

When he died in 1639, Saint Martin was known to the entire city of Lima; word of his miracles had made him known as a Saint to every resident of the region. After his death, the miracles and graces received when he was invoked multiplied in such profusion that his body was exhumed after 25 years and found intact, and exhaling a fine fragrance. Letters to Rome pleaded for his beatification; the decree affirming the heroism of his virtues was issued in 1763 by Clement XIII; Gregory XVI beatified him in 1836, and in 1962 Pope John XXIII canonized him. The poor and the sick will never fail to find in him a friend having great power over the Heart of God.

*\*Vie du Bienheureux Martin de Porrès, by Fr. Arthur M. Granger, O.P. (Dominican Press: St. Hyacinthe, 1941).*



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# SAINT MARTIN DE PORES

**Feast Day: November 3**



**Patron Saint of mixed—race people  
and all those seeking interracial harmony.**

# Saint Martin de Porres

**Dominican Coadjutor Brother  
(1579-1639)**

\*Saint Martin de Porres was born in Lima, Peru in 1579, during the days when Spanish noblemen and many adventurers were still in the land, fascinated by the lure of the gold and silver which abounded there. He was the natural son of one of these and a young Indian woman. It was not long before his dark complexion caused his father to be ashamed of him and his mother, and to abandon them. Later the father would regret his too rapid decision, and take Martin under his protection.

The young boy often heard himself referred to as a half-breed, and all his life long, his profound humility saw in himself only the magnanimity of God amid the inadequacy of his origins. When his mother could not support him and his sister, Martin was confided to a primary school for two years, then placed with a surgeon to learn the medical arts. This caused him great joy, though he was only ten years old, for he could exercise charity to his neighbor while earning his living. Already he was spending hours at night in prayer, a practice which increased rather than diminished as he grew older. Until his death he would flagellate himself three times every night, for his own failings and for the conversion of pagans and sinners.

He asked for admission to the Dominican Convent of the Rosary in Lima and was received first as a tertiary. When he was 24, he was given the habit of a Coadjutor Brother and assigned to the infirmary of that convent, where he would remain in service until his death at the age of sixty. His superiors saw in him the virtues necessary to exercise unflinching patience in this difficult role, and he never disappointed them. On the contrary, it was not long before miracles began to happen, and Saint Martin was working also with the sick outside his convent, often bringing them healing with only a simple glass of water. He begged for alms to procure for them necessities the Convent could not provide, and Providence always supplied what he sought.

One day an aged beggar, covered with ulcers and almost naked, stretched out his hand, and Saint Martin, seeing the Divine Mendicant in him, took him to his own bed, paying no heed to the fact that he was not perfectly neat and clean. One of his brethren, considering he had gone too far in his charity, reproved him. Saint Martin replied: Compassion, my dear Brother, is preferable to cleanliness. Reflect that with a little soap I can easily clean my bed covers, but even with a torrent of tears I would never wash from my soul the stain that my harshness toward the unfortunate would create.



When an epidemic struck Lima, there were in this single convent of the Rosary sixty religious who were sick, many of them novices in a distant and locked section of the convent, separated from the professed. Saint Martin is known to have passed through the locked doors to care for them, a phenomenon which was observed in the residence more than once. The professed, too, saw him suddenly beside them without the doors having been opened; and these facts were duly verified by the surprised

Superiors. Martin continued to transport the sick to the convent until the provincial Superior, alarmed by the contagion threatening the religious, forbid him to continue to do so. His sister, who lived in the country, offered her house to lodge those whom the residence of the religious could not hold. One day he found on the street a poor Indian, bleeding to death from a dagger wound, and took him to his own room until he could transport him to his sister's hospice. The Superior, when he heard of this, reprimanded his subject for disobedience. He was extremely edified by his reply: Forgive my error, and please instruct me, for I did not know that the precept of obedience took precedence over that of charity. In effect, there are situations where charity must prevail; and instruction is very necessary. The Superior gave him liberty thereafter to follow his inspirations in the exercise of mercy.

In normal times Saint Martin succeeded with his alms to feed 160 poor persons every day, and distributed a remarkable sum of money every week to the indigent — the latter phenomenon hard to explain by ordinary calculations. To Saint Martin the city of Lima owed a famous residence founded for orphans and abandoned children, where they were formed in piety for a creative Christian life. This lay Brother had always wanted to be a missionary, but never left his native city; yet even during his lifetime he was seen elsewhere, in regions as far distant as Africa, China, Algeria, Japan. An African slave who had been in irons said he had known Martin when he came to relieve and console many like himself, telling them of heaven. When later the same slave saw him in Peru, he was very happy to meet him again and asked him if he had had a good voyage; only later did he learn that Saint Martin had never left Lima. A merchant from Lima was in Mexico and fell ill; he said aloud: Oh, Brother Martin, if only you were here to care for me..! and immediately saw him enter his room. And again, this man did not know until later that he had never been in Mexico.