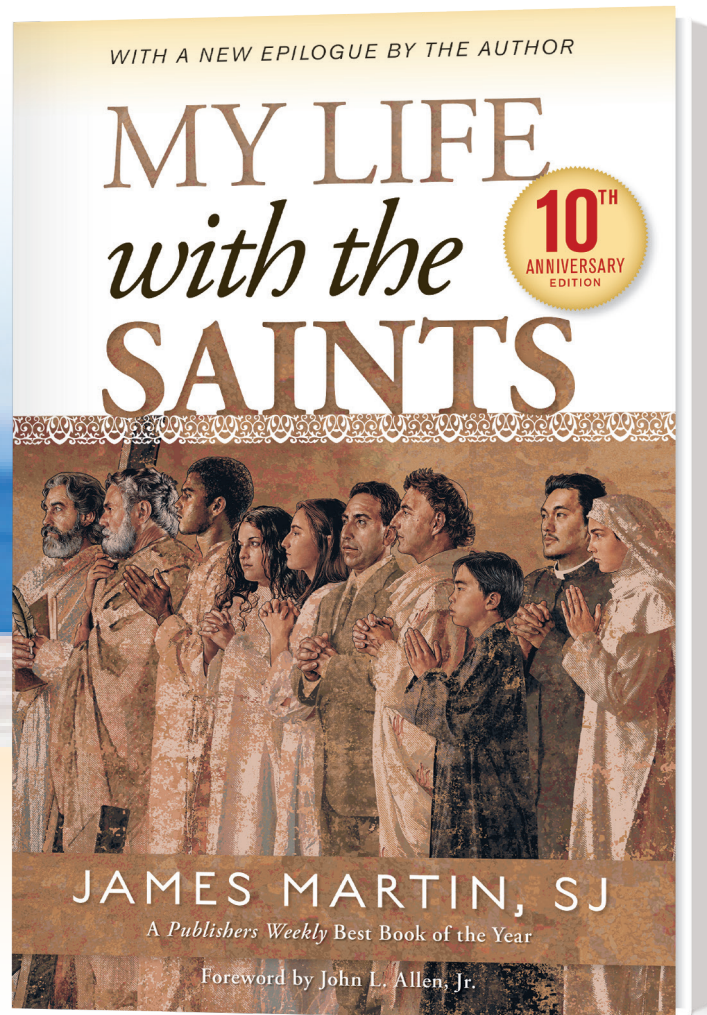


## Discussion Guide

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# *Summer Reading for the Soul*



## Week One: Chapters 1–3

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1. As a child, which particular saint most interested you? What about that saint interested you?
2. What purpose might the saints serve in our lives?
3. Thérèse of Lisieux discovered her vocation—her calling—at a very young age. Describe a time you felt called to a particular direction in your life by God.
4. “Everything, even human differences, leads to the greater good of the Church,” said Pope John XXIII at a gathering of bishops from around the world. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

## Week Two: Chapters 4–6

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1. Dorothy Day had an unswerving commitment to nonviolence. What do you feel is the root cause of the culture of violence in our world today? In what ways do you believe you could help effect change in that culture?
2. Feeling grateful for God's creative action in our lives is a key concept in Ignatian spirituality. Think back over your day. What one thing, person, or event are you most grateful for today?
3. Balancing activity with prayer is a constant challenge. Describe your habit of prayer. When and where do you like to pray?
4. Humility, obedience, and surrender marked Arrupe's work. When have you faced similar choices between submission to authority and staying your personal course? How did it feel? What is the interaction between surrender and faith?

## Week Three: Chapters 7–8

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1. For Martin, Bernadette symbolizes the need to remain true to one's own personal vision. When have you felt challenged in that regard?
2. "The Virgin's messages were simple and sensible: penance, prayer, pilgrimage," Martin writes of the Virgin Mary's appearances to Bernadette. What do you believe is the purpose of a pilgrimage? If you have participated in a pilgrimage, can you describe the experience? If you have not, does it seem like an experience you would welcome?
3. In upholding the dignity of each individual, Mother Teresa taught us what is possible between humans. What struck you most about her approach?
4. In general, do you find it easy or difficult to lead a Christian life? Name one thing you find difficult about being a Christian in today's society, as well as one easy thing about following Christ.

## Week Four: Chapters 9–11

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1. We sometimes think the saints were naturally holy and believed without question, but Thérèse endured a time of darkness in her spiritual life that shook her confidence in heaven and the afterlife. When has your faith wavered? What was your reaction?
2. “We cannot be ourselves unless we know ourselves. But self-knowledge is impossible when thoughtless and automatic activity keeps our soul in confusion,” Thomas Merton wrote in *No Man Is an Island*. What are some creative ways to incorporate reflection into our sometimes “thoughtless and automatic activity”?
3. Who was instrumental in leading you to your vocation in life? Describe how he or she was influential.
4. Peter was aware of his own sinfulness and weakness and was humble before the Lord. How does humility fit into your spiritual life?

## Week Five: Chapters 12–14

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1. Theology is often defined as: faith seeking understanding (258). Describe a time when you sought understanding after an influential experience of faith.
2. Think about how you respond when learning about your faith. Do you prefer intellectual reasoning or firsthand experiences? Is this true when you learn about other topics?
3. Do you believe you have met any saints? What made those individuals holy in your eyes? How have they influenced you?
4. Martin becomes attracted to the “hidden life” of Christ—the life of Jesus before he embarked on his public ministry. What do you imagine occurred during that part of Christ’s life?

## Week Six: Chapters 15–18

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1. What emotions did you experience while reading about the Ugandan martyrs and the East African refugees? Why do you think your spirit reacted that way?
2. Do you know anyone personally who adheres to strict religious practices today? What are your thoughts about people who do? Please explain why you feel that way.
3. When we question God's will for us, Martin suggests we look for signs of God's work that are already present in our lives and in the lives of others. What is one way in which you see God active in your life or in the world today?
4. Martin believes the saints should be appreciated for who they are, not simply for what they do. What are some lessons you have learned from saints?

# Epilogue

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1. Martin often asks people, “Would you be willing to leave everything you know and travel across the world to live among people you’ve never met to share the good news of the gospel with them?” (383). Take a moment to reflect on your own answer to this question. Why or why not would you be willing to take this leap?
2. Martin feels tempted by fame (386). What are the things in your life that tempt you to turn away from God?
3. What do you identify as the more difficult responsibilities to uphold as a disciple of Christ?
4. What saints would you include in your version of *My Life with the Saints*? Explain in more detail at least one of those saints and why you would include them.