



# St Francis Calling... are you listening?

St. Anthony of Padua O.F.S.,

Boynton Beach, Fl.

December 2017

## The Cobbler and His Guest

Remember to welcome strangers, because some who have done so have welcomed angels unaware. Hebrew 13:2-3

There lived in the city of Marseilles, a hundred years ago, an old shoemaker, loved and honored by all his neighbors, who affectionately called him "Father Martin."

One Christmas he sat alone in his little shop, reading of the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus, and of the gifts they brought, and he said to himself, "If tomorrow were the first Christmas, and if Jesus were to be born in Marseilles this night, I know what I would give him!" He arose and took from a shelf two little shoes of softest snow-white leather, with bright silver buckles. "I would give him these, my finest work. How pleased his mother would be! But I'm a foolish old man," he thought, smiling. "The Master had no need of my poor gifts."

Replacing the shoes, he blew out the candle and retired to rest. Hardly had he closed his eyes, it seemed, when he heard a voice call his name. "Martin!" Intuitively, he felt aware of the identity of the speaker. "Martin, you have longed to see me. Tomorrow I shall pass by your window. If you see me and bid me enter, I shall be your guest and sit at your table."

He did not sleep that night for joy. Before it was yet dawn, he arose and tidied up his little shop. Fresh sand he spread on the floor, and green boughs of fir he spread on the floor, and green boughs of fir he wreathed along the rafters. On the table he placed a loaf of white bread, a jar of honey, a pitcher of milk; and over the fire he hung a hot drink. His simple preparations were complete.

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### Birthdays for December

Sue Ann Miller 12/18

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Happy, blessed birthday!

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Congrats!

When all was in readiness, he took up his vigil at the window. He was sure he would know the Master. As he watched the driving sleet and rain in the cold, deserted street, he thought of the joy that would be his when he sat down and broke bread with his guest.

Presently, he saw an old street sweeper pass by, blowing upon his thin, gnarled hands to warm them. *Poor fellow! He must be half frozen*, thought Martin. Opening the door, he called out to him, "Come in, my friend, and get warm, and drink something hot." No further urging was needed, and the man gratefully accepted the invitation.

An hour passed, and Martin next saw a poor, miserably clothed woman carrying a baby. She paused, wearily, to rest in the shelter of his doorway, he flung open the door, "Come in and get warm while you rest," he said to her. "You are not well?" he asked.

"I am going to the hospital. I hope they will take me and my baby in," she explained. "My husband is at sea, and I am ill, without a soul to whom I can go."

"Poor child!" cried the old man. "You must eat something while you are getting warm. No? Let me give a cup of milk to the little one. Ah! What a bright, pretty little fellow he is! Why, you have no shoes on him!"

"I have no shoes for him," sighed the mother. "Then he shall have this lovely pair I finished yesterday." And Martin took down the soft little snow-white shoes he had looked at the evening before, and slipped them on the child's feet. They fit perfectly. Shortly, the young mother went her way full of gratitude, and Martin went back to his post at the window.

Hour after hour went by, and many needy souls shared the meager hospitality of the old cobbler, but the expected guest did not appear.

At last, when night had fallen, Father Martin retired to his cot with a heavy heart. "It was only a dream," he sighed. "I did hope and believe, but he has not come."

Suddenly, so it seemed to his weary eyes, the room was flooded with a glorious light; and to the cobbler's astonished vision there appeared before him, one by one, the poor street sweeper, the sick mother and her baby, and all the people whom he had aided during the day. Each one smiled at him and said, "Have you not seen me? Did I not sit at your table?" and vanished.

Then softly out of the silence he heard again the gentle voice, repeating the old, familiar words, "Who so shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." (Matthew 18:5). "For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in.

"...Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." (Matthew 25: 35-40)

Author unknown.

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Submitted by editor

