

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**St. Martin and Dreams**      Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time      Saturday, November 11, 2017      8:15 AM      Rom 16:3-9, 16, 22-27;      Lk 16:9-15      **St. Martin of Tours**, bishop Armistice Day      (Dreams can be God's forgotten language.)

Today we celebrate the memorial of **St. Martin of Tours** and the Armistice of World War I. Now there are those who say that the French delayed the armistice until this day because St. Martin is the **patron of France, the patron of winemaking, and the patron of the French army**. I don't know if that's true. But as it turned out the armistice was declared on this the 11th day of the 11th month at the 11th hour. And hostilities ceased at that moment 30 seconds after the last shot was fired. Sadly, many thousands of men died in the last couple days before the armistice. So we keep that in mind, **99 years ago today, the armistice**.

Now let's say it's true that the French really wanted this day because it was the feast of St. Martin; that's a very edifying thought. **St. Martin was a very edifying man**. He was born of pagan parents in the land which is today Hungary. His father was a Roman soldier, and at a very early age he became a Roman soldier. But also at a very early age, in fact 18 years old, he became a Christian. Now I don't know about the whole story of Martin's conversion, but he became a Christian and because he was a Christian in those days **Christians told soldiers they had to leave the army**. Early Christians were pacifists, whether that's good or bad, I do not say; it's a fact.

So Martin left the army, but while he was still dressed in his Roman military cloak he saw a beggar, who was actually cold because he had no cloak. **So Martin took his cloak and cut it in half and gave half of it to the beggar**. Later, soon after, **Martin had a dream in which he saw Christ wearing half a cloak**. And this convinced Martin that Christ was a very real presence in life, in fact present in those who suffer. So he decided to dedicate himself to Christ as a priest. Later he became a bishop and a founder of many monasteries and a religious community and **the first saint who is not a martyr honored in the West**. So that's rather unique, the first non-martyr saint honored in the West as a saint, the first canonized non-martyr. So that's rather remarkable.

**What about this dream?** Do you have dreams? For many years I never thought much of dreams. I had them; most of them were more or less pointless, as far as I could tell. But then when I was ordained a couple years, maybe it was six years, **the bishop asked me if I would be willing to go back to school to study**. I was torn. I was very torn by this suggestion because, on the one

hand, I really wanted to and I had actually volunteered to return to school. But at the same time I was very happy in the parish. I was at St. Mary of Gostyn in Downers Grove, and I just loved it there. And so **leaving at that moment meant tearing myself out of the happiest life I had had at that point.** So I said to the Bishop, “Well, how about if I wait a couple of years?” He said, “Oh no, I can spare you now. I don’t know if I can spare you in the future, but I can spare you now.” So it was “do or die”; **I didn’t know what to do. I was in a dilemma.**

Well I had a dream. And by the way, I had never heard what I later found out is that **dreams can be God’s forgotten language. I did not know that at the time.** But I had this dream, and the dream was so vivid that I knew it was really unusual and that **actually God was trying to tell me something.** I will not go into great detail, but in this dream I was walking around Starved Rock with a suitcase that was playing music. So I asked myself, well, what could this dream be about? And then I concluded that **God was telling me I had to pack my suitcase and go.** In fact in the dream a woman told me, “You can’t stay here; you have to go.” And I thought **it must mean that I have to leave this parish and go back to school.**

So God can speak through dreams; so can the devil. Those are called nightmares. And then some dreams are just pointless, wasted energy from the day. But the great irony was this: when I went back to school, **I started studying at a Jesuit Institute on Spirituality and Spiritual Direction.** This was a course with no options; there were no electives; you did what they told you. **The first three months the morning course was *The Interpretation of Dreams.***