

Celebrating
SAINT MARTIN OF TOURS
Patron of this Parish



The Parish
of Roath Saint Martin of Tours
Albany Road Roath Cardiff

Saint Martin, Bishop of Tours and Patron of the Parish

This is a brief outline taken from so many writings available to day concerning Saint Martin.

Martin was born at Savaria, Pannonia (today Szombathely, Hungary). His father was a senior officer (tribune) in the Imperial Horse Guard, a unit of the Roman army. Martin was named after Mars, the god of war, which **Sulpicius Severus** interpreted as "the brave, the courageous." His father was later stationed at Ticinum, Cisalpine Gaul (modern Pavia, Italy), where Martin grew up.

At the age of ten, against the wishes of his parents, Martin became a catechumen—a candidate for Christian baptism. At this time, Christianity had been made a legal religion, but it was still far from accepted among the higher echelons of society, especially in the Roman army, where the cult of Mithras was still much stronger

When Martin was 15, as the son of a veteran officer, he was required to join a cavalry regiment himself and thus, around 334, was stationed at Ambianensium civitas or Samarobriva in Gaul (modern Amiens, France).

While Martin was still a soldier at Amiens, he experienced a vision that became the most-repeated story about his life. He was at the gates of the city of Amiens with his soldiers when he met a scantily dressed beggar. He impulsively cut his own military cloak in half and shared it with the unfortunate man. That night he dreamed of Jesus wearing the half-cloak Martin had given away and heard Jesus say to the angels: "Here is Martin, the Roman soldier who is not baptized; he has clad me."

Baptism

The dream confirmed Martin in his piety, and he was baptized at the age of 18. He served in the military for another two years until, just before a battle against the Gauls at Worms in 336, Martin determined that his faith prohibited him from fighting. "I am a soldier of Christ," he reportedly stated, "I cannot fight." He was charged with cowardice and jailed, but in response to the charge,

he volunteered to go unarmed to the front of the troops. His superiors planned to take him up on the offer, but before they could do so, the invaders sued for peace, and the battle never occurred. Martin then was released from military service.

Martin made his way to the city of Tours, where he became a disciple of **Hilary of Poitiers**, a chief proponent of Trinitarian Christianity and opponent of the Arianism of the ruling Visigothic nobility. When Hilary was forced into exile from Poitiers, Martin returned to Italy. Later, with the return of Hilary to his episcopal see at Portiers in 361, Martin joined him and established a monastery nearby, at the site that later developed into the Benedictine Ligugé Abbey, the first such establishment in Gaul. The monastery became a centre for the evangelization of the country districts, and Martin travelled and preached throughout Western Gaul. This religious house was a centre of orthodox Christianity and a place of great missionary work in the countryside, where previously, all Christian activity had been centred in and around the Cathedral.

The Bishop of Tours

In 371 Martin was acclaimed bishop of Tours, where he impressed the Christians of that city by the enthusiasm with which he had pagan temples, altars, sacred trees, and sculptures destroyed.

His was a mainly pagan diocese, but his instructions and personnel manner of life prevailed. From reading all the various accounts of his Ministry as Bishop Martin was an exceptional man profoundly orthodox in his catholic faith but compassionate and fait with those who held other veivs - heretcis - those who hold and teach alternative veivs to that which is considered cathlolic and orthodox.

In the year 384, the Gnostic heretic Priscillian and six companions had been condemed to death by the emperor Maximus. The bishops who had found them guilty in the ecclesiastical court at Trier pressed for their execution. Bishop Martin contended that the secular powers had no authority to punish heresy, and that excommunication by the bishops was an adequate sentence. In this

he was upheld by the great saintly bishop of Milan, Ambrose. Martin refused to leave Trier until the emperor promised to reprove them. Soon after his departure, the bishops persuaded the emperor to break his promise. Priscillian and his followers were executed and became the first heretics to be punished by death!

Bishop Martin was furious and excommunicated the bishops responsible. But afterwards he took them back into communion in exchange for a pardon from Maximus for certain of those condemned to death and for the emperor's promise to end the persecution of the Priscillianists. Martin never felt easy about this concession and thereafter avoided assemblies of bishops!

Throughout his time as Bishop of Tours, Martin continued with his monastic lifestyle and his particular style of religious community was to have far reaching effects - even upon the growing Church in Wales at the time.

He was known as a good and holy priest, a fervent teacher and preacher, a man full of compassion and generosity for the poor and sick, the down trodden and those on the periphery of society at that time.

After a last visit to Rome, Martin went to Candes, one of the religious centers he had created in his diocese, when he became seriously ill. Ordering himself to be carried into the presbytery of the church, he died there on 8 November 397. He was buried in the Cemetery of the Poor at Candes on 11 November 397. His place of burial soon became a great place of pilgrimage. Later, his mortal remains (relics) were removed from there to a new basilica dedicated in his name and was completed in 470.

The feast of the translation of St Martin's relics is kept on the 4th July.

Martin's remains were enclosed in a stone sarcophagus, above which his successors, St. Britius and St. Perpetuus, built first a simple chapel, and later a basilica. St. Euphronius, Bishop of Autun and a friend of St. Perpetuus, sent a sculptured tablet of marble to cover the tomb. This Early Christian basilica burned down along with many other churches in 988.

A larger Basilica of St. Martin was constructed in 1014, which burned down in 1230. This was rebuilt as an even larger 13th-century Romanesque basilica, which became the center of great national pilgrimages and a stop on the way to Santiago. Martin's cult was very popular throughout the Middle Ages and a multitude of churches and chapels have been dedicated to him.

In 1562, Huguenots (French Calvinists) sacked the Basilica of St. Martin from top to bottom, especially destroying the tomb and relics of Martin. The church was restored by its canons, but then was completely demolished in 1793 during the French Revolution. All that remained of the basilica was the two towers which are still standing. To ensure the basilica could not be rebuilt, the atheistic municipality caused two streets to be opened up on its site.

In December 1860, excavations located the site of St. Martin's tomb, of which some fragments were discovered. A new basilica to house these relics was constructed by Mgr Meignan, Archbishop of Tours, from 1886-1924. Martin's tomb is still a place of pilgrimage for the faithful.



The new Basilique de St-Martin is neo-Byzantine in style and is much smaller than its great medieval predecessor. Next to it stand the only remains of the Romanesque basilica: the Tour de Charlemagne and the western clock tower.

The present Church of Saint Martin Roath was begun in 1897 and consecrated on the 20th October 1901. It was then part of the Parish of Roath.

The Parish of Roath Saint Martin was created on 20th May 1903. In February 1941 the building was a target for a German incendiary bomb which caused the building to be destroyed by fire. The present interior dates from the resoration work which began in 1951.

The Relics and Shrine of St. Martin at Tours are in the basilica's crypt, the walls of which are carved with hundreds of votive prayers dedicated to the saint.



The Crypt Church and reliquary of Saint Martin

Festivals in Honour of St Martin

On November 11 each year the Feast of St. Martin is solemnly celebrated in this church in the presence of a large number of the faithful of Tours and other cities and villages of the diocese.

Here at St Martin Roath we also keep a great solemn festival in honour of Saint Martin, bishop of Tours in whose honour this building is named and under whose spiritual patronage this parish is dedicated.

The feast of the translation of Martin's relics is also kept on July 4th. At St Martin's Roath we have an Icon of Martin wearing Epsicopal vesture. (Front Cover) This was written by Brother Leo at Walsingham and dedicted by Bishop David Thomas on the Feast of Saint Martin in 2003. The church also houses a wooden carving depicting his famous dream where he shared his cloak with the poor man. A work crafted by Frank Roper in the 1950's.

A Collect for the Feast of Saint Martin of Tours

Almighty and ever loving Father
who called your servant Martin from the armies of this
world to be a faithful soldier of Christ:
give us grace to follow him in his love and compassion
for the needy, and enable your Church to claim for
all people their inheritance as your children;
through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns
with you and Holy Spirit one God, now and forever.
Amen

A Prayer asking the Intercession of Blessed Martin for us and for our parish

Blessed Martin,
faithful servant and priest of the Lord
from your place among the company of the blessed
pray for us and for this parish that bears your name.

Holy Martin
pray to the Lord for us: that we in our own
generation, may following your good example
serve the needs of others and in so doing serve Christ
fulfilling his command to love and to serve.

Pray for us Blessed Martin of Tours until with you and all
the Saints we come to the vision and glory of God in
heaven through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen