



**Son of An Unknown Father  
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**Rehearsal Packet  
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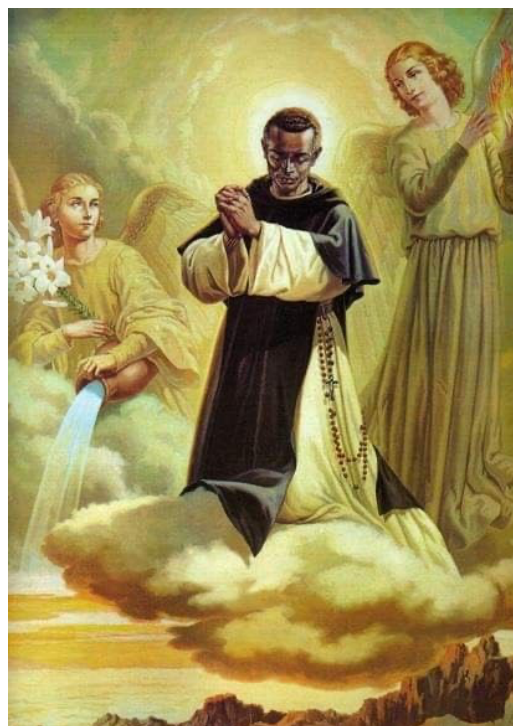
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## Saint Martin de Porres

Saint Martin de Porres (was Martin de Porras until the Vatican made a transcription error after his death, which changed it to Porres)<sup>1</sup> is the first black saint of the Americas. He was beatified in 1837 and canonized in May of 1962 by Pope John XXII, making him the Patron Saint of Racial and Social Justice.

### Martin de Porres's early years

Martin de Porres was born on December 9, 1579, in present day Lima, Peru. His parents were Ana Velazques and Juan de Porres. His parents were from completely different walks of life. While Ana Velazques was a freed slave from Panama, Juan de Porres was a Spanish Nobleman. Martin's baptism happened the same day he was born at the Church of San Sebastian. On his baptismal certificate it read, "father, unknown".<sup>2</sup> This meant that Juan de Porres was not at his son's baptism and therefore did not claim Martin as his legitimate child. It is thought the reason he never officially claimed Martin de Porres as his child was because of his dark complexion. However, Juan de Porres did stay in Martin's life for some time because Ana and he had another child together: Juana.<sup>3</sup>



Juan de Porres took both Martin and Juana on an important trip to Guayaquil, Ecuador when Martin was eight years old. This trip was the first time Juan recognized these children as his own to his family,<sup>4</sup> though, this was informal and was not legal recognition. While at Guayaquil, Juan hired a tutor for Martin so he could learn how to read and write. Two years later when Juan was called away to govern Panama, Martin was sent back to Peru to be with his mother; Juana stayed in Ecuador with her extended

<sup>1</sup> Celia Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas : The Life and Afterlife of Martín De Porres*, Cambridge Latin American Studies. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), <https://search-ebscohost-com.kean.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie.ip.url.cpid&custid=keaninf&db=nlebk&AN=685247&site=ehost-live&scope=site>., 20

<sup>2</sup> J.C. Kearns , *The Life Of Blessed Martin De Porres: Sainly American Negro And Patron Of Social Justice* (New York, NY: P.J Kenedy & Sons, 1937), 13

<sup>3</sup> Kearns, *The Life of Blessed Martin De Porres*, 13

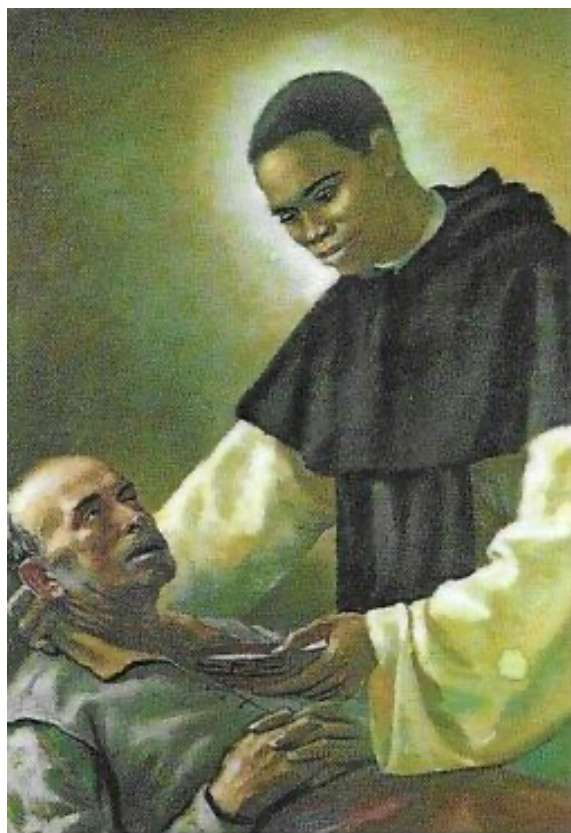
<sup>4</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 28

family, Juan had left them with enough money that she would have lived comfortably until she was married.<sup>5</sup>

When Martin was 12 years old, he apprenticed to be a barber and a surgeon, which was where he found his passion for healing people.<sup>6</sup> As a surgeon, Martin learned how to, “bind up wounds, to allay fevers, how to brew soothing drugs from herbs, how to set broken limbs, to make poultices, and, generally, all medical knowledge of that era for the relief of the diseases and ailments of humanity.”<sup>7</sup>

### Martin de Porres at the Convent

Martin left his mother in 1594 to join the convent of, “El Rosario – Nuestra Senora del Rosario, the religious house of the Order of Preachers, the Dominicans”.<sup>8</sup> When Martin entered the convent, it was as a member of the Tertiary, or the “third order”, which were supplemental to the friars. It was unusual that anyone in this position took vows, but after 15 years Martin de Porres did.<sup>9</sup> At the convent, Martin was assigned to work in the infirmary and, later, as a barber as well. His healing gifts were not exclusively used to those inside the convent, as he often left to help the people in the city. Martin was selfless and helped in more ways than just healing. When the monastery was low on money, he offered himself up to be sold into slavery so that the monestary would have enough money to continue to help the poor, but Don Lorenziano did not allow this to happen.<sup>10</sup>



*Saint Martin de Porres*

### Martin de Porres and his divine gift

Martin’s divine gift was first realized in 1619 when friar Fernando Aragonés was sick. Every other doctor had told him that he could not be healed and would die, but when

<sup>5</sup> Kearns, *The Life of Blessed Martin De Porres*, 14

<sup>6</sup> Kearns, *The Life of Blessed Martin De Porres*, 15

<sup>7</sup> Kearns, *The Life of Blessed Martin De Porres*, 15

<sup>8</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 24

<sup>9</sup> Violet Clifton, “MARTIN DE PORRES.” *Life of the Spirit (1946-1964)* 4, no. 40 (1949): 176–81, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43703351>, 176.

<sup>10</sup> Clifton, “MARTIN DE PORRES”, 176

Martin de Porres came to visit his prognosis changed. Martin sat next to him, gave him a drink of water, put his hands on his wounds, wrapped his body in a cloth filled with alfalfa stalks, and slept next to him, and the next morning he had no pain at all.<sup>11</sup> He was cured of his illness. After this Friar Fernando Aragonés was one of the main people to advocate for his saint status in the 1600s.

There were several other stories of people being healed by Martin de Porres in a similar way, and they all attested that it was the divine powers of God that were channeled through Martin de Porres who cured them.

Martin de Porres passed away in 1639 from what was thought to be typhoid fever.

## Peru and the world of Son of An Unknown Father

Prior to Spanish colonization of South America, Peru was the center of the Incan Empire. The Incan capital is present day Cusco where the ruins of Machu Picchu still remain. Peru has a diverse ecosystem, as the Andes mountains stretch on its coastal side, and inland the Amazon rain forest, which covers more than half the country. The capitol of Peru is Lima, on the northern coast of the country. The ethnic makeup of the country is quite diverse. It is as follows: 45% indigenous, 37% mixed race, 15% white, 3% black, Japanese, Chinese, and others.<sup>12</sup>

### Peru in the 1600s

Peru was a very new colony in the 1600s. Francisco Pizarro's conquest of the Incan Empire, via the murder of the Incan Emperor, Atahallpa, happened in 1533.<sup>13</sup> Two years later, in 1535, the Viceroyalty of Peru was officially established. This expanse of land was not just current-day Peru. In fact, the Viceroyalty of Peru stretched from present-day Panama down to present-day Chile. It was a vast expanse of land. Lima was established as the capitol of the Viceroyalty, which was the second most important city in the Americas after Mexico. Lima held many important buildings, such as the



<sup>11</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 64.

<sup>12</sup> "Peru Demographics," CountryReports, accessed October 22, 2021, <https://www.countryreports.org/country/Peru/population.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> History.com Editors, "Pizarro Executes Last Inca Emperor," HISTORY, March 4, 2021.

Royal Appellate Courts and the Administrative Headquarters.<sup>14</sup> Cusco, the old capitol of the Inca, was another important city which held many religious buildings including the Catholic diocese.<sup>15</sup> This was most likely placed here to solidify the Catholic religion and eliminate the indigenous religion.

In the early years of Peru, the Spaniards relied on indigenous labor for mines, mills, workshops, and other means of productions across the Viceroyalty.<sup>16</sup> However, European disease ran rampant through the indigenous population, causing numbers to fall drastically. This, coupled with indigenous fleeing further inland, caused Spaniards to look to another source for labor: enslaved Africans. Enslaved Africans built their waterways, buildings, forts, and more.<sup>17</sup> The influx of enslaved Africans sent to Peru, created a diverse cities and communities. Peru was home to Spaniards, Africans, Indigenous Peruvians, and their children, who were often mixed. In fact, it is thought there was actually an equal number of Africans and Europeans in Lima during the 1600s.<sup>18</sup> The indigenous population, in contrast, was very low. A 1614 census showed that out of the 25,000 reported people living in Lima, only 8% of the population was indigenous.<sup>19</sup>

### Afro-Peruvians in the 1600s

The introduction of enslaved Africans to Peru lead to the creation of a new race of people: Afro-Peruvians. The way Spanish elite viewed Afro-Peruvians was similar to how the white elites look at black people in the United States today. The, “city officials accused them [...] of being disloyal, idle, unruly, and violent, ever on the lookout for ways to evade or even attack their colonial masters.”<sup>20</sup> Some Afro-Peruvians, like Martin de Porres, were freed, and others were still enslaved. Spanish leaders held these racist attitudes toward Afro-Peruvians and placed restrictions on them. Afro-Peruvians could not leave the city of Lima without written consent, they could not carry swords, there were restrictions on what they could wear, they had a curfew, and had to take part in the same tribute system that indigenous Peruvians were subjected to.<sup>21</sup> In addition, freed Afro-Peruvians were barred from receiving a university education and taking certain types of jobs.

Afro-Peruvians did not take these restrictions and racism sitting down. They rose above the stereotypes placed on them. Many Afro-Peruvians became very successful

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<sup>14</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 21.

<sup>16</sup> Maribel Arrelucea-Barrantes. “Work, Family, and Honor: Understanding Colonial Slavery in Peru.” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 35, no. 3/4 (2012): 273–96. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43631674>, 274.

<sup>17</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 22.

<sup>18</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 22.

<sup>20</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 24.

<sup>21</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 25.

businessmen, surgeons, and barbers.<sup>22</sup> These successes were passed onto their children in the form of money, power, and influence. Afro-Peruvians created an elite group amongst their own people, despite the Spaniards' best efforts to quell their successes.

### The Slave Trade and Peru

As with all conquests by Europeans in the “New World”, African slaves were brought to colonies to supplement the decline of indigenous populations. Indigenous labor was used from the inception of colonies as unpaid slave labor. Unfortunately, many indigenous Peruvians perished from European diseases that their bodies could not fight off, while others died cruelly at the hands of colonizers. African slaves, by contrast, had some immunity to European diseases, which made them ideal replacements. Enslaved Africans, specifically those that were sent to Peru, came from a few different regions of Africa: Upper Guinea, Lower Guinea, West-Central Africa, and South-East Africa.<sup>23</sup> Prior to 1560, African slaves were not directly sent to Peru. Instead, ships would stop off at ports in the Caribbean, sometimes buying and selling slaves at those ports.<sup>24</sup> This buying and selling of enslaved people in the Caribbean helped diversify the slave population heading to Peru and in the Caribbean.

While slavery was prevalent in Lima during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, it was different than slavery in the English colonies in North America. The biggest difference was the number of freed black people in Lima, and the ability to earn freedom. 25% of the total population of black people in Lima were free.<sup>25</sup>

### The Encomienda System

The labor system for Indigenous people in the New World was not outright slavery, but the encomienda system. An encomienda was an, “organization in which a Spaniard received a restricted set of property right over Indian labor from the Crown whereby the Spaniard (an encomendero) could extract tribute (payment of a portion of output) from the Indians in the form of goods, metals, money, or direct labor services. In exchange, encomenderos provided the Indians protection and instruction in the Catholic faith.”<sup>26</sup> Some of the “protections” on an encomienda system are as follows: Indigenous people could not be bought, sold, or rented out to other people, the people in the encomienda were not passed down to future generations like property, instead the Crown would

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<sup>22</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 27.

<sup>23</sup> Stephan Bühnen, “Ethnic Origins of Peruvian Slaves (1548-1650): Figures for Upper Guinea,” *Paideuma* 39 (1993): 57–110, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40341657>, 57.

<sup>24</sup> Bühnen, “Ethnic Origins of Peruvian Slaves”, 61.

<sup>25</sup> Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas*, 22.

<sup>26</sup> Timothy J. Yeager, “Encomienda or Slavery? The Spanish Crown’s Choice of Labor Organization in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America,” *The Journal of Economic History* 55, no. 4 (1995): 842–59, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2123819>, 843.

decide if they went to another encomendero, they could not be relocated, and encomenderos were not given rights to the land.<sup>27</sup> This system was almost immediately abused.

On the religious front of the encomienda, the encomendero was tasked with conversion of those in their encomienda to Christianity. Encomenderos instructed indigenous people on faith and required them to attend mass every Sunday.

### Basilica y Monasterio de Santo Domingo<sup>28</sup>

The Basilica y Monasterio de Santo Domingo is a set of religious buildings under Our Lady of the Rosary. The construction of this building took around 50 years, concluding at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Our Lady of the Rosary was home to the first college in Peru, the University



of San Marcos, which opened after construction was finished in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Basilica is best known as the resting place of three saints: San Juan Maias, San Rosa de Lima, and San Martin de Porres. The skull of Martin de Porres sits, encased in glass, to the right of the main altar of the church.

### Christianity in Colonial Peru

When Christopher Columbus came upon the indigenous Taino of the Caribbean, the Spanish conquistadors were given another directive: the conversion of the Indigenous to Christianity. That is why Spaniards built so many churches in the Viceroyalties of the Americas. In Peru, missionaries introduced Christianity through the development of urban life.<sup>29</sup> Spaniards created urban centers that made it easier to teach Christian values and keep indigenous Peruvians away from their own sacred places (ie. Machu Picchu in Cuzco). These urban cities, “were divided, in their turn, into parishes, whose work of spiritual administration was complimented by the creation of hospitals. These establishments provided healthcare and practiced charity, but also to generate and

<sup>27</sup> Yeager, *Encomienda or Slavery?*, 843.

<sup>28</sup> “Basilica and Convent of Santo Domingo – Lima, Peru,” Waymarking.com, [https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/wm11MTK\\_Basilica\\_and\\_Convent\\_of\\_Santo\\_Domingo\\_Lima\\_Peru](https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/wm11MTK_Basilica_and_Convent_of_Santo_Domingo_Lima_Peru).

<sup>29</sup> Gabriela Ramos, *Death and Conversion in the Andes : Lima and Cuzco, 1532-1670*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), Accessed October 29, 2021, ProQuest Ebook Central, 89.



preserved social order”.<sup>30</sup> It was in these spaces where conversion to Christianity was heavily promoted: hospitals only buried people from their parishes and taught indigenous Peruvians about the concept of dying a Christian death.<sup>31</sup> While the spread of Christianity to indigenous people was mostly successful, many indigenous practiced their own religion in private.

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<sup>30</sup> Ramos, *Death and Conversion in the Andes*, 89.

<sup>31</sup> Ramos, *Death and Conversion in the Andes*, 90

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