

Martin de Porres (1579-1639)

Observed 23 August

(Celebrated with Rosa de Lima and Toribio de Mogrovejo)



Martin is an example of the varied and mixed population resulting from Spanish colonial occupation. He was born in Lima, the son of a Spanish nobleman and a black former slave from Panama. He and his sister received little or no support from their father, and their mother was hard-pressed to support them. Martin was apprenticed to a barber-surgeon at a very young age, and delighted in learning healing arts. When he was 15, he asked for admission to a local Dominican Convent. At first he was taken on as a menial servant. He cleaned and looked after the monks faithfully, in his free time caring for people who came for food or alms or healing. After years of miraculous cures and faithful service, he was made a full Dominican Brother despite the regulations that limited such privileges to those of pure European ancestry. Martin was much loved by the people of Lima and the tradition is filled with wonderful stories about his generous spirit and miracles. He is said to have negotiated an agreement with the mice that were eating the brothers' robes that he would feed them every night

in the garden, if they would leave the vestments alone. As a child, he is also said to have regularly fed beggars with the provisions bought at the market with his mother's meager wages. There are descriptions of his ability to fly when he was needed at a distance, to pass through locked doors to care for the sick, and of his repeated miraculous healings. He is generally portrayed with a broom or mop, and some of the animals he loved. Whatever his exact accomplishments, Martin lived out Christ's command to love everyone to an extraordinarily degree. He stands as a model of rising above any enmity, no matter what the provocation.

Lessons Sirach 7:32-36; Psalm 9:9-14; James 2:1-8,14-17; Mark 10:23-30

Collect Merciful God, you sent your Gospel to the people of Peru through Martin de Porres, who brought its comfort even to slaves; through Rosa de Lima, who worked among the poorest of the poor; and through Toribio de Mogrovejo, who founded the first seminary in the Americas and baptized many: Help us to follow their example in bringing fearlessly the comfort of your grace to all downtrodden and outcast people, that your Church may be renewed with songs of salvation and praise; through Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.