

Today is the Memorial of St. Martin of Tours, who became bishop of the French city of Tours in the year 371.

Martin was born in Hungary around the year 316, the son of a Roman military officer. He grew up in northern Italy where his father was stationed. At the age of 10, he became a catechumen, and although Christianity was legal before he was born, it was a minority religion.

At the age of 15, he joined the Roman army, and served for many years in France.

Pious legend holds that while on duty, Martin saw a poor man dressed in rags. He took off his cloak, sliced it in two with his sword and gave it to the man. That night, in a dream, he saw Our Lord wearing the cloak and praising his actions ... recalling Jesus' words in Matthew 25:40,

*Amen, I say to you,
whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine,
you did for me.*

Martin desired to live the life of a hermit, but was tricked into coming to Tours. When he realized he was to be made bishop, he hid in a barn, but was "outed" by the cries of geese who were disturbed by his presence.

An interesting linguistic note: The French word for cloak is "cappa" ... and the relic of St. Martin's cloak travelled around France for various devotions. The small buildings where the cloak was kept for prayer became known as "cappella" ... where we get the word "chapel," and the priests who accompanied the cloak became known as "cappeluna" ... where we get the word "chaplain."

Today is also Veteran's Day. May we remember in prayer those who serve our country ... and especially those who gave their lives in service of our freedom.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us ask for the fervor and perseverance of St. Martin ... that we might see Christ in the poor and the needy, and serve Him in the poorest of the poor.