

Traditional Martinist Order

The Light of Martinism





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Published by the Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, Inc.



LOUIS CLAUDE de SAINT-MARTIN

"My task in this world has been to lead human spirits by means of a natural path to the supernatural things, which by right belong to them, but of which they have lost all conception, either by their own debasement or by the false instruction of those who have taught them."

The Martinist Way



The Traditional Martinist Order is an initiatic Order and a school of moral chivalry with its roots in the Western esoteric tradition. It is open to men and women. Its name is derived from that of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, who was a great mystic and powerful Illuminist living in France in the 1700s. He wrote many books under the name of "The Unknown Philosopher" concerning our nature and our relationship to the universe. Through him, the Traditional Martinist Order is linked to a tradition with roots going back to the Primordial Tradition, at a time when humanity was privileged to unite itself freely with the Divine, without any intermediary.

Martinists ask themselves whether humanity is now capable of bringing about a union with the Divine. If, as indicated in the Bible, we were created in the image of the Divine, how do we explain humanity's present miserable situation? This question leads Martinists to study the history of humanity, from emanation out of the Divine immensity up to our present conditions.

For Martinists, there is no knowing humanity's fundamental nature except by studying the natural relationships which exist between the Divine, the universe, and humanity. The universe and humanity form a whole, two progressions linked one to the other and evolving together. If we wish to understand our true nature we must look toward the Divine, says Saint-Martin, for "we can only read ourselves in the Divine, only understand ourselves in the Divine splendor." If we are no longer in a position today to reach this understanding it is because we have made the error of separating ourselves from the Divine and losing ourselves in the world of appearances, the temporal world. We have, to some degree, fallen asleep to the spiritual world. Our inner Temple is in ruins.

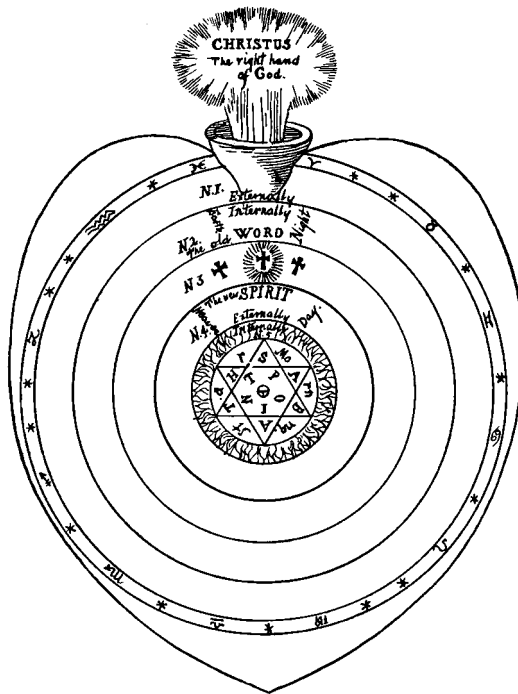
The Martinist quest lies in determining how we can rediscover this state of paradise in which humanity used to be at once a thought, a word, and an action of the Divine. "Reintegration" is our goal. We may have lost our original power, but we preserve the seed of this power, nonetheless, and all it takes is the will to cultivate this germ and make it bear fruit.

We sense full well that we are in a state of privation, and nothing in this lower world is capable of satisfying us entirely. What we desire fundamentally is not of this world, and that is why we continually go astray, being driven by immense longing for that faculty which previously enabled us to possess all, to rule all, to understand all. Saint-Martin said, "There is nothing so common as longing and nothing so rare as desire." The one who realizes the origin of this melancholy feeling, this fleeting memory of a lost greatness, who aspires to rediscover the original purity, is known as a Man or Woman of Desire. His or her desire is that of the Divine, and desire is the root of eternity.

To become a Woman or Man of Desire is to undertake the reconstruction of the inner Temple. The Martinist relies on two pillars to build this everlasting Temple—that of initiation and that of the Martinist teachings. Initiation denotes the beginning of this great work, for it is at this moment that we receive the seed of light which constitutes the foundation of our work. It is then up to us to work to bring into being this light and make it shine. Martinist initiations

are a privileged moment, the meeting between a Man or Woman of Desire and the Initiator. They can only be bestowed in a Temple, with the joint and active presence of the one giving and the one receiving.

Worldly initiations are a necessary preliminary to Martinists, though we see them as earthly representations of a greater transformation. They only become meaningful when we receive the "central initiation." Saint-Martin tells us that this initiation is that by which "we can enter into the heart of the Divine, and make the Divine's heart enter into us, there to form an indissoluble marriage which will make us the spouse of our Divine Redeemer. There is no other mystery in arriving at this holy initiation than to delve further and further into the depths of our being, and not let go until we can bring forth the living, vivifying root, because then, all the fruit which we ought to bear, according to our kind, will be produced within and without ourselves naturally."



From a plate in the book
Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries.

The Martinist Teachings

The teachings represent to a Martinist the nourishment necessary for the growth of the seed received during initiation. The foundations of the teachings are the writings of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin and his teacher, Martinès de Pasqually. Among the subjects offered for consideration are:

Mystical symbols	Cycles of humanity
The triune nature of humanity	Civilization and the ideal state
Esoteric study of Genesis	Art, music, and language
Free will and destiny	Mystical regeneration
The quaternary law	The elemental world
Reconciliation and reintegration	The world of Orbs
The visible and invisible worlds	The Empyrean world
Dreams and initiation	The ranks of angels
The science of numbers	The Kabbalah
Prayer	Meditation on the Sephiroth

In our work, Martinists use neither theurgy nor magic, for we conform to the ideal of the Unknown Philosopher—to guide humanity by a natural path to the supernatural. For this, it is not necessary to amass intellectual knowledge, because to progress on the path of reintegration, “we must not rack our brains, but our hearts.”

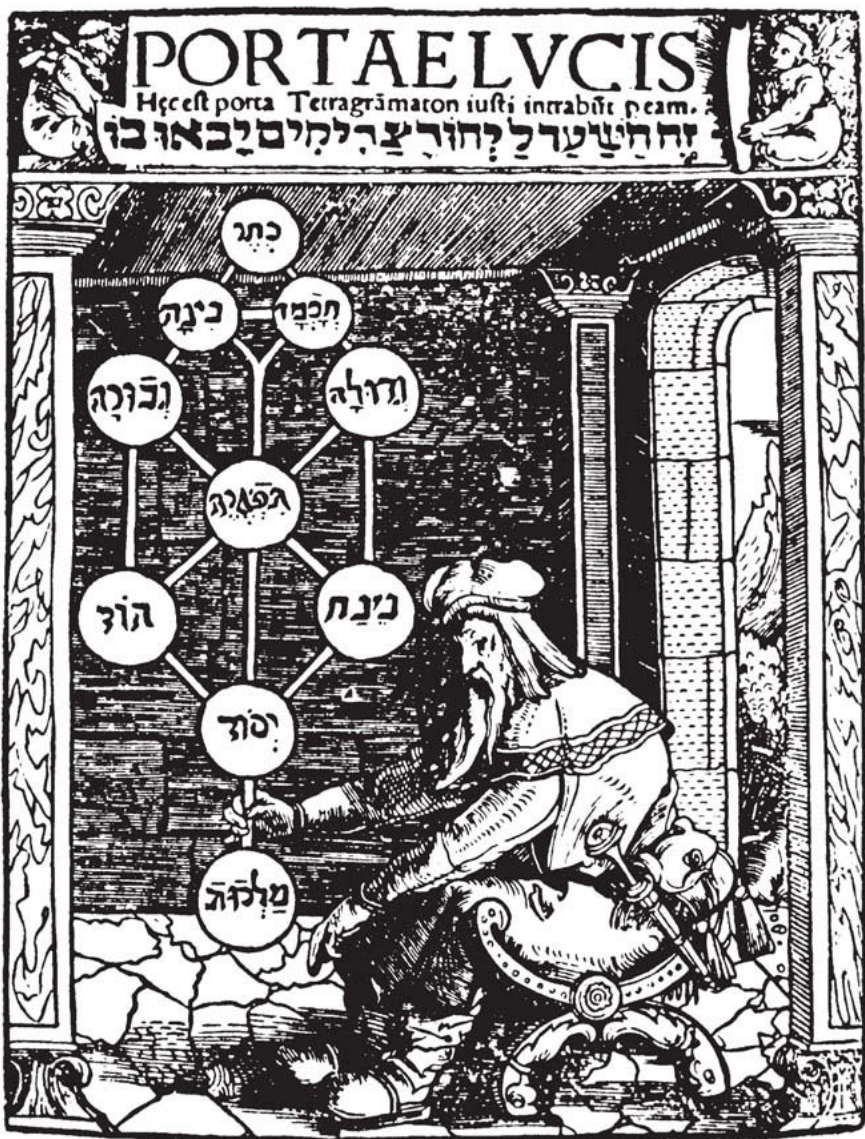
The Martinist uses two “books” in this work: one is the Book of Nature and the other the Book of Humanity. Nature is “the true horn of plenty for your present state . . . it is in effect the meeting-point of all created virtues. Thus, all these Divine virtues, ordained by the Great Principle so as to cooperate in our rehabilitation are always in existence around us.” Divine wisdom has sown the symbols of its virtues all around us that we may learn to benefit from them. Thus, Nature constitutes an endless source of knowledge for the initiate.

The second “book” entrusted to the Martinist for meditation is the Book of Humanity. For us, this is the essential book. According to Saint-Martin, we are the “one book written by the hand of the Divine”; it is within us that all the laws of the universe are written and “all these fundamental and important truths exist within all of us before they exist in any book.” It is first within ourselves that we must search. Reading the Book of Humanity, therefore, leads to introspection and allows the return to the center of being, the heart. Saint-Martin tells us that the heart “is the organ and the place where all our faculties are centered and where they manifest their action; and as these faculties relate to all the kingdoms of which we are composed, namely the corporeal, the spiritual, and the divine,” the heart is “the meeting place and continuous expression of the soul and the spirit.” The return of a being to its center, this inner contemplation, is the true prayer, because it “imbues our soul with this sacred charm, this divine Magian wisdom which is the secret life of all beings.”

The work of the Woman or Man of Desire provokes an inner transformation, a “spiritual inspiration” which heralds an inner rebirth. Once born as a new man or new woman, we go through all the stages of evolution until we reach complete maturity. Once we become “human-spirit,” we will be able to fulfill our ministry. In this mission, we shall accomplish that which was our original destiny, that is, to be the active intermediary between the Divine and the Universe. Communication will be reestablished between the high and low, and Earth will be able to find the Sabbath. Humanity will be able to participate in the reintegration of the whole into the One and will become again the Temple of the Divine.

People of peace, men and women of desire, such is the splendor of the Temple in which you will one day have the right to take your place. Such privilege should astonish you less, however, than your ability to commence building it down here, your ability, in fact, to adorn it at every moment of your existence. Remember the teachings of the sages, “as above, so below”; and imagine that you can contribute to this analogy by seeing to it that
“as below, so above.”

—Louis Claude de Saint-Martin



Tree of the Sephiroth as the "Portal of Light," the doorway of the Tetragrammaton through which the Just will enter.

A Brief History of Martinism

The foundations of the Martinist teachings are the writings of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin and Martinès de Pasqually. The story of these two great mystics begins in the early eighteenth century. In the midst of the great political and economic unrest leading to the French Revolution, France paused to listen to a debonair, inspiring, mysterious man who awed both the nobility and the people with the high level of mysticism contained in his published writings. This author signed his books "The Unknown Philosopher." Where did his great understanding come from? He could have been easily mistaken for a Sophist, yet he possessed the gentleness and profound understanding of a philanthropist.

This person was Louis Claude de Saint-Martin. He dared to invade the salons of the wealthy aristocrats to challenge their jaded interests with inspiring discourses. He allowed himself to become the idol of French society with but one purpose—to draw their minds away from their meaningless, self-indulgent existence to contemplate humanity's true position in the universe. He wished them to comprehend the natural connection existing between the Divine, humanity, and the universe, and to be conscious of the special place we once occupied in our original state and what happened to us during the course of time. Above all, he wanted them to learn how to regain this glorious former state.

The published writings of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin were read in France, Germany, England, and even in Russia. The knowledge which he imparted became known under the name of Martinism. This great teacher refused to take credit for what he taught, however, instead paying tribute to his initiators. To those who were worthy, he divulged the secret of a higher knowledge they could access. To attain it, they had to transform themselves, and their preparation was through initiation.

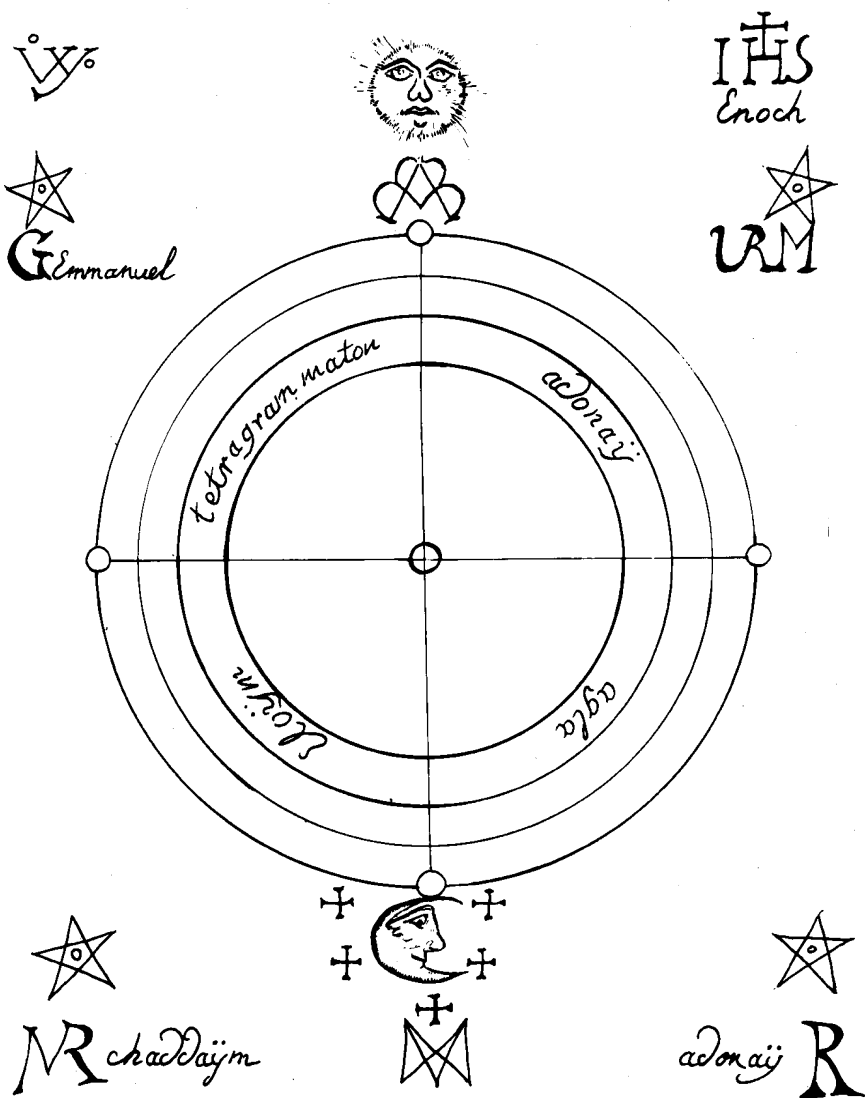
The person to whom Louis Claude de Saint-Martin gave credit for his teachings was Martinès de Pasqually, a powerful mystic, adept,

and theurgist of the eighteenth century. Tradition indicates he was well versed in the secret wisdom embodied in the esoteric teachings of Egypt, Greece, and the East. Shortly after 1760, Pasqually went to Bordeaux and established the headquarters for his order, The Masonic Élus-Cohen Knights of the Universe.

Saint-Martin, then an officer in the French Army, learned that one of his fellow officers was a member of this Order of the Élus-Cohens (Elect Priests). Through this friend, Saint-Martin met with the Supreme Master of the Order, Martinès de Pasqually, and was immediately captivated by the man's goals and teachings.

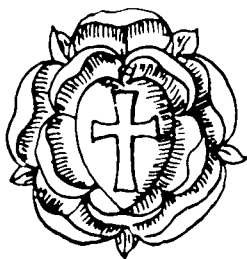
After due preparation and demonstration of his worthiness, Saint-Martin was initiated into the Order of the Élus-Cohens in the year 1765, at age 22. He eventually attained the highest degree of that Order, that of *Réau-Croix*. But Saint-Martin was not entirely won over by Pasqually's methods, which called for theurgic rites, very complicated ceremonies concerned with perceivable manifestations. Saint-Martin often asked Pasqually, "Master, is all that necessary in order to know the Divine?"

In 1772, personal matters compelled Pasqually to leave France for Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where he died in 1774. Without its founder, the Order progressively fell dormant. His two ablest disciples were Saint-Martin and Jean-Baptiste Willermoz. Willermoz joined with some members of the Élus-Cohens and the Order of the Strict German Templar Observance. They reorganized themselves by adopting part of the theoretical teachings of Martinès de Pasqually to create an order called "The Charitable Knights of the Holy City." Others joined this Order, but Saint-Martin, seeing that they were not so much seeking the truth as the Philosopher's Stone, chose to follow an independent path.



Theurgic diagram of the Élus-Cohens from an original document kept in the French National Library.

Saint-Martin traveled to England, Italy, and Germany to study humanity and nature and to compare the findings of others with his own. It was in Strasbourg, a city in northeast France, that he became acquainted with the works of Jakob Boehme (1575–1624), which revolutionized his whole mystical life. Jakob Boehme became for Saint-Martin his “second teacher.” In order to read Boehme’s texts in their original language, Saint-Martin learned German at the age of forty-five. Through a study of Boehme, he realized that true initiation surpasses theurgic rituals; there is no need to call upon intermediary powers of creation through complex and often dangerous ceremonies. Initiation can only be produced with the heart. This is what is called “The Way of the Heart.”



Design from a plate excerpted from the book
Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries.

From this point until the end of his life, Saint-Martin made a daily task of translating the texts of Jakob Boehme. “I owe my entry into the higher truths to Martinès de Pasqually, and I owe the most important steps I have made into these truths to Jakob Boehme.”

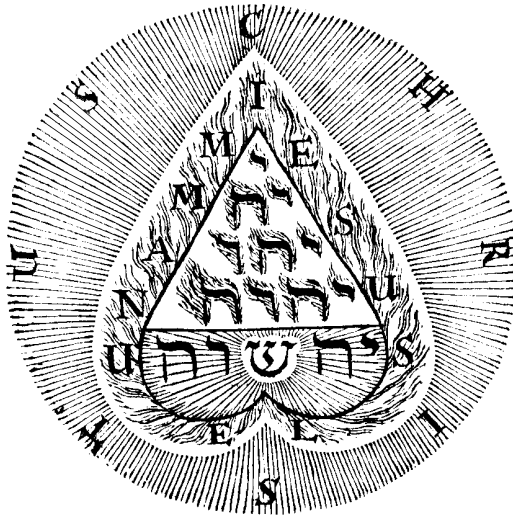
Saint-Martin published his first work in 1775 under the title *Of Errors and Of Truth, or Humanity Recalled to the Universal Principle of Science*. The book’s purpose was to combat the atheism of his time. As with all his other writings, this was published under the pseudonym of “The Unknown Philosopher.”

During the many years of his literary activity, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin wrote numerous works, including *The Natural View*

of the Connections Existing Between the Divine, Humanity, and the Universe; The Person of Desire; The New Person; The Spirit of Things; and The Ministry of the Human-Spirit. He also left to posterity a revealing and inspiring personal correspondence, as well as a few posthumous works. In addition, he published translations of the writings of the one he called his "most dear B" (Jakob Boehme): *The Birth of Dawn*; *The Three Principles of the Divine Essence*; *Forty Questions on the Soul*; *The Triple Life of Humanity*; and *Six Points and Nine Texts*.

The philosophical works of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin aroused much interest. In order to study his teachings, a circle of disciples was formed, known by the name of Society of Intimates. This society was working for the purest forms of spirituality. Saint-Martin accepted very few men and women into his society, always exercising extreme prudence.

Despite the political and social turbulence of the French Revolution, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin was never seriously harassed during the Reign of Terror, or at any other time during the Revolution. On October 13, 1803, at the age of sixty, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin went through transition following a stroke.



The name of the Divine which burns in the heart and soul of humanity.
From the *Collected Works of Jakob Boehme*.

Modern Martinism

Following Louis Claude de Saint-Martin's death, the Martinist disciples were not very active. The traditional teachings and ceremonies were privately transmitted by groups of initiators, spreading principally throughout Italy, Germany, and France. After a long period of secrecy, a great effort was undertaken in 1888 to restructure Martinism into an initiatic order. It is due to the efforts of Dr. Gérard Encausse (Papus) and Augustin Chaboseau that this order survived and took on the name Martinist Order. Their efforts were rewarded with success in 1891 with the formation of a Supreme Council of the Martinist Order, consisting of twenty-one members with authority over all the lodges in the world. Papus, a well-known French esotericist, was elected the first President of the Supreme Council. Under his brilliant and tireless direction, the Order grew rapidly, and by 1900, it could account for several hundred members in most parts of the world. Papus soon became an authority on Martinism, and his works constitute a precious source of information for Martinists and all those interested in the tradition.

World War I (1914–1918) greatly affected the growth and activities of the Order. Papus died heroically carrying out his duties as a medical doctor, and many other leaders and members of the Order did not survive. It was finally revived in 1931 due to the efforts of Augustin Chaboseau, the co-founder of the Martinist Order with Papus. He, along with the two other remaining survivors of the 1891 Supreme Council, created the Traditional Martinist Order to distinguish it from several movements which wrongly claimed to be the successors of Papus. Augustin Chaboseau, who was a descendant of an uninterrupted filiation back to Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, served as Grand Master and President of the Supreme Council until his transition on January 2, 1946.

Ralph Maxwell Lewis, Imperator of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, was received into the Traditional Martinist

Order on September 1, 1939, by Georges Lagrèze, legate and representative of Augustin Chaboseau. Consequently, the charters, manifestos, and all other documents needed for the promotion and development of Martinism in the Americas were transmitted to Ralph M. Lewis just prior to the oppression which the Traditional Martinist Order had to endure in Europe during the Second World War.

Currently, the Supreme Council of the Traditional Martinist Order is directed and presided over by the Sovereign Grand Master, Christian Bernard, Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC. The Traditional Martinist Order goes back through an initiatic transmission which is absolutely authentic, to the purest sources of Martinism. Thus, the Martinist light has been able to shine, spread, and increase, without interruption, its original luster.

Becoming a Martinist



There are two levels of Martinist affiliation:

I. Oratory or Home Study membership:

To all those interested in pursuing the Martinist teachings, we offer an Oratory or Home Study program. This type of membership entitles you to receive at home four Martinist discourses every month, to be studied in a manner that will be indicated to you. Although self-initiation is not part of the Martinist system of study, you will receive a ritual to mark the beginning of each level in your Oratory work.

Oratory study will familiarize you with the theoretical teachings of the TMO, however it will not offer the three traditional initiations, which confer upon you the status of a true Martinist initiate. Instead you become a student of Martinism.

To enroll yourself in this type of membership, please complete the enclosed application and send it with appropriate dues made payable to the Traditional Martinist Order. If it is accepted, you will receive your first packet of discourses within a short time. Then please join us online at www.martinistcommunity.org.

If you do not wish to receive Home Oratory Lessons but only to join a local group, please enroll with the Grand Heptad as a "Heptad Only" member.

2. Membership in a local Heptad:

The traditional method of Martinist membership is offered through initiation and learning in a Martinist Heptad. The word "Heptad" comes from the Greek *hepta*, which designates the number seven. Thus, a Heptad is a local body under the supervision of the seven officers in charge. Work in the Heptad is conducted in the strictest traditional manner, and initiations are conferred with the active physical presence of the candidate and an initiator, who is an officer duly initiated and empowered by the directives of the Martinist Tradition to initiate others.

This form of affiliation is open to those who are able to attend the meetings or classes, called "conventicles," which are held either weekly or monthly at the local Heptad. These meetings are conducted in the Heptad temple, and include a Martinist ritual followed by an active discussion among class members and the class master of the concepts presented in the Heptad discourse. Members who complete their studies and initiations in the Heptad, which takes a minimum of six years, become full-fledged initiates in a chain of Light extending back to Louis Claude de Saint-Martin himself. Smaller Martinist groups, known as Ateliers (Workshops), also offer classes and the Associate Degree Initiation.

If this type of membership appeals to you, please first complete the enclosed application for admission into the Traditional Martinist Order, choosing either "Home Oratory" (receiving lessons at home) or "Heptad Only" (no lessons at home) Membership, and enclose the dues applicable for the category of membership you have selected.

Once you have been accepted as a member of the Grand Heptad, please join us at www.martinistcommunity.org to connect with other Martinists and to find the Heptad nearest you. Membership in a local group will require modest dues to help support the expenses of the local Heptad or Atelier.

For those who live in an area where there is no Heptad or Atelier but who desire to be initiated into the Martinist Tradition, the option is offered to receive the first Martinist initiation only (the Associate Initiation) at a distant Heptad or Atelier or at a regional convention, if it is being offered. This allows those who are unable to participate in the classes and activities of a local group with regularity, or who live in a place where none are available, to attend general Martinist conventicles held during national or worldwide Rosicrucian conventions, or to visit a nearby group on occasion for special events (such as the official visit of a Provincial Master, the annual Feast of Ileschouah, or a General Conventicle with a guest speaker, etc.).

Members of the Traditional Martinist Order are free to discontinue their membership at any time. If they are Home Oratory members, they must return the teachings that they have received to the Grand Master of the Order. Heptad Only members who wish to resign for any reason are required to keep confidential any information they have received during their active affiliation in the local group.

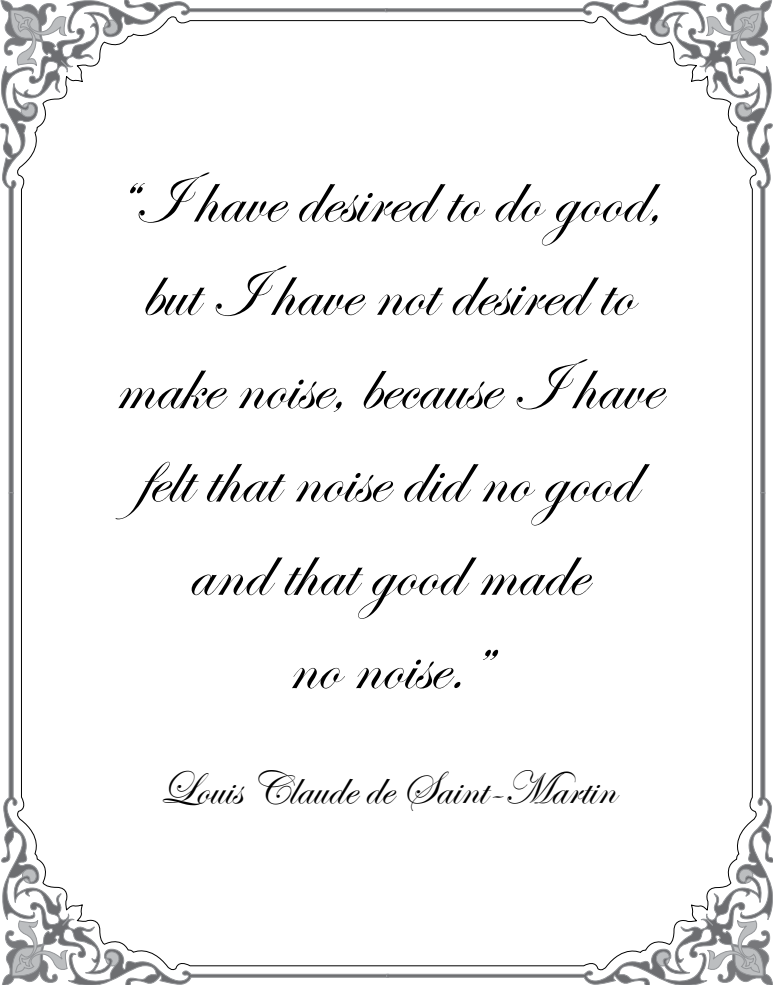
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*"I have desired to do good,
but I have not desired to
make noise, because I have
felt that noise did no good
and that good made
no noise."*

Louis Claude de Saint-Martin

