



This morning I watched the heavy mist rising from the rivers until only the tops of the evergreens could be seen. A few colored leaves hang like ornaments on the fruit trees around me. There has finally been some rain and the earth here in northern California is a green. Our olive trees will be harvested and the oil pressed in a week or so. Their green and silver leaves shimmer in the breeze. But it is the night that is truly spectacular.

In a few days we will commemorate what we call “Veterans Day” but in Europe November 11 is “St. Martin's Day”. Martin was a Roman soldier who is perhaps best known for cutting his warm soldier’s cloak in two and giving half to a beggar who later appeared as Jesus in a dream. Martin withdrew from the Imperial Army, and thereafter lived a quiet, simple, and peaceful life.

In Europe, children in many places look forward to St. Martin's Day. At night they light little lanterns and travel through the streets and woods singing special songs — for which they are often rewarded with treats. But I gather it is the adventure of being out with your lantern in the moonlight that is the real treat.

This year we are in the first quarter of the new moon. It had many names among the first people. I am told that those who walked the land on which I now live saw this November noon as a warning sign for when the water would freeze and life become hard. However, if we look out for each other we can warm the hearts and lives of those around us. That is easy to do with those we know and love. But this is a good time to also understand our commonness with strangers. Like the children with their little lanterns, we are all trying to find our way in the journey through life.

There is a very ancient Gaelic rune associated with St. Martin's Day;

*I saw a stranger yesterday.*

*I put food in the eating place-*

*drink in the drinking place–  
music in the listening place.  
And in the blessed name of all that is sacred,  
the stranger blessed himself and my house,  
my cattle and my dear ones.  
And the lark sang in her song;  
“often, often, often, goes God  
in a stranger’s guise.”*

This is also a good time to look about us for such strangers. For, like Moses’ son Gershom (Exodus 2: 22), we have all been and perhaps will again be *“strangers in a foreign land.”*

***Brother Toby***