



2020.003

Unidentified artist

*Saint Martin in Exile*

Peru, Cuzco

Mid-eighteenth century

Oil on canvas, 33 1/16 x 26 inches

This painting is very unusual in several ways. The subject, Saint Martin, seems to have been hardly represented at all in Spanish colonial art. The inscription, although abraded and difficult to read, is penned in an elegant hand. The textual source of the iconography is precisely credited.

Saint Martin was born in Todi, Umbria around 590/600, entered the order of Saint Basil, and, as an abbot, was sent by Pope John IV into Dalmatia and Istria with money to aid the inhabitants and redeem captives seized during the invasion of the Slavs. Martin acted as papal legate at Constantinople during the pontificate of Pope Theodore I, and was a deacon at the time

of his election to the papacy in 1642. Martin's troubles, pictured in this painting, began when he had himself consecrated as pope without imperial confirmation. This was at a time when Constantinople was the capital of the Roman Empire and the patriarch of Constantinople was the most powerful leader of the Church. Then Martin exacerbated his situation by publishing the decrees of the Lateran Council of 1649 in an encyclical. The enraged Emperor Constans II responded by ordering his exarch in Italy to have Martin arrested and brought from Rome to Constantinople. The arrest orders were finally carried out on 17 June 653, and Martin, along with Maximus the Confessor, was hurried out of Rome to Naxos, Greece and finally to Constantinople. After imprisonment, illness, and public indignities, Martin was banished to present-day Crimea, where he arrived only a few months before his death in 655, abandoned by his Church and friends.

Due to all his suffering on behalf of the church in Rome, Martin is recalled as both pope and martyr. This history of his final years is briefly told in the inscription at the top of the painting. Its textual source is found on the papers Martin is pictured writing on. At his left hand is a paper inscribed "Epist. 17. Apud Baroni tom 8 pag. 435-436." This identifies one of the letters (epistles) written by Martin. The other paper, on which he is still writing, is cited as Epistle 27.<sup>i</sup> The Latin *apud* is translated as "in the writing of," in this instance the author is Cesare Baronius, whose twelve-volume history of the first twelve centuries of the Christian Church were published between 1588 and 1607. Volume 8, which included the years of Martin's papacy, was first published in 1599 and again in later editions. Baronius, Librarian of the Vatican from 1597, had access to the archives upon which he based his detailed history. The *Annales Ecclesiastici* was never published in Spanish, so the author of the inscriptions on this painting must have provided his own translation to whomever added the script to the painting.

The subject of this painting stands out among the more familiar saints represented in Spanish colonial art. It is not known whether the composition was based on a print as so many other paintings were. At upper right is inset a small picture of the pope behind bars. In the foreground, Martin is pictured writing his letters, seated in front of a poor hut that shields him from the wind. His red mantle touched with gold and the papal tiara on the worktable reflect the magnificence of the papacy even in this island of exile, surrounded by a choppy sea.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

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<sup>i</sup> Seventeen letters by Martin are included in the *Patriologia Latina*, LXXXVII, 119.