

ST. MARTIN

A Sermon preached on the eve of St. Martin's Day, 1930 in Trinity Church, Lenox, by the Rector, the Reverend Letta Griswold, on the occasion of the adoption of St. Martin as the patron saint of Lenox School.



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*St. Matthew xx, 28. Even as the Son
of Man came not to be ministered unto,
but to minister*

IT is an ancient and goodly custom to dedicate churches, colleges, schools, and other institutions to the memory of a saint and to regard that saint as their patron. The Church has always believed that the saints in heaven pray for us on earth, and in many portions of the Church their prayers are directly invoked. Whether or not this practice appeals to us, the dedication to a saint holds up that particular member of the heavenly order for honour and imitation.

At their recent meeting the Headmaster and Trustees of Lenox School placed this school under the patronage of St. Martin of Tours. A diligent search of the kalendar would fail to find a saint more fitting to be patron of a school of the character and ideals of Lenox. The Trustees also adopted a motto and planned for a coat of arms. The motto is the Latin version of part of the text chosen for this sermon—*Non ministrari, sed ministrare*. The Latin translation gives us a pleasant play upon words, for *ministrare* and *ministrari*, are spelled exactly the same with exception of the final

had recently died. Martin did his best to withstand the clamour, but finally yielded, and neighbouring bishops gladly consecrated him. He gave himself to his new and difficult task with the same humble self-sacrifice and fiery zeal that had characterized him as monk and mission preacher. But instead of living in Tours as a secular prince, as was then becoming the fashion for great prelates, he kept all during his episcopate his hermit's robe, and dwelt in a humble cell outside the city gates. He endeavoured literally to imitate Christ, and he was one of the most powerful influences for the faith in his century.

A multitude of legends are told about his life as a bishop. In detail we no longer accept them, but they nevertheless witness eloquently to the wise and devoted zeal with which he ruled his great diocese, to the utter simplicity of his life, and the genuineness of his whole-hearted devotion.

He died in Candes about 397, while engaged upon a religious mission, and appropriately enough in church. Popular opinion spontaneously acclaimed him as a saint; a great basilica was built over the place of his interment at Tours; and his cultus became popular throughout France. The shrine of St. Martin was destroyed in the 16th century during the wars of the Reformation, rebuilt more splendidly than ever afterwards, only to be ob-

literated by the Revolutionists of France in 1797. Though now once again a great church stands over the spot where there is still a fragment of the great confessor's tomb.

There is another factor of considerable interest in the choice of St. Martin as the patron saint of the School. His feast-day falls on November 11, and thus coincides with Armistice Day, when we commemorate all who fell in the Great War and the signing of the armistice that brought peace to a war-distracted world. Perhaps what will in the long run prove the great issue of that terrible struggle will be that its horrors have inspired many people in all nations with a determination to end all war. It also happens that the festival of the translation of St. Martin falls on the 4th of July, another national holiday. Martin had been a soldier, and he is one of the first Christians on record to realize that warfare is contradictory to Christian faith. He was one of the first soldiers to desert the profession of arms to devote himself exclusively to the service of a Prince of Peace. It is part of the function of a school to train boys in good citizenship, and good citizenship more and more involves devising ways and means for keeping peace at home and between

the nations, and it is a happy coincidence that the holyday of the patron saint comes on the day when we commemorate the coming of peace.

The Headmaster proposes hereafter, beginning on Tuesday next, to commemorate St. Martin with an Eucharistic service in the Church; and then having observed the holyday, to proclaim a holiday for the school. So you boys will perceive that there is a practical as well as a mystical advantage in having a patron saint for the school.

But perhaps it will be wiser if we confine ourselves at this moment to the mystical advantages.

St. Martin is a fitting model for our School, for he was one who endeavoured to live in the spirit of his Master Christ. He accepted Jesus, not in any vague or uncertain way, but with all his heart and mind and will, and endeavoured to imitate him as the example for his own life. He lived in an age when it was as hard to be a Christian as ever it has been. It was an age of great luxury and wide corruption, when Christianity was only beginning to make its influence felt in any conspicuous way. Paganism, though soon to expire, still held the mass of people in the thralls of superstition and licentiousness. Persecution for Christianity was not yet over.

Martin took the teaching of Jesus that the love of God must be manifested in the service of the

brethren quite literally. He turned his back squarely on the prizes the world had to offer, refusing even the rewards that the Church would gladly have bestowed upon him. Jesus led a life of the utmost simplicity, and Martin chose to follow his example. The sharing of his cloak with the shivering beggar was typical of all his intercourse with his fellowmen.

Lenox School is an institution where the ideals of Christ are frankly put first. The life is intentionally simple, not because so to live is economically profitable, but because of its spiritual and moral value. It prepares for college as a matter of course, but it seeks to prepare for college in a definitely Christian way. It may fail with some individuals, but in the long run it will succeed, and its success is bound to influence secondary education generally. No one familiar with the situation can doubt the beneficent influence of Kent School in our secondary education. Kent indeed has blazed the way. It would be difficult to explain the "self-help system", which is characteristic of both Kent and Lenox, in better terms than was done by the Headmaster in his recent report to the Trustees.

"Self-help is commonly viewed as a financial expedient, whereas in reality this is by no means the most valuable contribution which it makes.

It is a common and, on the whole, a justifiable criticism of the boarding school as an institution that the boys become accustomed to living under rather unnatural hot-house conditions. There must inevitably be a certain number of people working for them, and it is therefore only natural that many boys easily develop an exaggerated sense of their own importance. In an attempt to cope with these difficulties and dangers, the self-help school, where not only are boys themselves undertaking and performing a very considerable share of the work done for the common good, but they are increasingly made aware of the work that others are doing for them, starts with an enormous advantage over one not so conducted. A school in which the self-help system prevails, where a reduction in needs and reasonable simplification in the material concomitants deemed necessary is adhered to as a matter of policy, where boys learn of responsibility and usefulness by being responsible and useful, almost inevitably commences with a considerable start toward the development of character to which soft living is seldom conducive.

"Furthermore, in a self-help school, there is a direct training in many of the fundamentals of a genuine democracy. Each boy learns by experience that he is not an independent individual, but that he is a member of a society, and that this

membership carries with it certain inescapable obligations. There is borne in on every boy, by living more than by teaching, the conviction that he, and everyone, has an essential part to play in the life of the school, however insignificant that may appear to be. Artificial distinctions of one sort or another count for little or nothing; a successful performance of what is expected of him is demanded of each boy; in the face of this, other distinctions fade away."

As the years go on it is to be hoped that the observance of the festival of St. Martin will become a tradition of the School, and help to focus attention upon and bring to realization its ideal of not being ministered unto but to minister. It will be a festival, I am sure, in which the people of the parish will be glad to take their part. The relations of the two institutions—school and parish—are so intimate, their aims in essentials so identical, that more and more they will be parts of one community seeking in their various ways to realize the Kingdom of God.

It is not impossible (to my mind, it is most probable) that what we do here and now in memory of what St. Martin was on earth, may, in the Providence of God, be known to him above. Surely it is not amiss to hope that his prayers may avail for a blessing on the School and all connected with it. In any case, this commemoration is on our part a reverent gesture by way of linking us anew with heaven.

Collect for St. Martin's Day

O Lord, who didst teach thy servant, St. Martin, to follow thee as a boy, and to serve thee unweariedly through length of days; Grant to us that we may be like him in discerning tokens of thy presence, and in showing zeal for thy glory and gentleness towards those who have gone astray, that we may draw the nations closer to thyself; who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest one God, world without end. *Amen.*