



## Changing Habits, Reading Guide

1. How does the time period during which this story took place affect the decisions of the four women in CHANGING HABITS? If the story had been set in today's world, do you think their decisions would have been different?
2. Of the three sisters - Kathleen, Joanna and Angelina - who do you think had the strongest vocation for the religious life, and why do you think so?
3. As the metaphorical "brides of Christ," sisters take vows for life in the same tradition that marriage vows are "till death us do part." Were there any aspects of the religious life as disclosed in the book that surprised, interested or impressed you?
4. Although the "women's movement" was empowering women in the "outside" world by the 1970s, nuns were still deferring to the parish priest's authority and decisions in nearly all areas. What effect did this submission have on each nun in her relationship with the main male authority figure in her life? (Angelina with her father; Joanna with her fiancé, Greg; Kathleen with Fathers Doyle, Sanders and Yates?) Did the tradition of submission to a parish priest affect why she became a nun, or left?
5. Review the difficulties the nuns face when they leave the sisterhood (Chapters 46 and 47). How are they similar to, or different from, the adjustment problems faced by a woman getting a divorce after a long marriage?
6. How do the themes of "love" and "loneliness" play out in the novel? Are they different for each woman? Can you identify with any of their feelings, despite their being nuns?
7. All three sisters are changed by their experience in the religious life. What does each learn from her years as a nun?
8. What do you think inspires someone to choose a life of religious devotion? Are the reasons for selecting this type of life different for a man and a woman? How? Are they different for individuals of different religions?
9. If you could conveniently step out of your daily life, could you see yourself spending a few years in "religious" in-service for your particular faith?