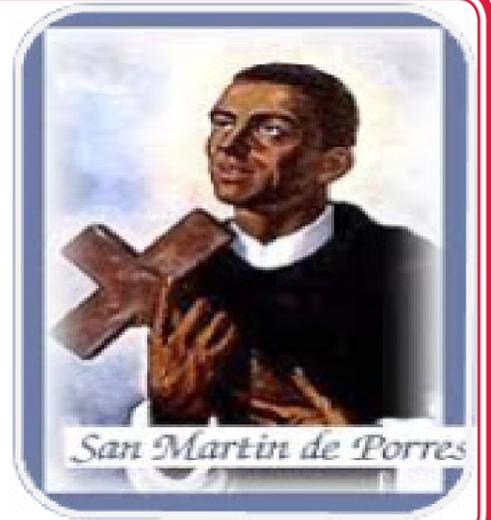


ST MARTIN DE PORRES

MAGAZINE



ST MARTIN – THE WOUNDED HEALER

If there was anyone who was deeply wounded personally and socially, it was St Martin de Porres. His Spanish father disowned him and he was left with his mother who loved him dearly and raised him on her own. And because he was of mixed race he was often humiliated. His deep spirituality enabled him to rise above all this and he is thus a perfect example for us in our racially divided country.

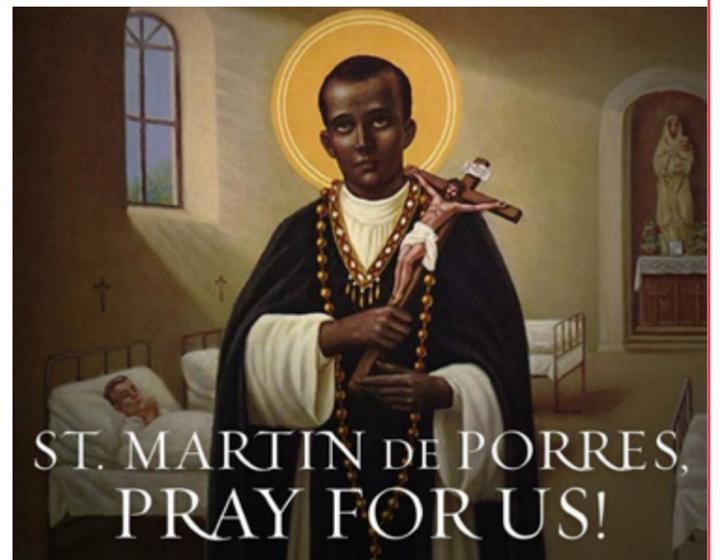
Many people turn to St Martin for physical healing and indeed many have been healed. However, there is more to St Martin than meets the eye. The excellent article in this newsletter by Fr Mark James is an inspiration for us to look beyond physical or charismatic healing and to see that healing involves much more. St Martin studied medicine to help people. He encouraged people in their difficulties and helped them to stand on their own feet. Our problems, especially with our youth in South Africa, are not all that different and we can confidently look to St Martin as a wounded healer and one who will intercede for our healing. His life is an inspiration and we at the St Mar-

tin Centre would like to expand our vision to help people, especially our youth, to discover who they really are and to lead them to wholeness.

So we invite you to send us your short stories about the need for healing - stories

about drug addicts, alcohol addicts, rapists and those raped, about abuse of women and children and human trafficking, about the challenges of education, about dishonesty, crime and unfaithfulness in relationships. Many people request healing from illnesses but we are looking more broadly and are inviting stories which request prayer and the intercession of St Martin. We would like to build community by inviting readers to pray for other readers in need. We would also like to respond to people in need.

Please send your stories to stmartincentre@gmail.com and copy Fr Emil at eblaser@zaop.org



THANK YOU!

Thank you to those of you who sent us warm Christmas greetings and New Year wishes. Thank you also to those who so kindly sent us Christmas donations. Be assured that your gifts will be well used through the ministry of the St Martin Centre.

A Challenge for Lent

Fr Emil Blaser

This newsletter covers the two months of February and March - this year, coinciding with the period we call Lent.

Lent is the 40 day period leading to Holy Week which culminates with Easter Sunday, which is the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The shortest and most powerful description of Easter is HE IS RISEN.

As with Christmas, the celebration of Easter has been hijacked by the commercial world. We invite you to take this time of Lent as a real preparation for Easter. It is a time of sacrifice which challenges many people. In the Church it is the time for the Bishops' Lenten Appeal - a time when we are invited to contribute financially to a special collection which

ideally should be a sign of the sacrifices we have made. Each year approximately R13m is raised for various ministries in the Church and the education of future priests. Similar collections are taken in Europe and the Americas, and millions of Rands from these countries have assisted various Church projects in our country. Were it not for these generous people, we would simply not be where we are as a Church in South Africa. Please be generous each week and keep in mind how the Lenten sacrifices of people in other countries have helped us. Let this time of Lent be truly a time of sacrifice. Cut into your finances, deny yourself, feel the pain of sacrifice. If your inclination was to give R100 to the appeal, make it R200. This will mean that you won't be able to afford your regular diet or luxuries.

On a spiritual level, try and make this time truly one of transformation. Try and get to mass once or twice a week and spend a reasonable time with the Lord in prayer. A good way of doing this is to find a quiet place (not always easy in our



noisy homes and suburbs!) and reflect on the readings of the mass of the day. This you will find in your missals or on your religious calendars. For those who know how to use a computer, this information is readily available on many Internet sites.

These are simple and possibly challenging proposals for Lent but they will certainly lead you more deeply into the spirit of this time so that at Easter you can say with conviction: HE IS TRULY RISEN and through your sacrifices you will feel this to marrow of your bones!

Prayer - The Foundation

When all is said and done, it was prayer that formed the foundation upon which Martin's entire life was built. It was prayer that transformed Martin from the "son of an unknown father" to beloved child of God.

A friend of mine, Brother Herman de Porres, who, as a Dominican and an African-Dominican, has modelled his life on Martin's, says this about the saint from Peru, "We know that he was a true brother to everyone he encountered. One could say a lot regarding his relations with neighbours; however it was his relation with God that makes him a significant figure worthy of imitation. Every moment of Martin's life was the result of his intimate relations with the master ... a real and loving God."

"After receiving communion Martin would withdraw in silence to pray to God, so much so that even when the Friars would look for him, they could not find him Sometimes he would hide beneath one of the chairs in the chapter hall of the Priory, or in a loft or basement One day some of the friars were looking for Martin all over the Priory. Not finding him, they knocked on the door of Francisco de la Torre, a guest of the Priory, who offered to help look for Martin. He found him hidden in the solitary corner up on the roof of the church, on his knees praying, his hands folded with great devotion, looking toward the place where the Blessed Sacrament was kept in the church."

LOST IN THE COMPANY OF GOD

Prayer was Martin's daily bread. It was what nourished him. From childhood he had shown a great inclination towards silence and solitude. One of Martin's American ancestors, medieval mystic and theologian, Meister Eckhart, said once that "the very best and noblest at-

FOCUS: ALONE WITH GOD

tainment in this life is to be silent and let God work and speak within." And again, Eckardt added, "If Jesus is to speak in the soul, she must be all alone, and she has to be quiet."

Martin knew this need for silence and aloneness with God almost by instinct. It was a gift given him by God, though not everyone understood it. It was uncommon in Martin's time for the *donados* and lay brothers to attend mass and receive communion every day. That meant that communion days were special days - Sundays and solemn feasts. Martin celebrated these special feasts by spending the day hiding out in silent prayer with God. After receiving the Eucharist with his brothers at the conventual mass, it only seemed natural to Martin to go and put into practice the words of the Psalmist: "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (34:8).

In the Dominican tradition, of which Martin was a part, all activity, including preaching and works of charity, were meant to flow from contemplation. The Order's motto, *Contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere*, translates as "Contemplate and share with others that which is contemplated." Martin's intense apostolic activity and compassionate service to the poor was intensely rooted in a life of prayer and contemplation. Without one, it is rare to see the other. Another great Dominican, Catherine of Siena, wrote to a friend of the need to be faithful to both contemplation and loving service, "You must walk, not with one, but two feet". In her own prayer, God had said to her: "Love of me and love of neighbour are one and the same thing."

Understanding Martin's intense life of prayer as one of the two feet on which he walked helps us to translate his saintly life into a workable healthy spiritual life for ourselves. It is not that Martin ran away from the Friars or from the poor so that he could hide out and pray,

Running away from the world does not make one into a competitive. As God told Catherine of Siena, "Love of me and love of neighbour are one and the same thing."

For Martin, to receive the body of Christ in the Eucharist only seemed complete if he could then go off and be alone, in order to love God and the poor in the silence of his heart. It was the very same poor with whom he would break bread later in the day. His silence and solitude was intimate communion with God and with the world. The bread he shared with the poor was simply a continuation of the Eucharistic celebration. In Martin's silent prayer these two dimensions - which often are separate - came together.

We too frequently experience a separation between the liturgical practice of our faith and our commitment to justice. Bartolome de las Casas OP, who had forcefully denounced the conquest and slaughter of the Indians and Africans in America, said once, speaking of the link between the Eucharist and the poor: "They cannot celebrate the Eucharist with bread that has been kneaded by the hands of enslaved brothers and sisters." And to a Bishop who did nothing to link his faith with justice, Las Casas added: "You eat and drink the blood of your own flock." St Paul also made clear the connection between the Eucharist and the people of God:

The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor 10:16-17).

As Martin knelt in solitude on the roof of the Priory church, looking in the direction of the blessed sacrament, he was embracing the entire world

in the infinite spaciousness of his heart. In Martin's contemplation, the poor also tasted and saw that the Lord is good. Brother Ferdinando Aragones, the head infirmarian, testified that "the two virtues of the active and contemplative life were so united in Martin that, when he would exercise charity by serving the sick, he did so with a spirit that was recollected, composed, and full of devotion. He was always present to the Creator, engaging and conversing with God in his soul ... through the simplicity of his words and actions."

Giuliana Cavallini, biographer of the lives of both Martin and Catherine, uses the story of Jesus' visit to the house of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42) to capture beautifully the equilibrium that held Martin's contemplation and compassion together in a single unity. "In Martin's heart," she writes, "Martha and Mary never disputed, because Mary accompanied Martha always and everywhere. But when Martha had finished her work, Mary took Martin by the hand and led him to some hidden spot where he would enjoy the presence of the Lord, alone ... Solitude to Martin was like a magnet."

Most insightful is Cavallini's phrase, "Mary accompanied Martha always." In other words, brother Martin's many hours of tireless service of the poor - in the streets of Malambo, caring



The Life of St Martin - 9

for the sick in the infirmary, feeding the mice in the garden, healing the wounded dogs, visiting the African slaves, planting fig trees for the poor - were all done while his heart remained recollected in silent adoration.

The truth is, he was always hidden in God's silent heart of love - even in the midst of long and tiring days of apostolic service. He never stopped breathing in the presence of God, and he never stopped breathing out compassion. It was all one. It was Martin's very life.

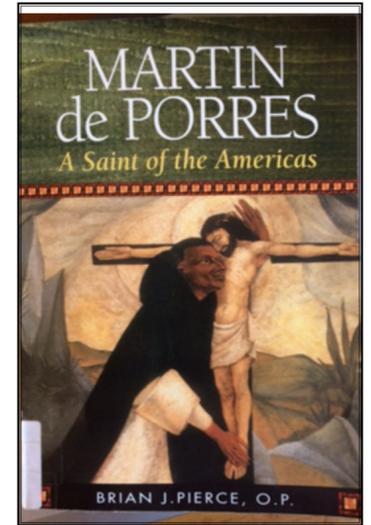
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do I pray? Do I struggle with trying to balance my life between being present to God and present with the poor and needy? How might I hold the poor in the infinite spacious-

ness of my heart while I pray? Try cutting out a picture of someone from the newspaper, and then spend some time praying for that person and the many like him or her. What practical things can I do to stay "recollected" throughout the day? Experiment with setting aside 15 minutes of silence each day.

During the silence, be mindful of your breathing. As you breathe in, know that the Holy Spirit is coming in to fill your whole being (Jn 20:22), and as you breathe out, know that you are breathing out compassion upon the world. Practice this mindful breathing throughout the day.

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The Healing Ministry of St Martin De Porres

I am about to make a very bold statement but one I think is true: People in our country need the ministry of St Martin now more than ever before. Why do I make such an outrageous comment? Our country needs St Martin's healing ministry. I will give some examples of why I think this is true.

A few days ago, I answered the doorbell at our community house in Springs. Standing at the gate was a young 13 year-old girl from one of the neighbouring parishes. Nosipho was dressed as many young girls that age in shorts and a top with a hood pulled over her head. She asked me if the church was open because she wanted to pray because she was terribly troubled. I let her in and as we were walking to the church she began to share her story.

She told me that she had run away from home because her mother didn't want her and had placed her to stay with other people in another town. One of the older boys in this house, she alleges, raped her and she was afraid to return home. She wanted to be admitted to an orphanage so that she could finish her schooling. We talked and I tried to console her. She went to the church to pray. We managed to get her to a house of safety through the assistance of the police and their social worker. Ahead of this young girl lies a long path of investigations by police and social workers, court cases and custody debates.

Sadly, this is not an isolated case. As parish priest of Kristo Inkosi parish in KwaThema I have come across similar cases of neglect and abandonment of young people by their parents. A mother is forced to leave her child with a grandparent or friends because her new boyfriend refuses to allow her to bring her child to stay with them because he doesn't want to pay for the upkeep of another man's child. Part of this is a poverty trap because the mother is dependent on the boyfriend for income and support.



Fr Fr Mark James OP

Neglect and anger among our youth has led many to drink excessively and to take nyaope. Addictions to drugs and alcohol are killing many young people today.

Many feel that they will never get the jobs they want or the future they desire. Unemployment is high and they are demoralised. Even when they do go searching for jobs it doesn't always have a happy ending.

Last year another young woman came to our door in Springs with a young baby in her arms. She wanted to get help to go home to her family on the South Coast. She had come up to Gauteng after being promised a job. When she arrived she discovered that the job was prostitution. She asked us to contact her family and they paid for her transport costs back home.

These are some of the social ills affecting our youth. Sadly, there isn't enough space to outline all the problems affecting our youth but I feel that St Martin is calling us to a more profound response. When Martin was in the priory in Lima, he asked to be a brother and

one of his tasks was to be the doorkeeper. This suited him perfectly because he had regular contact with the struggling and vulnerable people who came to the priory door asking for assistance. His healing ministry wasn't just miraculous healings but being willing to give a listening ear as he was cutting their hair as the barber.

He was compassionate to the needs of the hungry who came to the priory to ask for some bread to eat and water to drink. He listened to people's stories and sorted out ways to assist them and help them find their way in life. Our youth desperately need people like this too.

I think St Martin is calling us to a ministry of healing especially to the young of our country. Martin's healing ministry was never 'showy' or grandiose. He did it in humility and knew it was Christ doing the healing and not himself.

There is a wonderful story of how a sick Dominican priest from Martin's own community insulted him calling him a 'mulatto dog'.

Instead of retaliating, Martin returned this man's venom with an act of love. He brought the priest his favourite salad for lunch. This brother was taken aback by Martin's generosity, as the story goes, and he repented and asked Martin for forgiveness. He asked Martin to have pity on him because he was due to have one of his legs amputated. Martin responded by healing him. Martin returned hatred with love.

This story is not just a pious story about Martin healing a priest's gangerous leg. It is also a story about the healing of gangerous, poisonous and racist attitudes in people's relations with one another in society. Martin is not just healing a relationship with his brother he is also challenging the prejudices of an unequal, unjust and racist society.

Continued on the Back Page

Youth need to hear about St Martin

From Previous Page

This is the type of healer we need in our country today. Not the healers who spray people with Doom, or give people false hope that they can heal Aids, or charlatans who use religion and the healing ministry as a business to make millions of Rands from desperate people. St Martin's approach was through humility and service. He sought no rewards except to do the work of Christ.

Martin was able to heal others because he found Christ had healed him. He must have suffered terrible hurt and rejection when his father abandoned his family. This condemned Martin, his sister and their mother, a freed slave, to a life of desperate poverty. Yet he was transformed by Christ, and never hated people but reached out to them in compassion.

Our youth need to hear these stories of St Martin but more importantly they need to imitate his example. St Martin is calling us to draw together young people and to start maybe St Martin youth groups which help young people find healing in their lives. This could be done by attending human growth

and personal development workshops. A project could be run in conjunction with the Kolping Society which offers not only human development work but also 'Work Opportunity' workshops.

But is not enough that young people find healing for themselves - it can make them very self-centred. They need to be like St Martin and reach out to other people and help them find healing. In this regard, the Dominican sisters project Sithand' izingane in Langaville (between KwaThema and Tsakane) trains young people to become peer-to-peer counsellors. Young people attract young people and a how ministry to the youth could be cultivated through the spirituality of St Martin. Young people changed our country after June 16 and they are needed again, not for political liberation, but spiritual and personal transformation. St Martin's spirituality of healing can make a major difference in the lives of the youth of our Church and country.

In the groups of St Martin, young people like Nosipho can learn how to pray. They need to be taught to read the scriptures

and to hear the stories of how St Martin cared for the little ones like themselves. They need to feel empowered that they can assist and help one another as 'joyful proclaimers' of Christ's healing for our world. In order to do this they need to start with themselves, reflect on how Christ is calling them to healing, what the Bible and St Martin says about this healing, and then develop some actions about how they can make themselves open to receive Christ's healing. Even more importantly, they also need to recognise the suffering of other young people around them, to reflect on what the Bible and St Martin says about the suffering of others and how they are to respond to the suffering of others in ways which are compassionate and healing.

I thank St Martin Centre for the wonderful work it is doing. I wrote this article not to criticise the work that is being done but to generate thinking about what is the specific contribution that St Martin's spirituality can make in our country today. I would welcome other people's comments and reflections.- Fr Mark James OP.

DOMINICAN STUDENTS FOR PRIESTHOOD

On 17 December 2017, two of our students were ordained deacons - Br Isaac Mutelo OP and Bro Kelvin Banda OP. They should be ordained priests at the end of 2018.



It takes approximately eight years to prepare a student for priesthood. We are happy to report that we have 20 students at the moment which is a tremendous blessing. However, the downside of this is that it costs approximately R100,000 per student per year! We plead for St Martin's intercession to help us find the necessary money to cover this cost. If any of St Martin's clients would like to help us in some way, please know how grateful the brothers of the Dominican Order will be. It would be wonderful if some would sponsor a student each year. If you would like to know more about this matter please communicate with Father Emil at eblaser@zaop.org

KOLPING SOCIETY

Kolping International is a worldwide network with about 400,000 members in more than 60 countries.

The organisation is named after Blessed Adolph Kolping. Mem-

bership of the KOLPING Society of South Africa is made up of individuals who have a passion to work together in family-like groups called "Kolping families". At the most basic and local level, each Kolping family acts as a catalyst for personal development that encompasses all the aspects of Christian living (prayer, family, work, community). The KOLPING society welcomes all Christians and other denominations that accept and support the ideals and objectives of the society. Kolping families are found in rural and urban areas, amongst the poor and the rich, and formal and informal communities. There are both young and old members, and membership is open to individuals and families.

Youth outreach

One of our important projects is called the "Work Opportunity Programme" or WOP. These courses are conducted three or four times

a year for young people who have completed their schooling but don't really know what to do with themselves. Young people emerge from these courses transformed and enthusiastic. Read more about Kolping by visiting the website www.kolpingjhb.co.za or write to kolping4you@vodamail.co.za

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

An important way of building community is by sharing our thoughts and ideas about what you think we should or could be doing at St Martin Centre. Please send us letters to the editor, asking for prayers or thanking our readers for their prayers and thanking God and St Martin for his intercession.

Some people write requesting physical healing. This should still be done but we are inviting you to look more broadly at what might make our newsletter more relevant and interesting. We thank those who have written expressing appreciation of our inspiring newsletter.

Snippets

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