

Midwest Holy Cross Associates

“Jesus: A Pilgrimage”

**A Resource in Spirituality for Holy Cross Associates
Based on the Book by Rev. James Martin, S.J.**

INTRODUCTION

The theme for our 2016 Associate Conference is “Wake Up the World with Jesus and Moreau.” Father James Martin, S.J. will be our keynote speaker and will present material from his recent book “Jesus: A Pilgrimage.”

Father Martin is editor at large of America Magazine, a TV commentator for the major networks, and author of many books. He is also a Scripture scholar and a retreat and spiritual director. In “Jesus: A Pilgrimage” he shares his spiritual journey to the Holy Land and some of his conversion experiences on the way.

Using this booklet in preparation for our conference would be an excellent way to ensure that his presentation will have the greatest impact in our lives and will carry us through as committed Holy Cross Associates.

From the Back Cover

A gifted storyteller and spiritual director, Father James Martin, SJ, invites readers to experience the stories of the Gospels in a completely new, vivid, and exciting way to gain a deeper understanding of Jesus. Moving sequentially through the Gospels, considering not only familiar passages but also the “hidden life” of Jesus, the book offers a bold retelling of the life of Christ, faithful to the Christian tradition, while meditating on parts of the narrative that have often escaped notice.

Martin provides personal stories from his own life, the most up-to-date biblical scholarship, and powerful anecdotes from beloved spiritual teachers, and brings the reader along on his own real-life travels through the Holy Land.

Combining the fascinating insights of historical Jesus studies with profound spiritual reflections about the Christ of faith, Martin re-creates the world of first-century Galilee and Judea to usher us into Jesus's life and times and reveal how Jesus speaks to us today. *Jesus: A Pilgrimage* is an invitation to know Jesus as Father Martin knows him: Messiah and Savior, as well as friend and brother.

The “Lectio Divina” Process for Praying the Scriptures:

The desert fathers and mothers in the early church had a very unique way of spending an entire day in reflection on a passage of Scripture. Their method, known as “lectio divina,” has come down through the centuries as an important way of growing in the spiritual life. It consists in reading a passage of Scripture three times. Each time the passage will contain more meaning as the reader begins to apply its message to his or her own life.

Follow these instructions as you reflect on Scripture and on the readings as part of your monthly chapter meetings.

The group leader chooses volunteers to read the selected scriptural passage three times.

Prior to the first reading, the chapter spends a moment in silent prayer asking the Holy Spirit to be present in this discernment process.

It would be helpful for all to have reflected on the readings before the session.

Before the first reading, the group leader says, “As we read the passage for the first time, choose a word or phrase that captures your attention.” (No further explanation here). After the passage is read, the group leader says, “Take a moment to reflect on that word or phrase.” After a short period of reflection, the group leader shares only his/her word or phrase and then invites others in the group to share theirs. It is important to allow enough time for all to participate.

Before the second reading, the group leader says, “As we read the passage for the second time, listen for a personal message God is giving you. It could have something to do with the word or phrase you have already chosen”. After the passage is read, the group leader says, “Take a moment to hear the message God has for you in this passage. I will begin by sharing first and then I will invite others to share”. It is important to allow two or three minutes before the leader shares his/her thoughts. Some members will need this time to receive the significance of the passage for them. After the group leader shares, he/she invites others to share. Stress the importance of sharing aloud. Each individual sharing is a gift to the group and has special significance for the community.

Before having someone read the passage for the third time, the group leader says, “As we read the passage for the third time, listen for a call from God. What direction does God want you to take during the coming month? I will begin by sharing first and then I will invite others to share”. It is important to allow two or three minutes before the leader shares his or her thoughts. After the group leader shares, he or she invites others to share.

At the end of the process the group leader asks the group how God is leading the chapter for the coming month.

Modification to the “Lectio Divina” Process

We are adding a fourth element to the lectio process. REST. Take a few moments of quiet time recalling the prayer of the Chapter. Say it quietly to yourself as a means of making it more vivid and adding to its importance as you live with it through the month.



Chapter One: **Sowing the Seed**

Moreau's Insight

Father Moreau was well aware of our human weakness and how parts of our personality are still wrapped up in the attractions of our culture. Yet he says that all can be renewed when we rely on the gifts that the Holy Spirit offers us. He points to the apostles who were “seen as ambitious, jealous and quarreling.” But that changed when the Holy Spirit came upon them enabling them to become “models for us” and saints with “sublime virtues.”

Let us examine how the seed of God's word has taken root in us.

Matthew 13:1-8

“On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying, ‘A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rock ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear.’”

Chapter One: (cont'd)

Sowing the Seed

“Jesus: A Pilgrimage” by James Martin

“The parable may refer to those parts of ourselves that are open, and not open. Can you see your whole self as the field and consider what parts are fertile, what parts are rocky, and what parts are choked with weeds?”

Where, for example, are you open to God’s word in your life? Perhaps you are easily able to find God in your family. That may be your good soil. Where is your rocky soil? Perhaps you are compassionate with friends but less so at work, stubbornly clinging to old grudges. That aspect of your life may be unyielding, and God’s word cannot penetrate the soil of your soul. What part of your life is choked with weeds? Perhaps you desire to follow God but are obsessed with wealth, which chokes off the fruitful growth that God might wish.

To continue the metaphor, God may want to dislodge a few rocks, and pull out some weeds in order to clear a space for God’s word to take root. This may take the form of a friend confronting you on some selfish behavior, a sudden recognition of your own stubbornness, or even a period of suffering that opens to God in a new way. God plows, unearthing the good soil where God’s word can be planted, take root, grow and flourish.”

“Lord, Let My Heart Be Open to Your Word”

Chapter Two: **Understanding Those on the Margins**

Jesus understood the lives of those on the margins from firsthand experience.

Moreau's Insight:

Moreau knew the plight of Jesus born in the home of a simple carpenter. Moreau writes, "It was fitting that Joseph be poor like the Savior, first out of respect for the divine sentence commanding humans to labor and second to be conformed to his divine son who had not anywhere to rest his head and who praised the poor in one of the beatitudes."

Let us examine Jesus' compassion for those who labor and are burdened.

Matt. 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

Chapter Two: (cont'd)

Understanding Those on the Margins

“Jesus: A Pilgrimage” by James Martin

“When Jesus meets the poor during his public ministry and treats them with compassion, and when he directs his followers to care for the poor, it is not simply the stance of someone looking down from on high, as a wealthy person might pity the homeless man he passes on the way to the office. Rather, it is the stance of the person who himself came from a poor town, and who may have felt that compassion for years. Jesus’ love for the poor came not only from meditating on the Scriptures, from seeing injustice in the world around him at the time of his ministry and from his divine connection to the Father, but also from his life in Nazareth: his youth, adolescence and early adulthood.

Jesus would have been acutely aware of the income disparities in Galilee, the taxes levied on the people, and the way that something as random as drought can wipe out a year’s earnings. Jesus knew the precariousness of human life.”

“Lord, in My Own Poverty, Help Me Identify With Those on the Margins”

Further questions:

What effect did last month’s prayer, **“Lord, Let My Heart Be Open to Your Word”**, have on your outlook?

“Lord, in My Own Poverty, Help Me Identify With Those on the Margins”

How does this new prayer speak to you?

Chapter three:

Jesus Invites Us To Be More Calm in the Storms of Life

Can you hear Jesus inviting us to be more calm as we face the storms in life?

Moreau's Insight:

What great authority is that of Jesus Christ, of all the saints, of all the doctors of the Church, the councils and the apostles throughout the ages! This entire cloud of witnesses has but one voice for extolling the benefits, the importance, and the necessity of meditation. If you look at the Savior of the world in his retreat at Nazareth or in the Temple, if you go with him into the desert or into the lonely garden, or if you follow him through his time of preaching the Good News, everywhere you will see him praying and meditating. He would pass the nights in prayer, says St. Luke. And St. Mark adds that he would rise early in the morning to pray in a lonely place.

Mark 4: 36-41

“And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?’ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’”

Chapter three: (cont'd)

Jesus Invites Us To Be More Calm in the Storms of Life

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“Let’s consider this in light of the frenzied state of our emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual lives today. The more I listen to people, the more I hear them speak about their lives using the same words: ‘overworked, overbooked, overwhelmed, stressed-out etc. I have no time for my family.’ ‘I have no time to pray.’ ‘I barely have time to think.’ Now this does not describe everyone’s life: the unemployed, the underemployed, the sick and those in the last stages of life. But our culture has impressed upon us the equation that the busier you are, the more important you are.

Yet it may also mask a subtle form of pride. Being busy is often an indication of generosity; some people pour themselves out for others in a selfless way. But sometimes busyness is the way we prove (consciously or not) to ourselves that we are important. This tendency on an individual level is then multiplied out in the community, leading to a society in which extreme busyness is a badge of importance. It may also mask an inability to be still.”

“Lord, With You I Can Weather the Storms of Life”

Further questions:

What effect did last month’s prayer, **“Lord, in My Own Poverty, Help Me Identify With Those on the Margins”**, have on your outlook, etc.?

“Lord, With You I Can Weather the Storms of Life”

How does this new prayer speak to you?

Chapter Four: **Healing into Wholeness**

Jesus wants to free us from all that holds us back from being the person God has created us to be.

Moreau's Insight:

“There was no action, no matter how painful, that Christ’s love for us would not make him do, no position so low or so wretched that his love would not make him undertake to attract our own love. And after so many proofs of his love, he asks in grateful response only that we go to him with confidence like children to their father. He invites us, calls us, and urges us to come to him to comfort us in our pain and to calm the bitterness of our hearts in his own heart.”

Mark 5:18-19

“As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him. But Jesus said to him. ‘Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.’ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.”

Chapter Four: (cont'd)

Healing into Wholeness

“Jesus: A Pilgrimage” by James Martin

“As in the Gospel story, only God has the power to liberate fully. And, as in the Gospel story, we need to name our own demons – we need to say, ‘I am vain’ or ‘I am greedy’ or ‘I have this addiction’ in order to open ourselves to healing. Naming or acknowledging our sinful patterns is the first step to healing.

Still, it’s hard to seek out healing. The turmoil that we see in the man, the divided heart that we witness, parallels our being torn between not wanting to spend another moment with our demons and fearing the means by which we might be healed. What would I have to do to be healed? Will it be painful? Yet if we take a chance, emerge from our tombs, prostrate ourselves before God – not in a subservient way, but in a way that acknowledges God to be our ‘higher power’ – and ask for healing, God can free us.”

“Lord, Heal Me into Wholeness”

Further Questions:

How has last month’s prayer, **“Lord, With You I Can Weather the Storms of Life”**, helped your disposition during the month?

How could this month’s prayer, **“Lord, Heal Me into Wholeness”**, relate to your life?

Chapter Five:

Sharing Food Helps Us to Share Our Lives

Our lives are so interconnected that we live fully only when we share who we are and what we have with others.

Moreau's Insight:

“Since he wants to present an image of the Holy Eucharist in the multiplication of the loaves, he begins by putting the faith of his apostles to the test. They asked: ‘How can we feed so large a crowd with five loaves and two fishes?’ Thus he distributed the bread of his word before giving them the material bread, thereby bringing the poor relief in their temporal needs after instructing them.”

Mark 6:45-44

“When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, ‘this is a deserted place, and it is already very late. Dismiss them so that they can go to the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves something to eat.’ But he answered them, ‘you give them something to eat. How many loaves have you? Go and see.’ When they had found out, they said, ‘Five, and two fish.’ Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.”

Chapter Five: (cont'd)

Sharing Food Helps Us to Share Our Lives

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“Food betokens a host of other spiritual meanings. It is satisfying, as is God’s love. The sharing of food is a communal event, underlining the community aspect of faith. ‘Table fellowship’ was an important aspect of Jesus’ ministry. Some of our happiest hours and most intimate moments are spent at the table with family and friends. Moreover, for many Jews, one major image of the world to come is of a magnificent banquet, where a meal is shared with the patriarchs. Food is also about giving, sacrificing, and sharing; someone must labor to grow it and expend time and effort to prepare it. Food requires work and sacrifice. Someone also needs to do the feeding, in this case Christ. Overall, it is a gift.”

“Lord, Help Me Share the Food of Your Love”

Further Questions:

How has the prayer from last month, **“Lord, Heal Me into Wholeness”**, affected your life?

How does the prayer for this month, **“Lord, Help Me Share the Food of Your Love”**, speak to you?

Chapter Six:

Hope For His Healing Touch

Sometimes Jesus tests us to wait in hope before he answers our prayers in the way that best suits the life he has destined for us.

Moreau's Insight:

“Thus is Jesus Christ pleased to try his work; only a religious spirit that understands the power of his cross can sustain our courage in the midst of all these trials. Happy, indeed, are we if we know how to understand the unspeakable advantage of becoming more and more conformed to the image of the divine Christ crucified. For those who live by faith, the cross is a treasure more valuable than gold and precious stones... We must enclose these precious souvenirs in a reliquary made of charity that is patient, resigned, and generous, and which, in union with the divine master, suffers all things and supports all things.”

John 5: 1-9

“Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha (Bethesda), which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids – blind, lame and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ The sick man answered him, ‘Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.’ At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.”

Chapter Six: (cont'd)

Hope For His Healing Touch

“Jesus: A Pilgrimage” by James Martin

“Jesus is asking the man, ‘Have you given up hope?’ Jesus is asking the man if he still has faith.

God asks the same question to those of us who enjoy perfect physical health, but who may have given up in other areas. A broken marriage, a miserable work environment, and overwhelming financial difficulties can lead us to despair. We can experience a spiritual paralysis that needs to be healed. But buried deep down under the despair is hope.

Hope is like the Pool of Bethesda. For years that place was thought to be lost, then just a myth. For years it was covered by dirt and gravel and trash. Perhaps it existed once, people thought, but no more. But it was always there, waiting to be seen again. It took work, but it was found.

This is how God comes to us – asking if we still want healing, if we still believe, if we still have faith.

Even while we dwell in despair, God excavates our hope and asks us, ‘Do you want to be made whole?’”

“Lord, Help Me Wait for Your Healing Touch”

Further questions:

How has last month’s prayer, **“Lord, Help Me Share the Food of Your Love”**, been with you through the month?

How does the prayer for this month, **“Lord, Help Me Wait for Your Healing Touch”**, speak to you?

Chapter Seven: **Forgiveness**

When with God's grace we are able to forgive ourselves and others, we bring new vitality to our lives and our ministry.

Moreau's Insight:

Moreau wrote a last spiritual testament at La Grande Trappe in June of 1867, the year after he resigned, and supplemented it with a final statement in August of 1871. He asks forgiveness from God for his faults but expresses his pardon to all those who hurt him in the exercise of his ministry. Moreau also asks for pardon from those he unintentionally hurt and then gives thanks to both his natural family and religious family in Holy Cross. He closes his 1867 testament as follows: "But it is to you that I address myself, my dearest friends, priests, brothers, and sisters of Holy Cross, beloved sons and daughters in Jesus Christ, who, in the midst of my trials, have never ceased to show for me the deepest interest, the most tender attachment, and the most generous devotion. Receive here the last expression of my gratitude, esteem and affection. Although separated in body, let us remain united in spirit and in heart and by constant fidelity to your Rules, by your devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, obtain grace of entering into eternal union with God and his elect."

John 21:15-19

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him 'Yes, Lord you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' 'You know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him 'Feed my sheep.' After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'"

Chapter Seven: (cont'd)

Forgiveness

“Jesus: A Pilgrimage” by James Martin

“The breakfast by the sea shows that Jesus lived the forgiveness he preached. Jesus knew that forgiveness is a life-giving force that reconciles, unites, and empowers. The Gospel by the Sea is a gospel of forgiveness, one of the central Christian virtues. It is the radical stance of Jesus, who, when faced with the one who denied him, forgave him and appointed him head of the church, and the man who, in agony on the Cross, forgave his executioners. Forgiveness is a gift to the one who forgives, because it frees from resentment; and to the one who needs forgiveness, because it frees from guilt.

Forgiveness enables us to renew ourselves as disciples and respond when we hear Jesus say to us, as he said to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee, ‘Follow me.’”

“Lord, Help Me to Forgive Myself and Others, as You Forgive”

Further Questions:

How did last month’s prayer, **“Lord, Help Me Wait for Your Healing Touch”**, become helpful in my daily experiences?

How does this month’s prayer, **“Lord, Help Me to Forgive Myself and Others, as You Forgive”**, speak to me?