

Book Club Discussion Questions for The MADONNA OF PISANO by MaryAnn Diorio

NOTE: These questions may be used in a variety of ways, including book club or reading group discussions, and in Bible-study groups dealing with the topics of forgiveness, rape, sexual abuse, betrayal hypocrisy, and immigration. They may also prompt personal reflection and meditation.

1. Maria struggled with forgiving the man who raped her. From a human standpoint, her struggle was understandable. Yet, God commands us to forgive. What enabled Maria finally to forgive Don Franco? Can we forgive in our own strength?
2. Is forgiveness a challenge for you? If so, why? Why do you think forgiveness is so difficult for many people?
3. When a person refuses to forgive, how is his or her soul affected?
4. For a long time, Don Franco refused to confess his guilt out of fear of exposure. What are some other reasons people refuse to admit their guilt and seek forgiveness? What does the refusal to forgive or to ask for forgiveness do to the human heart?
5. Does forgiving mean forgetting? Does forgiving mean trusting again the person who hurt you?
6. Maria chose to prove her forgiveness of Don Franco by offering him a job on her farm after he was defrocked. Does forgiveness mean maintaining a harmful relationship? How can you determine if you should continue or end a relationship with the person who hurt you?
7. Luca could not discern who was telling the truth: Maria or Don Franco. What should one do when one cannot determine the truth in a given situation? Consider King Solomon and the two women claiming to be the mother of the same child ((1 Kings 3: 16-28).
8. Although Maria wanted to marry Luca, she remained true to her dream of restoring *Bella Terra* to solvency. Should duty supersede one's personal desires? If so, when? How important is it to stay true to one's dream?
9. Is there someone in your life you need to forgive? Is there someone of whom you need to ask forgiveness? Is there something holding you back? If so, what is it?
10. Will you make the decision now to forgive that person or those persons who deeply hurt you? Will you make the decision now to ask forgiveness of the person or persons you deeply hurt?