

San Martin de Porres

O Sacred Heart of Jesus!

By Emil Blaser OP



I think it would be right to say that devotions form a very intimate part of the prayer life of Catholics rather than non-Catholics. We have many devotions like the rosary, like devotions in honour of Saints like Martin de Porres, Francis of Assisi, Dominic and hundreds of others. We honour our churches under the patronage of a saint. In fact I am always amazed at how people refer to their parish by their patron saint.

The month of June is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The biggest sodality in the church in South Africa is called the Sacred Heart sodality and quite literally has thousands of members. They are all very enthusiastic "Sacred Heart members".

I remember as a boy we had an old monsignor in our parish who boasted that in every parish he worked he installed a huge statue of the Sacred Heart with an ever burning light in front of it. Even today, I visit Catholic homes and find a picture of the Sacred Heart pinned behind the front door, as you might find the rosary hanging on the wall or from a rear-view mirror in the car. There are usually stories expressing deep faith, safety or dedication. Sometimes these images are cosmetic; other times they verge on the superstitious!

Basically, devotion to the Sacred Heart speaks of the incredible love that Jesus has for us and what is asked of us is to attend mass on the first Friday of the month and to spend an hour in adoration before the blessed sacrament every Thursday. I wonder how many members of the Sacred Heart sodality realise this! Devotion to the Sacred Heart takes the physical heart of Jesus as the representation of his divine love for us.

Franciscans the devotion was championed by St Bonaventure (d 1274) and others. In the early 1600s the devotion was especially propagated by the Jesuits and the image of the Sacred Heart was displayed everywhere, even on the title pages of their books.

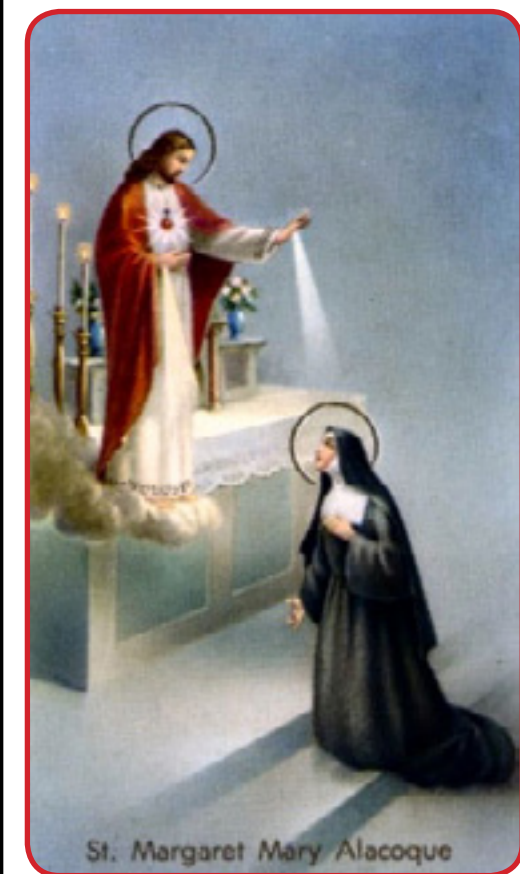
It was St Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690) who received apparitions of Jesus Christ, revealing the form of the devotion, its chief features being receiving holy Communion on the first Friday of the month, spending an hour in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and celebrating the feast of the Sacred Heart. Pope Innocent VI instituted mass in honour of the Sacred Heart in 1353. In 1693 the Holy See imparted indulgences to the Confraternities of the Sacred Heart mainly in France. In 1856 Pius IX extended the feast beyond France and in 1899 the feast was extended to the whole church. Pope Leo XIII was asked by Sister Mary to consecrate the entire world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and after theological investigation this was done on 25 May 1899. He also decreed that the consecration of the entire human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus take place on 11 June 1899. It encouraged the first Friday devotions and the month of June as dedicated to the Sacred Heart. It also included the prayer of consecration to the Sacred Heart.

It was Pope Pius X who decreed that the consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus should take place every year. Popes Pius XII and Benedict XVI reaffirmed the importance of the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is celebrated 19 days after Pentecost, which is always a Friday.

Some of the above facts are taken from Wikipedia. Hopefully this short article is enlightening about the feast and will encourage people to attend mass on the first Friday of the month and to adoration of the blessed sacrament on Thursdays. Hopefully you might even buy yourself a little emblem of the Sacred Heart - go one step further like my old monsignor friend and install a little statue of the Sacred Heart in your home!

Prayer by St Margaret Mary Alacoque

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, you desire so ardently to shower your favours upon the unfortunate, and to teach those who want to advance in the school of your love, you continually invite me to be meek and humble of heart like you. For this reason you convince me that in order to gain your friendship and to become your true disciple, I can do nothing better than to try henceforth to be truly meek and humble. O Jesus, permit me to enter your heart as I would a school. In this school, teach me the science of the saints, the science of pure love. O Good Master I shall listen attentively to your words: "Learn of me, for I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls".



St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

JOYFUL NON-VIOLENCE

Some of the religious brothers called Martin a "perro mulatto" (a mulatto dog), along with other names aimed at upsetting him or causing him to get angry. Martin never showed anger. In fact, he would respond with a joyful smile, telling them what they said was right and that they really knew him well. Martin would then serve these very ones who attacked him with even greater love..

TEACHING THE POWER OF LOVE

This is an example of how the "little stories" about Martin's life turn the world upside down.

It is a real tragedy that for many centuries these mulatto dog stories (they are quite numerous) have been recounted as if Martin were proposing that oppressed people hang their heads low and take the lashes from the master's whip with humility. To read these stories in this way is to drive a stake into the heart of Martin the Porres, but nothing could be further from the truth. His entire life was spent lifting God's poor and beaten children out of the violence of hatred.

Others simply skirt around these uncomfortable stories of Martin thanking people for treating him like a dog and kissing the feet of those who despised him. We cannot be true to Martin by ignoring these stories, dismissing them as nothing but examples of old-fashioned

and unhealthy humility. This approach furthers the caricature of Martin as an ignorant pawn of an oppressive religion and, worse yet, misses the power hidden like a seed in the stories themselves.

Martin was no dummy. He was so on fire with love that he could face his enemies with patience until they finally surrendered to the power of love. This is key to the practice of non-violence. Long before Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., systematised the philosophy and practice of active non-violence, what Gandhi called *ahimsa*, Martin had already learned the basics from his dialogues with the gentle Christ on the cross, and from his prayerful listening to the gospel. The words of Jesus were quite clear: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34).

To love just as Jesus loved; Martin knew that this was no easy task. Daily, though, he worked at putting into practice this new commandment of his gentle Christ. Many years later, another proponent of non-violence, Cesar Chavez, who spent his life struggling on behalf of farm workers, spoke about the price one pays when committed to this path: "Non-violence exacts a very high price from one who practices it It takes more guts, if I can put it bluntly, than violence." It took guts and patient endurance for Martin to look into the hateful ways of



those who called him a "mulatto dog" and offer them the healing that comes from authentic love and understanding. Again in the words of Chavez, "Non-violence in action is a very potent force and it can't be stopped If we have the capacity to endure, if we have the patience, things will change."

We can only understand Martin's strange responses to the violence inflicted upon him and others if we see him as a teacher, as one who used the practice of nonviolence and patient endurance to teach others that there must be another way. Martin, of course, would laugh if he heard us calling him a teacher, just as he would with the title of preacher. He had no such pretence. But that is precisely what he was. He scrubbed toilets instead of spending his days in the archbishop's palace precisely to teach Father Juan to re-evaluate the priorities in his own life. He prepared a salad of capers for Father Pedro Montes de Oca, who had just called him a "mulatto dog" and other bad things, to lead him into a new way of dealing with his anger. Anyone who has lived in community or been married knows that such a non-violent approach to the little "violences" of daily life is no easy path to walk. Martin did not enjoy being treated like an animal any more than Jesus enjoyed being crucified. Both, though, had "the capacity to endure" with the hope and trust that love would ultimately triumph.

"To our bitterest opponents we say: we shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what

you will, we shall continue to love you Throw us in jail, we shall still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our community at the midnight hour and beat us and leave us half dead and we shall still love you. One day we will win freedom, but not only for ourselves. We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process". (Martin Luther King in *Strength to Love*).

These words, of course, are from the other Martin - Martin Luther King Jr - and they very beautifully reveal the power hidden in the practice of nonviolence. It is a spiritual path and fleshed in love, and it's only goal is to win the opponent over to love. As the story with which we began this chapter said, "Martin would then serve these very ones who attacked him with even greater love.."

Limatambo was a large hacienda (farm) owned by the Dominicans on the outskirts of Lima. Martin spent much time there planting medicinal herbs and olive trees, as well as visiting with the poor indigenous and African farmworkers who lived there. One night some of the friars found Martin in the barn, feeding the mules and oxen.

"Leave that work for the Blacks," they told him.

Martin responded, "The Blacks are tired and the animals have worked more than I have. They have earned their food, and it would be a lack of charity not to give it to them. I, on the other hand, have done nothing to serve God today; I do this so that the day will not pass without doing something for God's holy service."

The Life of St Martin - 11

This is Martin, the teacher of non-violent love at his best. He easily could have berated the friars, calling them "racist pigs" and unworthy servants of the gospel. After all, do the Scriptures not say, "eye for eye, tooth for a tooth"? (Ex 21:24). What he did instead was act in such a way that his example might serve as a teaching about the love.

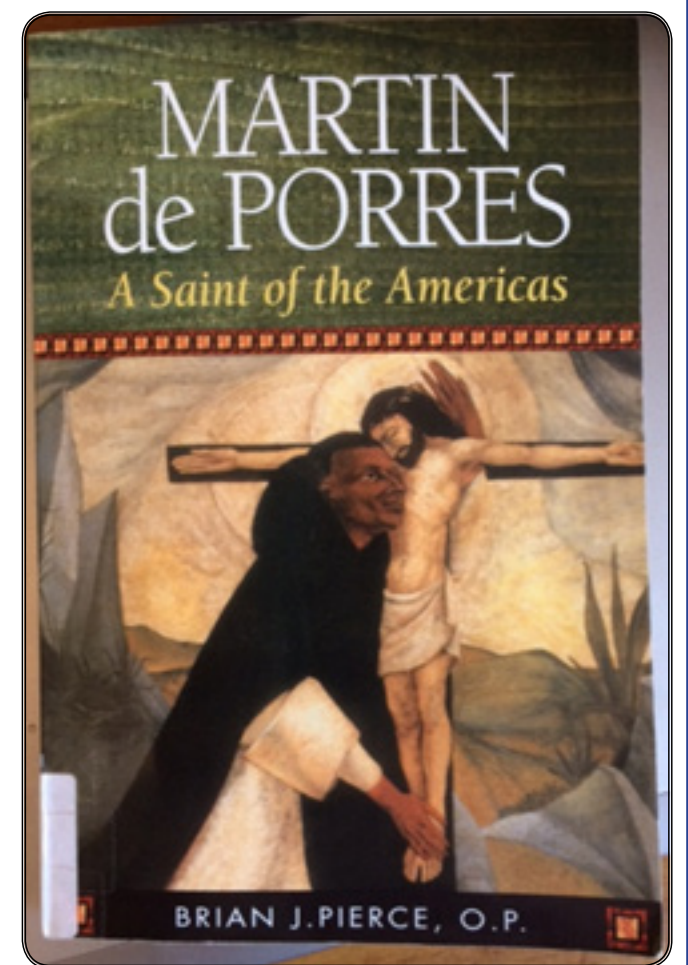
Non-violence, Gandhi frequently said, is not about being victorious over the enemy, but about inviting them to conversion. The friars that found Martin in the bar that night knew very well that Martin had done much to serve God that day. He was playing a secret game with them, teasing them into conversion: "I do this so that the day will not pass without doing something for God's holy service."

Martin's heart smiled as he said these words, for who, after all, was letting the day pass without doing something holy for God? Martin was a wise teacher; he wanted to lure his brothers' hearts into the "trap of love". As

the other Martin said many years later with such eloquence: "We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process." In the end, it is all about love.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Begin by reading Matthew 5:38 - 48. If possible, spend time with this pivotal teaching of Jesus (part of his sermon on the Mount), following it up with some journaling if possible. What is Jesus saying? What are the consequences of this teaching for us today? Is there any "enemy" lurking in your life these days who might need a second chance? How does a nation that develops and sells arms respond to this teaching of Jesus? What might it mean - in very concrete terms - to love violent criminals, even terrorists? How do we respond from a faith perspective so that we can love those who hate into conversion? Reread the Martin Luther King Jr. quote above and end with a prayer.



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Pope St John's Homily at St Martin's Canonisation

St Martin de Porres was canonised on May 6, 1962, by Pope St John XXIII. In celebration of the recent 56th anniversary of that great event, here is Pope St John's homily on that occasion.

The example of Martin's life is ample evidence that we can strive for holiness and salvation as Christ Jesus has shown us: first, by loving God "with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and second, by loving your neighbor as yourself."

When Martin had come to realise that Christ Jesus "suffered for us and that he carried our sins on his body to the cross," he would meditate with remarkable ardour and affection about Christ on the cross. He had an exceptional love for the great sacrament of the Eucharist and often spent long hours in prayer before the blessed sacrament. His desire was to receive the sacrament in Communion as often as he could.

Saint Martin, always obedient and inspired by his divine teacher, dealt with his brothers with that profound love which comes from pure faith and humility of spirit. He loved men because he honestly looked on them as God's children and as his own brothers and sisters. Such was his humility that he loved them even more than himself, and considered them to be better and more righteous than he was.

He excused the faults of others. He forgave the bitterest injuries, convinced that he deserved much severer punishments on account of his own sins. He tried with all his might to redeem the guilty; lovingly he comforted the sick; he provided food, clothing and medicine for the poor; he helped, as best he could, farm labourers and Negroes, as well as mulattoes, who were looked upon at that time as akin to slaves: thus he deserved to be called by the name the people gave him: 'Martin of Charity.'

It is remarkable how even today his influence can still move us toward the things of heaven. Sad to say, not all of us understand these spiritual values as well as we should, nor do we give them a proper place in our lives. Many of us, in fact, strongly attracted by sin, may look upon these values as of little moment, even something of a nuisance, or we ignore them altogether. It is deeply rewarding for men striving for salvation to follow in Christ's footsteps and to obey God's commandments. If only everyone could learn this lesson from the example that Martin gave us.



A Practical Appeal

There are many loyal readers of this newsletter. Each day we pray the novena prayers for all your intentions, confident that St Martin prays for you.

There are also many who turn to St Martin to help them in their needs. These requests end up at our shrine where we pray for all your needs.

One sad case is of an elderly couple. They are pensioners and he is not strong and well. His wife had to have her one leg amputated and now has a prosthetic limb. There is not much she can do. Often they have to help each other but when one is disabled or sick, it becomes very difficult. They live in a small two-roomed house. Their great need at the moment is to find a caregiver and possibly add a small room to the house. Neither of these are possible right now.

They have a son who is very active in the church and whose application has been received to study for the priesthood. However, should he leave for the seminary, his dear parents, who have given him their blessing, would be very badly off. Indeed, they already struggle on his meagre salary.

This is a practical case where your help could provide them with a caregiver and some financial assistance and facilitate the son on his journey to the priesthood.

Once again, if you are able to help please contact Father Emil 0829997171



FOCUS: LOVE EVEN THOSE WHO HATE YOU

"God created the world in marvellous diversity, a garden of fecund asymmetries." Unfortunately, not everyone experiences this garden of diversity as something so "marvellous". The colour of Martin's skin provided the needed scapegoat for certain people to project their own self-hatred on to someone else. Hitler, of course, turned this sickness into an art form, but we see it in our own day when nations, religions, and political parties demonise one another. We see it when anti-immigration laws seek to drive the "stranger in our midst" underground. Hatred comes disguised in many forms. Martin de Porres, however, refused to play the game of hatred. He refused to respond to violence with violence. Instead, he teaches us the way to disarm our hatred through the practice of love.

A MEMORABLE YEAR!

The past year, 2017/2018, will be remembered by many for a number of reasons.

On 19 May 2018 the world witnessed the spectacular royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan. It was a memorable and colourful day. As with all royal functions, the wedding was organised to the finest details.

On 5 August 2017 another historic celebration took place – the centenary of the presence of Dominican friars in South Africa. It was also the 800th jubilee of the foundation of the Dominican Order. The King William's Town Dominican sisters also celebrated their 140th birthday. 2018 was also the 200th birthday of the foundation of the Catholic Church in South Africa. So, we could home in on many memorable occasions.

Another noteworthy event was the continued growth of the Dominican Friars in South Africa. At long last we are receiving local vocations from South Africa. We have established our presence in Zimbabwe and Malawi and we continue to receive vocations from Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Over the last hundred years we have been helped tremendously by the Dominican Order in Holland and elsewhere. Indeed, without this help we could never have survived and we are very grateful. And now, funders abroad are insisting that we stand on our own feet. This is very difficult as we have about 20 Friars in formation and the cost is approximately R100 000 per annum per student. We cannot but be mendicant friars! Keeping all these facts in mind it is remarkable that the Dominican Order has made such an incredible mark on the his-



tory of the Church in our country. Our other great achievement has been the establishment of the only Catholic radio station in South Africa, Radio Veritas. We do not have the trumpets and fanfare of the royal wedding but we do have many loyal friends in our parishes and various apostolates.

Each year the brethren try to reach out to their parishioners and friends in August in order to support the ministries of the Order especially for the formation of young friars. Unfortunately from all the parishes and ministries in which we work, we have seldom reached R50 000. The month of August is the month in which we appeal for financial assistance. This year we have aimed high and hope to raise at least R100 000.

That would be a tremendous achievement in this jubilee year and we would love to see it become an even more memorable year which would be possible with the generosity and goodwill of all our friends.

If every friend of St Martin de Porres who reads this newsletter would be prepared to make a significant donation to support the valuable work that the

Dominicans are doing in our country and beyond, how memorable that would be. We would like to remind people about this plea over the next few months so that the month of August in which we celebrate the feast of St Dominic will receive your special attention. Please remember that St Martin de Porres was a faithful Dominican and that he will pray for you and your families.

Please send your donation to:

St Martin Centre

Standard Bank Springs 012142

Account number 020858647

Reference: St Dominic and your phone number.



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