



The Abbey: A Story of Discovery

James Martin

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In the tradition of the spiritual classics *The Shack* and *The Screwtape Letters* comes a captivating and poignant debut novel from the revered Jesuit priest and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Jesus* and *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*.

A divorced single mom, Anne can barely cope with life and struggles to make sense of the death of her young son.

A former architect with a promising career, Mark works as a handyman and wonders how his life got off track.

The abbot of the Abbey of Saints Philip and James, Father Paul sometimes questions whether he made the right decision in secluding himself so thoroughly from the world.

At this Pennsylvania abbey, this unlikely trio will discover the answers they seek—a miracle of hope and understanding that bears witness to the power of God to bring healing and wholeness to our lives.

Written with the compassion, insight, and warmth of his previous bestsellers—*Jesus*, *Between Heaven and Mirth*, and *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*—Father James Martin's debut novel is infused with deep spiritual wisdom, wry humor, and loving grace. Through his characters' struggles, questions, and crises, we see firsthand how God uses our worries, anger, doubts, prayers, failures, and longings to help us complete ourselves and feel wholly loved.

The Abbey: A Story of Discovery Details

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From Reader Review The Abbey: A Story of Discovery for online ebook

Anita Johnson says

I loved this short, lovely novel. There was a feeling of familiarity for me since I had lived near the locations. Also, I had a wonderful family friend who was also a Jesuit, so I found this story relateable and comforting. The story could have been a parable on loss and finding one's way to peace. If you enjoyed Fr. Joseph Girzone's Joshua series, you will probably like this.

Laura says

I absolutely loved this book. A good discussion about God's interaction with people in life...can help to explain some people's whys in their lives. I really enjoyed the characters and each of their faults and their search for God in their lives. The story is simply told with no 'super deep' meaningful passages.

I loved this book so much I finished it in one day:)

writer... says

Contemporary stories of the main characters' journeys of faith in real life situations of loss of relationships, family, and career. Gently and capably guided by The Abbey's Abbott Paul, I gained insights into monastic life routine, self support through their abbey's jam production, and interrelational skills required for community life.

As a fellow spiritual director, I felt a solidarity as Abbott Paul guided the mc's to recognition of God in the details of their life.

His explanation of prayer was insightful and reassuring as mc Anne pursued this new experience as an adult. One particularly valuable statement referred to the monastic way of life allowing them to focus on their life purpose by removing extraneous activities and involvements of life outside the call to the monastic. By sharing this, mc Mark gains both the understanding and support needed for him to pursue his carpentry skills rather than just the grass cutting of the abbey grounds.

Linda says

This book is definitely Christian (Catholic) fiction. As much as I wanted to like and love it just because it was written by Father Martin, I can't.

The story is nice about a woman who lost her faith after a divorce and the death of her teenaged son. The story was just okay, but the book could have used a lot more fleshing out. I guess for a first attempt at fiction, it's not too bad.

Kathy says

I have long admired James Martin for his intelligent and clear manner of interpreting the Gospel. I was not prepared to love this book like I did. The Abbey is the centerpiece of this story and the characters - Anne, Mark, Father Paul, and Father Edward are fully fleshed out characters with interesting back stories. The reader follows along as the characters unfold and strive to find answers and to live their best lives. Have to admit that my favorite parts were Anne's conversations with Father Paul. I found that it answered questions I didn't even know I had, challenged some of my own ideas about my relationship with God, and left me wondering what is going to happen to these characters. Great read!!

Mary says

The Abbey is the story of God reaching out to people in various ways. Abbott Paul seems too good to be true. He always has good advice and knows what to say. The book deals with grief and finding one's way in life. A quick read but enjoyable.

Charles says

An enjoyable novel and good introduction to Jesuit spirituality

The Abbey is a short, but touching story that provides a good introduction to Jesuit spirituality. Fr. Martin takes the reader through several sessions of spiritual direction with the characters of Anne, Paul, and Mark. For those intimidated by Fr. Martin's book "The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything," his first novel provides some of the same insights in a smaller and more intimate setting. A very good novel for those fans of Fr. Martin, Jesuit spirituality or those looking for a novel about someone exploring his or her faith.

Grace says

I admit it: I'm a fiction snob. Though Father James Martin is my favorite Catholic spiritual author, I dreaded reading his first attempt at fiction. *The Abbey* wasn't bad, actually, and I enjoyed it because I love Father Martin so much. However, if you're not already a Martin fan and are easily irritated by less-than-stellar fiction, spend your time and money on Martin's beautiful, thought-provoking, and spiritually enriching nonfiction, like *My Life with the Saints*, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, and (my personal favorite) *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Nothing was actually wrong with the prose, plot, or characters. The novel just lacked a certain sophistication and subtlety I expect from the best fiction. Also, if you're not super interested in Catholic spirituality, you might get a little bored with this book.

I did very much enjoy the descriptions of the abbey and the life of the monks, as I love going on retreat at my local Trappist monastery. I know *exactly* what Father Martin is talking about when he describes a character's reaction to the scent of the incense the monks use. It's sweeter and richer than the incense in most Catholic churches, and it immediately brings to me a sense of peace and contentment, as if to say, "Here you shall find rest for your soul."

Ann-Marie says

A good story of how you find God or how God finds you.

Megan Uy says

I started to give this book four stars and then realized I was just being kind since I'm such a fan of Fr. Martin. I wanted this book to be better than it was. It was a quick, easy read and I enjoyed it and found some comforting and inspiring lines in it. But I never got lost in the story--there really isn't a story, per se, to get lost in. There really wasn't a reason that this book had to be fiction at all--Fr. Martin could just as easily have made it a series of case studies for spiritual direction and pastoral counseling. As a therapist and seeker, I can appreciate that. As a novel-reader, I found it frustrating and rather heavy-handed. So if you're not already familiar with Fr. Martin's other work, don't start with this. His non-fiction books are so much better that to judge him on this attempt at a novel would be unfair.

Thom says

Odd that I did not find the story particularly compelling, but I kept wanting to read it in all my spare moments. In part I think it is because I have enjoyed experiences at a monastery myself and the story evoked some of these. It was a bit too predictable, but I was content for that to be so. It is life as I wish it to be: not easy necessarily but not so overwhelming that life in a community cannot help me through it. This is an easy uplifting read.

Julie Davis says

This earnest, well-meaning tale shows how difficult it is for authors to switch gracefully between nonfiction and fiction. Author James Martin is a talented nonfiction writer but one wishes he weren't so well known that The Abbey was given the green light without someone wondering where an actual story was.

Handyman Mark and divorced mom Ann are both struggling to find meaning in their lives until various encounters at a nearby abbey provoke thought and spiritual awareness. All the action is internal with very little taking place in their real lives. This may be exactly what the author intended since most of us live fairly uneventful lives while still striving to find God and meaning. However, is that what we want to read about in a novel?

I contend that we also need an engaging storyline. I can take sweet and simple. I read many of the Mitford novels by Jan Karon. However, even Karon included unlikable people, moments of genuine tension, and the possibility that things might not work out. There is no such trace of that in this book.

I liked the themes of spiritual discernment and finding God in everyday life. However, The Abbey is more properly a novella than a novel and, considering the lack of story development, really just a vignette of instructions on prayer and how to live the spiritual life. If Jesus told long parables, explaining carefully along the way, then this is the sort of modern parable he might have told. Luckily, he usually liked to build in a little suspense and leave something for us to chew on, like any good story teller. Will that woman find her

lost coin? How will the eldest son respond to the father's pleading after the prodigal son returns?

It will be appreciated by people who want a sweet spiritual pick-me-up and nothing more.

[NOTE: this book did make me think of several other books which readers might appreciate. For a story inspired by a dream, try *Leaf by Niggle* by J.R.R. Tolkien. For a look at life inside a religious order, try either *In This House of Brede* or *Five for Sorrow, Ten for Joy*, both by Rumer Godden. For an early piece of religious fiction by a nonfiction writer, try either *The Great Divorce* or *Out of the Silent Planet* by C.S. Lewis. For homey, sweet inspiration try the *Mitford* series by Jan Karon. For questioning God when disaster strikes, try *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* by Thornton Wilder. For excellent development of questioning God, prayer, and balancing everyday life, try either *A Jesuit Off-Broadway* or *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, both by James Martin.]

Barb says

A single mother mourning the loss of her teenage son and her tenant, an underemployed architect-turned-handyman, find a common bond in an unlikely place: the local monastery.

It was OK. Nothing to shout about, and shorter than it needed to be, I think. Character transformations take time to set up. There were some comforting things about prayer, and some interesting insights about monastery life, but as a novel, this really didn't carry off all that well. This type of storyline needs to be character-driven, but the development wasn't there.

At \$14 for a 224-page ebook and \$18 for the paperback, I think that's overpriced for what you get here.

Lee Harmon says

Author James Martin aims for a story of spiritual awakening and falls short. A divorced mother grieves the loss of her son, when circumstances contrive to bring her to an old Abbey, housing monks. There she finds solace and inspiration in an image of Mary, mother of Jesus.

Martin writes with humor and believability, but lost me when the plotline turned flat. He teases us with the potential for romance, and again with the mysterious image of Mary, but both tangents lead nowhere. Instead, about halfway through the book, it turns into a teaching opportunity for Martin to introduce us to Jesus.

I believe this book could be comforting to the right reader, but it just simply didn't resonate with me.

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Fonch says

I like really much this choral story, whose center are three characters an accountancy, an architect, and the father Paul. I cheer up to the father James Martin S.J. who continue with the adventures of the father Paul. It is a character plenty of life. In my opinion would be very interesting he spread his horizons. I loved very

much the author settled this story in Philadelphia (Pensylvania) in this state lives my friend Val Bianco, whom i send a fond hug. This novel is self-help, besides this novel allows to the persons know the monastic life, and the mysteries of the catholic, thanks to the doubt of two characters, especially one Anne. I am very interested in the activity of the Benedictine, and Trapensian monasteries in United States, meanwhile i read the novel i had the feeling that i was reading to the father Thomas Merton. This story provoke that God enter in your life. To sum up is a tender, beautiful, and wonderful story. Other reason to enjoy of the reading is that one of the readers was the acclaimed american novelist Ron Hansen. I would be enchanted to read their novels. My next review will be "Die under your sky" was written by the great spanish writer Juan Manuel de Prada.

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Me gusto mucho esta historia coral centrada en tres personajes. Es mucho mejor de lo que parece. Animó al Padre James Martin a que prosiga con las andanzas del Padre Paul. Es un personaje, que en mi opinión tiene mucha vida, y puede dar muchísimo más. Me gusto también que el autor haya situado la historia en Filadelfia Pensylvania, dónde vive mi amigo Val Bianco. Es una novela de autoayuda, pero que ayuda a las personas a conocer la vida monástica (especialmente a mí me interesa la labor de los monasterios Benedictinos, y Trapenses. Tenía la sensación de leer a Thomas Merton), y a conocer a Dios. En resumen es una novela tierna, bella y delicada. Otro motivo de regocijo es que parece que uno de los lectores fue Ron Hansen. Un autor, al que estoy deseando leer.

Mi siguiente crítica será de la novela "Morir bajo tu cielo" del mejor escritor español Juan Manuel de Prada.
