

[Readings: Wisdom 1:1-7; Psalm 139; Luke 17:1-6]

What wonderful and providential readings we have given to us by the Universal Catholic Church! They have been selected and prepared for Monday of the 32nd Week in Ordinary Time, but also speak to today's national and civil observance of Veteran's Day. We start with the beginning of the Book of Wisdom, the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit. We move to the Responsorial Psalm 139, which is my favorite Psalm of all the psalms in the Book of Psalms, because it reminds me of my awesome origins in the mind and in the creative power of God. We then move to the Gospel passage from Luke, shining a light on sin, forgiveness and faith. How does all of this fit in with today's observance?

Back on October 31st, Halloween of all days, Pope Francis met with military chaplains from around the world as they participated in a formation course on international humanitarian law hosted by the Vatican.

He said, "Dear Ordinaries and military chaplains: as you carry out your mission to form the consciences of the members of the armed forces, I encourage you to spare no effort to enable the norms of international humanitarian law to be accepted in the hearts of those entrusted to your pastoral care... The Second Vatican Council calls those in military service 'custodians of the security and freedom of their people.' The servants of Christ in the military world are also the first to be at the service of men and women and of their fundamental rights." Pope Francis said that war prisoners have been subject to violations of their human dignity, including abuse, violence, cruelty treatment, and various forms of "inhuman and degrading" torture.

"The ethical foundation and crucial importance of these norms for safeguarding human dignity in the tragic context of armed conflicts means that they must be properly and rigorously respected and enforced," he added.

"Respect for the dignity and physical integrity of the human person, in fact, cannot depend upon the actions they have done, but is a moral duty to which every person and every authority is called," Pope Francis said.

Today the Church celebrates the memorial of St. Martin of Tours, bishop. St. Martin is the first bishop and confessor honored by the Church in the West.

St. Martin was born (c. 316) at Sabaria, a town in Pannonia near the famous Benedictine monastery dedicated to his name. Against the wishes of his parents he associated with Christians and became a catechumen at the age of ten. At fifteen he entered the army and served under the Emperors Constantius and Julian. While in the service he met a poor, naked beggar at the gates of Amiens who asked alms in Christ's Name. Martin had nothing with him except his weapons and soldier's mantle; but he took his sword, cut the latter in two, and gave half to the poor man. During the following night Christ appeared to him clothed with half a mantle and said, "Martin, the catechumen, has clothed Me with this mantle!"

Martin was eighteen years old when he received the sacrament of holy baptism. At the pleading of his superior officer, he remained two years longer in the army. Then, upon requesting dismissal, Julian accused him of cowardice. "With the sign of the Cross," Martin answered, "I shall more certainly break through the ranks of the enemy than if armed with shield and sword."

Martin also possessed the gift of discerning spirits. With these gifts, Martin founded a monastery at Ligeu', France, where he lived a monastic life. He was ordained a priest and became bishop of Tours. He founded more monasteries, trained clergy and preached the Gospel to the poor. He died in 397.

Through his intercession as a military veteran, we pray:

Father of the human family, Prince of Peace, and Spirit of Wisdom,
We ask for blessings on all those who have served their country in the
armed forces.

We ask for healing for the veterans who have been wounded,
in body mind and soul, in conflicts around the globe.
We pray especially for the young men and women, in the thousands,
who are coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan with injured

bodies and traumatized spirits.

Bring solace to them, O Lord;

may we pray for them when they cannot pray.

We ask for an end to wars and the dawning of a new era of peace,

as a way to honor all the veterans of past wars.

Have mercy on all our veterans.

Bring peace to their hearts and peace to the regions they fought in.

Bless all the soldiers who served in non-combative posts;

May their calling to service continue in their lives in many positive ways.

Give us all the creative vision to see a world which,

grown weary with fighting,

moves to affirming the life of every human being

and so moves beyond war.

Hear our prayer, O Prince of Peace, hear our prayer.

O God, we are thankful for all who have served in protecting our country.

Give them an abundance of your blessings.

Continue to watch over and protect those

who are still in active military service.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.