

Faith-Sharing/Discussion Questions

Holiness

by William J. O'Malley

These faith-sharing questions accompany *Holiness* by William J. O'Malley, SJ. A teacher for more than forty years, Father O'Malley currently teaches at Fordham Preparatory School in New York City. In this book Father O'Malley draws on Jesus' life and on the examples of saints who are flawed like us to surprise us and inspire us to be what we really are: children of God in the family of God. He has published many popular books and articles on spirituality and Christian living, including *Choosing to Be Catholic*, *Meeting the Living God*, *Lenten Prayers for Busy People* and *Redemptive Suffering*.

** Note that at the end of each chapter there is a reflection section called "A Personal Examen." The following questions are a supplement to the author's own questions for reflection.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION—"ACCESSIBLE HOLINESS"

- What did I find as the most striking comment from the author's introduction?
- Which characterization of holiness do I more relate to: the one the author presents for high-school seniors or the one of "older folk"?
- What concepts or images come to my mind when I hear the word *holiness*?
- How has my understanding of holiness changed over the course of my life?
- In what ways do I strive for holiness in my daily living?

CHAPTER ONE—"THE BEYOND IN OUR MIDST"

- What was the main point the author was trying to make in this chapter?
- What particular places and actions in my life have "radiated a 'specialness' beyond the meaning of humdrum days"?
- What are some times in my life that I have felt the incredible presence of God?
- How do I feel connected in the way I practice my religion?
- What have I done to avoid feeling numbed or "armor[ed] from seeing or hearing" what is happening around me?

CHAPTER TWO—"TRUST"

- What concept presented in this chapter do I most resonate with? Which one do I find to be the most challenging?
- As a parent, mentor or friend, how do I cherish and challenge others in my life?
- How has the issue of trust impacted my life?
- Why is comprehending one's own greatness so difficult?
- Am I more focused on my personality or my character? Why?

CHAPTER THREE—“HONESTY”

- What have I learned about honesty from reading this chapter that may have been a surprise to me?
- In what ways do I haggle with myself about self honesty?
- How have I dealt with being honest in situations that call for tact?
- Why is dealing with objective truth difficult?
- When, in my own experience, have I had trouble dealing with the truth? What did I learn about myself in those instances?

CHAPTER FOUR—“IMPARTIALITY”

- In my own educational experience, how did I learn “how to reason to honest decisions”?
- What do I find to be the biggest challenge in being impartial?
- Which “obstacle to impartiality” do I struggle with most?
- How do I daily “gather, sift, outline, conclude and critique”?

CHAPTER FIVE—“GRATITUDE”

- How might I agree or disagree with the understanding of God as “the One without whom I would not exist”?
- What are some of the different ways that express gratitude to God?
- What giftedness do I need to be more conscious of in my life?
- What does the Mass/Eucharist mean to me, especially in the context of gratitude?

CHAPTER SIX—“AWARENESS”

- In what ways might I have become desensitized to the presence of others around me? To the presence of God?
- How can one properly go from not talking to strangers to treating them like a neighbor?
- How often do I acknowledge a complete stranger? What has been their response?
- When was the last time I made a new friend, and how would I describe what that process was like?

CHAPTER SEVEN—“EMPATHY”

- Based on the reading of this chapter, how would I describe empathy to others?
- Which do I find myself doing more: feeling *for* another or feeling *with* another? How might I improve upon both?
- In what ways do I struggle with being kind, especially from the stance of empathy?
- How does one go from kindness to loving?
- Would I agree or disagree with the position that forgiving the “hardest love”? How has my own experience led me to that particular conclusion?

CHAPTER EIGHT—“PERSEVERANCE”

- What has been the most common way that I deal with the failures in life?
- What “legitimate suffering” have I had to deal with in life? What were my personal challenges with dealing with it?
- What “unmerited suffering” have I been faced with? What was my response to it?
- In what ways has suffering helped me grow?