The Rev. Andrew Kellner
Consecration Sunday & St. Martin's Day
11.15.26

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. Please be seated.

Well, good morning, St. Martin's. Good morning!

My name is Father Andrew Kellner and I have the great pleasure of serving as one of the chaplains at the Community of St. James School where I oversee the Servant Year program, a diocesan program inviting young adults into vocational discernment and formation as well as being the rector of the Church of Saint Asaph in Bala Cynwyd. I bring you greetings from both of those communities on this day.

I want to start by saying thank you to Mary and to your stewardship team and your entire Consecration Sunday team for inviting me to be here with you, and for all the work that they have put in over the last months to make today possible. So, thank you for this invitation and for all of their work today.

Today we are here to talk about Martin, right? It's his feast day, and yet I want to talk about somebody else. So, please go with me if you would. I want to talk to you today about St. Sulpicius, Sulpicius Severus. And I want to talk to you about him because he was a pretty holy guy himself. He lived in France the same time as Martin did. And he was a lawyer. He was a lawyer who married a young bride who was the daughter of a lawyer. And he inherited all of the family wealth from her side of the family as well. So, he's a pretty well-off kind of guy.

His young bride, though, dies very early in their marriage and he becomes a widower and he begins to pray and think about what to do with his life. His mother-in-law, Bassula, decides that she's going to help him to live a holy life. She encourages him in his desire to give himself over to prayer and to good works and to simplicity of living.

So Sulpicius does something that we might think was crazy. He sells off just enough of his estates and his property so he can pay off any obligations, any debt, anything that he had. He downsizes to a small cottage. He keeps everything that he had. But then he decides to look at what he actually needs to live. And that's all that he takes from his vast wealth every year. Just what he needs. And he commits year after year to share everything else with the poor, the vulnerable, and with the church. He decides to support ministries that are engaging the world around them. He builds churches and supports church communities. He decides to live a way of stewardship that is admirable, but when I look at my finances, I'm not always sure that I could do what Sulpicius did.

And I mention this because it's around this time when he begins living this life, he hears about somebody else who's living a similar life, Martin. And he goes and he meets Martin. Their encounter so transforms Sulpicius, so captures his imagination that he begins to visit him every year, once or twice during the summertime, so he can just be with Martin and learn from him.

What so moved him was that when he comes to meet Martin the bishop, Martin takes and washes his hands. And later that night, he bends down and he washes Sulpicius's feet. Martin demonstrates to him what service really looks like. That stewardship isn't just about giving your money away, but it's about being present to the people who are with you. The people who walk through your door, the people who come to see what your community is all about. Who come to hear a word of encouragement to come and experience a calming and healing word in the midst of a hurting world and a hurting life.

Sulpicius is so moved by all of this that over the years when he comes to visit until Martin's death, he decides that he's going to write down what Martin told him. This is why we have anything of Martin's story. Martin wrote down none of his teachings. He did not keep an autobiography. He did not keep a journal. It's because Sulpicius wrote *The Life of St. Martin* that we know a bit more about him and why today here in Chestnut Hill we come to a church named after St. Martin and for his good deeds to celebrate them.

Now I wonder if we took a minute and just imagined this community, everyone gathered here. Each of us is in some ways today making up St. Martin. This is the place where people come to hear a good word, to receive encouragement, to worship God together, to receive a good meal, which we're going to enjoy after today's service, and to be in fellowship with one another.

That makes each of us also Sulpicius in some small way. If together we make up St. Martin, we each are Sulpicius. Taking that story, that story of what St. Martin's is here in Chestnut Hill. What this community does, what this community believes, and how it lives out the teachings that we heard from the prophet Isaiah today, and that we heard Jesus commending to us in the gospel.

We are each called to be storytellers, to be so moved by our experience here in our community, by each of our self-giving, of our time, our treasures, our talents, sharing our stories, and our lives with one another. Taking time to sit down and to listen to what first brought you here, what kept you here, and why did you come back today? To make time to listen to those stories helps us to know what St. Martin's is all about. How you as a community are still living out what Christ compels all of us who are followers of his teachings and his way of being to do and to be in our lives. People who see a need and just don't see somebody who hasn't worked hard enough, who don't see somebody who is not good enough, who are moved to look and to see Christ, look and to see God present to them in that moment and to offer some sharing of compassion, of kindness, and of material help and assistance.

This is the work that we're all called to do. This is the work that you do here through your many ways of community engagement, through your fellowship ministries, through your Stephen Ministers, your lay Eucharistic Visitors, through so many different elements of what makes St. Martin's St. Martin's. You're doing this work actively.

Now, some of you might be saying, "Well, I'm not involved with any of those things." Well, guess what? There's still opportunity. There's time and there's commitments to make today.

Today is about our financial commitments to our parish. It is about thinking about, "what do I need and what might I share with others?" What might I give to St. Martin's so St. Martin's can thrive? So

St. Martin's can be the place that has space for somebody else to come,, to be welcomed, to experience God's love, to be changed and transformed and become another Sulpicius with me, another storyteller of the power of this community in the world that so desperately needs love and transformation.

Today, on Consecration Sunday, that's the invitation that I bring to you. That's the invitation that your teams have been praying about. That is the commitment that we're being invited to consider. What do I have to share with this place so that people may encounter Christ here deeply and transformatively?

Each of us is called to open ourselves up to those who are sitting around us. Those whose stories are familiar to us. Those whose stories we have yet to hear. Those who have yet to walk through these doors. We're called as Christians to follow where St. Martin did, to see someone in need and to share a piece of what we have with them so that they might have what they need.

And I know that you do this so well. I get to experience it almost every single Saturday at The Welcome Table at the Community of St. James where members of your parish come down. Baked goods are there. All sorts of wonderful things are shared out with that community through this place, and they share the story of this place. They're there because they are part of you. They are there because they are inspired by this community to go from this place and to share God's love with others.

And so, my friends, today as you get your pledge card, you've been praying about it. You've been thinking about it. Maybe you said, "We'll see if that preacher's got anything good to say. If he's got anything good to say, maybe we'll add a little bit more money to it." I don't know. But I encourage you to really think about what does a commitment to be Christ in our world look like for you, for your household, and your family? What do you need? There's a freedom in allowing ourselves not to need as much as the world tells us we need. There's a freedom in deciding that we can give a little bit more because we have a little bit more to share.

I encourage you to think about that prayerfully when you get your pledge card after the Post Communion Prayer, to think about your commitment to following Christ, to being a member of this community, and also your commitment to sharing your story with this place, your life with this place, so that others may encounter Christ in you and in your experience, and to think too how you might share that with others in the world around you.

My friends, Martin had a friend named Sulpicius. May we each be Martin's friend. May we each become another Sulpicius. May we each share the good story of this place and this community and help Christ be known in our world. In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.