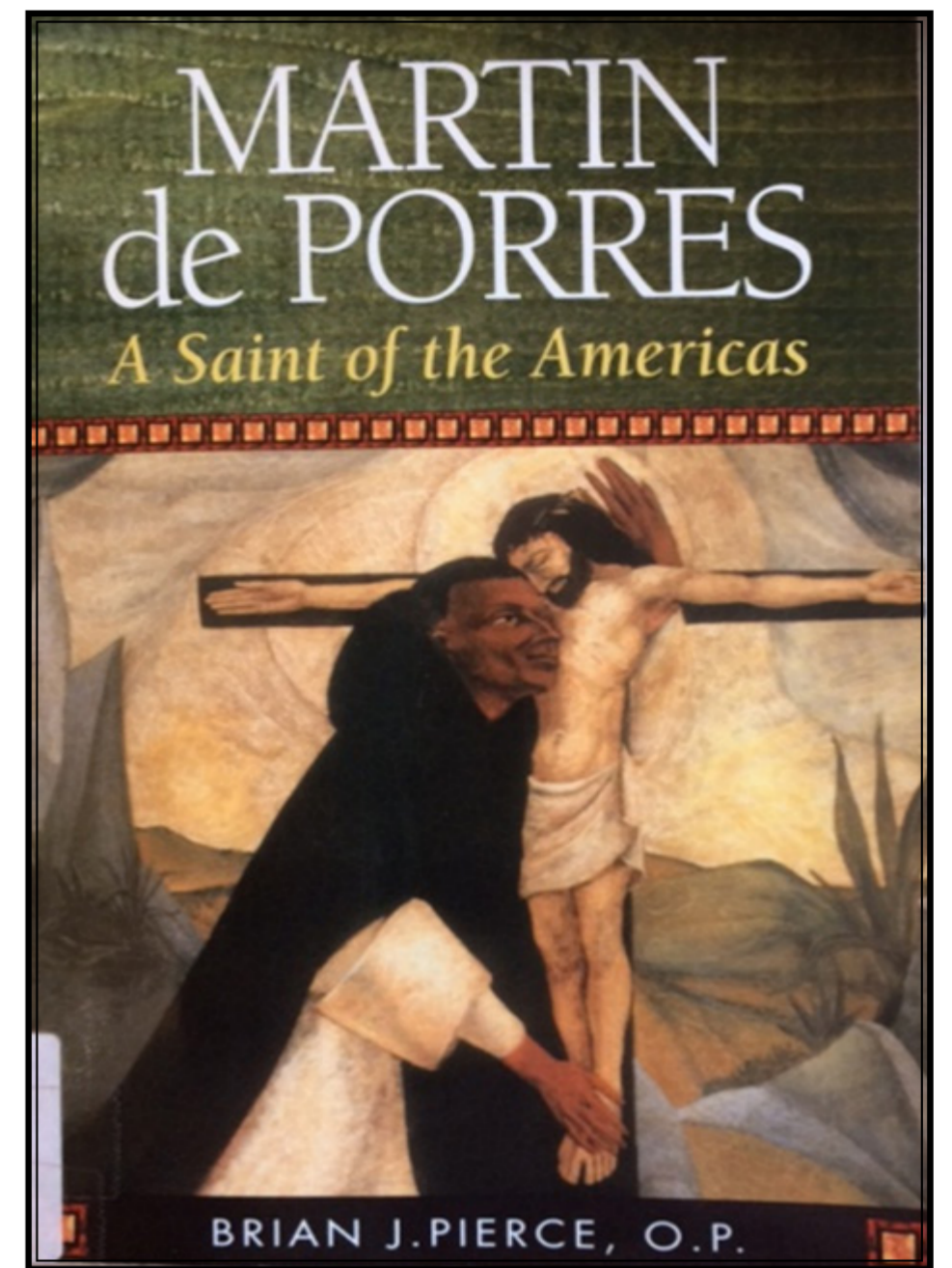
Martin was perhaps best known for his love of dogs. They could cuddle up to him and lavishly lick him to express their affection. One witness said that he frequently saw Martin returning to the Priory "bringing with him wounded or sick dogs. He would cure them with great attentiveness and love, almost as if they were rational beings." What was he trying to say to the world by bringing these dogs into the Priory to heal them? What was he saying about God? Dominican sister Mary O'Driscoll asked during a conference almost 20 years ago: "Do the poor feel comfortable in our homes?" Is that not the question Martin wants us to ask ourselves? Do the poor feel comfortable in our country? Martin's stray and wounded dogs certainly felt very comfortable in Martin's simple cell. They were his little brothers and his sisters.

Not everyone, though, saw the situation through Martin's eyes. At one point the Dominican provincial ordered Martin to throw all the dogs out of the cloister. One witness testified that Martin, "moved with pity and compassion, gathered as many dogs as he could," and took them to the house of his sister, Juana. Each morning he arrived with food hidden in the folds of his habit to feed them. Needless to say, Juana's generosity also reached its limit. She complained that the dogs were turning the house into a mess so Martin called them together, "and speaking with the dogs, told them that when they have to do their necessities, to go out into the street After that the dogs no longer bothered anyone." Hospitality towards the homeless is not always neat and clean. Still though, we hear the voice say, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35).

Martin was also in charge of the clothing room of the Priory, and even his patience was tested when he realised that the mice were destroying the bedding and gowns used for the sick. He finally called one of the mice and said, "Brother, why are you and your friends damaging the linens for the sick? I'm not going to kill you, but go and call your companions, and together go out to the garden. I will bring you food each day." So daily Martin took the leftovers from the infirmary out to feed the mice. "I was hungry and you gave me food" (Mt 25:35).

There are hundreds of stories like these. They offer us an insight into Martin's vision of a world where the "least of my brothers and sisters" would be cared for through simple gestures of charity. He lived this out until the very end of his life. As he was dying, the friars tried to give him medicines made from animals that were killed. Martin gathered up enough strength to speak one more word in defence of the least of these. "Why do you kill those creatures of God if it is God's will for me to die?"

Through the stories of Mar-



tin's compassion for God's creatures, he is urging us to "wake up" and realise that there are little ones among us, too. They are here in our very midst - hungry and thirsty, wounded and abandoned. Sometimes they are calves or dogs, but more often they are children or refugees fleeing war or women hiding in a battered women's shelter. The word for "creature" in Spanish - *criatura* - refers not only to animals (a mule, a mosquito, a mouse), but is also used when referring to an infant, a newborn baby, a "little one". For Martin all God's little ones are *criaturas de Dios* ("creatures of God"). When Martin embraces a wounded dog, he is embracing every human who has been wounded as well. And, as Martin and the gospel remind us, each compassionate embrace is always an embrace of Christ: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me."

This spontaneous love affair with all of God's creatures is the homily of Martin's life, his preaching of the gospel of Christ. Without an abundance of words, Martin's actions proclaimed the reign of God in a thunderous voice. Jesus said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see!"

For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it" (Lk 10:23-24). The question for us is: Do we see what Martin is doing and hear what he is saying? Do we see the little ones in our midst? Do we hear the cry of the poor? And most importantly, do we see and hear that they are Christ?

Reflection questions

What does Martin's affection and love for animals say to me? Do I get what Martin is doing through his "preaching of the little ones"? How does Martin's example challenge me to discover Christ in "the least of my brothers and sisters"? How can I make of my life a lived homily about God's love for the poor? Read Matthew 25:31-46. Where am I in this parable? Where is our country? Spend some time with an animal, a pet, showing it affection and love. Then close your eyes and send this loving kindness out to our wounded world.

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To be continued.

St Martin Snippets

Touching hearts

Our appeal for financial assistance for ministries to vulnerable people has touched many hearts. To date we have received R 30,000 with a promise of more to come. Some of this was especially earmarked for ministry to the deaf. Thank you to those generous people who have made these donations and may we encourage others to do the same. It is never too late to count your blessings and share whatever you can afford.

Prayers answered

Many people have a deep love for St Martin and constantly seek his intercession. Please send us these prayers which we will place at his shrine and also let us know your stories of how St Martin has answered your prayers. This will be an inspiration to our readers. Remember, no story is insignificant if it has been an expression of your love and devotion to St Martin.

All Souls Day

At the beginning of November we celebrate ALL SAINTS and ALL SOULS day. In South Africa the feast of All Saints is transferred to the following Sunday – 5 November.

We would like to draw your attention to ALL SOULS Day. It is customary to remember in our prayers the souls in Purgatory and all our deceased friends and relatives. In a special way, priests pray for these intentions at all their masses during the month of November.

We would like to invite you to send your intentions to the St Martin Centre. You can do this via email or by letter. When doing this it is customary to give the priest a fi-

nancial contribution (Stipend) for the service rendered. If you send your intentions via email we ask you please to make your financial contribution directly into our bank account with your name as a reference. The minimum mass stipend is R50. We will ask priests to remember your intentions during this month of November and pass on the stipends to them. Please remember the stipend is practically the only income for many priests in our country and your generosity would be appreciated. Overseas thousands of mass intentions are requested with the inclusion of mass stipends.

The stipend is not a payment for a mass but a contribution to the priest for his kind service. A priest will never refuse to say mass for you if you do not have a stipend. But, like you, he has to survive and a little financial donation will always be welcome.

The origin of the mass stipend goes back to when wealthy families accommodated a priest who would say mass for them every day in the family chapel in return for his board and lodgings.

St Martin's Day

St Martin's Feast day is on 3 November. He was canonised a saint on 6 November 1962. This year we would like to remember St Martin in a special way and will be having a special mass in the Springs Catholic Church of Our Lady of Mercy at 11h00 on Saturday, 4 November.

Naturally we would like to have as many as possible at the celebration. For many this will be the first time to have such a celebration and we would like to make it as meaningful as possible. Please have it announced in your parishes and convents and inform Mavis at the centre about how many might be coming. We would like to do some basic catering and would therefore need to know numbers. Please let us know by the very latest 28th of October. If you would like to help with the catering in any way please speak to Mavis about this.

St Martin Relic

The St Martin Centre boasts a beautiful relic of St Martin de Porres, acquired by the first director of the St Martin Centre in South Africa, Fr Nicholas Humphreys, OP, at the canonisation of St Martin in 1962.

The picture shows Fr Emil and Michelle Mace with the relic.



As far as a section 18 certificate is concerned I wish to advise that my donation comes from our hearts and we have no intention of scoring from the Receiver. St Martin has been good enough to me and my family.

I got hold of your informative magazine from a mother to many and your plight really touched me and indeed I should count my blessings.

St Martin Clients say...

I will help with a small sacrifice at month end. I have you in my prayers including all the vulnerable people. Miracles are there, Father, and you will regain your mobility and this communication is just a start towards this recovery. Have a blessed day and cheer up as there are people around you who care. Francis

Please pray for my son. Our Lord, guide him to a good, healthy and pure life. May I also ask for special intentions for him to be granted. Thank you

Please help me and pray for me St Martin and grant my request which is that my solicitor will get the police and those in

charge of my case to drop the caution against me. Thank you St Martin for helping the charge is not going to court. St Martin I put all my trust in you Amen. Thank you for being my very close friend all my life.

I ask St Martin to please guide and protect my mother from any danger, harm and sickness while she is in Rome and during her travels. St Martin, I place all my trust in you.

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Per kind favour of
Mr John Shalala

