

# Death in Black and White

A Novel by Fr. Michael Brisson, LC

## Discussion Questions

1. Father Hart is a young priest who is put in charge of the parish for the first time. What experiences have you had of assuming a bigger responsibility? What insecurities have you faced? How have you overcome them?
2. Consider the priests, ministers, or other faith leaders you know. What significance do they play in society, in your family or friend group, and in your personal life?
3. In Chapter 4, Father Hart is called to hear the confession of someone he thinks is dying. Thinking about that encounter and not what happened afterward, did Father Hart handle the situation correctly? Could he have handled it better?
4. The day after Father Hart's fateful confession, he and Monsignor discuss the situation (Chapter 5). Who was right? Should Father Hart do his duty and be a confessor to the mob, or should he have tried to seek justice in some way?
5. In Chapter 6, Father Hart has to minister to a bereaved family. Have you ever had to be with someone who has lost someone close to him or her but unknown to you? What was that experience like? What can you do in a situation like that?
6. What was your initial impression of Ashley in Chapter 7? How did it change as her conversation with Father Hart developed? Was Father Hart's approach appropriate? Could he have said or done something differently?
7. In Chapter 9, Father Hart finds himself in an apologetics firefight with an apparent atheist. Have you ever been in a discussion that intense? Did you win? Is it possible to win arguments like those? How should you deal with someone antagonistic toward your beliefs?
8. What do you make of the friendship between (Father) Chris and (Father) Andrew? Have you ever had a friend like Andrew? How did you deal with him or her?
9. As a confessor, Father Hart cannot reveal what he hears in confession in any way. Many priests have given their lives instead of revealing what they've heard. What do you think that experience is like? Are there other moments when it is appropriate to keep secrets?

10. In Chapter 12, Father Hart doesn't call the police. Instead, he tries to take matters into his own hands. Given what he knew (and didn't know), was that the right decision?
11. Father Hart finds solace at St. Agnes Church on 43<sup>rd</sup> Street in Manhattan. Do you have any special spiritual place where you find solace?
12. What role does Divine Providence play in the story? Have you had an experience of how God uses bad or unfortunate situations to bring about a greater good?
13. What role does mercy play in the story? Is it possible to be too merciful? Is there anyone in the story or in real life beyond redemption?

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