

**FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX**  
**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**THE POSSIBILITIES OF SAINTHOOD**

by Donna Freitas

**Reading Level**

Grades 7 up



“Behold: A rare bloom of a book, a genuflection toward the reality that today’s young can still be, more likely than not, good at heart. *THE POSSIBILITIES OF SAINTHOOD*, while never gloomy or dogmatic, is a literary work of mercy. Let us rejoice and be glad.” — Gregory Maguire, author of *Wicked* and *A Lion among Men*

“This book is super cool! It made me laugh, a lot.” —A YALSA YA Galley Teen Reader

**About the Novel**

Antonia Lucia Labella has two secrets: at fifteen, she’s still waiting for her first kiss, and she wants to be a saint. An official one. Unfortunately, the two events Antonia’s prayed for seem equally unlikely to happen. It’s not for lack of trying. For how long has she been hoping to gain the attention of the love of her life—the tall, dark, and so good-looking Andy Rotellini? Too long to mention. And every month for the last eight years, Antonia has sent a petition to the Vatican proposing a new patron saint and bravely offering herself for the post. (So what if she’s not dead?) But as Antonia learns, in matters of the heart and sainthood, things are about as straightforward as wound-up linguini, and sometimes you need to recognize the signs.

**Discussion Questions**

1. The book opens with Antonia’s letter to the Vatican offering herself as the Patron Saint of Figs and Fig Trees. Reread the letter and make a list of the things you know or assume about Antonia from the start. After you finish reading the book, go back over the list. Was your perception of Antonia on target?
2. If you were to be a patron saint, what would your specialization be? Write a letter making your case and e-mail it to [saint2b@live.com](mailto:saint2b@live.com).
3. Discuss Antonia’s two main aspirations (to become the first living saint and to get her first kiss from the right boy). On the surface, these goals seem very different, but do they have anything in common? What are your aspirations?
4. In the beginning of the book, Antonia introduces her cousin Veronica as the “evil nemesis” in her life (p. 8). Does Antonia let her feelings for Veronica affect her actions? How? Do you have someone like Veronica in your life?
5. Antonia also has a best friend, Maria Romano. Examine their friendship and write a list of the attributes of a best friend in the style in which Antonia writes her lists.

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6. Andy Rotellini and Michael McGinnis are the two boys in Antonia's life. Compare and contrast them. Do they share any characteristics? What are their good points and bad points? How does Antonia decide which boy is right for her?

7. Discuss Antonia's desire to be the Patron Saint of the First Kiss and Kissing and the fact that it was her kiss on Mrs. Bevalaqua's cheek that seemed to precipitate Mrs. B.'s miraculous cure (p. 62). Do you think this is coincidence or are these aspects of the story linked?

8. See Antonia's guide "To Become a Saint You Must Complete the Following." (p. 37) What are the possibilities of sainthood for Antonia?

### About the Author



Donna Freitas is an assistant professor of religion at Boston University. Her nonfiction books for adults include, most recently, *Sex & the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance, and Religion on America's College Campuses* (Oxford), based on a national study about the influence of sexuality and romantic relationships on the spiritual identities of America's college students. She is also a devoted fan of the celebrated British children's author Philip Pullman, and wrote a book with Jason King about the religious and ethical dimensions of his award-winning trilogy, *Killing the Imposter God: Philip Pullman's Spiritual Imagination in His Dark Materials* (Jossey-Bass / Wiley). She loves to ask Big Questions (Why are we here, anyway?) and delights in discovering the many possible forums in which to dabble with the stuff of faith, religion, spirituality, and gender. Ms. Freitas lives in New York City.

### For more information on Donna Freitas:

#### Web sites:

[www.fsgkidsbooks.com](http://www.fsgkidsbooks.com)

Includes a biography of the author and additional information about her book as well as an excerpt.

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