Love is patient, love is kind
Martin of Tours

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1 Corinthians 13:4a “Love is patient, love is kind.”



Martin of Tours lived in the fourth century. As a young man, he served as a soldier in the Roman army. The story for which he is best remembered happened when he was preparing for baptism. One bitterly cold winter’s day, Martin approached the gates of Amiens, a city in what is now France. There, he encountered a beggar who had little clothing and was suffering terribly from the cold. The man was asking passers-by for help, but people continued on their way, leaving him to suffer.

Martin stopped. He had no money to give the man, and he had already given away much of his clothing to help others. All he had left was the military cloak he wore. So Martin took his sword, cut his cloak in two, and gave half to the freezing beggar. It was not a grand gesture, but a simple act of kindness. Some of the bystanders laughed at Martin because he was now wearing only half a cloak. Others felt ashamed, realising that they had more than enough to help the man, yet had done nothing. Martin was patient with the bystanders and kind to the beggar.

Reflective questions — Have you ever noticed someone in need? Perhaps someone who was lonely, struggling, or simply needed a little kindness. Is God asking you to reach out?

Reflective pause — 30 seconds

The historical account of Martin’s life tells us that something extraordinary happened that night. Martin had a vision of Christ wearing the very half of the cloak he had given to the beggar. In the vision, Jesus told the angels that Martin had clothed him. Martin was deeply affected by this experience. He came to understand that his act of kindness towards a poor and overlooked stranger had been an act of love towards Christ himself.

Matthew 25:40: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Martin could not have known, as he approached that freezing beggar, that his simple act of kindness would become one of the most enduring stories of Christian love. Yet Jesus had already taught that when we care for those who are hungry, vulnerable, overlooked or in need, we are serving him. It is easy to think of love as something we feel towards the people closest to us: our family, our friends, the people who understand us and make us feel valued. But Christian love reaches beyond those comfortable boundaries. It notices the person who is struggling, the person who has nothing to offer us in return, the person whom everyone else seems to overlook.

Kindness does not always require money, extraordinary courage or a dramatic sacrifice. Sometimes it means stopping to listen. Sometimes it means making a phone call, offering practical help, or giving someone our time when we are busy ourselves.

Reflective question — Who might God be asking you to notice? Is there someone in your family, your church, your workplace or your community who needs your kindness? What could you offer them this week, even if it costs you a little time, comfort or convenience?

Reflective pause — 30 seconds

Let Martin of Tours inspire you to embrace a love that is patient and kind: a love that notices others, and sees the value of every person. Make that love part of your life, one simple act of kindness at a time.