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## MARTIN OF TOURS (316 – 397)



This winter, when you next see someone who looks both poor and cold, think of Martin of Tours. This monk bishop, born in Pannonia (now Hungary) became one of the most popular saints of the Middle Ages. Martin's father was a pagan officer in the Roman Army, and Martin

was intended for the army as well. But from an early age Martin wanted to be a Christian, and felt that as a Christian he could not serve the Roman Empire. Martin was imprisoned for this early 'conscientious objection', and not released until 357, when he was nearly 40.

One day Martin met a nearly naked beggar at Amiens. He took off his cloak, cut it in half and gave the half to the beggar. Soon after this, he had a dream in which Christ appeared to him, wearing the half of the cloak which Martin had given away.

Martin was the pioneer of western monasticism: he founded the first monastery in the whole of Gaul about 360.

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He was made bishop of Tours in 372 – by popular demand of both his clergy and his people. As bishop, Martin continued his simple life as a monk, - and evangelist. Christianity had been largely confined to the urban centres of population, but Martin went further, and took Christianity to the pagani (country-men). For the next 25 years this greatly loved bishop travelled his diocese by donkey and by boat, preaching the good news of Jesus Christ, and helping his people to tear down their heathen temples and sacred trees. He was sought out for his healing prayers for the sick, and also his defence of the faith from heretics.

Martin's emblem in English art is often that of a goose, whose annual

migration is about this time of year. 'St Martin's Summer' in England is a spell of fine weather that sometimes occurs around 11th November.

*We will of course be celebrating our Patron Saint's life, witness, and continuing ministry in heaven on Saturday 11th November.*

