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## ***St. Martin de Porres Apostle of Charity***

*Pope John XXIII*



This excerpt from the homily of Pope John XXIII on the occasion of the Canonization of Saint Martin de Porres (Die 6 Maii 1962: AAS 54 [1962], 306-309) is read in the Roman Office of Readings for the Feast of Saint Martin de Porres on November 3. St. Martin de Porres was born in Lima, Peru in 1579 as the illegitimate son of a Panamanian mother and a Spanish father. Having inherited the dark color of his mother who was either Indian or black, he was rejected by his father and was reared therefore in poverty. He entered the Dominicans and became renowned for his countless works of charity. Martin was friends with another great Dominican Saint from Peru, St. Rose of Lima. He died in 1639 and was canonized by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The example of Martin's life is ample evidence that we can strive for holiness and salvation as Christ Jesus has shown us: first, by loving God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and second, by loving your neighbor as yourself."

When Martin had come to realize that Christ Jesus suffered for us and that he carried our sins on his body to the cross, he would meditate with remarkable ardor and affection about Christ on the cross. Whenever he would contemplate Christ's terrible torture he would be reduced to tears. He had an exceptional love for the great sacrament of the Eucharist and often spent long hours in prayer before the blessed sacrament. His desire was to receive the sacrament in communion as often as he could.

Saint Martin, always obedient and inspired by his divine teacher, dealt with his brothers with that profound love which comes from pure faith and humility of spirit. He loved men because he honestly looked on them as God's children and as his own brothers and sisters. Such was his humility that he loved them even more than himself and considered them to be better and more righteous than he was.

He excused the faults of others. He forgave the bitterest injuries, convinced that he deserved much severer punishments on account of his own sins. He tried with all his might to redeem the guilty; lovingly he comforted the sick; he provided food, clothing and medicine for the poor; he helped, as best he could, farm laborers and Negroes, as well

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as mulattoes, who were looked upon at that time as akin to slaves: thus he deserved to be called by the name the people gave him: 'Martin of Charity.'"

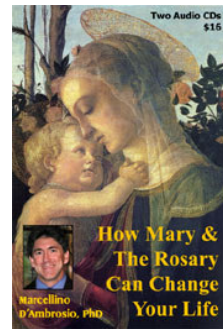
The virtuous example and even the conversation of this saintly man exerted a powerful influence in drawing men to religion. It is remarkable how even today his influence can still come us toward the things of heaven. Sad to say, not all of us understand these spiritual values as well as we should, nor do we give them a proper place in our lives. Many of us, in fact, strongly attracted by sin, may look upon these values as of little moment, even something of a nuisance, or we ignore them altogether. It is deeply rewarding for men striving for salvation to follow in Christ's footsteps and to obey God's commandments. If only everyone could learn this lesson from the example that Martin gave us.

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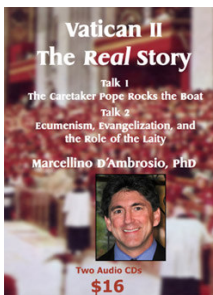


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