

St. Martin de Porres



1579-1639

Feast Day:
November 3

St. Martin de Porres was born in Lima, Peru, in 1579. He was the son of a Spanish nobleman and a freed black slave from Panama. After the birth of Martin's little sister, Juana, two years later, their father abandoned them. The family grew up in poverty, with Martin and Juana's mother working as a laundress.

As Martin grew older, people mocked him for being mixed race. But even from the young age of eight years, Martin remembered the priest at Mass saying, "We were all made in God's image and likeness." He would tell Juana that God was concerned about the color of people's souls, not the color of their skin.

Martin became apprentice to a barber-surgeon, where he learned to care for the sick. He spent many hours at night praying before a crucifix that hung above his bed. He knew he wanted to give his whole life to God. So when Martin was fifteen, he went to live with the Dominican order in Lima at the convent of Santo Domingo. The Dominicans gave Martin the duties of caring for the sick and the clothes room. When Martin was twenty-four, the Dominicans made him a religious brother, and he took charge of the infirmary.

When an epidemic struck Lima, the sick novices were locked in a separate part of the convent to prevent the spreading of disease. Martin miraculously passed through the locked doors to take care of the sick. He also performed many other miracles: Martin could heal others instantly, light filled the room when he prayed, he could be in two places at once, and his ecstasies would lift him into the air.

When Martin turned sixty, he fell ill and endured terrible pain. He suffered for almost a year and died in 1639. He was so famous for his miracles that crowds flocked to his body and took pieces of his habit for relics.