



Father Joseph Martin - Obituary

Father Joseph Martin, S.S.

October 12, 1924 – March 9, 2009

Father Joseph Charles Martin, S.S., co-founder of Father Martin's Ashley, an addiction treatment center in Havre de Grace, Md., and a noted authority and lecturer on alcoholism, died at the age of 84 at his home in Havre de Grace.

Best known for his lectures on alcoholism as a disease, delivered to alcoholics and their families with his charismatic style and sense of humor, Father Martin is credited with saving the lives of thousands of alcoholics and addicts. While he retired from active management in 2003, he continued to lecture at Father Martin's Ashley, addressing patients as recently as November 2008.

His "Chalk Talk on Alcohol" lecture, which began "I'm Joe Martin, and I'm an alcoholic," and more than 40 films are legendary. His films, which have been translated into multiple languages, continue to be used at treatment centers

around the world, in hospitals, substance abuse programs, industry and most branches of the U.S. government. He is the author of several publications including Chalk Talks on Alcohol, published by Harper & Row in 1982, which is still in print.

He and Father Martin's Ashley co-founder Mae Abraham raised funds to buy and renovate Oakington, the estate owned by the widow of U.S. Senator Millard Tydings on the Chesapeake Bay near Havre de Grace. The treatment center, which opened in 1983, has since provided treatment and program services to more than 40,000 people suffering from the disease of addiction, and their families. Two years after Father Martin's Ashley opened its doors, Forbes magazine ranked it as one of the top ten addiction treatment facilities in the country. Patients at the 85-bed facility come from the East Coast and across the U.S., where it has a reputation for treating alcohol and drug addiction and relapse with respect for the dignity of each individual who enters its doors.

In 1972, the United States Navy filmed "The Blackboard Talk," which they then dubbed "The Chalk Talk." It became known throughout the U.S. military and established Father Martin as a recognized leader in the addiction treatment field.

In 1991, Father Martin was invited by Pope John Paul II to participate in the Vatican's International Conference on Drugs and Alcohol. He made four trips to Russia under the auspices of the International Institute on Alcohol Education and Training, and also traveled to Switzerland and Poland to speak to Alcoholics Anonymous groups and to addiction counselors in training.

Father Martin's honors and awards include the Andrew White medal from Loyola College, Baltimore, for his contributions to the general welfare of the citizenry of Maryland; Rutgers Summer School of Alcohol Studies Distinguished Service Award (1988); and Norman Vincent Peale Award (1992).

Born the fourth of seven children in Baltimore on October 12, 1924, Father Martin graduated from Loyola High School in 1942 where he was valedictorian, and attended Loyola College (1942-44). He studied for the priesthood at St. Mary's Seminary on Paca Street (1944-45) and at St Mary's in Roland Park (1945-48), and was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Baltimore in 1948. The following year he entered the Society of St. Sulpice, a community of priests devoted to the formation and education of seminarians and priests.

He taught English and History both at St. Joseph's College in Mountain View, Calif., (1948-56), and at St. Charles College, Catonsville, Md., (1956-68). From 1968-70 he served as chaplain at the mother house of the Oblate Sisters of Providence in Baltimore.

While serving at St. Charles College, Father Martin began his recovery from alcoholism. Following treatment, he worked as a lecturer and educator in the Division of Alcohol Control for the state of Maryland, prior to founding Father Martin's Ashley.

Father Martin always had a very special concern for priests in trouble. In this, he remained faithful to his Sulpician vocation throughout his life.

Father Martin is survived by Mae and Tommy Abraham, with whom he lived for more than 30 years, two sisters Dorothy and Frances, his brother, Edward and numerous nieces, nephews and their children.

The viewing will be held on Thursday, March 12, from 1 pm to 9 pm at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. Father Martin's Mass of Celebration of the Resurrection will be held on Friday, March 13 at 10 am at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Cathedral Street, Baltimore, Md. Interment will be private.

Expressions of remembrance may be e-mailed to ashley.marketing@fmashley.com or mailed to Father Martin Remembrance, Father Martin's Ashley, 800 Tydings Lane, Havre de Grace, MD 21078. They will be posted on the Father Martin's Ashley Web site at www.fathermartinsashley.org.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Father Martin's Ashley treatment center, 800 Tydings Lane, Havre de Grace, MD 21078 or to The Associated Sulpicians of the U.S., 5408 Roland Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21210.