

ST. MARTIN DE PORRES

A WARM HEART AMID A COLD WINTER



Good King Wenceslas looked out,
On the feast of Stephen;
When the snow lay round about,
Deep, and crisp and even.
Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel;
When a poor man came in sight,
Gath'ring winter fuel.

I. WENCESLAS LOOKED OUT – *What do we look at?*

“People don’t know how to look anymore.” – Jonah Teller, O.P.

What does Advent look at? – “When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she **makes present** this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's **first coming**, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his **second coming**.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church §524, emphasis added)

What did Saint Martin look at?

- Eucharist – spending hours in contemplation and thanksgiving
- Crucifix – nightly penances before the chapter room’s crucifix
- Brothers – serving them and suffering them
- Poor – ministering to their needs

“Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling.
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?”
“Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
By Saint Agnes’ fountain.”

II. WHO IS HE? – *How do we see others?*

A deeper hunger – “When Christ said: ‘I was hungry and you fed me,’ he didn’t mean only the hunger for bread and food; he also meant the hunger to be loved. Jesus himself experienced this loneliness. He came amongst his own and his own received him not, and it hurt him then and it has kept on hurting him. The same hunger, the same loneliness, the same having no one to be accepted by and to be loved and wanted by. Every human being in that case resembles Christ in his loneliness; and that is the hardest part, that’s real hunger.” (Bl. Teresa of Calcutta)

Martin saw in light of the First Coming – “If it had been only a passing fancy or some vague philanthropic idea which inspired Martin, he would have been overcome by the first obstacles. But his love of souls sprang from his love of God. His respect for souls was based upon his veneration for the blood of Christ, shed for our redemption.” (Cavalini, pg. 131)

...and of the Second Coming – “Martin loved souls by the light of the faith, he loved them in the light of their glorious destiny. He saw them as precious stones destined to be used for the construction of the celestial Jerusalem after they had been purified and refined by the trials of life.” (ibid, 70)

“Men’s curiosity searches past and future / And clings to that dimension.
But to apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time,
is an occupation for the saint,— / No occupation either, but something
given / And taken, in a lifetime's death in love, / Ardour and selflessness
and self-surrender.” (T.S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets*, “Dry Salvages,” V)

“Bring me flesh, and bring me wine!
Bring me pine logs hither!
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear him thither.”
Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together.
Through the rude wind’s wild lament,
And the bitter weather.

III. PAGE AND MONARCH TOGETHER – *What do we bring others?*

Martin’s prayer and action – “In Martin’s heart 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 could enjoy the presence of his Lord, alone with him.” (Cavalini, pg. 154)

Martin and his Mother – “His love for Mary was spontaneous, the love of a son for his mother. Martin was always in the presence of Mary.” (ibid, 24)

“Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger.
Fails my heart, I know not how;
I can go no longer.”
“Mark my footsteps, my good page.
Tread thou in them boldly.
Thou shalt find the winter’s rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly.”

IV. TREAD THOU BOLDLY – *In what do we hope?*

St. Thérèse being bold in prayer – “O Jesus, I know it, love is repaid by love alone, and so I searched and I found the way to solace my heart by giving you Love for Love... Remembering the prayer of Elisha to his Father Elijah when he dared to ask him for HIS DOUBLE SPIRIT, I presented myself before the angels and saints and I said to them: ‘I am the smallest of creatures; I know my misery and my feebleness, but I know also how much noble and generous hearts love to do good. I beg you then, O

Blessed Inhabitants of heaven, I beg you to ADOPT ME AS YOUR CHILD... It is bold, I know; however, I dare to ask you to obtain for me YOUR TWOFOLD LOVE.” (Manuscript B, 4r; emphasis hers)

Martin as a spiritual father – “If a novice asked Martin to adopt him as a son, promising to look upon him as a father, the master of novices had no objection... the young who chose Martin as their model and guide were always among the best religious. Many good and gifted religious, masters of theology, and even bishops, were numbered among Martin’s ‘sons.’” (Cavalini, pg. 159)

They are happy, whose strength is in you, in whose hearts are the roads to Zion. As they go through the Bitter Valley, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rain covers it with blessings. They walk with ever growing strength, they will see the God of gods in Zion. (Ps 84:6-8)

In his master’s steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted.
Heat was in the very sod,
Which the Saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing;
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

V. FIND BLESSING – *What blessing do we seek?*

ET HOMO FACTUS EST – “For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, AND BECAME MAN.” (Nicene Creed, emphasis added)

Of you my heart has spoken: “Seek his face.” It is your face, O Lord, that I seek; hide not your face. (Ps 27:8-9a)

RECOMMENDED READING

Cavalini, Guiliana. *St. Martin De Porres: Apostle of Charity*. TAN Books, 1942, reprinted in 2012.