



Engaging Aging

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Twelve Things I Wish I Knew at Twenty-five by Reverend James Martin, SJ

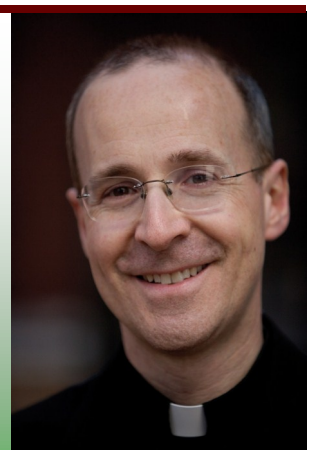
For my 50th birthday this past week I decided that it would be a lark to Tweet the *12 Things I Wish I Knew at 25*. Or rather, things that had I either known them (or, more accurately, *followed* them) would have made my life a lot easier, and saved me a lot of heartache. Some are bits of advice that wisdom figures have told me during my Jesuit training and that took years to sink in. Others are the result of some hard knocks. A few are insights from the great spiritual masters that I've adapted for my own life. (Here's a confession: I often imagine my older self meeting my younger self and saying some of these things--especially Number One.) It was also fun trying to boil them down into the requisite 140 characters for Twitter. In any event, maybe some of them will help a 25-year-old you know. Maybe one or two will help you!

1. First up: Stop worrying so much! It's useless. (i.e. Jesus was right.)
2. Being a saint means being yourself. Stop trying to be someone else and just be your best self. Saves you heartache.
3. There's no right way to pray, any more than there's a right way to be a friend. What's "best" is what works best for you. *(Continued on page 2)*

“Only if people change will the world change; and in order to change, people need the light that comes from God, the light which so unexpectedly entered into our night.”

Pope Benedict XVI

James Martin is a Jesuit priest currently serving as Culture Editor of America magazine in New York. He has authored numerous articles and books, including the award winning My Life with the Saints, the New York Times Bestseller The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything, and most recently, Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor and Laughter are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life. This article first appeared in the In All Things Blog for America magazine, December, 2010. It is reprinted here with the kind permission of Father Martin.



Twelve Things I Wish I Knew at Twenty-five (Continued from page 1)

4. Remember three things and save yourself lots of unneeded heartache: You're not God. This ain't heaven. Don't act like a jerk.

5. Your deepest, most heartfelt desires are God's desires for you and vice versa. Listen. And follow them.

6. Within you is the idea of your best self. Act as if you were that person and you will become that person, with God's grace.

7. Don't worry too much about the worst that can happen. Even if it happens, God is with you, and you can handle it. Really.

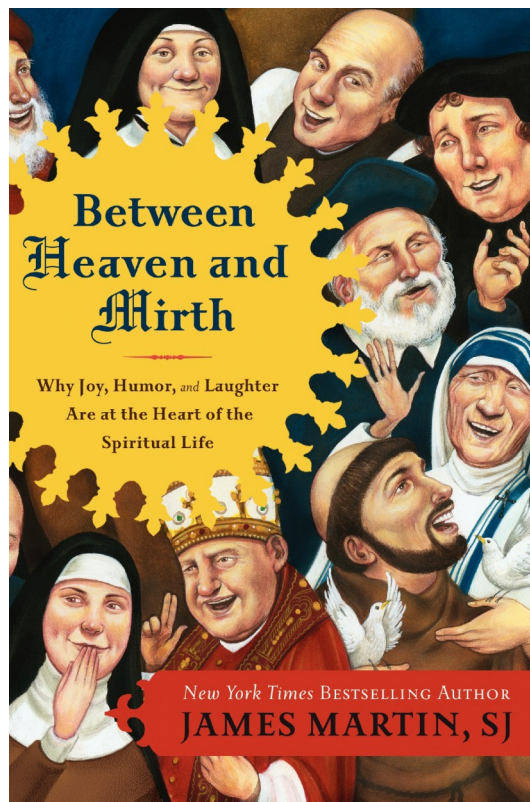
8. You can't force people to approve of you, agree with you, be impressed with you, love you or even like you. Stop trying.

9. When we compare, we are usually imagining someone else's life falsely. So our real-life loses out, i.e., compare and despair.

10. Even when you finally realize the right thing, or the Christian thing, to do, it can still be hard to do. Do it anyway.

11. Seven things to say frequently: I love you. Thank you. Thank you, God. Forgive me. I'm so happy for you! Why not? Yes.

12. Peace and joy come after asking God to free you -- from anything that keeps you from being loving and compassionate.



Available for purchase online and in your local bookstores in both hardcopy and e-book formats.



Wishing You a Joyful Christmas and a Peace-filled New Year From the Staff of the National Religious Retirement Office

Left to right: Sr. Janice Bader, CPPS; Mrs. Jean Smith; Br. Robert Metzger, SM; Br. Henry Sammon, FMS, JCL; Mrs. Monica Glover

Jean Smith will be retiring on December 30, 2011. With gratitude for her service, we wish her well. NRRO welcomed Cassandra Malloy to the staff on December 12.

From the Editor's Desk

Sister Sherryl White, CSJ, Ph.D., Psychologist, Pittsburgh, PA



Have you ever noticed how many lists we make as Christmas approaches? We seem to have been programmed for it from the cradle. As children, we sang about Santa making his list of “who’s naughty and nice,” then penciled our letters, listing gifts we hoped to receive.

As we get older, our jottings have morphed into the list of gifts we need to buy for others. But it doesn’t stop there. Consider the list of people to invite to the Christmas or New Year’s party; the list for Christmas card recipients; the list of last minute errands and food items for the community feast. Push beyond Christmas and we are still making lists, crafting resolutions we plan to take up in hopes of a better new year.

Father Jim Martin, SJ, has given us a new twist on making lists. In his article, he writes “twelve things he wishes he knew at the age of twenty-five,” confident that such wisdom would have made things a bit easier. He offers the list as a gift for fellow travelers on their life journeys.

Imagine for yourself what such a list would look like were you to draw from your experience. With all its blessings and challenges, what simply stated lessons has your life given you? Are there any invitations in that list that are uniquely yours for the year to come?

Not interested in lists? I understand. Just yesterday, a ringing telephone made me shout, “There’s nothing more I can do,” before I even answered the call. Then I remembered the Advent reading from Luke’s gospel telling of the paralyzed man whose friends refused to believe there was nothing more to be done. They heard that Jesus could heal and they sought that heal-

ing for their friend. They made a mat and carried him to Jesus. When they couldn’t get through the crowds, they didn’t get deterred. They climbed up onto the roof and lowered their friend through the ceiling, right into the middle of the crowd, smack in front of Jesus. They sought healing for their friend and Jesus gave it. They refused to give up. They believed there was something more they could do. And they did it.

Maybe that’s what lists are all about: calling us to that extra mile. In this season of memories, I can recall the time my aunt was told by doctors that there was “nothing more to be done” in her struggle against cancer. My parents drove 360 miles through the night to be with her. Refusing to give up, they made a list of things to do, then did them, moving Aunt Mary lock, stock, and barrel in just 2 days to live with us. She died not long after that. The doctors were right. Medically, there was nothing more to be done. But in terms of peace and reconciliation, my aunt was able to do quite a lot.

Maybe we’ve been right all along. This is a season of lists. It’s a time to prepare, believe, and act in confident hope. Surprises await us around every corner. Consider... on the final page of my aunt’s bible – one she carried as a life-long Southern Baptist - she ended her last list of scriptures to be studied with this handwritten inscription: “God makes sons of men sons of God, because God hath made of the Son of God the Son of Man.” St. Augustine!

Merry Christmas and best wishes for all— sons and daughters—to be well in the new year.

Extra Innings

By Reverend Francis X. Moan, SJ

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: You may read this near Christmas, but I am writing it just as the St. Louis Cardinals have clinched the 2011 World Series. Hence the title.

Extra Inning 1. Both my parents died in their early 60's; at that time I considered them to be quite old. So as I surprisingly reached 70, I began to wonder what the Lord had in store for me. I had just finished fifteen years of service to refugees and my Provincial allowed me some time off to consider what I would do next. Except for slowing down my health was good. The Provincial suggested what he considered a lighter job for an aging Jesuit, raising funds for five ministries (church, school, medical clinic, legal clinic and social service agency) in a poor inner city parish; I accepted. Life was comfortable in a dilapidated row house with a few fellow Jesuits.

But as the years rolled on, the spirit, though still willing, was becoming fettered with a failing body. Finally one day the Jesuit M.D. in the medical clinic told me I was suffering from peripheral neuropathy and that while I may have walked across every refugee camp in Southeast Asia, Central America, Africa and the Middle East, walking was now going to be much more difficult for me. I stayed there for a few more years but after a total of seven I knew it was time to settle elsewhere.

Extra Inning 2. I landed in the Provincial's Residence/Office where I could renew a closer relationship with my many relatives in the area and engage in some contact with those who came to work there and in some parish ministry. I was fortunate to find a parish which needed my services only two or three Sundays a month and which was willing to accommodate itself to my physical

limitations in presiding at the liturgy. That ministry has been a life-saver for the past five years.

My service to that parish has been interrupted at times by physical setbacks, including a back operation which kept me on the bench for about four months.

Meanwhile the Provincial decided to move his offices and to make the building into a retirement home for others like myself. As that building immediately filled up with the lame, the halt, the blind and the deaf, the Provincial decided to build a bigger retirement home on the same property. So here I was after seven years moving on to...

Extra Inning 3. We moved in on July 14, 2011, and the additional rooms were soon occupied by more elderly and infirm Jesuits. We range in ages from the 50's to the 90's.

Well, what has all this meant to what is called "my spiritual life?" Each phase of the last fifteen years has been a blessing in its own way. My physical deterioration has made me adjust my spiritual priorities. St. Ignatius Loyola wanted us to find God in all things and all places and to be contemplatives in action. And indeed I have found God in these extra innings, often as before, but now with more emphasis on the contemplation than on the action. It was not easy to pray while recuperating from a serious back operation; aside from that I have had plenty of time to pray for those I would like



Fr. Frank Moan, SJ,

(Continued on page 5)

Extra Innings (Continued from page 4)

to assist personally but cannot. The mystery of God is still what enthalls me. Modern scientists are probing “dark matter” and even “dark energy” which is causing the “dark matter” to expand. To me that pales in comparison with the search for the living God.

Yes, I watch the clock while praying; I am distracted; I am still encumbered with the shortcom-

ings I had sixty-six years ago when I entered the Jesuits. But who God is and how God and I interact gives me no rest. Obviously, I am still here to pursue that path. I still have much to learn, much of God still to experience. So what will be in my stocking this Christmas season? Another inning or two? It matters not. Today is what counts. Live today; live to encounter the Risen Jesus, the Splendor of God.

From the Offices of NRRO

Brother Robert Metzger, SM
Associate Director of Planning & Education



In his article Fr. Frank Moan said his parents died in their early 60's and he considered them to be quite old. When I was in my 20's I used to think my religious brothers in their 60's were quite old. Now that I am in my early 60's it is not looking that old! There are more than 170 religious in the United States over the age of 100. Age is just a number...what is more important is our relationship with God as we grow older.

Fr. Frank says his spiritual life has changed through the years and the “extra innings” have been a blessing in his life. Advent is a good time of the year to review our relationship with God and to see if we are growing in our love of God as we grow older.

In my article in the previous issue of *Engaging Aging* I made an appeal to send NRRO any material you may have on transitions and I would like to ask again for your assistance. Because of the importance of support during times of transition from independent living to interdependent living, NRRO would like to begin a collection of various ways that we as religious congregations assist our members in making this transition.

If you have rituals, prayer services or practices that your community uses, would you be willing to share those with NRRO? We will remove any references to the congregational name and will make these available on our website as models for other religious institutes to use or adapt. Please send your material to RMetger@uscceb.org.

As I write this article it is the weekend of the national collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious. In the first 23 years of the collection Catholics have given more than \$643 million to elder religious for their retirement expenses. The donors have not only been very generous with their gifts but also with their words. Many donors send their gift directly to NRRO and include a note of how much they have appreciated the work of religious through the years. We ask you to please join the staff of NRRO as we give thanks this Christmas, and throughout the year, for the generosity of our many friends.

We pray for all of you that the birth of the Christ Child will bring peace and joy to your life and our world throughout the new year.

Engaging Aging

Sister Liberata Pellerin, CSJ
Sisters of St. Joseph, Concordia, Kansas



Sister Liberata (Liebe) Pellerin, CSJ

Old age gives me a new perspective on life. Now, at age 93, I am being taught by God and others many lessons about the beauty of life, gratitude for every breath, and the gift of time for reflection and prayer. That's how I want to live my remaining days . . . with gratitude and praise. I belong to God in a new way. God's desires are moving in me and that is my service.

I live at Manna House of Prayer in Concordia, Kansas, and try to be as useful as I can. Twenty years ago or so I gave retreats around the country to aging religious. My present ministry is that of spiritual direction and presenting a conference/dialogue

monthly with our elderly sisters at the Motherhouse and at Mount Joseph where some of our more infirm sisters live. I don't have to teach them to pray! They are so holy, so prayerful. I realize that I can help them by reminding them of their great gift of selfless love, accompanied as they are with illness, infirmity and loneliness. I remind them of Jesus' selfless love. I do this with the Gospels and



Blanche Wilson & Sr. Liebe

with our congregational documents. I tell them that the Motherhouse and Mt. Joseph are different because they live there. These sisters do not ask to be relieved of their own pain but ask grace for others and are very mindful of the present realities and needs of the world.

I never refuse to honor a request for spiritual direction because I know that God leads the way. I have experienced many different persons of various ages and states of life. What I have come to know is that God takes each person as she or he is and gently moves them toward God himself. God points the way gently, surely, graciously. I am at ease in doing this ministry because I have come to know first-hand how grace flows in abundance, and it comes not from me! God's desires are moving in me and that is my

service. When I receive credit for having helped someone along, I just give God the gratitude and thanks. It is God's work.

So what is my 93rd year of life like for me? I hear the murmur of the eternal shores. I don't have many years left. When I try to capture or sum up my life in one word it is *THANKS*. Thanks to God, our congregation, my family and friends; thanks for all the experiences of my life. I wouldn't take back one moment of one day of these 70+ years as a Sister of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kansas!



Sr. Liebe presenting at a Journaling Workshop

Announcement

On June 30th NRRO co-sponsored our first webinar with the Avila Institute of Gerontology. The event was so successful and reached so many people that we are continuing this relationship. In a recent meeting with Sr. Peter Lillian of the Avila Institute we have scheduled four webinars for 2012.



The dates for webinars are: February 6; May 1; August 21; and November 13, 2012. All four webinars will begin at 1:00 PM Eastern time. All expenses for these webinars will be covered by the Retirement Fund for Religious collection. Topics and speakers will be announced throughout the year. We will send out an email in early January with the information for the February webinar.

Recommendations

The following books might make wonderful additions to your libraries:

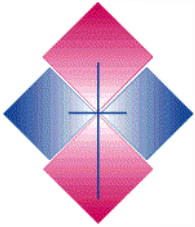


- *Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor, and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life*, by James Martin, SJ, HarperOne Publishers, 2011.
- *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, by Richard Rohr, OFM, Josey-Bass Publishers, 2011.
- *The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully*, by Joan Chittister, OSB, Bluebridge Publishers, 2010.
- *Harvest Us Home: Good News as We Age*, by Rachel Callahan & Rea McDonnell, SSND, St. Anthony Messenger Publishers, 2000.
- *Sacred Space: The Prayer Book 2012*, Irish Jesuits.

Calendar

January 3	Direct Care Assistance applications distributed and available on the website
Jan. 24-26	Planning and Implementation Workshop – Menlo Park, CA
February 6	Webinar co-sponsored by NRRO and Avila Institute of Gerontology
February 16	Training for new NRRO consultants
March 31	Direct Care Assistance applications due
April 17-19	Planning and Implementation Workshop – Dayton, OH
May 1	Webinar co-sponsored by NRRO and Avila Institute of Gerontology





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The National Religious Retirement Office coordinates the national collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious and distributes this money to eligible religious institutes for their retirement needs.

The National Religious Retirement Office supports, educates and assists religious institutes in the U.S. to embrace their current retirement reality and to plan for the future.

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Retirement Fund for Religious



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