

## 17. Non-fiction – Spirituality & Inspiration

### **A JESUIT OFF-BROADWAY by James Martin**

What happens when theater and theology share the stage? Discover the answer in this true story about the making of a celebrated play.

Called to the priesthood by God, Fr. James Martin was startled to get a very different kind of call one evening in 2005: a phone call from actor Sam Rockwell. Rockwell had been cast in the part of Judas Iscariot in an Off-Broadway play where Judas was on trial for his crime of betraying Jesus; would Martin be willing to offer some theological insights? Martin gladly obliged, and within weeks playwright Stephen Adly Guirgis and other members of the cast began to dialogue with Martin about a host of spiritual issues that weighed on their minds: Can we believe the Bible? What was Jesus' mission? What is sin? Does hell exist? Is anyone beyond God's forgiveness?

*A Jesuit Off-Broadway* recounts Fr. Martin's thrilling six months with the LABYrinth Theater Company, as it created and performed *The Last Day of Judas Iscariot*, which had a sold-out five-week run in New York. As the occasionally profane and worldly playwright, director, and actors struggled to understand theological issues and ideas, they strove to convey them in an artistically convincing way to a largely secular audience. Through it all, Martin learned lessons about theater and life, about how the sacred and the secular aren't that far apart, and how questions often tell us more than answers do.

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