

Martin Charles

CHARLES. Her cow is sick.  
MARTIN. We get a burton in the plate, but you can bet they have a penny for a pint.  
OLE. Excuse me, Father —  
MARTIN. Brother Olf!  
CHARLES. Times are hard, Martin. But we needn't take it out on the village.  
MARTIN. Who else can we take it out on? We haven't seen a pilgrim in four months, and our saint hasn't worked a miracle in thirteen years!  
~~PEASANT WOMAN. (Leaving Olf's shop.) (Charles notices Martin's sack.)~~  
away a few feet. Peasant Woman continues praying. Olf sets down his sack.)  
MARTIN. If I'm to be your successor, as you've promised —  
CHARLES. So that's it ...  
MARTIN. I just want to be sure there's a monastery left by the time it's mine.  
CHARLES. I've given my life to this order ...  
MARTIN. I know ...  
CHARLES. Rebuilt its walls with these hands, fed the congregation with my own bread ...  
MARTIN. All the more pity if we close our doors for the lack of a penny a prayer.  
CHARLES. We won't. Not while I'm alive. And we will not corrupt our ideals for a penny. When His Holiness arrives —  
MARTIN. We've heard nothing from Brother Felix for weeks.  
CHARLES. And when he arrives with His Holiness I have no doubt that pilgrims will follow. The Pope's never been to these parts before, it's a stamp of approval.  
MARTIN. And what if he never shows up? After all the preparations, after all the money we spent on the chair ...  
CHARLES. He gave me his word.  
MARTIN. His word.  
CHARLES. You'd doubt the word of the Pope?  
MARTIN. Of course not. Did you get it in writing?  
CHARLES. Martin ...  
MARTIN. Well, we should have promised him a miracle.  
CHARLES. You can't just promise the Pope a miracle.

MARTIN. You have to! He's not going to ride a thousand miles to see a dead body, they have them in Rome.  
CHARLES. He'll be here.  
MARTIN. When?  
CHARLES. Humanity has waited twelve centuries for the Second Coming; why are you so impatient?  
MARTIN. Because we're starving! (He collects himself.) I don't know when you last checked the pantry, but there's nothing in it. The chickens are gone, the sheep are gone ... There's scarcely a pauper's portion for each of us, and nothing for the paupers themselves.  
CHARLES. We took a vow of poverty ...  
MARTIN. Yes, to help the helpless, not become them. If the Pope doesn't show up today or tomorrow, we'll have to eat the donkeys. (Of Charles' parchment.) What's that?  
CHARLES. Um ... nothing.  
MARTIN. Another request?  
CHARLES. The shoemaker's shop by the river flooded.  
MARTIN. (Taking it.) I suppose they're asking for bed and board.  
CHARLES. That was the general idea.  
MARTIN. Very well. (He crosses to his pile of parchment pages and rifles through them.) We'll put them in line behind the blacksmith's family, the weaver's widow, and the leper with the limp. (He inserts Charles' page in the stack.)  
CHARLES. In line?  
MARTIN. That's what I've been trying to tell you: There's nothing left. Either Brother Felix shows up with the Pope or we're out of the charity business forever.  
CHARLES. Perhaps if we redirect our prayers ...  
MARTIN. Charles: We need to be practical now. If we can't do good with our faith alone, then faith alone's no good.  
CHARLES. (Determined.) The Pope will come. The pilgrims will come, the alms will come. (Beat. Less certain.) They have to.  
OLE. (Beat.) I hate to intrude, Father ...  
MARTIN. (Noticing Peasant Woman.) For God's sake ... (Thinking it's about him, Olf stops short, but Martin walks determinedly past him to Peasant Woman, grabs her shoulder and turns her around again.) You said one prayer.  
PEASANT WOMAN. (To Charles.) My husband's sick too.

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