



WEEKLY MEDITATION

ST. MARTIN OF TOURS (October 12)

St. Martin was born into a pagan family in Illyricum (Albania) about AD 330. His father was a soldier and Martin joined the army at the age of fifteen. On a cold winter day he encountered a beggar at the gate of the city of Amiens in Gaul. He had no money to give the beggar, but he was moved to cut his cloak in half and he gave one part to the needy man. That night Martin had a dream in which he saw Christ Himself wearing the half-cloak. Up to this point in his life he had been thinking about becoming a Christian. His dream convinced him and he was baptized. At the end of his tour of duty, he asked to be released, saying: "Until now I have faithfully served Caesar. Let me now serve Christ." He became a disciple of the great defender of Orthodoxy against the Arian heresy, St. Hilary of Poitiers. He suffered for his faith in a number of places and eventually founded a monastery in Gaul. He was elected Bishop of Tours in 371. His merciful character became famous and he used his position to intercede for prisoners. He adamantly opposed using secular power to punish heretics and this led him into conflict with many church authorities who were eager to use the power of the state to enforce religious orthodoxy. He was opposed to the wide-spread practice of torture and capital punishment. After his death, his shrine at Tours became a famous sanctuary for those seeking justice. The biography of this remarkable saint was written by his contemporary, Sulpicius, Severus in *On The Life of St. Martin* (this can be read online at www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf211.toc.html).

St. Martin was a courageous and faithful soldier in the service of an earthly sovereign. He enlisted in the service of Our Lord Jesus Christ and showed himself to be a brave defender of the Orthodox faith, and especially of the moral vision of the Gospel and the Christian values of mercy, justice and peace. We know him as St. Martin the Merciful. By his prayers may we find the courage to be faithful to Christ and to have a compassionate heart.

Fr. Andrew



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