



Parish of the Nativity of the Lord – Book+Circle notes

May 2020

***Where Are You Now?* by Mary Higgins Clark**

These notes are the fruits of another virtual 'meeting' via emails among the Book+Circle.

Book description

This novel by the prolific Catholic author Mary Higgins Clark tells the story of a family living with tragedy and loss. It has been ten years since 21-year-old Mack went missing from his Columbia University dorm; he calls his mother every year to assure her that he is fine but answers none of her questions and then hangs up. His father's death in the 9/11 attacks does not bring him home, but his sister Caroline decides to seek the truth about his disappearance. She discovers a complex web of secrets and lies which someone is intent on protecting, at any cost.

How did the book make us feel?

The book was widely agreed to be a real 'page turner', and welcome light relief in these difficult pandemic times. Most readers said they felt eager to see what was going to happen next, in the many twists and turns of the tale. There was some scepticism about some details of the plot line and characters' responses to situations, but general satisfaction with the 'happy ever after' conclusion, even if it did seem a little rushed relative to the pace of the rest of the action: seeing evil punished and good prevail is always comforting.

What were the book's strengths and weaknesses?

There is a good level of suspense maintained through most of the book which makes the reader want to keep ploughing through. There are also a few red herrings which are constructed and deconstructed well.

The book includes some references to Catholic faith and life, in a rather indirect or incidental manner without explanation; most readers enjoyed this, although there was some question as to whether this could be off-putting for non-Catholic readers.

The book contains positive messages on the value of family loyalty and the destructive effect of greed for money and status; however, there was little direct connection between these and Christianity.



The book is an easy read, with an intriguing plot, good pace, and strong clear language. The difference in tone between the majority of chapters describing the action and the few (very chilling) chapters written from the mind of the killer was striking. Most readers found the short chapters helped their enjoyment of the reading process; however, other readers found this approach rather 'bitty' and got in the way of the continuity of the story.

The novel is very America-centric, which some readers found not to their taste; others found the descriptions of a New York well-heeled lifestyle (where it's normal to have a concierge, chauffeur, and a place in the Hamptons or Martha's Vineyard) enjoyably distracting from the sometimes grim realities of life in lockdown.

Would we read another book by this author?

Most readers would probably read another book by Mary Higgins Clark if it were suggested for the Book+Circle; a couple would enjoy reading more of her work independently.

Would we recommend this book to other people?

Certainly to anyone who likes a murder-mystery story; to people going on a long plane or train journey; or to anyone planning to relax by a pool on holiday, or even by the fire during the present lockdown.

Next books:

An Autobiography by G K Chesterton

The Bridge of San Luis Rey by Thornton Wilder

Next meeting dates:

Wednesday 24th June at 8 pm, venue to be confirmed.

Friday 7th August at 10.30, at the Retreat Café at St Joseph's (possibly).