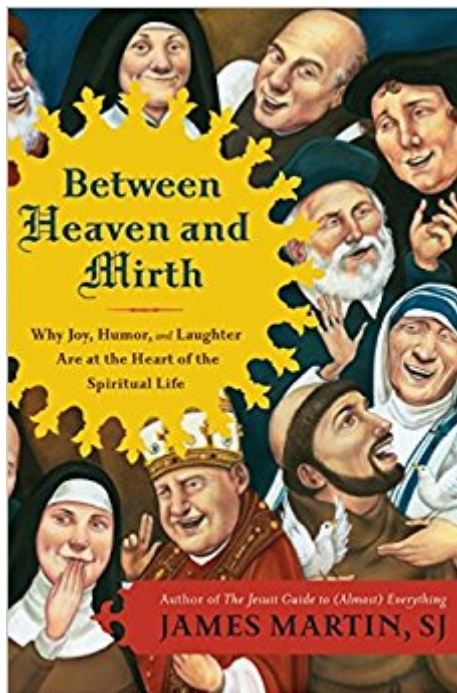


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Between Heaven And Mirth: Why Joy, Humor, And Laughter Are At The Heart Of The Spiritual Life



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 “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.

Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: HarperOne; Reprint edition (September 11, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0062024256

ISBN-13: 978-0062024251

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 204 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #30,805 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #75 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Humor > Self-Help & Psychology #163 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Catholicism #266 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects

Customer Reviews

“Winsome and comical but also provocative and thoughtful, Martin’s book is a breath of fresh air for those who would take religion and themselves too seriously.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) “Martin’s book suggests numerous ways to foster the strength of gracious good humor and makes a wonderful case for replacing suffering and sadness with an abundance of levity and joy.” (Booklist) “Between Heaven and Mirth couldn’t come at a better time since both individuals and religious institutions are feeling the pressure of hard times. Joy and a playful sense of humor are great antidotes to hopelessness and helplessness.” (Spirituality &

Practice)“Between Heaven and Mirth is delicious, well-crafted and well-paced. Martin draws on his own experience as a priest and demonstrates both a light touch and an impressive command of his subject.” (Harvey Cox, the Washington Post Book World)“Between Heaven and Mirth uses biblical passages, personal anecdotes and saints’ stories to show the importance of humor to the spiritual life.” (Catholic News Service)“Holy people are joyful people, Martin says. The author suggests ways that humor and laughter can be incorporated into prayer. This is a book that will make you laugh. Sprinkled throughout are many funny stories and jokes.” (Christian Century)“If you ever got in trouble as a child for laughing in church, prepare to be vindicated.” (Scott Alessi, U.S. Catholic)

In *Between Heaven and Mirth*, James Martin, SJ, assures us that God wants us to experience joy, to cultivate a sense of holy humor, and to laugh at life’s absurdities—not to mention our own humanity. Father Martin invites believers to rediscover the importance of humor and laughter in our daily lives and to embrace an essential truth: faith leads to joy. Holy people are joyful people, says Father Martin, offering countless examples of healthy humor and purposeful levity in the stories of biblical heroes and heroines, and in the lives of the saints and the world’s great spiritual masters. He shows us how the parables are often the stuff of comedy, and how the gospels reveal Jesus to be a man with a palpable sense of joy and even playfulness. In fact, Father Martin argues compellingly, thinking about a Jesus without a sense of humor may be close to heretical. Drawing on Scripture, sharing anecdotes from his experiences as a lifelong Catholic, a Jesuit for over twenty years, and a priest for more than ten, and including amusing and insightful sidebars, footnotes, and jokes, Father Martin illustrates how joy, humor, and laughter help us to live more spiritual lives, understand ourselves and others better, and more fully appreciate God’s presence among us. Practical how-to advice helps us use humor to show our faith, embrace our humanity, put things into perspective, open our minds, speak truth, demonstrate courage, challenge power, learn hospitality, foster effective human relations, deepen our relationship with God, and ... enjoy ourselves. Inviting God to lighten our hearts, we can enjoy a little heaven on earth.

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." This may seem self-evident, but the number of dour and humorless Christians would seem to indicate that it bears repeating. Fr. Martin goes on to extol humor's virtues in the area of health, spirituality, hospitality, play, and interpersonal relations. What's more, the book is funny. Fr. Martin sprinkles jokes and humor from the saints liberally throughout the text, including stories about Pope John XXIII; Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ; Dorothy Day; various Jesuit saints; and, of course, Jesus! In fact, I think his look at humor in Sacred Scripture (both Old and New Testament) will be especially eye-opening for many people. As Fr. Martin points out, it is easy to overlook the humor in the Bible: "We've simply heard the stories too many times, and they become stale, like overly repeated jokes. 'The words seem to us like old coins,' [Elton Trueblood] writes, 'in which the edges have been worn smooth and the engravings have become almost indistinguishable.' Trueblood recounts the tale of his four-year-old son, who, upon hearing the Gospel story about seeing the speck of dust in your neighbor's eye and ignoring the log in your own, laughed uproariously. The young boy readily saw the humor missed by those who have heard the story dozens of times." Besides the Bible Fr. Martin recommends numerous books on humor and spirituality (he admits up front that his book is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject) and even gives a list of his favorite funny movies. A quick note about the book's intended audience: some Catholics may wonder why a book about spirituality by a Catholic priest includes insights from other Christian traditions as well as Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism. Fr. Martin writes for a broad audience, and I hope that his Protestant and non-Christian fans from the Huffington Post and the Colbert Report will pick up the

book; I think many would be surprised at the relevance of its subject. I heartily recommend *Between Heaven and Mirth* for anyone interested in furthering their own spiritual journey -- or just looking for a few new jokes from their repertoire. The Church's rich tradition of faithful joy is a treasure that deserves to be shared, for humor is a gift from God. Or, as Hilaire Belloc so succinctly put it: *Wherever the Catholic sun doth shine, There's always laughter and good red wine.* At least I've always found it so. *Benedicamus Domino!* Disclosure: I received a review copy of this book for free from TLC Book Tours.

This book is a great look on how humor and joy aids our spiritually and our relationship with God! Written from a Catholic perspective but also includes references and jokes from figures of other Christian denominations and Jewish figures as well. The author is down to earth and brings in many of his own personal stories as well (which are, more than not, hilarious!). Definitely recommend this to anyone who is seeking for more joy in their life!

I purchased this book after seeing the author on *The Colbert Report*. He's been on the show a few times and I was always impressed by his answers. I really enjoyed Martin's approach to joy, laughter, and humor in our lives. We usually talk about "experiences with God" as solemn, deep, heavy-emotional moments. Very rarely do we say we meet with God during times of laughter and joy. God created laughter and he loves to be a part of it. Humor can build us up, humble us, and destroy us. It is a powerful tool. Some of my favorite quotes: "Humor helps us to endure suffering by giving us something of a break and reminding us that pain is not the last word for the one who believes in God" "Joy is not a selfish thing to seek, but a selfless thing to find" "Joy, deeper than happiness, is a virtue that finds its foundation in the knowledge that we loved by God"

I am a big fan of James Martin, but was a little disappointed by the book. Themes were repeated in numerous chapters, as though he had written them as stand alone essays and then stitched them together for a book. The concepts were all good- although I think he failed to draw a good distinction between humor/mirth and joy. I believe both are essential, but they are fundamentally different. One can certainly be humorous, but fail to be joyful.

A friend who believed in biblical myths, asked me to read this book. She passed away shortly afterward.

This book was recommended to me by my Spiritual Advisor, and, boy, was she right! Fr. Martin shows how there can be so much joy in scripture and in our faith, if we just look for it. There is a discernment process called RAA, which is "recognize, appreciate and affirm". It can be used for many discernments, but especially for reading this book. . Over and over the author, (who by the way has a delightful sense of humor) shows how simply applying humor to a situation can make life not only easier, but fun. Recognize it, appreciate it and affirm it inwardly and then to others. Father Martin does not negate or fail to recognize the agonies we all go through, he just shows how with faith and a little humor, our glass will once again not only be half full, but full to overflowing. As a special gift, Father Martin shows how Jesus, and His Father, use humor to get their points across! (You have to love Elijah's response to Ahab's wimpiness!) A great read, maybe a chapter every few days, let it sink in. Enjoy.

Like all the books by Father Martin, most readable, interesting, funny, and spiritual.

Would recommend to anyone who would like to explore the tenets of spirituality. Wonderfully written and engaging.

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