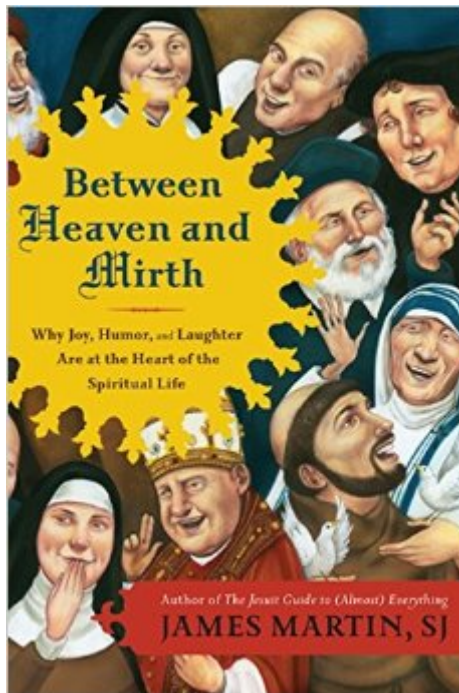


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Between Heaven And Mirth: Why Joy, Humor, And Laughter Are At The Heart Of The Spiritual Life



Synopsis

Between Heaven and Mirth will make any reader smile. . . . Father Martin reminds us that happiness is the good God's own goal for us. • "Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York
From The Colbert Report's "official chaplain" • James Martin, SJ, author of the New York Times bestselling The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything, comes a revolutionary look at how joy, humor, and laughter can change our lives and save our spirits. A Jesuit priest with a busy media ministry, Martin understands the intersections between spirituality and daily life. In Between Heaven and Mirth, he uses scriptural passages, the lives of the saints, the spiritual teachings of other traditions, and his own personal reflections to show us why joy is the inevitable result of faith, because a healthy spirituality and a healthy sense of humor go hand-in-hand with God's great plan for humankind.

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Customer Reviews

The nicest compliment I ever received came from a Catholic deacon at a parish in Iowa. My family and I were getting ready to move out of the area (my one-year fellowship at the local Catholic hospital was ending) and he was explaining why our family would be missed: "It's been so nice having you here. You and your family live the faith joyfully." This compliment came back to me while reading Jesuit Fr. James Martin's new book, *Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor, and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life*, which hits shelves today. Fr. Martin has crafted a wonderful book highlighting the rich tradition of faithful humor and joyful spirituality. He takes dead aim on the gloomy, pessimistic side of Christianity, arguing that it is not only antithetical to the

teachings of Christ, but hurtful to the Church's mission of evangelization. If you're looking for a quick summary of Fr. Martin's insights, skip to chapter four (helpfully entitled "Happiness Attracts: 11 1/2 Serious Reasons for Good Humor"). This is a similar list to the keynote talk I heard Fr. Martin give at the 2011 NCCL conference. At the top of the list is the fact that happiness and humor are ways to witness to our faith: "Joy, humor, and laughter show one's faith in God. For Christians, an essentially hopeful outlook shows people that you believe in the Resurrection, in the power of life over death, and in the power of love over hatred. Don't you think that after the Resurrection Jesus's disciples were joyful? 'All will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of things will be well,' as the fourteenth-century mystic Blessed Julian of Norwich said. For believers in general, humor shows your trust in God, who will ultimately make all things well. Joy reveals faith.

Sometimes you'll find a book written by precisely the right person. When you see such a book you know that the author was born to write it. For instance, with all of its beauty and intelligence, *Catholicism* had to be written by Fr. Robert Barron. Likewise, nobody else could have compiled *The Future Church* like expert journalist John Allen, Jr.. And only a dreaming philologist like J.R.R. Tolkien was capable of producing *The Lord of the Rings*. While these books are rare, one new title fits the mold. *Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor, and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life* (Harper One, hardcover, 263 pages) was written by Fr. James Martin, one of the funniest, joyous, most light-hearted religious figures in America and the perfect person to write it. Martin is the rare priest who personifies levity. Whether writing articles in *America Magazine* or exchanging one-liners with Stephen Colbert--Martin is the official "Colbert Show chaplain"--he just exudes happiness wherever he is. *Between Heaven and Mirth* captures this attitude and shares it with the rest of us. The pages are full of humor and the jokes roll one after another. But the book isn't just a collection of jokes. An early section, for instance, explores the humor of Jesus. Many people see Jesus as a joyless judge, a sober teacher unconcerned with humor and laughter. Part of this is because many of Jesus' jokes are tinged with first-century Jewish wit and therefore fly right over our heads.

Folks who have been visiting this space know that I have a soft spot in my heart for the writings of Fr. James Martin. You see, the very first post written here, by Webster Bull [...], was about his book "My Life With The Saints." I also read that book and enjoyed it immensely. Fr. Jim, see, has what I like to think of as a unique, folksy style, that appeals to many. Stephen Colbert has noticed. Perhaps it's because Martin is so effortless to read. The words just seem to pour off of the page and directly

into your subconscious, and before you know it, you're on the next chapter. In the particular case of this book, the subject matter is appealing because, and bear with the rhetorical question, how many of us have met the bane of St. Teresa of Avila during our journey along "the Way?" I'm referring to the "sour faced saints" that she begged God to spare us from. If you can find a way to give them this book surreptitiously, it would do them a world of good. But forgetting about the speck in the eyes of others, and turning to the planks in our own, which Fr. Jim uses as an example of the tomfoolery of Our Lord, this latest book will help you along the narrow path with a lighter step. You see, the subtitle of this slim volume is "Why Joy, Humor, and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life," and though there are plenty of sour moments through this "vail of tears," Martin's book reminds us to remember that there is a time and place for everything, which he assiduously goes about pointing out for us through both biblical passages (Ecclesiastes in this case) and numerous other citations gleaned from the lives of the saints and other real world examples of lived, not just theoretical, faith.

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