November 11th: Memorial of Saint Martin of Tours, Bishop

Gospel text (*Mt* 25:31-40): Jesus said to his disciples: "... Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

Saint Martin of Tours, bishop (316-397)

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(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, the Church remembers St Martin, Bishop of Tours. Born of pagan parents in Pannonia, in what is today Hungary, he was directed by his father to a military career. Still an adolescent, Martin came into contact with Christianity and, overcoming many difficulties, he enrolled as a catechumen in order to prepare for Baptism. He would receive the Sacrament in his 20s, but he would still stay for a long time in the army, where he would give testimony of his new lifestyle.

Leaving military service, he went to Poitiers in France near the holy Bishop Hilary. He was ordained a deacon and priest by him, chose the monastic life and with some disciples established the oldest monastery known in Europe at Ligugé. About 10 years later, the Christians of Tours, who were without a Pastor, acclaimed him their Bishop. From that time, Martin dedicated himself with ardent zeal to the evangelization of the countryside and the formation of the clergy.

—St Martin is known most of all for an act of fraternal charity. While still a young soldier, he met a poor man on the street numb and trembling from the cold. He then took his own cloak and, cutting it in two with his sword, gave half to that man. Jesus appeared to him that night in a dream smiling, dressed in the same cloak.