

Book Group / Study Guide Questions for *Vatican Waltz*

1. Of what importance is Cynthia's relationship to her father? Grandmother? Local priest?
2. At what point do you sense a shift in her attitude, from timid to more assertive?
3. If you were raised Catholic, how do you feel Catholicism was portrayed? If you were not raised Catholic, was the religion made understandable to you?
4. What do you consider the central scene in the novel?
5. What is Cynthia's response to violence and fear, and how does that affect her character?
6. If you are a Dostoevsky fan, can you guess where the name Zossima comes from?
7. The actual Cardinal of Genoa was famous for going out in the streets of Genoa to address G-8 protestors at some risk to himself. Do you think his behavior in this novel is admirable or outside the boundaries of his faith?
8. What do you predict will happen to Cynthia's child?
9. Some people, including the author's own mother, a devout Catholic, were offended by the ending, but Merullo insists he was simply trying to envision a 'modern Mary'. How did you react to the surprise at the end (or were you surprised)?
10. Did the book challenge any of your own beliefs? If so, do you think the author handled this provocative material in an appropriate manner?
11. In doing research for the novel, Merullo says he actually walked down the dangerous street where Cynthia walks before her meeting with the cardinal (though he says it was during the day). Since this section—the walk and then the time in the small church—were based on an actual experience, did you sense any slight difference in the writing?