

Biography

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, S.J.

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, S.J., was born in Turin on February 15, 1927. When he was seventeen, Cardinal Martini entered the Jesuit order and was ordained eight years later on July 13, 1952, considered an exceptionally young age for a Jesuit priest. Two years later he graduated summa cum laude from the Pontifical Gregorian University with a doctorate in Theology, with a thesis on "*The Historical Problem of the Resurrection*" which was soon published.

After some years of teaching at the faculty of Chieri he returned to Rome and earned a doctorate in Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, always summa cum laude, with a thesis on "*The Editing Problem of Codex B in the Light of the Papyrus Bodmer XIV.*"

In 1962 he professed solemn vows and in 1963 was appointed to the Chair of Textual Criticism at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. In 1964 he prepared a new edition of the *Greek and Latin New Testament* of A. Merk, and was invited to be a member, the only Catholic, of the committee for the publication of the *Greek New Testament*.

The concentration of his research was in the area of textual criticism and he became a scholar of international importance and renown. Many are his scholarly contributions relative to the witness of the first Christian community, with much attention to ecumenism and interfaith dialogue. On many occasions the Cardinal met with Muslims and representatives of the Islamic world, especially in meetings called "Men and Religions" which were held in various cities of Europe. He collaborated with Hebrew University in Jerusalem in establishing a program for the students of the Pontifical Biblical Institute. Finally, he put much initiative and energy in affirming the importance of Scripture for practical theology and pastoral ministry as well as promoting the use of the Bible by the faithful.

His scholastic excellence opened the door for him to be named head of the Scripture Department at the Biblicum where he also was appointed Rector of the Institute in 1969, an office he held until 1978. During this time he gained a reputation for being accessible and being a people person to the students and faculty. In 1978 he was named Rector of the prestigious Pontifical Gregorian University. That was also the year Pope Paul VI invited him to preach the Vatican's annual retreat during Lent, where one of his predecessors in this exceptional ministry was Cardinal Karol Wojtyla. After a year as head of the Gregorian, he took a sabbatical to write on numerous biblical, theological and spiritual subjects.

On December 29, 1979, Pope John Paul II named him the new Archbishop of Milan. On March 6, 1980, he was consecrated by the Holy Father and assumed his responsibilities as head of the Sea of Milan, the largest diocese in the world.

Three years later he received his red hat and the titular church of St. Cecilia. When Cardinal Martini took possession of his new archdiocese, he made a "walk of prayer" through the city, stopping several times to pray for all the work that men and women are doing, and for the power of Christian love and peace. "*Walking through the city, I can imagine so many sufferings behind the walls of the houses,*" he said. "*But in so much sorrow I also see an immense core of generosity.*"

Named to the College of Cardinals in 1983, he was immediately appointed to four different Vatican bodies instead of the one or two on which most new cardinals serve. He served membership in the Curial Offices of the Second Section of the Secretary of State, the Congregation for Oriental Churches, the Congregation for Divine Worship and Sacraments, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies for Apostolic Life, and the Congregation for Catholic Education, as well as the Pontifical Council for Culture.

As president of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences from 1986-1993, he played a major role in the 1991 Synod of Bishops for Europe, and he greatly expanded cooperative efforts with Protestant and Orthodox church bodies on the continent. He presided over the ecumenical meeting in Basel, Switzerland, in May 1989 seeking after 500 years the reunion of Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Anglicans.

A scholar of international renown, the Cardinal has been awarded many prestigious recognitions. In 1989 he received a doctorate *honoris causa* from the Pontifical Salesian University for his pastoral and educational programs. In 1999 he was named *Doctor ad honorem* from the Russian Academy of Sciences. The following year he received the *Prince des Asturies 2000 of Social Sciences, Spain* award. In November of the same year he was appointed by the Holy Father a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and in December he was named *European of the Year*.

The Cardinal speaks French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese and modern Greek in addition to his native Italian and the ancient languages of Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

In 2002, having reached the age of 75, he retired as Archbishop of Milan and in 2003 he moved to the Jesuit community in Jerusalem where he dedicates himself to prayer and biblical studies.

Cardinal Martini recently participated in the Conclave of Cardinals in Rome which elected Pope Benedict XVI.

From *"My Christmas in Bethlehem"* the Cardinal wrote: "I would like to reach from this place all mankind, in particular those whose prayers I led for twenty-three years in the Cathedral of Milan. I would like the message that is born from this bare cave to reach all of them: even in the smallest things of our day, even in those most hidden or seemingly trivial...even in those that make us suffer, the mystery of God who turns to us with love is present. I return as each year from this Mass next to the cave with eyes a little new. Even the vision of the city of Bethlehem, with its desolation for want of pilgrims, gives us occasion to hope that one day all this will give way to joy, to well-being and to peace." (published in *La Stampa*, 29 December 2004)