

## Discussion Questions for *Lay Siege to Heaven*

1. Describe the characters of Catherine's parents. Can you sympathize with her mother, who wants to see her well married?
2. Describe Catherine's character as a young girl. What happened to Catherine when she was 6 years old that made her want to belong to God alone?
3. How does her mother react when Catherine cuts off her hair? How does Catherine respond to being treated like a servant?
4. Who are the Dominican Sisters of Penance, or the Mantellata? Why do you think they accepted Catherine, even though she was young?
5. How was Catherine tormented with lustful visions? Why do you think God allowed this?
6. Why were people, even her fellow sisters, jealous of Catherine?
7. What happens when the Franciscan Fra Lazzarino visits Catherine, intending to discredit her? What can we learn from her example, if untrue or unfair things are said about us?
8. There were many extraordinary stories about Catherine and miracles in the book—what was your favorite story about her and why?
9. What special graces was Catherine given during prayer and Holy Communion? What were her sleeping and eating habits? How do you think you would respond if you were one of her contemporaries and witnessed this?
10. What type of accusations were made against her and what happens when her case is brought before the Order in Florence?
11. What role did Catherine and her followers have in Sienna during the Plague?
12. Did you know that Catherine received the stigmata, although it was invisible? Why do you think she begged God to make it invisible?
13. Who was Brother William Flete and what was his relationship with Catherine?
14. What role did Catherine play politically and spiritually in the Church during her life? Did you realize all the turmoil that happened in the Church during her lifetime? Discuss the events that happened – the rebellion against the papacy, her role in the papacy returning to Rome, the antipope, etc. Why was her involvement so extraordinary?
15. This is a historical novel—did you do any research to see how much of the story was factual versus how much was artistic license by the author?

