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

Gospel text (*Mt* 25:31-40): Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' 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.'"

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Today as we celebrate the memorial of St. Martin of Tours, the liturgy invites us to reflect on this particular passage from the Gospel according to Matthew. This passage tells us about the end of times when the Son of Man comes to judge and separate the just from the sinners. In doing so, Jesus will recompense the just by inviting them to take possession of the kingdom prepared for them. But, what was the condition to inherit the kingdom? The Gospel states this clearly: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25,35-36).

The people however were surprised due to the fact that they have never seen the Lord. So they question: how could we have done this to you and yet we never met you? Jesus then explains Himself saying: "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25,40).

This was exactly what Martin did while he was still a catechumen. It is said that one very cold day at the gates of the city of Gaul, Martin met a shivering and half-naked beggar. Moved with compassion, he divided his coat into two parts and gave one to the poor man. He did this because he saw Christ in that poor man. Just like St. Martin, we too are all called to care for the poor. This is our vocation as Christians. It is in this sense that Pope Francis says in “Evangelii Gaudium” that “none of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice.” May St. Martin intercede for us to truly care for the needy.