

A Newly Crimsoned Reliquary

Questions for Book Club Discussions

1. Donna Fletcher Crow often says that one of her goals as a writer is to give the reader a “you are there” experience in creating her settings. Did you enjoy visiting Oxford in this book? Have you ever been to Oxford? What did you enjoy most there, or what would you most like to visit?
2. One of the themes of the Monastery Murders series is that events from the past impact our lives today. Do you believe this is true? Why or why not?
3. Felicity says she went off to study in a monastery more than a year ago “on something of a whim.” Since then she has been working to curb her impulsive nature. How do think she’s doing on becoming strong without fool-hardiness? Do you see her as more active and caring or more rash?
4. Fr. Antony was planning on becoming a monk before Felicity turned his life upside down. How do you see him as a man? As a priest? As a college lecturer?
5. The life and work of St. Frideswide provide a framework for this story. How did you react to Frideswide’s story? How do you feel about the idea of saints? Do you believe their lives can provide role models for us today?
6. English change-ringing, especially the tradition of muffled tolling, is an important part of the background of this story. Did you find that interesting? Do you enjoy the sound of church bells?
7. When Antony is lecturing about the martyrs of the English Reformation he tries to make the point that there were about an equal number of martyrs on both sides of the Catholic-Protestant divide and to give his students a sense of the tragedy. Do you feel he was successful?
8. How did you react to the accounts of martyrs in the light of the religious conflicts we read of in the news today?
9. The work of John and Charles Wesley and the Holy Club is also part of Oxford’s religious history which Antony teaches his students. How do you respond to the “social gospel” aspects of their work such as prison visiting? Have you had any experience with such “acts of mercy” yourself or known anyone who has?
10. What do you think about the Oxford Movement and their dual emphasis on high church worship and working among the poor in the most deprived areas? Have you had any experience in a church that continues these practices?

11. How did you react to Antony's debate before the student atheist society? Antony was thankful that this debate was unjudged, but if you had been voting, how would you have voted? Why?
12. Antony was forced to assimilate new understandings of his childhood and of himself when he reconnected with his sister at their uncle's funeral. Have you found that an old friend or family member can have an entirely different memory or understanding of a past event than you have? Do you feel these new understandings are important or is it better to "let old dogs lie?"
13. The climax of this story takes place around All Soul's Day or All Hallow's Eve. Was it new to you to learn the roots of today's Halloween holiday? Do you think it's important to have a day for recalling our dear departed?
14. Felicity and Antony are looking forward to their wedding soon after Christmas. What do you predict for their future?
15. What would you say the theme of this story is? What did you learn from reading it? Are there things you would like to know more about?
16. Do you have questions you would like to ask the author? If so, please write to:
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