November 11: St Martin of Tours (no text)

**MODEL OF ST FRANCIS**

St Martin was the most popular saint at the time of Francis Bernardone. That’s why St Francis’s biographer, Thomas of Celano, stressed the similarities in the lives of St Martin and St Francis.

St Martin’s biographer, Sulpicius Severus, in his *The Life of Martin*, wrote, “At a certain period, when he had nothing except his arms and his simple military dress, in the middle of winter, …he happened to meet… a poor man destitute of clothing…. He had nothing except his cloak in which he was clad, for he had already parted with the rest of his garments for similar purposes. Taking his sword therefore he cut his cloak into two equal parts, and gave one part to the poor man, while he again clothed himself with the remainder.”

In his *Second Life of St Francis*, Celano writes, “One day he met a poor half-naked knight, and moved by piety, for love of Christ, he generously gave him the finely tailored clothes he was wearing. Did he do any less than the great Saint Martin? They did the same thing, with the same purpose, though in different ways.

Francis first gave away his clothes,

then everything else;

Martin gave away everything else

and then gave away his clothes.

Both lived poor and humble in this world

and both entered heaven rich.

Martin was poor, but a knight,

and clothed a poor man with part of his clothes.

Francis was rich, but not a knight,

and he clothed a poor knight with all of his clothes.

Both of them,

having carried out Christ’s command

deserved to be visited by Christ in a vision.

Martin was praised for his perfection

and Francis was graciously invited to what was still missing.

FA:ED II, p.244.

St Francis had a special devotion to St Martin. He spent the Lent of St Martin in the hermitage of Poggio Bustone, from 11 November, the Feast of St Martin, until Christmas.

When the friars composed the texts of the Mass and Divine Office in honour of St Francis, they lifted out texts from the liturgy of St Martin. They were keen to identify St Francis of Assisi as the new St Martin of Tours.

The Alleluia verse in our Mass of St Francis is: “Francis poor and lowly enters heaven rich in virtue, greeted with celestial hymns”. It was taken from the liturgy of St Martin, with only a change of name. It is still found as the third Antiphon in our Morning Prayer of St Martin. The Benedictus antiphon of the same Morning Prayer is from the same Latin source as the hymn to St Francis that we used to sing in Latin at the Transitus:

O most holy soul, upon whose passing from this life  
 the citizens of heaven rush to greet you,  
 the choir of angels shout with joy, and the glorious Trinity bids you   
 come, saying: stay with Us forever.