

Archbishop Lori's Homily: Feast of St. Martin de Porres; Knights of Columbus Mid-Year Meeting

30th Week in Ordinary Time

Feast of St. Martin de Porres

Knights of Columbus Mid-Year Meeting

Houston, Texas

Nov. 3, 2018

Last night we focused on “Faith in Action” – on what it should mean to us as leaders and members of the Knights of Columbus. This morning we have a saint who exemplifies faith-in-action, namely, St. Martin de Porres.

The beginnings of his life were not promising. Martin de Porres was the son of Spanish nobleman and a Panamanian ex-slave, living in Lima, Peru. His father at first denied that Martin, who was dark-skinned, was his son. And, needless to say, Martin did not enjoy the advantages that his father's nobility and affluence might otherwise have provided. What young Martin *did* have was faith, a strong and active faith, a faith that was centered on the Person of Christ. Like many saints, Martin was, we might say, “precocious in holiness”.

That led him, at sixteen years of age, to knock on the door of a Dominican priory. Martin did not immediately become a member of the Dominican Order. More likely, he worked as a servant in the priory – and, as you can imagine, in 17th century Peru, there was a lot of backbreaking work to be done. Along the way, the superiors of the house saw something special in Martin. At length, he underwent formation and after eight years he became a lay brother.

Faith in the Eucharist

There is no question that faith in Christ was the driving force in Martin's life. Truly, he believed in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Truly, he embraced in faith all that Jesus

said and did for us and for our salvation. Truly, he staked his whole life on all that is written in Scripture and handed on in the teaching and discipline of the Church.

Accordingly, the focus of Martin's faith was the Eucharist, in which and through which Christ is substantially present, in his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. Through the Eucharist, Jesus remains with us and draws us to himself. And surely, the Eucharistic Lord drew Martin unto himself. As he knelt before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, the Lord's Eucharistic heart spoke to Martin's heart, and inflamed his heart with love for the Father in the Holy Spirit and with love for the poor and needy. If ever anyone had a living faith, it was this young lay brother, Martin de Porres.

Before moving on, let me make an observation about the importance of Eucharistic adoration in sustaining *our* faith. In the wake of the crisis that has erupted in the Church at home and abroad, many people have spoken to me of the consolation that they have derived from Eucharistic adoration. In an atmosphere that has imperiled, sadly, the faith of so many Catholics, people have told me that silently opening their hearts to the Eucharistic Lord has sustained them in their faith and in fact has deepened their faith. During a recent gathering of priests in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, more than a few of them told me that, more than ever, *they* are taking refuge in the Eucharistic Lord. And I'm here to tell you that prayer before the Most Holy Sacrament sustains me in my faith and in my priestly ministry through thick and thin. It is there that I repeat the words of St. Paul, "...for me, life is Christ..." So as we put into motion "Faith-in-Action", let us be sure to center *our* faith squarely on the Person of Jesus, truly and substantially present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Faith-in-Action

But let us now complete the story of St. Martin de Porres for he was not only a man of faith but indeed a man of faith-in-action. His long hours before the Blessed Sacrament were exceeded only by his dedication to the needs of the poor. To his contemporaries, Martin seemed to be everywhere all at once, doing, as one admirer put it, 'the jobs of many persons.'

But he did those tasks with a humility and generosity he learned from the Master.

St. John XXIII tells us that Martin dealt with his brothers, his fellow Dominicans, “with that profound love which comes from pure faith and humility of spirit.” The saintly pope adds that “he loved them even more than he loved himself...” and was only too ready to forgive their faults and failings. Charity, you know, begins at home but home can be the most difficult place of all to practice charity!

Martin’s faith found loving expression far beyond the walls of the priory. Like Fr. McGivney, he worked with criminals and tried to reform them. He would sit up at night with the sick and bring them comfort. For the poor he would provide food, clothing, and medicine. He did all he could for poor families and for the marginalized, those who were looked down upon by others. People soon got the idea. They gave him a nickname: “Martin the Charitable.” If you have to have a nickname, shouldn’t that be it?

Conclusion: A Place at the Banquet

While he lived on this earth, Martin followed the admonition of Jesus in today’s Gospel. In the banquet of life he took the lowest seat at the table. Overjoyed to be at the banquet, he chose to sit with the poor, the sick, and the vulnerable. And, at that end of the table, he shared with his neighbors whatever he had. As a result, when in 1639 he went home to the Lord, the Good Shepherd spread before him the banquet of eternal life. At *that* banquet, Martin was invited to sit at a very high place, close to Jesus himself and to his Mother Mary, surrounded by the saints and angels.

All because he put his faith into action! Vivat Jesus!