

present-day Crimea (the Chersonese in those days), saying to them when they wept: "Rejoice with me that I have been found worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ."

There, in Crimea, a famine prevailed, and Martin lingered on for four months, abandoned to sickness and starvation but maintaining perfect serenity, until God released him by death from his tribulation on the 12th of November, 655. In a letter he sent from there, which has been conserved, the Pope wrote: "For this miserable body, the Lord will have care; He is near. What is there to alarm me? I hope in His mercy, it will not be long before it terminates my career."

Reflection: There have been times in the history of Christianity when its truths have seemed on the verge of extinction. But there is a church whose testimony has never failed-- it is the Church of Saint Peter. Where Peter is, there also is the Church! When the pope is unable to speak, his deeds speak more eloquently still.

The real significance of the word martyr comes not from the dying but from the witnessing, which the word means in its derivation. People who are willing to give up everything, their most precious possessions, their very lives, put a supreme value on the cause or belief for which they sacrifice. *(excerpted from: www.h-t.org; www.magnificat.ca)

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Saint Martin I Pope and Martyr

Feast Day: November 12



**Merciful God, our Father,
neither hardship, pain, nor the threat of death
could weaken the faith of Saint Martin.
Through our faith give us courage to endure
whatever suffering the world may inflict upon us.**

Saint Martin I

*When Martin I became Pope in 649, Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine empire and the patriarch of Constantinople was the most influential Church leader in the eastern Christian world. The struggles that existed within the Church at that time were magnified by the close cooperation of emperor and patriarch.

Saint Martin, who occupied the Roman See from 649 to 655, was a native of Tuscany, and became celebrated amid the clergy of Rome for his learning and his sanctity. When he was elected Pope, Rome echoed with cries of joy; the clergy, the Senate and the people gave witness to their great satisfaction, and the emperor approved this happy choice. He did not disappoint the hopes of the Church; piety towards God and charity to the poor were his two rules of life. He repaired churches falling into ruin and restored peace between divergent factions, but his greatest concern was to maintain in the Church the precious heritage of the true faith.

For this purpose he assembled in the Lateran Church a Council of a hundred bishops, which condemned the principal heads of the eastern Monothelite heresy, again raising its head. Saint Martin himself sent out an encyclical letter to all prelates, showing that a spurious Credo circulating in the east was erroneous, and excommunicating all who followed it. He incurred the enmity of the Byzantine court and even of two patriarchs, by his energetic opposition to their errors, and the Exarch of Ravenna, representing the oriental

Emperor who denied the human will in Christ.

Constant II in Italy, went so far as to endeavor to procure the assassination of the Pope while he stood at the altar in the Church of Saint Mary Major. The would be murderer, a page of the Exarch, was miraculously struck blind, however, and his lord refused to have any further role in the matter.

But the eastern Emperor's successor had no such scruples. After having the holy Pontiff accused of many fabricated misdeeds, he seized Saint Martin -- who did not resist or permit resistance, for fear of bloodshed in Rome -- then had him conveyed to Constantinople on board a vessel bound for that port. None of his clergy were permitted to accompany him; he was boarded at night in secret.

After a three month's voyage, the ship anchored at the island of Naxos in the Aegean Sea, where the Pope was kept in confinement for a year, then finally brought in chains to the imperial city in 654, where he was imprisoned for three months. When he appeared before his judge he was unable to stand without support; but the pitiless magistrate heard his accusers and sentenced him to be chained and dragged through the streets of the city. Martin bade farewell to his companions in captivity before he left, banished to the