



The Girls' Book of Priesthood

Louise Rowland

July 2016. Margot Goodwin arrives as the new curate at St Mark's, Highbury.

She's one part exhilarated, ten parts terrified. This is the most important twelve months of her life. Success would mean becoming a fully-fledged priest a year from now, something she feels profoundly called to do. Failure would not only prove her father right, but also delight all the antis who consider woman priests an abomination.

Can she convince everyone – herself included – that she's more than a five foot eight redhead with a PhD and a penchant for Max Factor's Mulberry Lipfinity?

Discussion Points

1. Can you understand Margot's sense of vocation – even if you're not in any way religious yourself?
2. Louise did extensive research for *The Girls' Book of Priesthood*, talking to over a dozen young women priests to hear their experiences first-hand. What do those insights add to the experience of reading the novel?
3. Margot talks about the 24/7 nature of her role and the intense lack of privacy that priests face. What impact do you think that would have on her personal life and her sense of self? How would you react, if you were in her shoes?
4. This is Margot's first job. How similar – or different – do you think her experiences are to those of other first time workers?
5. Many priests rely on a rich seam of gallows humour to help them cope with the pressure. How does humour contribute to the telling of the story – and to Margot's way of dealing with what she faces?

6. After her flat is destroyed by the gas explosion, Margot is thrown into 'temporary' accommodation with the Armstrong family. What impact does she have on their lives – and vice versa?
7. In the climate of #metoo and #equalitynow, to what extent is Margot a feminist? How do you think being a male trainee priest would differ from her experience?
8. Margot very quickly feels like she is being stalked by the Vic-i- leaks posts. What purpose do they serve in terms of the plot and atmosphere of the novel?
9. How much did you think Margot's complicated relationship with her family lies behind her desperate need to succeed?
10. Did anything in the book surprise you?
11. *The Vicar of Dibley* and *Rev* were both extremely successful TV series, portraying the daily life of parish priests. What additional benefits come from approaching it in novel form?
12. What do you think the future holds for Felix and Margot?

About the author



Louise Rowland grew up in Bournemouth and studied English at Cambridge University. She has always loved working with words – everything from writing advertising copy and feature articles right through to putting words into the mouths of CEOs. After 11 years living and working in Frankfurt, Paris and Amsterdam, she returned to the UK and took a Masters in Novel Writing from City University, where she won the course prize.

She lives in London and has two grown-up daughters. *The Girls' Book of Priesthood* is her first novel.