

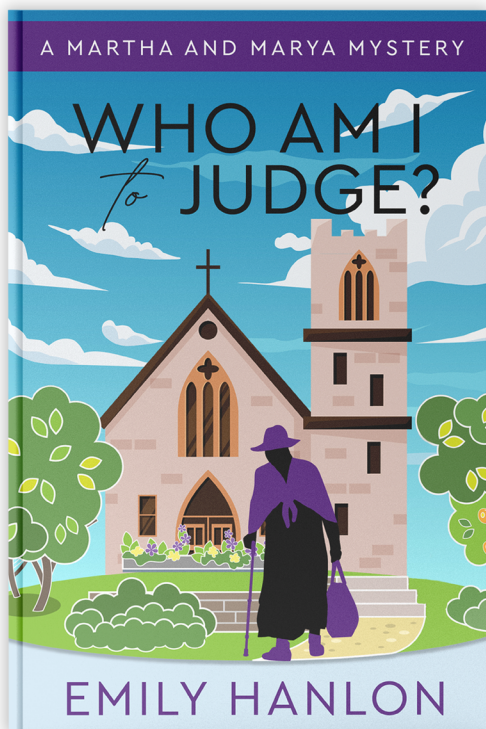
"Hanlon weaves enchanting characters, parish gossip,
and murder into a whodunnit that will delight
cozy mystery fans."

—**Susan Furlong**, *New York Times*
Top Ten Crime Fiction Novel of the Year

EMILY HANLON

Mystery Author

MEDIA KIT



ABOUT EMILY HANLON



EMILY HANLON was raised in Texas, educated in Boston, and now lives in New York. She worked as a personal injury litigator for many years, first as a plaintiff's attorney presenting the stories of injured clients, then changing sides and telling the stories of clients accused of causing those injuries. Finally ending up as an arbitrator, she publishes over fifty decisions a year that seek to unravel the truth behind those always contradictory versions. A life of listening to witnesses and sifting through facts has prepared her well for creating the complex entanglements of murder mysteries.

Having converted late in life after watching the joy that faith brought to her husband and three sons, she, like her sleuths in the Martha and Marya mysteries, is a eucharistic minister, active in the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and a card-carrying Church Lady. Through her books, Emily shares her love of the Church and of a good "whodunit".

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EMILY HANLON

WHO AM I TO JUDGE?

BOOK ONE OF THE MARTHA AND MARYA MYSTERY SERIES



WHEN A PRIEST CONFESSES TO THE MURDER OF A PARISHIONER, EVERYONE in the wealthy waterfront town of Pequot Bays is convinced of his guilt—everyone, that is, except Marya Cook, a Bible-quoting, lavender-clad octogenarian known to locals as the Purple Pest.

Unable to prove his innocence on her own, she draws in Martha Collins, a much younger, efficient, ever-busy church lady, to assist in her investigations. Although Martha is unwilling to associate herself with the odd old woman as she accuses wealthy and influential suspects of murder, Marya's peculiar logic persuades her that this ditzy old woman may not be so ditzy after all.

A victim with plenty of enemies, a corrupt ambitious cop, a conflicting confession by a fellow priest, and the death of a prime suspect make the path to truth a crooked one. The rich and powerful suspects scoff at poor, dithering Marya. Can she, in the end, unveil their many secrets and prove there is more to a person than meets the eye?

GENRE

Mystery

PUBLISHER

Chrim Press, a division of
WhiteFire Publishing
chrimgpress.com

PUBLICATION DATE

May 1, 2023

ISBN

978-1-946531-50-6 (print)
978-1-946531-51-3 (digital)

DISTRIBUTOR

Ingram

ADVANCED PRAISE

Readers will be delighted with Hanlon's deftly constructed mystery and vividly imagined world of colorful characters in this refreshing and hopeful tale of redemption." —SUSAN FURLONG, *New York Times* Top Ten Crime Fiction Novel of the Year

When evil strikes not just at the heart Martha's beloved community, but her home, she knows it is her duty to prevent a miscarriage of justice. But in order to ensure truth prevails, Martha will need to examine everything she thought she understood—and make a very unlikely alliance with the vividly memorable Marya. *Who Am I to Judge?* is an absolute gem—a delightful mystery suffused with faith, friendship and a sparkling cast of characters that will charm readers even as it keeps them guessing until the very end!" —WENDY LACAPRA, author of *Scandal in Spades*



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SAMPLE INTERVIEW

TELL US ABOUT YOUR BOOK.

It's a whodunit in the Agatha Christie tradition set in a waterfront community on a long island which is home to the very wealthy and those who serve them. The suspects come from the very wealthy, and my sleuth, Marya Cook, comes from the other side of the tracks. She is an octogenarian living in the town's only public housing, ridiculed by the locals as the "The Purple Pest" for her colorful clothing as she rambles down Main Street spouting platitudes and quoting the Bible.

When her parish priest confesses to the murder of a particularly pious prying parishioner, she's the only one in town who doesn't believe he did it, and so she presses a very reluctant, much younger, efficient, ever-busy church lady, Martha Collins, into helping her. The rich and influential suspects underestimate the blessedly poor, forgotten, and humble Marya until, in the end, she gathers them together unveils their secrets. On the way, the relationship between Martha and Marya evolves, leading to an unexpected friendship.

HOW DID YOU CREATE YOUR CHARACTERS?

Marya was inspired by real woman who went to my church. She dressed in purple and handed out notecards. I was blessed to have known her for several years and I think she is the closest person to a saint with whom I have been acquainted.

The Marya character was first named Nyura, after a woman in a three book series about the *Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* by Vladimir Voinovich. It's a hysterically engaging story

of a not-too-bright Russian soldier during World War II who seduces Nyura, a long suffering, lonely woman who then plods towards justice to rescue Chonkin after he is arrested by the secret police. Marya shares Nyura's insistence on justice in the face of insurmountable odds. Marya, however, has a tinge of the ever-underestimated Columbo, her own illogical logic and non-sense, and an extraordinary recall of the teachings of the IHM sisters who educated her and of the Bible, which I have learned has a saying appropriate to virtually every situation that pops up in a murder mystery.

Martha is the anti-Marya. Marya's apartment has paper littered over every flat surface, whereas Martha sanitizes her bottle of sanitizing cleanser. By the time Martha has finished a Hail Mary, Marya has just started the second line. Marya is the thinker and the pray-er, Martha is the doer. It pretty much stared me in the face for a long time before I realized that the sidekick was Martha from the Bible, and Nyura had a lot in common with her sister Mary. So I re-named Nyura Marya, and I named her sidekick Martha.

AMONG MARTHA'S MANY MINISTRIES AS A "CHURCH LADY", THE MOST PROMINENT IS HER INVOLVEMENT IN THE ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY. YOU ALSO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE SOCIETY. IS THAT IMPORTANT TO THE BOOK?

Very. And I didn't even realize it at first. It wasn't until the lead characters had taken on their personalities and back stories that I realized their relationship had been very much informed by the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Vincenians



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are called to visit the poor in their homes, to call them friends and neighbors and not clients, to listen, respect, not judge, and to answer their needs as they present them. We seek to become "friends to the poor". A spiritual director of the society, Rev. Aidan R. Rooney, described it in a recent "Vincentian Minute", we learn their names, let them know who we are, and build a relationship.

I made one of the sleuths, Marya, a Vice President of a St. Vincent de Paul Society conference just because I knew about the organization, having been involved in it for a long time, but I had not realized how "Vincentian" the book was. The whole book could be viewed through a Vincentian lens. A poor woman in a wealthy community, ignored or made fun of. Ignored, that is, until she gathers the rich and powerful suspects together to reveal which one of them is the murderer!

The developing and frequently awkward relationship between my two amateur sleuths mirrors the central theme of the Vincentian mission – entering into a relationship with the poor. There is a tension between Martha Collins, the respectable church lady, and the poor old woman. I realized that Martha,

who found herself at times embarrassed, confused, and frustrated by her new acquaintance, reminded me of my own struggles with my Vincentian ministry as I try to enter into a relationship as I help my new friends.

WHAT DREW YOU TO WRITING?

I don't know. My mom enjoyed writing, and maybe I picked it up from her. But the minute I started writing a book, I knew it was for me. I would get up very early, before work, sit at the computer, and the hours would fly by. I'd look up at the clock and be shocked that I had been writing for two or three hours. Besides my first massage-and only the first one-I cannot recall another time when I have been so thoroughly in the moment, not distracted by other thoughts. It was pure joy.

WHY DID YOU WRITE THIS BOOK?

Faith, Catholicism, and religion are pushed into the dark corners of our



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culture in our ever-secularized world. This book is an attempt to share the joy I have found in my faith and in the church ladies and other acquaintances I meet on a daily basis in church.

Agatha Christie is third on the all-time best seller list trailing only Shakespeare and the Bible. I thought it would be great to use a popular genre to shine a light on, and maybe gently stir the memories of people who have fallen away from the faith, about familiar prayers – such as to Mary Undoer of Knots which is so relevant in today’s knotty world; about the sayings of Jesus – “Take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye”; about the parables and the sayings that come from the Bible - “Mind your own business,” from 1 Thessalonians 4: 11-12.

The Church is ever-present in the book, a third major character which I hope presents Christian doctrine and dogma without the dogmatism. A murder mystery is the perfect genre to use for my purposes because, at its base, it is all about morality, right and wrong, and justice, themes shared with

Catholicism, so it is possible to address those themes without being didactic.

YOU ARE A CONVERT. DOES THAT PLAY ANY PART IN THE BOOK?

Yes and no. There is no conversion story in the book. But Martha, a cradle Catholic, is constantly being converted by Marya. Martha has relied entirely on herself since she was 19 years old and is very effective and useful in her church ministries, but she does them to obey the letter of the law - pharisaic. Marya on the other hand, performs her seemingly useless, silly tasks like handing out notecards with Bible quotes to people who don’t want them out of love and relies on God. They have a little spat when Martha says the Bible says, “God helps those who help themselves” and Marya points out that saying is NOT from the Bible and to the contrary the Bible says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.”

