

FATHER ELIJAH: AN APOCALYPSE

(Discussion Questions)

1. How familiar were you with the Book of Revelation in the Bible before reading this book? Did reading Father Elijah make you want to increase your understanding of the Book of Revelation? What is your understanding of the apocalypse?
2. What images come to your mind when you hear the word “Antichrist?” Read the bible passages (*Dan 7*) (*1 Jn 2:18-23; 4:3*) (*2 Jn 7*) (*2 Thes 2:3-12*) (*Mt 24*) (*Mk 13:14-20*) (*Rv 13:17:7-14*). How would you describe the Antichrist after reading these passages? Does the President of the Federation of European States in the novel fit the bill as someone you would describe as the Antichrist?
3. What are your impressions of Father Elijah? How has all the tragedy in his life affected him and formed him for the Pope’s mission? Does Father Elijah seem real to you?
4. What emotions did you experience as you read this book?
5. Michael D. O’Brien wrote this book before the new millennium (published in 1996). In what ways is the Catholic Church under attack in his book? How has the Church changed in the twelve years since this book was published? Does O’Brien’s depiction of the Church under attack ring true, today? If so, in what ways? How might the story be rewritten to reflect the Church of today?
6. On page 41, Father Elijah sees a visitor in his room who is described as, “...*evil of a quality that was new to Elijah...the man radiated virtue, character, and nobility. But all of these qualities were without charity, and the cumulative effect of so much good turned to some undefined ill was to invoke fear...*” Is it possible to be virtuous and lack charity at the same time? If so, how might people described in this way affect the Church’s mission? What did you think of Cardinal Vettore?
7. On page 62, the Pope refers to chapter 34 in Ezekiel. Read Ezekiel 34: 1-11. What does the Lord have to say about shepherds who do not feed and protect their flock?
8. What is meant by the phrase, “*weakness is your strength?*” (page 105)
9. What did you think of Father Elijah’s relationship with Anna Benedetti? How did you feel about her fate?
10. Obedience is a big theme in this book. One example is at the top of page 371 where it says, “*He was a true priest, and after love of Christ, he valued obedience above all else. He believed that obedience and genuine love were inseparable.*” When is obedience a virtue? When is obedience necessary? To whom should we be obedient? Can you think of a situation in which obedience might be a sin? When is it okay to be disobedient?
11. Father Elijah has many spiritual insights in this book. Which one affected you the most and why?

12. Some of the characters in this book seemed to be based on real-life people. Which characters seemed “familiar” to you? How would you describe Michael D. O’Brien’s spirituality based on this book? To whom or to what does he direct most of his criticism?
13. What did you think of Father Elijah’s visit to Warsaw and the old Sophia House? How did you react to Count Smokrev’s confessions about what he did to his friend, Piotr, and his lie about Pawel Tarnowski?
14. On page 371, we are introduced to Father Smith, an editor for the fictional newspaper, *The Catholic Times*. Fr. Smith is criticized by his superiors for not wanting to hire writers “infected with modernism.” Eventually, Fr. Smith is falsely accused of embezzlement (page 465). Did you find yourself sympathizing with Fr. Smith? Does *The Catholic Times* remind you of any modern day Catholic periodicals? What can be deduced about Michael D. O’Brien’s opinion of some modern day Catholic periodicals?
15. On page 470, Father Elijah states, “*Anger is an emotion...It can rise up for legitimate reasons. The sin is only in the will. What do we choose to do with our anger? We must convert these feelings. Pray for our enemies. Suffer in silence. When the time comes... speak the truth before your accusers, but... without rancor.*” Do you agree with this statement? What makes you angry? What do you do with your anger?
16. Do you think that there is an “Antichrist” spirit in today’s world? If so, how would you describe it and what is its source? Is there a difference between “Antichrist” and “Antichurch? Explain.
17. What did you think about the exchange between Cardinal Vettore and the Pope on pages 500-514?
18. Father Elijah experiences many prophetic dreams and revelations in this book. Do you believe that God communicates with us in our dreams? Have you ever experienced this type of communication? What did you think of the appearance of the boy Rafael (starting on page 527) who helps Father Elijah?
19. What was your reaction to Father Elijah’s confrontation with the President? Was it what you expected?
20. What did you think of Father Elijah’s assignment as Bishop of Panaya Kapulu? What emotions did you experience when he was led to discover the tomb of Mary? What did you think of Brother Ass’ half-dream about the apostles and Mary’s death?
21. Father Elijah has a long interior conversation with God starting on page 562. Father Elijah asks, “*Why do You permit evil to go so far?*” Why do you think God allows evil to go so far? How would you describe the author’s image of God based on this conversation?
22. Did you find this novel suspenseful? Did you like the ending? Explain why or why not. Did you notice any symbolism in the book? Explain.