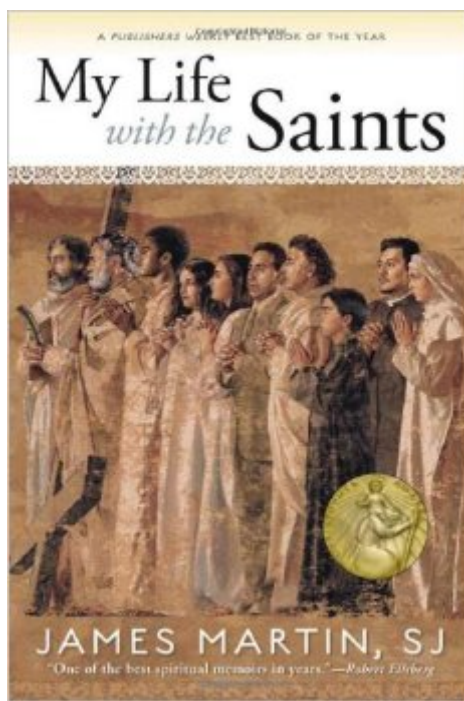


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My Life With The Saints



Synopsis

One of Publishers Weekly's Best Books of the Year • Winner of a Christopher Award • Winner of a Catholic Press Association Book Award Meet some surprising friends of God in this warm and wonderful memoir James Martin has led an entirely modern life: from a lukewarm Catholic childhood, to an education at the Wharton School of Business, to the executive fast track at General Electric, to ministry as a Jesuit priest, to a busy media career in Manhattan. But at every step he has been accompanied by some surprising friends—the saints of the Catholic Church. For many, these holy men and women remain just historical figures. For Martin, they are intimate companions. "They pray for me, offer me comfort, give me examples of discipleship, and help me along the way," he writes. The author is both engaging and specific about the help and companionship he has received. When his pride proves trouble—some, he seeks help from Thomas Merton, the monk and writer who struggled with egotism. In sickness he turns to Thérèse of Lisieux, who knew about the boredom and self-pity that come with illness. Joan of Arc shores up his flagging courage. Aloysius Gonzaga deepens his compassion. Pope John XXIII helps him to laugh and not take life too seriously. Martin's inspiring, witty, and always fascinating memoir encompasses saints from the whole of Christian history—from St. Peter to Dorothy Day. His saintly friends include Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Mother Teresa, and other beloved figures. They accompany the author on a lifelong pilgrimage that includes stops in a sunlit square of a French town, a quiet retreat house on a New England beach, the gritty housing projects of inner-city Chicago, the sprawling slums of Nairobi, and a gorgeous Baroque church in Rome. This rich, vibrant, stirring narrative shows how the saints can help all of us find our way in the world.

"In a cross between Holden Caulfield and Thomas Merton, James Martin has written one of the best spiritual memoirs in years." —Robert Ellsberg, author of *All Saints* "It isn't often that a new and noteworthy book comes along in this genre, but we have reason to celebrate *My Life with the Saints*. It is earmarked for longevity. It will endure as an important and uncommon contribution to religious writing." —Doris Donnelly, *America* "An account . . . that is as delightful as it is instructive." —*First Things* "In delightful prose Martin recounts incidents, both perilous and funny, that have prompted him to turn to the saints, and in doing so shows us a new way of living out a devotion that is as old and universal as the Church." —Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ, Fordham University "An outstanding and often hilarious memoir." —Publishers Weekly "Martin's final word for us is as Jungian as it is Catholic: God does not want us to be like Mother Teresa or Dorothy Day. God wants us to be most fully ourselves." —*The Washington Post Book World*

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Customer Reviews

I knew I'd probably enjoy James Martin's MY LIFE WITH THE SAINTS as soon as I started reading it. I've read other books by Martin and have found him to have the rare gift of writing about himself and his experiences while at the same time creating a book that really isn't about him. Anyone who has read even portions of IN GOOD COMPANY or THIS OUR EXILE will probably agree. Martin uses his own experiences to share something larger, namely faith and how we find God. Some critics have even called him a modern Thomas Merton, something Martin would probably eschew (see his chapter on Merton and you'll know what I mean), but like Merton, James Martin is using his skills as a writer to articulate faith in a way that is inviting for those who are searching and engaging for people looking for something deeper. Enjoying MY LIFE WITH THE SAINTS did not surprise me, but what did impress me was Martin's original approach to the lives of the saints. This is not a dry collection of short biographies of well known Catholics, most of whom are canonized saints, and are somewhat well known. It's a combination biography of the saints and memoir. We learn about the person's life, but we also learn how the saint touched Martin's life in a somewhat chronological order. The saints and people included are not unexpected. Any self respecting Jesuit would have to include Ignatius Loyola, Aloysius Gonzaga, and Pedro Arrupe. Since Martin is a writer and strong voice for social justice, Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day were not far fetched figures to include. Therese of Lisieux and the Apostle Peter are again beloved and no surprise. The fact the writing is concise and engaging is again, no surprise. What impressed me as being a great way of writing about saints is Martin's organization.

MY LIFE WITH THE SAINTS is a deeply reflective and often moving treatment of several Catholic saints, some ancient, some modern, some declared, some yet-to-be, some contemplative, some active. Their stories are told in the context of a young priest's encounter with them in his formation as a Jesuit. James Martin, S.J. paints short vignettes of the lives of the saints as he meets them along the path of his vocation, from graduating The Wharton School of Business to serving as a new priest. Martin's story is not that of a pious Catholic school graduate who was always steeped in traditional Catholic culture. Neither is he a particular rebel or outcast who's come back into the fold. Martin is, rather, a kind of ordinary American guy who turns out to have had a vocation to the priesthood. What's more, as shown in this book, he has a true gift as a spiritual writer. I once had a spiritual director who referred to everyone as "saints"; from the perspective of "holiness," I know I sure didn't feel like one, even less, perhaps, these many years later. Most of my acquaintances, then and now, joke about *not* being "saints," that they are too fond of nightlife and generally having a good time to be regarded like someone they think of as pious and self-abnegating. Indeed, Ambrose Bierce described a saint as "A dead sinner revised and edited." He continued (THE DEVIL'S DICTIONARY), "The Duchess of Orleans relates that the irreverent old calumniator, Marshall Villeroi, who in his youth had known St. Francis de Sales, said, on hearing him called saint: 'I am delighted to hear that Monsieur de Sales is a saint. He was fond of saying indelicate things, and used to cheat at cards. In other respects he was a perfect gentleman, though a fool.

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