

St Martin of Tours

St. Martin was born around the year 316 in what is now the country of Hungary. Shortly before his birth, Christianity had been made legal. Before, if you were Christian, you could be arrested and killed just for believing in Jesus! Though Christianity was now legal, not everyone liked it, including Martin's parents.

Martin's heart longed for something more than just the pagan faith of his parents. So much did his heart ache that at the age of 10, he secretly went to a Christian church and begged to be taught the faith! He fell in love with Christianity! For some reason he still wasn't baptized when he was forced to join the Roman army at 15 years old. (His father had fought in the army, and it was a law that if your father had fought in it, sons must too.)

To get Martin to take the oath required of soldiers, he had to be held in chains! "I just want to go live in a monastery," he pleaded. Unfortunately, that wasn't an option for him. Once he had pledged the oath, he felt he must obey it and stayed in the army, eventually becoming an officer. Fortunately for him, his job was to guard the emperor and thus he rarely, if ever, saw battle.

Even while living the life of a soldier, Martin tried to live the life of a monk. As an officer, he had a servant. But instead of letting the servant clean his boots, Martin cleaned the servant's!

One very cold day, Martin was wearing a warm cloak and riding his horse when he met an almost naked beggar shivering with cold. Quickly, Martin took off his cloak, slashed it in half, and gave the beggar one half of his cloak to warm himself. Many people nearby laughed at Martin for ruining his beautiful cloak.

That night, Martin dreamed that Jesus was the beggar now wearing his half cloak. Jesus also was saying to the angels and saints around him, "See! This is the mantle (cloak) that Martin, yet a catechumen (someone learning about becoming Catholic), gave me."

In the morning, Martin remembered the dream, and it bothered him that Jesus had referred to him as "yet a catechumen." Immediately, Martin went and was baptized a Christian. He was now 18 years old.

Over the next two years Martin's faith continued to grow and eventually his duties as a soldier went against his beliefs as a Christian. One day, he refused to go and fight in a battle saying, "I will not draw my sword and kill. If I must, I will go into battle, but I will not fight." His commander put him into jail saying that he would stay in jail until the battle the next day. Then, Martin was to go into battle—without his sword. The opposing army sent word that day that they wanted peace. There was no battle; Martin was released from battle and the army.

St. Hillary, (another great saint of the time) guided Martin and encouraged him to be a priest. Martin did not feel worthy and declined. Over time, Martin founded two monasteries, became a bishop, tore down many pagan temples replacing them with Christian churches and freed many prisoners.

The Feast for St Martin is the 11th November . He died of natural causes in his sleep and is laid between two crosses in the Church in Candes (Gaul) which is in France.