

What's in a Name?

Why are we called 'chaplains' and not 'airport-vicars' or something else?

It's all down to an unlikely soldier called Martin who lived in 4th century Italy. His father was a senior officer in the Roman Imperial Cavalry who wasn't pleased when, aged ten, Martin announced his decision to follow the teachings of Jesus. Christianity had been made legal in 313AD with the conversion of Emperor Constantine, but it was still a foreign religion of the East - and of the urban poor. Fashionable cultural sophisticates and those in positions of authority and power followed the mystical cult of Mithras.



At fifteen Martin was called up on National Service, though he was rarely encountered combat. When he was called upon to fight, he ended up in jail, on a charge of cowardice, having declared, "I am a soldier of Christ. I cannot fight." Though a pioneer of Christian pacifism, Martin was no coward. Like conscientious objectors in the 20th century, while refusing to use weapons of war, he still volunteered to serve alongside his comrades on the frontline. It is a powerful coincidence that Saint Martin's Day is November 11 or, since 1918, Armistice or Remembrance Day.

While still a teenager, Martin deployed to Gaul (modern-day France). In the middle of winter, at the gate of the city of Amiens, Martin met a naked beggar. Instinctively, he cut his thick woollen cloak in half and gave half to the shivering man. That night he had a vision of Jesus himself dressed in the cloak that Martin had donated. At the age of 18 he was baptized a Christian.

Martin's miraculous cloak was kept at Marmoutier Abbey near Tours. By 679 it was in the royal treasury and by 799 Emperor Charlemagne had entrusted it to the monks of Saint-Denis. The priest who acted as guardian of the cloak was called a *cappellanu* 'of the cape', and soon priests who served travelling companies of soldiers were called *cappellani* or *chaplains*.

Similarly the small temporary places of worship where people could pray and venerate Martin's cloak (and all that it stood for) were called *capellae* or *little cloaks* - temporary shelters set up in a hurry for travellers to stop and pray.

So what does Martin's simple act stand for? Simple acts of generosity – both small and great - that I often witness around the airport.

A few weeks ago I assisted Kevin, a passenger who freely admitted he had used up all the reserves of patience and goodwill of his family and friends. He had lived the high life and earned good money in the past, but he had run

out of luck. Returning to the UK, no-one was prepared to help and he had nowhere to stay. He had spent the two previous nights alone, sleeping rough behind Wigan Wallgate station. With what was left of his own money he bought me a coffee at Joe's Kitchen. I was able to put him in touch with a Methodist charity that helps homeless people get back on their feet.

Martin, the reluctant soldier, has much to teach us today. **First** he is an inspiration to our armed forces around the world, as they rebuild communities and help individuals following natural (and entirely man-made) disasters. **Secondly**, Martin's vision of Jesus himself dressed in the beggar's half-cloak reminds me of the dignity of those we meet who, in that moment, find themselves in urgent need; for food, shelter, transport or just to be acknowledged, and look to us to share what little we have. **Thirdly**, Martin's 'chaplain's' and 'chapels'- both people and places of refuge on the journey remind me that, in the words of a well-known hymn:

*We are pilgrims on a journey,
fellow-travellers on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.*

George Lane
Co-ordinating Chaplain

You are invited

to the
Chaplaincy Annual Meeting
on
Thursday 28 November 2013
14.00 - 15.30
at
Olympic House, Manchester Airport
M90 1QX

An informal meeting to meet members of the Chaplaincy Board, Chaplaincy Team and friends of the Chaplaincy.

Refreshments will be served and the new Manchester Airport Chaplaincy Website will be launched.

RSVP to Jackie.Lowe@manairport.co.uk

If you have a prayer you'd like others to share and pray with you, visit the new online community



www.prayoneforme.org

Prayer Diary

November (week 48)

We give thanks in our prayers for the work of:

- **Car Rentals Village:**
Avis, Budget, Enterprise, National/Europcar, Hertz, Sixt
- **Taxi Cab Drivers and Arrow Cars**
- **Traffic Marshalls**
- **Bussing**
- **Car Parks**
- **Meet and Greet (Valet parking)**

Daily Prayers

(Christian) take place every day at 8.30am in Terminal 1 Prayer Room (and at many other times and places too)

Friday Jumma Prayers

(Islamic) are held in T3 Prayer Room 1300 GMT (Winter)

Since 1980 the Chaplaincy at Manchester Airport has provided pastoral, spiritual and practical help, support and guidance to all who work at the airport as well as those who travel through it. The main Chaplaincy office is based by Ground Floor Check-In, Terminal 1. There is always a member of the team on-call.

Contact us on: 0161 489 2838 or thechaplaincy@manairport.co.uk



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