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Interview with Father James Martin

In May 2011, the Ignatian Faculty Scholars at Regis University conducted a Skype interview with Father James Martin, S. J., author of *The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything*. The Scholars had used Father Martin's book as a text for their year of study, which focused on Ignatian Spirituality, the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, and teaching and learning at a Jesuit university. The interview was transcribed and is printed below. Father Martin reflects on the book, and responds to questions about the book itself, about finding God in all learners, and about the Church.

Ignatian Scholar (IS): I've been designated to start off with the first question and probably the most profound one of the day and it relates to your recently elevated position as the official chaplain of The Colbert Report.

Now, it's also my understanding that as part of Lent, Steven Colbert has decided to relinquish his Catholic affiliation and try out some other religions. I'm just wondering how you as a chaplain view this Lenten exercise?

James Martin: Well, I sent him a note and I congratulated him on his supposed "apostasy." He said, "I'm Catholic and for Lent I have to give up something that I love and I love my faith. So, I'm going to give up my faith." It was pretty funny, I thought.

I also know that he's trying to get Archbishop [now Cardinal] Dolan, the Archbishop of New York to come on in and receive him back into the church. I think he's going to do some sort of penance or something. So, yes, he did not consult me before he "apostatized."

IS: So, you would have advised him against doing this sort of thing then, right?

Martin: Oh, I would have certainly advised his character against it! But I knew it was in good fun. He did something that may have offended a few people, but I think it surprised some Catholics who have known him to be a good Catholic. It was Ash Wednesday and he actually took the ashes off his face! But he plays a character, so people shouldn't have gotten so weirded out by it.

IS: Well, I'm sure he keeps you on your toes.

Martin: Yes. But, maybe one day I can put him on his toes!

IS: Thanks so much. We'll continue by asking you a little bit about your book because we have given some very good attention to it and have liked it very much this year. And we are curious about the factors or the forces that led you to write the book. How did it come about?

Martin: Well, that's a good question. I had done a book called *My Life with the Saints* that came out in 2006. I had tried to get that published with a mainstream publisher and they all said, "No, no, it's not edgy enough. You need to put in stuff about the sex abuse crisis."

So, all these publishers turned it down and then when the saints book did well, suddenly the same publishers that turned it down were knocking on my door and saying, "Oh, we'd like you to write for us."

So, HarperOne, which is the religion end of HarperCollins, said, "What would you most like to write about?"

And I said, "Well, I've always thought that there's a need for a mainstream introduction to Jesuit spirituality, to Ignatian spirituality, and that most of the books of Jesuit spirituality are written mostly for Catholics and they're written mostly in Catholic publishing houses for Catholic readers.

And there are great books on Ignatian spirituality by people like Dave Fleming, Bill Barry, Howard Gray, Joe Tetlow, all these great Jesuit spiritual masters, as well as women like Margaret Silf and people like that.

Anyway, I thought what was really needed was a really mainstream book, a mainstream publisher, a mainstream approach that would assume nothing, zero. It would assume that you didn't know who Ignatius was, you didn't know what a Jesuit was, you never prayed, you were still maybe seeking God. So, I really wanted to do something that was

almost like for me when I was at age 27, a person who knew nothing about anything in terms of the Ignatian background.

That was the impetus behind the book and I wanted to keep it as nuts and bolts as I could because, well, my example is that you pick up books on Jesuit spirituality or Ignatian spirituality and the first chapter they talk about the “charism” of St. Ignatius and most people don’t know what “charism” means.

I wanted to keep it just simple, direct and something that I could have used when I was young, and really, I did design it for faculty and people who were interested in the Ignatian way, but knew nothing about it. That was the goal of the book and what you read is the product.

IS: It achieved the goal, at least for us.

IS: After writing the book and getting feedback, Father Martin, is there anything that you would change or delete or add?

Martin: Always. The book comes on the first day and you open it up and you say, “Oh, my gosh. Why didn’t I put this in there?” or “Why did I put that in?” Yes, one of the things that I had wanted to put in the original book was a somewhat lengthy summary of three Jesuit saints: Aloysius Gonzaga, the Italian saint; Jean de Brébeuf, one of the North American saints, one of the American martyrs; and Miguel Pro, the Mexican Jesuit who was martyred. And I was going to give these stories of these guys and recount in each case some particular Ignatian ideal that they exemplify.

It was pretty long. And the publisher said, “You have this momentum. The book is like this train, so you’re going down the track and then suddenly you stop and say, ‘Okay, now we’re going to read stories of three Jesuits.’”

So, I had initially put them in an Appendix and then I read that and I just thought, “Well, this seems like it’s kind of tacked on.” So, I just deleted the whole thing; the whole thing went out.

And the other thing is that if you read it carefully, at the end I say that there are two things that I wasn’t able to treat as much as I wanted to. So for one thing there was initially a very long discussion

on this question of suffering: “How could a good God allow suffering?” in the chapter on suffering. That was mostly sort of academic.

And then there was another long chapter, a long section on something else that I cut out. I had this long section in the beginning about how can we know there is a God. And I said, “Basically, here are the proofs for the existence of God.” Then I went into saying, “There are a lot of proofs, but it’s experience in our own lives that’s the most convincing, etc.”

The publisher and I really thought that this was a huge distraction; I mean, you get people into these sort of philosophical ideas, like proofs of the existence of God and Thomas Aquinas, and so on, and you lose the train of thought.

The other thing about “How could a good God permit suffering?” is that you can’t really explain it in a ten-page summary.

So both of those went out and I said at the end, “Here are these two topics that if you want to go somewhere else, you can go here to look at it.”

But as I’m sitting here and as you ask that question, I don’t regret taking them out. They were right about the lives of those saints—I love those three saints, but that would have been a distraction towards the end—and I also think the book is not about philosophical arguments or about proofs for the existence of God, nor is about telling you about why there is suffering in the world. So, I’m actually happy they went out.

Anything I would have done differently or would have deleted? Well, you ask an author that and he’s going to give you something. I sometimes think there might be a little too many boxes and asides and stuff like that towards the end. But that’s a little thing. I’m pretty happy with the way it is and it went through a lot of edits; the publisher said, “Delete this, add this.” So, I’m pretty happy with it. But those are the things I’ve left out.

IS: And just one comment about additions to your book. I have to say that perhaps the most impactful chapter was the one on friendship dealing with love not in word but in deed. And at the end of that chapter you deal with the notion

or the value of graciousness. And through the book you actually refer quite a bit to Father Shelton's work, who is a member of the Regis faculty who has just published a book on graciousness.

IS: The next question pertains to Chapter Four where you spoke very eloquently about sin and the *examen*, and often faculty speak about the challenges of seeing God in our most difficult students.

How might faculty be advised to see God in all students; again, particularly these ones we would define as difficult?

Martin: That's a good question. Sometimes it's the most difficult ones who teach us about ourselves--but I'm speaking as someone who has never spent one day in the classroom. Now I've never taught, so take what I say with a grain of salt! Difficult people are in all of our lives and we have the invitation is to see, as Mother Teresa said, Christ in distressing disguise.

The first thing is just to be as charitable and loving and open minded as you can and try to remember that this person is probably going through all sorts of struggles that we don't know about. That's the benefit of the doubt; that Ignatian Presupposition that I talk about, which is helpful. The first thing is to be loving, charitable and try to give them the benefit of the doubt.

The second thing, though, is that difficult people tend to reveal something about yourself. I'm no psychologist, but I tend to think that when we respond to someone who's difficult it's because it's touching something that we're sensitive about. And so, what does this person reveal to you about yourself?

And the third thing is, can you be free enough to love this person in the way that God loves them? That's the way I look at those things.

But the other thing is to say to yourself that you can't like everybody and that when we try to force ourselves to like everybody, we do violence to ourselves. You can try to love them, but you can't really like everybody; it's a chemistry thing. There might be people I normally like or naturally like

more than somebody else, just the way there's chemistry and different personalities.

So, part of it is also the way Christ treated people which is with equal dignity; everyone is important, even the people that you might not like.

That's one of the great mysteries. Not everyone's going to like us and we're not going to like everybody else.

IS: Another question. We've been particularly studying Ignatian pedagogy, just the ways of Ignatian spirituality would apply to the teaching experience and the educational experience. What qualities of your own educational experiences have made those experiences distinctive?

Martin: First of all, just to put it in context, I didn't go to a Jesuit college or to a Jesuit high school. So my first real encounter with the Jesuits was at age 27 in the novitiate.

I studied at Loyola University Chicago for my philosophy, and I studied at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge. I would say the two things that I found most clearly different than secular education or any other education is, number one, a *cura personalis*: the idea of care for the whole person, which is at the heart of Jesuit education, the idea that it's not just about teaching and things are sort of filling your heads with numbers or the facts. It's the whole person, caring for the whole person: the person's soul, the body, the mind, the family life, the social life, which is very helpful for me in just understanding what Jesuit education's about.

Second is social justice. I was encouraged when I was at Loyola Chicago and when I was at Weston to understand social justice as a constitutive part of the education; it's not just about teaching kids to make money. I found this out as I was doing my research for this book. John O'Malley, the great Jesuit historian, wrote about that in his book *The First Jesuits*. It said that Ignatius and the early Jesuits were not teaching kids just to have them go out and get a job; it was so they could become contributing members of the community; it was a social thing, it was helping the community by trained people who would be contributing to society. There's a social justice aspect to that.

IS: As faculty we wrestle with how to best impart that kind of style, that kind of message. And do you have any thoughts as to how in the classroom the Jesuit message could come through clearly?

Martin: Yes, three ways. Number one, the best way to teach Jesuit spirituality is to live it. When the Jesuit Superior General came to visit our novitiate in 1988 we asked him the best way to increase vocations and he said, “Live your own vocation joyfully.”

So, there’s this idea that it’s not as much about teaching as it is about *being* that person, being that person who embodies the Ignatian spirituality, who’s the contemplative in action, who finds God in all things, who’s interested in social justice. So, students recognize that and they respond to it. Young people especially respond to authenticity.

The second thing is inviting them – I like that word inviting—into areas that they might not be comfortable going to, like prayer, social justice, about being a contemplative. So, inviting them into your world and sharing those things.

Also it’s important to point them to good resources: movies to watch, books, YouTube videos, anything that’s going to help them enter into the riches of the tradition.

But trying to embody those things and invite them into a new way of thinking and actually pointing them to resources that might be good.

As far as *cura personalis* goes, that goes back to the original question of what do I do with people that I might not like? It’s really caring for the whole person, not simply just a student or a person in a chair, but for their spiritual, social and mental well-being, really caring for that person, not just the student on the roster. And I know that at every Jesuit school there are also, fortunately, plenty of opportunities for service.

When I meet folks who have gone and worked with the poor and the struggling, it changes them. It just does, even if it’s at the most basic level of a father working for his country or overseas. And that’s the part of raising their consciousness and helping them reflect on what’s really out there.

IS: We are using the words of Bernard Lonergan and the generalized empirical method to frame our respective philosophies of education and reflect on our spirituality as educators. What might be your thoughts on Bernard Lonergan and his method to consider those issues?

Martin: I know very little about Lonergan other than his way of learning, insight, experience. But I would say that the Ignatian way is based a lot on experience, insight and reflection.

Now, I will say one thing: in many books of Ignatian spirituality that intellectual cognition and insights are downplayed when they’re really important.

So, most spirituality books talk about emotions, desire, feelings. But insights and recognizing something on an intellectual level and having “a-ha” moments are very important and are not treated as respectfully as they should be.

For example, if I’m praying about something and I say, “Oh, my gosh, I just realized something about Jesus,” or “I just realized something about myself,” that insight, to use some Lonerganian language, is important. I really believe that because God works in all sorts of ways.

And so, we privilege the emotional over the intellectual, unfortunately, in the spiritual world. Now, in the academic world it’s just the opposite: it’s all about the intellect.

IS: Father, there’s an increase of secularization in this country that I don’t know whether it’s just a fad or what, but it does seem to be happening.

How do we deal with the growing secularization of our students?

Martin: Yes, that’s a good question. It’s the same out in New York and the East Coast.

First of all, be the most authentic Christian or Catholic believer that you can be. Embodying what you believe is the most powerful witness.

Think of people like Mother Teresa, John Paul, Dorothy Day, whoever your favorite saints are. Dorothy Day, for instance, just lived it and after

Dorothy Day died in 1980, someone said about her, “She acted as if the Gospel were true.”

People are drawn to that. We’re drawn to someone who lives authentically. Can you yourself live your faith authentically, and what will happen is people will start to say, “Well, you know, that’s really interesting. Well, he seems really happy. What does he have that I don’t have?” That’s the first thing.

The second thing is the word “inviting.” Can you invite them into the riches of Christianity, of the Ignatian spirituality, of Catholicism when they’re ready? Jesus knew the *kairos*. Jesus knew that a good fisherman knows how to, first of all, fit the bait to the hook to the fish. Like, a good disciple and a good apostle and a good Christian and the best way to reach somebody.

A good fisherman knows to be patient, just like a good apostle would. A good fisherman knows not to worry about storms or the fact that he might not be catching a lot of fish.

And a good fisherman knows to stay out of the way. So, when you think about that, you might think, now, what’s the good way to attract these people and invite them? What’s the right time to approach them? What’s the right way to do it?

Third, don’t – to shift the analogy to that of the farmer: Don’t be worried that the seeds that you plant don’t sprout immediately.

But the most effective and compelling witness is yourself.

IS: How is the organized church dealing with the secularization of the young?

Martin: It depends. There are parishes that are very active and good in outreach to the young, have youth masses, have high school programs and there are parishes that are not as good.

The institutional church could do more in terms of being where people are and speaking in people’s “languages,” and I mean that in the broadest sense. The most basic example would be this: some of the letters that come out from the bishops’ conference on a particular topic are written for experts. They’re often not written for

youth, they’re often not written for people who are seekers and they’re sometimes hard to get through.

Jesus, on the other hand, used parables and talked about sheep and goats and farms and seeds and clouds. It’s a simple way of talking to people, in words and a language they understand, and that points out the need to understand how people are hearing things these days.

So, I would say: good and bad. Good in a lot of parishes, not so good in other parishes, good with some dioceses, not so good with other dioceses. The failure is that we don’t yet recognize that we have to speak their language, and that includes, as odd as it sounds, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube.

IS: Just a little bit of a follow up to that, Father Martin, I think that a lot of people were really surprised when it was revealed that, say, Mother Teresa had all these doubts although she was a saintly woman. And would you comment on how we project or express those doubts as part of our authenticity as human beings?

Martin: That’s a good question; I’d love to talk about that because I really feel strongly about that whole idea. For those who don’t know, Mother Teresa had a very profound mystical experience earlier in her life that brought her out of the Loreto Sisters’ Convent and had her move to working with the poor.

But then for the rest of her life, shortly after that, she didn’t experience God in her prayer. Now, that doesn’t mean, as some commentators said, she didn’t *believe* in God; it just meant she didn’t feel God’s presence. You know how we say to people it’s like not hearing from someone for a long time? It’s not that you don’t think they exist; it’s just that you don’t feel their presence.

That shows that part of the spiritual life is difficult and it includes feelings of abandonment sometimes, feelings of loss, sometimes even feelings of doubt. She experienced feelings of doubt and said: “Where are you, God?” Part of the life of a believer is a life of doubt; no one is immune from it. Look at the apostles; they have Jesus Christ right in front of them. He was doing all these miracles and healing people and stilling the storms and raising people from the

dead. And guess what? They still didn't understand and they still didn't believe. And then they keep saying, "Oh, you of little faith."

So, if that's the way it was with the apostles who had Jesus of Nazareth right in front of them then it's not surprising that for modern-day believers that we're going to have doubts from time to time. Part of authenticity would say, "Yes, I struggle. Yes, I struggle with a lot of people. Yes, I struggle with understanding Jesus' message in its totality. I struggle with my church sometimes."

Even the saints did that; the saints struggled. So, we are not immune to that and we shouldn't think that we should be immune to that; that's part of the problem. People think that once you get baptized or once you're a Christian that everything's solved. And that's not the way it works in the saints' lives and that's not the way it worked in Mother Teresa's life.

Now, that doesn't mean that you're not faithful and you don't believe, but it does mean that you struggle. It would be like saying once you're married you have no trouble in your marriage. Hey, you took your vows, right? What's the problem? Well, I mean, that's just not realistic, that's not human.

That's part of the authenticity. If a married couple stood up in front of you and said, "We're going to talk to you now about marriage. And guess what? We've never, ever had a struggle or a fight in 50 years of marriage," you would say that person's not being authentic, right? The same way the person of faith is going to have to say, "I struggle." That's authentic. But I still believe. Same with a married couple who would say, "But I'm still committed to this marriage" or "I still love her" and "I still love him."

That's part of the authenticity which is part of our humanity.

IS: Speaking of struggle and authenticity, what do you see as one or two of the most important issues facing the church and the Jesuit order in particular in the next ten years or so?

Martin: Number one, outstripping all the rest, is sex abuse. We must address that and I'm talking about the church and the Society of Jesus. The

Oregon province was just bankrupted by the settlements against the abusers. If we don't address that not only are we not going to have any parishioners left or any money left, we're not going to have any credibility left. So, that to me is the number one issue.

On a different level, though, it's very important to know how to speak the language of the people with whom you are ministering. For the Jesuits, the big question is how to best share the riches of Ignatian spirituality and pass along the tradition because we're not going to be 100 Jesuits at Regis, there might be four or five.

Ignatius was a layperson who developed the spiritual exercises and he was a layperson when he had his first experience of God. You didn't have to be ordained to do that.

But there is something different about someone who lives their whole life as a Jesuit. I mean, for us it's all Jesuit, Jesuit, Jesuit; we're trained as Jesuits, we go home to a Jesuit community and we go on Jesuit retreats every year and it's just different. It's the air we breathe.

It's the difference between going to a class on marriage or marriage counseling taught by someone who has a Ph.D. in marriage counseling and written a million books on it versus someone who's married. It's just different; it's a different feel, just something that something's a little different there. Not better or worse, but different.

My other analogy was taking an Italian studies course from someone who has a Ph.D. in Italian and who knows everything and can speak fluently versus someone who might not have as much of that, but was born in Italy. It's different; the different groups bring different things. As I said, not better or worse, just different. You need both the native speaker and the one trained to speak that way; they bring something different to the table.

So Jesuits per se are important for a Jesuit university. But you don't need 100 of them. The Holy Spirit is calling laypeople, personally, to new tasks. The Holy Spirit is calling laypeople to step up and assume the roles in the Ignatian tradition and I think Ignatius would be happy about that.

IS: I want to go back to your comment on the sexual abuse thing and ask whether that in some way gets to some of the issues of the clerical state and particularly the way bishops are developed or educated and the separation of leadership from the people?

I also wanted to raise a question about how Vatican II has been generally dismissed by the bishops in which laypeople in the 1960s got very committed to their Catholicism through Vatican II and that has been very disappointing in terms of its implementation.

Martin: Well, as for clericalism: absolutely. There are so many different things bandied about regarding the sex abuse crisis: there's clericalism, there's celibacy, there's homosexuality, there's chastity, there are psychological problems and a lot of times they're all squashed together and people don't know what they're talking about.

Clericalism contributed to the sex abuse crisis. It didn't cause it, I mean, because what causes it obviously is the sick priests who abused these kids. But the clericalism made it more difficult to address. Clericalism made some bishops more likely to listen to their priests than to the laypeople. That's the damaging element of clericalism that when a mother or father came and said, "Father So-and-so or Senior So-and-so or Bishop So-and-so is abusing my child," that the bishop or the religious superior would believe the priest over the layperson.

To me that's the worst situation. Then, what I've been thinking about lately is what I call the "Poor Father" syndrome. So, there are two basic qualities of many abusers: narcissism and grandiosity. If the narcissist makes a move on somebody, the narcissist doesn't care and so when it comes to abusing kids, the narcissist is all about his needs. Then you have the grandiose person. Usually these people are pied pipers and it's like Father So-and-so ran this youth thing or he was this chaplain and kids gravitate toward him.

When these guys are removed from ministry, what happens? They may not be able to change much, because they're the same people with these psychological make-ups. And their narcissism takes over: "Poor me." And I've seen firsthand,

"How terrible for poor me. How terrible that I'm out of ministry." And the grandiosity is, "I'm the worst-treated person in this situation, terrible, worst, terrible, terrible."

What happens with people in leadership, even with the best intentions, is they may feel, because they're generous, "Poor Father So-and-so, terrible. He's been removed from his parish, and he had to go to that treatment center and his name was dragged through the papers and, oh, my gosh. And now someone's asking to have him do some more treatment? Oh, that poor, poor man." They see that reality, rather than the victim's. That's clericalism.

IS: The narcissist is not good a problem solver. Again, speaking in terms of leadership, they surround themselves with people who look and sound and act like them. So, there's no one who's really going to challenge them or see maybe opposing views on the situation, right?

Martin: Right. And also even if you have superiors who are emotionally healthy, who are generous, it's hard for them not to get sucked into the dysfunction of poor so-and-so. "Poor Father has been removed. It was a terrible scandal and his name was dragged through the paper and hasn't he suffered enough?"

So, that's what sometimes happens. That's how the clericalism influences the sort of sex abuse stuff.

As for Vatican II, I would say I'm still very hopeful. The pendulum swings one way and it sort of swings back over the other way. John O'Malley said that it took the church 100 years to digest the Council of Trent and we've only been 40 years since Vatican II and it's a reaction. I still believe in the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit is going to move us in the way that the Holy Spirit wants to move us if we're open to it. I mean, I think the church is being humbled right now, in terms of the abuse crisis, and it needs to be.

IS: Father, you've already talked a little bit about some of those questions, particular sexual abuse. In your book you have a chapter on the acceptability of sex among consenting adults and married couples, but you also spent a whole

chapter talking about celibacy and why it's a good thing for priests to practice that.

In the long view, why is the church so concerned about sex?

Martin: Some of it may go back to St. Paul. Not to blame Paul! Jesus was doing his public ministry in a particular time and place, and so was Paul. And you know we have mandatory clerical celibacy until 1100. You had before that married priests. St. Peter, after all, was traditionally the first pope, and he was married. We know that because Jesus heals his mother-in-law.

But gradually the monks were seen as the kind of exemplars of holiness and so priests needed to mirror them; so, secular priests and diocesan priests needed to be on par with the monks. Also, there was a question about property. So, there was property that was being passed along; if priests were married legitimately, who was going to get the sort of parish and the money and things like that? So, celibacy became the rule.

Now, chastity and celibacy are still right for some people; they're called to it. I'm called to it. In religious orders people freely choose chastity.

Clerical celibacy is different. That's a restriction. If you want to be a priest, you can't get married. That's slightly different. So if priests could suddenly get married, Jesuits would still be living in chastity because we live in community and we take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

For some people chastity is great, and it frees you to love many people very deeply. Other priests may feel it as more of a burden. Others not at all. Perhaps there's a bit of a change now because we now have married Anglican priests who are entering into the church.

But the big question: why are Catholics and Catholic leaders seemingly so obsessed with sex? Well, first it's historical; some of it comes from Paul's writings, and it just continues through all of Christian history, this notion of celibacy as the highest state. And it's only around the time of Vatican II where that starts to change, where it's not just the celibates who are holy, but everybody; the universe of all holiness. So, there's an historical reason.

There's also a theological reason which says, well, Jesus was celibate so that's the highest thing you can be. And I do believe Jesus was celibate; I mean, I do believe he *wasn't* married. I don't believe in *The Da Vinci Code* or anything like that—but that doesn't mean that everybody has to be celibate.

But the third thing about this topic is more subtle—you have a group of people who most of whom entered seminary at 16 who didn't have sex, who went right from their parents' house into the all-male seminary, who didn't get the best education when it came to sexuality, or their emotional life, and who I think may now be afraid of sexuality. That's one of the reasons you see this sort of antipathy or discomfort towards anything that has to do with sexuality.

That's a big part of the sex abuse crisis too: you had guys who should not have been accepted into the seminary, who were clueless about their sexuality.

Anyway, I was thinking the other day all the stuff that's really a stumbling block for a lot of people in the church—sex abuse, women's ordination, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, celibacy, all that stuff—these are like the big issues in the church right now, they're all about sex.

The Catholic teaching on sex is beautiful. The Christian message is that sex is a gift, and sexuality is something people need to reverence and honor. When you present it to people in that way, they say, "Oh, that's beautiful. All I've heard is, 'Don't do this. Don't do that.'"

So, if the church could make clearer the teaching on sexuality, face the problems surrounding sexual abuse, and also listen to people's experiences of sexuality, listen to the experience of people today, then I think it would be a great help to moving ahead.

Overall, a good deal of the sex abuse crisis relates to some older men who may who may misunderstand sex, who may be afraid of sex, who may be afraid of women, and who may be afraid of their own sexuality. Or simply not be as cognizant of some things as they might be.

If you're a 75-year-old bishop, you've never had sex and you've never taken a course on sexuality and you've never been encouraged to talk about your sexuality and you get all these different urges and feelings, and you've never gone to a psychologist, and someone who comes to you and says, "This man is a pedophile," what do you do with that? Emotionally that must just almost impossible thing to deal with. That's not an excuse, but an explanation. I often ask people, "How would your grandfather deal with questions like that?"

That's why some bishops were not in the right position to hear that stuff. For example, if someone comes into you and says, "I'm going to kill myself," you need to be a very strong person to be able to really help that person out with that and that's why we have counselors, and when these priests and these bishops heard these things, I think they just didn't know what to do.

In the 1970s and 80s a lot of psychiatrists also said guys can be cured and then the priests were told they were cured. And then the bishops were told, "This man is cured."

Now, what does a bishop know about pedophilia? So he said, "All right, you're cured. The doctor said so. So I'm putting you back." Now, I'll go one step further, though. I do think, that even if the bishop was completely ignorant and he was told that this guy could go back to ministry and then he abuses *again*, then I think all bets are off. Then the bishop is crazy if he puts the person anywhere else.

What happens is the media, though, is that it all gets lumped together. Celibacy leads to abuse, homosexuality leads to abuse, clericalism leads to abuse, Catholicism leads to abuse. And so on. It needs to be separated out, but no one has the time to do that and frankly no one has the inclination to do it. Most people will talk about sex abuse in the Catholic Church and they have no idea what they are talking about.

I read articles that say that celibacy leads to abuse. Well, most abuse takes place in families. Does that mean getting married leads to abuse or being a married man leads to abuse? Is that valid as well?

So, there's a lot of misinformation going around.

IS: Thank you so much for sharing that with us. In conclusion, we'd like to ask if you have any issues you'd like to discuss with us or questions that you'd like to ask of us?

Martin: Yes. I'd like to ask what you think about Ignatian spirituality? What were the most helpful and surprising things to you in the book? I'm always curious about that?

IS: I think the chapter on friendship. I've heard some discussion about it, but I think that was a good discussion and I enjoyed it.

Martin: Well, you can thank Charlie Shelton for that.

IS: I also think your little asides are good. I heard you earlier say that maybe there were too many. No, I don't think so. They were very good.

Martin: Thank you. That's very thoughtful. Thank you. Other people?

IS: That makes the book more accessible to more people.

IS: I like the inclusion of social justice; however, the Jesuits have always focused on social justice and it seems to be very strong in their theology and philosophy departments, but it's hard to see it integrated with other aspects of their institutions.

Martin: I tend to think that sometimes the people think that the Christian message is supposed to be easy, and it's supposed to go down easy, but actually it can be disturbing for people. It's supposed to be.

One of the great descriptions of Dorothy Day was she "comforted the afflicted and she afflicted the comfortable." The Christian message is not going to make people feel happy all of the time.

But maybe a better way is to talk about inviting once again. If you invite people into an experience with the poor or the struggling, it inevitably changes them. You can't go away from working in a soup kitchen with the poor, in a hospital, you cannot go away without seeing these people's fundamental humanity and it changes you. It converts you.

And part of it is trusting that people are still open, because we've got to say, "Oh, well, this person doesn't like the message, so therefore this person can't deal with it." But, people's hearts are big and that God can always work with that.

One of the things I've been realizing as I'm writing is that in the story of the Rejection at Nazareth, when Jesus stands up to read in the synagogue, that the townspeople knew Jesus, and we reject prophets and that's usually the way it happens. But recently on a retreat I was thinking that Jesus has lived in Nazareth his whole life. So He's 30 years old. *He* knows all these people. He knows everybody in that synagogue. He knows when He gets up and says what He's about to say which is "I'm the Messiah." That's His message and He knows exactly how people will respond.

He is probably able to say to himself, "I know that this person's going to get mad, and this person's going to go crazy, and this person will probably say nothing." That is, he could anticipate their responses, and their rejection. But you know what? He did it anyway. So we might get rejected and we might know that speaking the Gospel is going to get us rejected. That's okay. We need to be free of that need to be approved of in life.

By the same token there are ways of doing it that are more inviting. But sometimes you need to be ready to be rejected and that's okay. Christ was able to do that because he's not worried about being approved of all the time and that's okay. That's a good model, too.

IS: I was just going to say that I really appreciated what you had to say about poverty. That made more sense to me than anything I'd read in that area.

It is also helpful to watch you today and realize how really authentic you are in regard to these issues and the passion you have for them. I would recommend you writing more in that area.

Martin: I can only write so much on sexuality before it gets too complicated. I mean, I'm not a moral theologian. But I can just be honest and tell people everything about the Gospels and the teaching of the church, and about that part of my life by being open and authentic, just like a

married couple could say--I'm not married, "Sometimes we don't have sex for a while, and these are ways of dealing with that."

A married couple who are very authentic the same way that a priest should get up and be able to say, "I still have sexual feelings and I may fall in love at times. I don't act on them because I've made this choice." It just removes a lot of the mystery and feels more comfortable just talking to you.

I gave a talk at Fairfield University in Connecticut to the students and these were sophomores and juniors, great kids. And one of them said, "Can you talk to us a little bit about what it's like to be... to give up..." – I mean, he was really dancing around it, "...to give up married life."

And he just couldn't say it!

And I said, "Chastity." And everybody laughed. I said, "I'm not afraid to talk about that. Why should you be embarrassed about that?" You should be able to talk about chastity--the way of loving people and what kind of sacrifice is involved and what happens when you make that vow--because you're trying to be authentic and it's important to sort of demystify that stuff.

Not talking about that kind of stuff in the church honestly is, once again, one of the other hidden reasons for the sex abuse crisis. Everything is so mysterious and, in a sense, repressed. If, as a Jesuit, I said to my confessor or novice director, "I'm falling in love" and he said, "You're out!", well, who's going to confess or speak openly? Who's going to be honest? Who's going to talk about that? How can you understand your chastity and live authentically if you don't understand sexuality? How could you be a good person and not understand sexuality?

IS: I'm listening to some of the words that you're using and I keep coming back to the word contemporary and I like that you made your book to me contemporary. But how do we use contemporary words to speak to prospective students?

Martin: That's a great insight because Jesus' message was kind of contemporary, too.

He preaches on the Kingdom of God. Now, what does He do? Did He write a book and talk about the theological categories? No. He uses images like seeds, clouds, birds, a woman who's sweeping the house and then He tells stories. He uses something that's contemporary, the parables that come from nature or everyday life, the stuff that's right around Him and stuff that we don't understand today but they did back then, like the slave and the master. But to people of His time they would get that.

So, what do we have to do? We use simple words and images and ideas and present it that way. That's why we need to use YouTube, Facebook, movies, music, whatever. And Jesus used parables. Now, the parables might not work as well today, but we need to be contemporary not because we want to be "with it," but because that's where people are.

IS: Thank you, Father Martin, for writing a very good book that we have been enjoyed and we have used this year. It is approachable and readable and real, as you are. And thanks, as well, for spending some time with us. We've profited from your discussion and the time with you.

Martin: I just finished a book that's coming out in October; I literally just finished it two days ago and it's off to the publisher. It's on joy, humor and laughter in the spiritual life. And it's called *Between Heaven and Mirth*.

And I get to start another book. That book's done and I just started a book on Jesus.

IS: Wonderful. How long did it take you – just one final question: how long did it take you to write this book, the one we've used?

Martin: Oh, let's see. About five minutes. Kidding. This book took about four years. Please keep me in your prayers.

IS: Thank you. We will keep you in our prayers. When will you be on the Colbert Report next?

Martin: Whenever they ask me! 