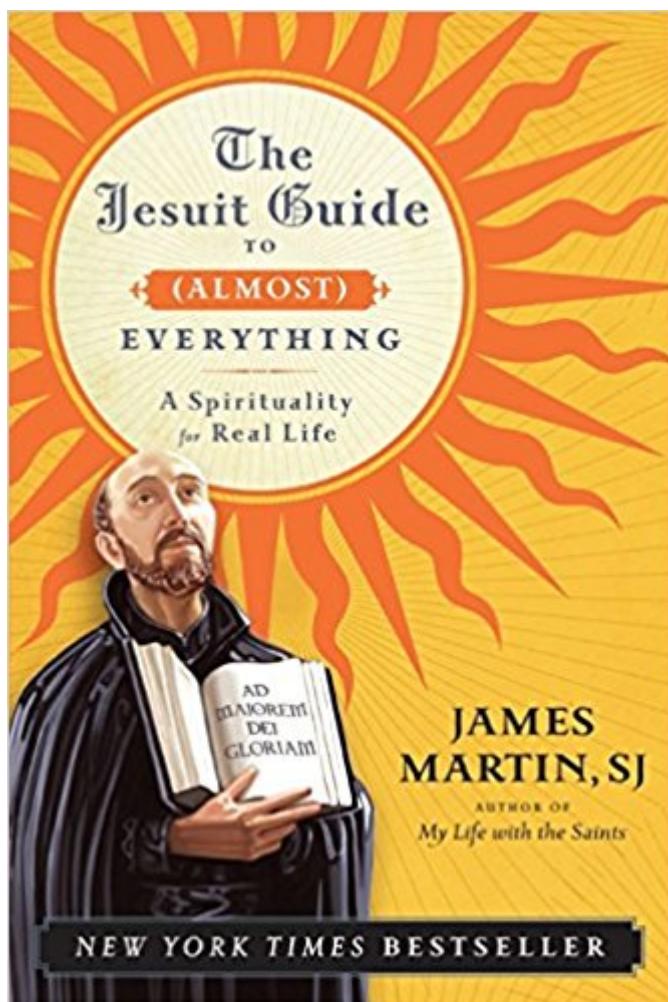


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# The Jesuit Guide To (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality For Real Life



## Synopsis

The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything by the Revered James Martin, SJ (My Life with the Saints) is a practical spiritual guidebook based on the life and teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. Centered around the Ignatian goal of "finding God in all things," The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything shows us how to manage relationships, money, work, prayer, and decision-making, all while keeping a sense of humor. Filled with user-friendly examples, humorous stories, and anecdotes from the heroic and inspiring lives of Jesuit saints and average priests and brothers, The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything is sure to appeal to fans of Kathleen Norris, Richard Rohr, Anne Lamott, and other Christian Spiritual writers.

## Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: HarperOne; 32097th edition (March 6, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061432695

ISBN-13: 978-0061432699

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1.1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 553 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #4,194 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Catholicism #21 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects #81 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Living > Spiritual Growth

## Customer Reviews

Ignatius of Loyola's "way of proceeding" as lived by the Jesuits, the community of men he started in 1540, forms the basis of this spiritual handbook. Author Martin, a Jesuit for 20 years, claims anyone can benefit from the methods Jesuits employ in conducting their lives. This includes not only believers in God, but those who eschew religion, reject God, explore the spiritual terrain, or are just plain confused. After all, Martin writes, the Ignatian way is about "finding freedom," and the Jesuit founder wanted it to be available to everyone, not only members of his community. Martin provides a brief history of Ignatius and the Jesuits, followed by a how-to that covers prayer in its various forms; the Jesuit vows of chastity, poverty and obedience; friendship and love; discernment; and finding a life path. Readers familiar with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius—an ordered set of spiritual themes and practices—and other facets of Jesuit life will find this rather elementary, but

Martin has done a creditable job of making the Ignatian way relevant to a contemporary audience.

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For over 500 years, the Jesuit Order of Catholic priests, founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola, have enjoyed a well-deserved reputation as a society of scholars, educators, free-thinkers, and activists. In this digestible account of all things Jesuit, James Martin, S.J., encapsulates the uniquely Ignatian concept of spirituality. Translating the essence of the Jesuit philosophy into layman's terms, he uses both traditional stories and personal anecdotes to vividly illustrate the Jesuit approach to God, friendship, social justice, decision-making, prayer, simplicity, obedience, and self-actualization. Martin's engaging, intimate tone will appeal to anyone interested in understanding the history, the efficacy, and the universality of the Jesuit mission and way of life. Martin, the author of *My Life with the Saints* (2006), has a way of popularizing serious religious issues without trivializing their impact and significance. --Margaret Flanagan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you are looking for a companion to take along on your spiritual journey, you couldn't pick a better one than Fr. James Martin, S.J. His new book is a marvel. It is clear and concise about all those troubling questions you always wanted to ask about God and finding God. It offers a map (thoughtfully provided by St. Ignatius of Loyola and built on by Fr. James) for seeing God in your life and putting into practice this wisdom. This includes simplifying your life, confronting the nature of suffering, how Ignatian spirituality helps with making decisions, how to become the person you were created to be, and more. I especially liked the part on role of desire--our hearts' deepest longings--and how they bring us closer to God. Add in Fr. James's flashes of incisive humor as well as various accounts from his personal journey, and you have a fine book. If I had one word to apply to this book (I considered "inspiring," "educating," "enlightening," and "transforming") it would be clarity. We are in great need of a clear thinker as we ponder together the nature of our humanity and who we are called to be while alive on this earth.

Religious, and specifically Christian, books can be a challenging lot. On the one hand there are plenty of great theological texts to read (Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Rahner, Barth, etc), but suffice it to say they are not the type of book you curl up with at the end of the day. On the other hand, there are too many "Christian-lite" books (I'll be nice and not name names) which touch on Christian

themes, but lack the depth to really challenge the faithful. With his rather bold title, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, James Martin, SJ looks like he would fall in the latter category. But happily, what we find here is a treatment of the Christian faith (through a Jesuit lens) which is not difficult to digest, but will challenge the reader to reexamine their stance toward faith. This is not just wordplay when I say "stance toward faith." Martin honestly and respectfully engages readers who may be atheists or agnostics, as well as any Christian still examining their faith. He does note that much of what he offers from his Jesuit life could be adopted by non-Christians. But give Martin credit for not being embarrassed of his faith and making a strong case for Christianity. Martin acknowledges his own wordplay when he addresses his title. "It's not a guide to understanding everything about everything (thus the Almost). Rather, it's a guide to discovering how God can be found in every dimension of your life." The essence of the book is that every aspect of your life is spiritual -- faith is not just concerned with your thoughts on God, but what you say in those emails to a coworker. This is the first of four definitions that comes from Jesuit spirituality, namely, that everything in your life is important. The second idea is "contemplative in action," in which Martin outlines how a contemplative life translates into an active life. This theme plays a major role throughout the book as Martin explores how those of us who are not Jesuits can still actively incorporate spirituality into our lives. Third, not only is everything important, but God can be found everywhere. This carries the theological phrase of incarnational spirituality, but the idea is simple. Finally, many readers may be surprised to hear that people who pledge obedience see their spiritual life as one of freedom and detachment from distracting influences as opposed to a set of rules to follow. Martin spends a great deal of time looking at the role of prayer in our lives. Again he is not afraid to challenge, as he does with the conventional excuse of "busyness," when it comes to why we find prayer challenging. One of Martin's strengths is that he understands the challenges of the working world. He came to his own faith decisions after a, ahem, active collegiate experience and after having a successful business career. He knows what many people deal with daily, and although not the head of a family, he understands the stresses the life of a parent has to contend with in addition to finding prayer time. But he points out that all relationships need nurturing, and our relationship with God is no different. He offers several options, but his focus on "The Examen" is the most enlightening. This Jesuit prayer is central to the Jesuit way of life. Created by the Jesuit founder, St. Ignatius Loyola (and Jesuit spirituality is often called Ignatian spirituality), this prayer takes a person through five steps at the end of the day. The prayer focuses on the course of the day. In Martin's version (and we learn throughout that Jesuits are a pretty flexible lot on faith issues) we start with gratitude for what went well, and then review all actions of the day. When we recall events we are sorry for we

have reached the third step, which leads naturally to seeking forgiveness, step four. Finally, we seek God's grace for the coming day. Simple as it sounds, and it is simple, the prayer reinforces that idea of all aspects of your life are important to God. All our actions should reflect our faith, and when we fail, we should seek to remedy our wrongs. Regardless of one's faith inclination, a thorough review of the day and an accounting for one's actions is bound to create opportunities to move forward. Martin's explanations of the vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty are enlightening in not only understanding what those vows mean, but what they have to do with the rest of us. No, he is not promoting worldwide chastity in the normal sense, but he does argue that loving chastely lets those even in sexual relationships realize there are many ways to express love. In a sex-obsessed culture, this rather obvious line of thinking is desperately needed. This is how Martin works throughout the book. He explains how Jesuit's think and why, and then looks to tie it in with everyday life for the non-Jesuits of the world. While it sounds simple, it is challenging in both content and translation to life. If you just want an easy "feel good" book or "10 steps to live like a Jesuit," look elsewhere. If you want to think about faith and how it underlies your life, this is the place to start. But not to worry, Martin does all this with a sense of humor. He knows when some thinking sounds funny, and he points it out. He loves to tell Jesuit jokes, almost always at the expense of Jesuits, and the book is filled with real-life stories to illustrate his points. How often do you get to read a priest talk about being overwhelmed by sexual obsession just weeks before ordination? Martin does, and he spares himself little in the telling of tales. But his honesty and humor make all this thinking that more fun. And after all, if we cannot enjoy our faith, we must be missing something. Martin also keeps a friendly, informative Facebook page where you can read about his other comments on life.

Fr Martin does a great job in what he sets out to do - explain Ignatian Spirituality to a mainstream audience. He even makes strides to be speaking to everyone from atheists to Buddhists to Protestants and of course Catholics. Historical vignettes from Jesuits across the ages intersperse with a description of various elements of Jesuit life including the Examen. To help the reader connect with these techniques and ideas, personal stories and anecdotes are told. One leaves the book feeling as if they know the author as well as the material. Highly recommend for anyone interested in Jesuits, spirituality, or a new way to consider their daily life and surroundings whether you've never heard of Ignatius or consider yourself a follower.

Wonderful tour through Jesuit tradition. Well written with humor, get for the lay person to read.

Almost all the men in my extended family are all Jesuit. I was trying to understand where they're "coming from," and this helped.

How to be a Catholic without being a sourpuss. Navigates soundly between Catholic fundamentalism and the liberality that makes Catholic just another way of looking at world. Funny and serious.

This book explores the ideas of Ignatian spirituality which finds God in all things. Certainly, one does not have to be Catholic to reap the benefits of the Ignatian way. Among other things, the Ignatian way is about finding the freedom to become the person you were meant to be, about making good decisions, detachment from unimportant things that clutter your life, and growing in your faith and understanding throughout life. The author discusses religion versus spirituality and concludes both are beneficial. He explains that the pull that draws us to God comes from God. He briefly touches upon problems of the Catholic Church and why some members of the church have fallen away. He notes that we do not have to change for God to love us, but ultimately, our relationship with God will transform us. He explains the Examen, a simple prayer method and the way God speaks to us. For me, one of the most helpful parts of the book dealt with decision making and discernment. For example, we must begin the decision making process with indifference and seek confirmation once a decision has been made. (He explains through examples and details how this is done). There is so much good information in this book that a reviewer could go on and on. I was so impressed with the information that besides highlighting on my Kindle, I took written notes so I could view main points in one spot. Better than self-help books!

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