

## North of Hope— Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Use the following questions as guides to deeper individual understanding of the novel or for group discussion.

1. Describe the character of Fr. Frank Healy. What were the formative events in his life? What inspired his entrance into seminary?
  2. What were the symptoms of Fr. Healy's midlife loss of hope? What factors, by the end of the novel, had worked to restore his hope?
  3. What do you think of the character of Libby? What were her strengths and weaknesses?
  4. Once as a young man and later as a priest, Frank hears a voice telling him "She's the one . . . she's the one." (pp. 8 and 169) Where is this voice coming from? What does it mean that Libby is "the one"? Does Libby being "the one" mean the same thing both times?
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5. Libby and Frank both make choices that bring them to, at least momentarily, problematic points in their lives. What do you see of your own life experience in these characters? What attitudes did these characters have about their past choices and present consequences during the course of the novel? What is your attitude about choices you've made that you might question or regret today?
  
6. Why does Libby think she needs Frank Healy? What would you tell this character, if you had a chance, about the nature of love and self-respect?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Do you think Frank should have simply cut Libby out of his life at some point? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Most of the characters in this novel were "north of hope" in some way. Describe one or two of these characters, their loss of hope, and how hope was restored.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the virtue of hope in this way: "Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. . . . Buoyed up by hope, [we are] preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity." (CCC, 1817, 1818) Reflect on the struggles of the characters in this novel in light of this definition.

