



Father John Malley, O.Carm.  
Director of Carmelite Missions

## November: Month of All Saints and All Souls

*“Let Us Give Thanks And Praise”*

In our Catholic tradition, November is the month of All Saints and All Souls. In our American tradition, it is the month of a Thanksgiving holiday. In an attempt to “keep thanks in Thanksgiving” this month, I want to share with you the gratitude of Mother Maria Elena and our contemplative nuns in the Philippines.

But first, I am aware that you receive many appeals for help from other groups, similar to our Carmelite Missions, asking for support. The needs of the poor in the underdeveloped parts of the world seem to be getting more critical, especially during these difficult economic times.

I too get those kinds of letters – often from the Carmelites who serve in our Province’s missions in Peru, Mexico and El Salvador, but mostly letters come from our Sisters in many other countries where they live with people who are desperately poor. I am most grateful that our Carmelite Mission office can respond positively to such appeals for help because of the generosity of wonderful friends like yourself. THANK YOU!

Letter continued on back



I also receive letters asking for help from our monasteries of Nuns, like St. Therese, since they often have no health or medical insurance. Recently, Mother Maria Elena of the Immaculate Heart of Mary monastery in Burgos wrote in gratitude:

“The Sisters were extremely delighted with the gift that you sent. Sister Janet’s op-

eration and chemotherapy for breast cancer have been very successful. Sister Anna Maria’s LASER treatment for the tumor on her brain has been a great help, and she is now back in her formation work with the Junior Sisters and with the two young women, Marie and Therese, from Vietnam. And Sister Marita’s cataract surgery went well.

Honestly, I too am very happy and thankful for your help. However, I must admit my fear – I’m afraid you will no longer send us some financial support because of the difficult economic situation in the United States. Father John, you know that’s the only funds from which I ‘freely’ take to help the Sisters’ medical problems, and for the help that we give to the poor families that come to our monastery.”



Saint of the Month 🌸 Feast Day, November 11

# Saint Martin of Tours

## Early Life

The town of Sabaria (now Szombathely) in Pannonia (now Hungary) can claim Martin as a native son, probably being born in 316 or 317. We know that his father was a soldier with the rank of Tribune who commanded a legion of Roman soldiers. Possibly, his father and mother came from somewhere else and were stationed there when Martin was born, but such a detail is not mentioned by his biographers. In any case, as a young boy his parents were transferred to Ticinium (modern Padua near Milan in the north of Italy), and Martin grew up there as an army child. However, his parents were not Christian, and he was not brought up with the knowledge and love of Christ.

When he was ten, Martin went off to a church by himself, enrolled as a catechumen and began to learn the catechism; he even had Bishop Anastasius bless him as a follower of Christ. But his baptism would come later. His parents were more anxious that he follow a military career, and this, too, was the law. Sons of veterans had to join the army if their parents were to receive benefits.

Martin would have liked to be a monk, but in deference to his parents he enrolled in the military at the age of fifteen. He joined a cavalry unit, a special corps of the Imperial Guard. It was a very special unit, decked out in fancy uniforms, the envy of the other

soldiers. Of his four years of training, we know very little, due to the fact that he was a very good young man and did not take advantage of his uniform or profession as others did. At the age of nineteen he went with a combat unit to France, first to Rheims and then to Amiens, with the rank of “circutor” that gave him the right to double rations, two horses and an orderly. His biographer mentions an interesting note; he says that Martin served his orderly! It was here in Amiens that the famous legend of his cloak took place.



Imagine a saint more popular than St. Joseph and St. Anne! Imagine an army child who joined the service, resisted a command to act cruelly in the military, left the service, became a monk and a bishop, and later lived and died a saint. Capsule all that, and you have the life story of our Saint of the Month for November, Martin of Tours.

Fortunately, we have an eyewitness for his biographer, and a second story of his life was written shortly after his death. Most of the information about Martin comes from Sulpicius Severus who knew him personally; more comes from Gregory of Tours who learned about him from his contemporaries. In his day, Martin was extremely popular throughout France, and a devotion sprang up that made him better known, invoked and honored, than St. Joseph or St. Anne, at least up to the Middle Ages. Even today, hundreds of churches in France are named after Martin. It is significant that this patron of France, a former soldier, has a feast day, November 11th, the same day that peace came to war-torn France in 1918.

Covering his uniform was a great cloak, white in color that the Imperial Guard wore in winter. It was a cold night of an exceptionally severe winter, and Martin was returning from night rounds. At the gate of the city he met a poor man, naked, teeth chattering and huddled up against the cold. Martin took his sword, cut the cloak in half, and gave the larger half to the poor man. In his sleep that night he heard: "Martin, still a catechumen, covered me with this cloak." Soon afterwards he asked the bishop to baptize him, and this took place on Easter in 339 when Martin was twenty-two.



### Soldier of Christ

Martin wanted to leave the army and become a monk, but one of his army friends persuaded him to stay, at least to complete his enlistment. He wanted to win souls for Christ, not to be their military conqueror. Before a battle he told the Emperor that he would not lead the men but would go into battle unarmed. He would not kill or maim. The angry Emperor accepted this with poor grace and jailed him to make sure that he would lead the men the next day. Martin spent the night in prayer – in the morning envoys from the enemy came suing for peace. No need for battle, and Martin was allowed to leave the army. At twenty-five he would start his life of dedication to Christ.

He went to the Bishop of Tours (St. Maximus) and received guidance from him, even going on a pilgrimage with him. Then Martin went to a lonely spot, made a little hut for himself, and lived as a hermit. Most probably Bishop Maximus advised him to visit the bishop of Potiers, Hilary, who was adept at guiding souls. Hilary had come from a wealthy family and was schooled as a lawyer. Converted to Christianity, he became very fervent, and the people selected him as the Bishop of Potiers (in those days bishops were selected by the people). Martin desired to learn from him how to serve Christ completely. He learned spiritually and theologically, and finally Hilary told him that he wanted to ordain him as a priest. In humility Martin shied away from this, but he finally agreed to be ordained an exorcist.

### Hermit and Bishop

Martin's holy style of life began to draw followers who looked to him for direction, and he soon became known as a miracle worker and saint. Hilary prevailed on him to be ordained a priest so that he could be more effective with the people.

When Martin was fifty-four, the saintly bishop of Tours, St. Lidorius, died. The people wanted another saint to succeed him, and when the suggestion was made to select the saintly miracle worker from Leguge, a cry went out for Martin. So that he wouldn't refuse, they tricked him into coming to Tours. They told him there was a sick woman who wanted to see him! A delegation came with him, preventing his escape, and he was made the Bishop of Tours, the city associated with his name. As bishop, he was not only the spiritual leader but also the civil ruler. He took up both tasks with zeal and was soon loved by all.

Martin still desired to be a "monk bishop" and soon founded a monastery called Marmoutier, outside Tours. With more men joining the monastery, he was able to set up a school for future monks and for the children of the area. From Marmoutier, came priests, bishops, and saints that have made the monastery famous in church history.

### Legends and Miracles

At this time there was still much paganism in France, Druids and others. Martin started to change this. Setting up a system of churches, the modern parish system, he blanketed the whole area and often went from place to place, preaching and confirming his work by miracles or feats that became 'legendary' in their re-telling.

Martin served his diocese and many, many other places in France, always with the result that pagans were won for Christ. As he grew older and physically weaker, he kept more to his monastery at Marmoutier. Later, when trouble arose in Candès, he went there to settle things. He contacted a fever while staying there, and as his life was ebbing away, some of his brothers asked him: "Why, father, are you going to forsake us?" His reply is famous: "Lord, if I am still necessary for my people, I do not refuse the labor." These were his last words as the good Lord called him home on November 8, 402. He was eighty-six.

Miracles started at once and have continued to our day. In the basilica at Tours, there are volumes that merely recorded the wonderful things done at his behest. But it would seem that the best – at least in modern times – is that this ex-soldier helped bring peace to his dear France. World War I ended at 11 o'clock on his feast, November 11, 1918. ✿



## CARMELITE MISSIONS

8501 Bailey Road | Darien, IL 60561-8418

[www.carmelitemissions.org](http://www.carmelitemissions.org)



*"When I Was Hungry You Gave Me To Eat"*

### *All Saints and Souls continued...*

Our office will continue to help Mother Maria Elena and her monastery, as well as other groups of contemplative Nuns, and our Sisters involved in parish and school work...because of your generosity! As a token of my own personal thanks, allow me during November, the month of All Souls, to remember each day at my Mass your loved ones who have died. May they live happily in the fullness of God's Kingdom.

Once again, my deep thanks for all that you do to help our Carmelite Missions. May the good Lord bless you with a peace-filled November and Thanksgiving.

Love and peace,

*Fr. John Malley, O. Carm.*

Director of Carmelite Missions

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needed NOW more  
than ever.**

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*Remember the Carmelite Missions when you write your will.*