

## Reflection Wednesday Week 32 St Martin of Tours 2020

**St Martin of Tours** was born in the Roman province of Pannonia (west of modern Hungary) about 316 and educated at Pavia in Italy. He was baptized, left the army and after spending some time as a hermit, founded a monastery at Ligugé in western France, where he lived a monastic life guided by St Hilary. Later he was ordained priest and became bishop of Tours. He was an inspiring model of a good shepherd. He founded other monasteries, educated the clergy, and preached the Gospel to the poor. He died in 397. The famous story about St Martin is that, while a soldier, he gave half of his military cloak to a beggar and later had a dream in which the beggar revealed himself as Christ.

Martin could easily have written the words of Psalm 88(89): *I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord; through all ages my mouth will proclaim your truth. Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for ever.* True or not, the story about Martin would have arisen because he was someone who cared for the poor, the destitute, and those in need. Despite his call to the solitary life, he was willing to respond to God and become a pastor of the people in the example of the Good Shepherd. He certainly saw the presence of Christ in all those he helped and served.

One commentator wrote: *"Martin's worry about cooperation with evil reminds us that almost nothing is either all black or all white. The saints are not creatures of another world: They face the same perplexing decisions that we do. Any decision of conscience always involves some risk. If we choose to go north, we may never know what would have happened had we gone east, west, or south. A hyper-cautious withdrawal from all perplexing situations is not the virtue of prudence; it is in fact, a bad decision, for "not to decide is to decide."*

### In his words:

- Refusing further service as a Roman soldier: I am a soldier of Christ: combat is not permitted to me.
- *With the sign of the Cross, I shall more certainly break through the ranks of the enemy than if armed with shield and sword.*
- Allow me, brothers, to look toward heaven rather than at the earth, so that my spirit may set the right course when the time comes for me to go on my journey to the Lord.
- *Lord, if your people need me, I will not refuse the work. Your will be done.*

**Having just moved** into his office, a pompous, new colonel was at his desk when an airman knocked on the door. Conscious of his new position, the colonel quickly picked up the phone, told the airman to enter, then said into the phone, *"Yes, General, I'll be seeing him this afternoon and I'll pass along your message. In the meantime, thank you for your good wishes, sir."*

Feeling as though he had sufficiently impressed the young airman, he asked, *"What do you want?"*

*"Nothing important, sir,"* the airman replied, *"I'm just here to hook up your **telephone.**"*