

19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND MIRTH

BY JAMES MARTIN, S.J.

FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS THIS COLUMN WILL FEATURE EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK **BETWEEN HEAVEN AND MIRTH.**

As a Catholic priest and Jesuit, I've come across a surprising number of spiritually aware people who are, in a word, grim.

Many of my favorite jokes are about Catholics, priests and Jesuits. The Jesuits, by the way, are a Catholic religious order (for men who take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and live in community) founded in 1540 by St. Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish soldier turned priest.

It's easy for me to tell jokes about Catholics, priests and Jesuits, since I'm all three. And a self-deprecating joke may be the healthiest brand of humor. Let me share with you one of my favorites.

The Silent Monk

A man enters a strict monastery. On his first day the abbot says, "You'll be able to speak only two words every five years. Do you understand?" The novice nods and goes away.

Five years later the abbot calls him into his office. "Brother," he says, "you've done well these last five years. What would you like to say?" And the monk says, "Food cold!" "Oh, I'm sorry," says the abbot. "We'll fix that immediately."

Five years later the monk returns to the abbot. "Welcome, Brother," says the abbot. "What would you like to tell me after 10 years?" And the monk says, "Bed, hard!" And the abbot says, "Oh, I'm so sorry. We'll fix that right away."

Then after another five years the two meet. The abbot says, "Well, Brother, you've been here 15 years. What two words would you like to say?" "I'm leaving," he says.

And the abbot says, "Well I'm not surprised. You've done nothing but complain since you got here!"

You might wonder why I start with a joke, but in a way, jokes are the point of this essay, which is that joy, humor and laughter are underappreciated values in the spiritual life and are desperately needed not only in our own personal spiritual lives but in the life of organized religion. Joy, for example, is what we'll experience when we are welcomed into heaven. We may even laugh for joy when we meet God. Joy, a characteristic of those close to God, is a sign of not only a confidence in God but also gratitude for God's blessings. Humor, too, is an essential but neglected requirement of spirituality. Most of the saints had a terrific sense of humor and could easily laugh at themselves. Finally, we must remember that laughter is essential even in the most "spiritual" or "religious" of places.

There are two ways to look at laughter from a spiritual vantage point: joyful, contented and playful or mocking, malicious, desperate and cynical.

Let's start with the last in our trio of gifts, laughter. The most comprehensive recent treatment of the place of laughter in Western spirituality is Karl-Josef Kuschel's short book *Laughter: A Theological Essay*. At the beginning of his enjoyable study, Kuschel, a professor of theology at the University of Tübingen in Germany, admits the "conceptual impossibility" of developing a theology of laughter, since there are so many varieties. Some are praiseworthy, others not. "There is joyful, comfortable, playful and contented laughter," he writes, "and there is a mocking, malicious, desperate and cynical laughter." Kuschel thus identifies the two main ways of looking at laughter from a spiritual vantage point. "Like their Master from Nazareth," Kuschel writes, "Christians have to take into account both laughing and being laughed at." Laughter can heal or hurt.

In short, one school of spirituality condemns laughter; the other praises it. The condemnatory strain finds voice in the writings of the 4th century theologian St. John Chrysostom, who suggested that true Christians should weep out of sorrow for their sins. Chrysostom explicitly stated that he does not wish to ban mirth, but rather aims to remind the world that tears more effectively bind us to God than does laughter. This predilection against laughter finds echoes in the thought of other early Christian theologians, who saw *risibilitas* (in Latin, the human ability to laugh) as dangerous in another way—it stood in opposition to reason.

My own theology of laughter, similar to what Kuschel calls his "jokological" approach, is at odds with that of Jorge de Burgos. As long as it remains firmly in that first category of "joyful" and does not transgress into "mocking", human laughter is a gift from God. Laughter has a long tradition among the saints and spiritual masters in many religious traditions as a necessary component of a healthy life. Most contemporary religious traditions, Christian and otherwise, disagree with Jorge's overheated condemnation of laughter. The catechism of the Catholic Church—hardly a frivolous book—includes a line in a chapter on "popular piety" that might have surprised many of the early church fathers, not to mention Jorge. At the core of the faith of believers there is, says the catechism, a "storehouse of values" that offers wisdom for the Christian life. Such wisdom "provides reasons for joy and humor even in the midst of a very hard life."

MISSIONARY COOPERATION PLAN COLLECTION

Sr. Eileen Tickner, F.M.A., a Salesian Sister of St. John Bosco will be at St. Philip next weekend, **August 18/19**. She will be speaking about the Missions in general; mostly about the Missionary call of each person in the Church.

Our Jubilee Prayer

Rejoicing in you, O Lord, with thankful hearts we pray as . . .

We Remember

gratefully our past companions on the Journey whose sacrifice inspires us.

We Celebrate

the good news of love in action that empowers spiritual, service and social ministry.

We Believe

in God's providence as faithful stewards who continue Christ's work using the Keys to the Kingdom. Amen

MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT & MINISTRY

A support group for people grieving the death of their spouse. Next meeting: **Tuesday, August 14th and 28th** at 7:00 PM in the RUSSO ROOM. Please contact Dr. Rachel Rengifo at 201-500-2068.

WIDOW/WIDOWERS

Monday, August 13th – 6:30 PM – We will be meeting in the Molloy Center.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

1st and 3rd Wednesday - 8:00 PM: *The VFW Hall* - 491 Valley Road, Clifton

ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

Your parish Knights of Columbus are holding their annual Golf Outing on **September 20, 2018**. The cost remains the same - \$150.00 for Golf at Knolls West Country Club which includes: luncheon, cocktail hour, dinner, lots of prizes, raffle, contests, golf cart and all fees. If you would like to be a player, sponsor or volunteer, please contact Brian Kulesa at (973) 418-2085 or beezerkul@aol.com.

COLUMBIETTES

The Central Chapter Columbiettes, the service group for Regina Mundi Columbiettes, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Columbiettes, St. John's/St. Mary's Columbiettes (Dumont) and St. Philip the Apostle in Clifton is celebrating their 60th Anniversary. The Luncheon will be held **September 30, 2018** between 1 and 4 PM at Wallington Exchange, 365 Main Avenue, Wallington. Cost is \$40.00 per person. For tickets call Marion at 973-790-3847 or Barbara Ann at 973-916-1957. Reservations close September 24th.

ROSARY SOCIETY

SAVE THE DATES!

Sunday, October 7th - 74th Annual Communion Brunch!

The first meeting of our Rosary Society will be **September 10, 2018** beginning at 6:00 PM in Church with the Rosary followed by Mass. More information to follow!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CONFIRMATION REGISTRATION

Registration for the 2018-2019 year is now open. **New families are welcome!**

Consider joining the Religious Education Ministry

Catechesis and religious education require the involvement of our entire faith community. Not only are we called to provide a community that welcomes new members, but also to provide catechetical instruction to them.

This is a wonderful opportunity to share our faith with the youngest members of our community. Let's work together to help our children grow in Faith.

Our Religious Education needs several volunteer catechists, classroom aides and substitutes for classes beginning in September. Training and curriculum materials will be provided for catechists. Offer your example and your time to learn about Christ with the children. Please pray about it! Come and join us in this beautiful ministry. For more information, contact Debbie Leach at 973 779-6200 or dleach@stphilip.org.

Registration for Classes

Returning families are reminded, if you haven't already done so, to register for 2018-2019 school year.

There are two ways to register:

- **Online: Visit www.stphilip.org. The registration forms and fees can be submitted electronically.**
- **In Person or by Mail: Download and Print the registration form and return with fees to the Parish Office.**

If you are new to our parish or have a child entering 1st grade in September, please call the Religious Education Office.

Be sure that you are registered with the parish prior to registering your child/children for class. Contact Barbara Salzer, parish secretary at 973-779-6200.

Please contact dleach@stphilip.org with any questions about our Religious Education program.

- Registration closes on August 15th!

ST. PHILIP PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Needed

Teachers, paraprofessionals, and substitute teachers

Please email your resume to:

principalzito@gmail.com

DIOCESAN NEWS

SILVER AND GOLD WEDDING ANNIVERSARY MASS

Couples, were you married in 1968 or 1993? The Diocese of Paterson invites you to celebrate your 25th or 50th wedding anniversary during a special Mass to be offered at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Paterson, NJ. Bishop Serratelli will serve as main celebrant on this joyful occasion to be held:

Sunday, November 4, 2018 at 3:30 PM

Arrangements can be made by contacting the parish office. **The deadline to register is Monday, October 15, 2018.** You will receive additional information from the Office of Family Life once your registration has been processed. *Congratulations on this joyous occasion!*

PRAY FOR

THE NEWLY BAPTIZED:

Christian John and Jordan Daniel DiMarco
Children of Peter and Bonnie

THE SICK: Silvia Berardo, Lara Buell, Margaret Sikora, Sister Beverly Aiazzone, Antoinette Van Setters, Alexander Bancey, Derrick Medeiros, Maria Ligato, Philip Kutzenco, Evelyn Wescott, Annette Wanamaker, Mildred Nerone, Eugene & Lorraine DeBellis, Bob Rose, Jack Steffans, Fred Van Duyne, Dave Miller, Sr. Giovanni Aiazzone, Maya Hilario, John Pepe, Ron Kuruc, George Biondi, Theresa Buhler, Chloe LoPresti, Cathy Papuzenski, Roberta & Al Dressner, Eloise Stampoulos, Pina Basile, Jim Weis, Loretta Latona, Rita Latona, Eileen Kirschner, Roger Greff, Maryann Greff, Peg Chambers, Dorothea Stepka, Vivian Hart, John Thievon, Alice Negron, Janet Irizarry, Ryan G. Micale, Vincent Caragliano, Domenico Cirilli, George Heyrich, Angelo Masino, Monique Tommaro, Paul Pairo, RoseMarie Azzaro, Henry Murphy, Annie Omelcvcuk

THE DECEASED:

Robert Finizio

PRIESTS' SCHEDULE: AUGUST 19, 2018

5:30 PM Fr. Matt 8:00 AM Fr. Joe
10:00 AM Fr. Joe 12:00 N Fr. Matt

PARISH GIVING

SUNDAY COLLECTION: AUGUST 6, 2017 \$18,054.00
SUNDAY COLLECTION: AUGUST 9, 2018
Envelopes \$12,169.00
Cash \$ 1,589.00
Online giving donation \$ 5,054.00
Total **\$18,812.00**

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY

1 Kgs 19:4-8; Eph 4:30—5:2; Jn 6:41-51

SUNDAY, August 12, 2018

8:00 All the People of the Parish
10:00 Margaret & George Dikdan
Kathy Miragliotta
12:00 Special Intention: The Hilario & Amati Families

MONDAY, AUGUST 13, 2018

9:00 Bill Loftus

TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2018

9:00 Sadvary & Furesz Family

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2018

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

9:00 Deceased members Canavan Family
Marie Riegrova
7:00 PM All the People of the Parish

THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 2018

9:00 Patsy Sinisi

FRIDAY, AUGUST 17, 2018

9:00 Kenneth Comtois – 5th Anniversary

SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 2018

9:00 Ann & Edward Sheridan, Sr. & Jr.
5:30 Gene Musto
Mark Kaczor
Robert Finizio

SUNDAY, AUGUST 19, 2018

8:00 All the People of the Parish
10:00 Kathy Miragliotta
William Twomey
12:00 Simo Borovcanin

The Sanctuary Candle: In memory of
Gene Musto
From Loving Wife

**THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15**

Masses are at 9:00 AM and 7:00 PM

PLEASE NOTE

Our Bulletin company has asked us to submit our bulletin to them one day earlier than we have been. Therefore, bulletin information must now be received at the Parish Office on Mondays. Information should be emailed to Barbara Salzer at bsalzer@stphilip.org