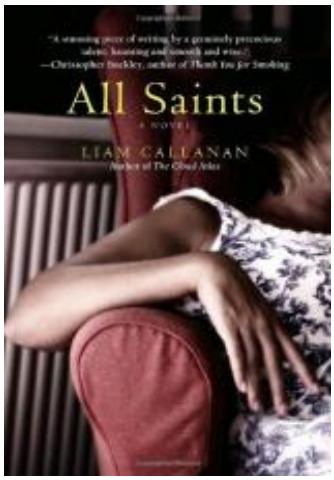
# All Saints

by Liam Callanan




## About the Book

The acclaimed author of **The Cloud Atlas** returns with a wondrous second novel. Set in a small beachfront Catholic high school, narrated by a beautifully complex heroine?theology teacher Emily Hamilton?**All Saints** is at once a mystery, a love story, and a powerful rumination on secrets, temptation, and faith.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** How did it affect your reading to know that a male author had created Emily, a pitch-perfect female narrator? How would you characterize the way she sees the world?

**2.** What was your initial understanding of Emily?s revelation that she had kissed a boy, for the first time in her life, at age fifty? How did your impressions of her shift as her marriage history unfolded?

**3.** Discuss the irony of Emily?s classroom topics. How do the students? oral reports, and the concept of saints and popes, contrast with the circumstances of modern life presented in the novel? How do you define ?saint??

**4.** What do the two coasts?New York and California?mean to Emily? How does she perceive the cultural differences and landscapes of these two settings? What types of dividing lines are created between the novel?s two parts, Fall and Spring?

**5.** Were any of your teachers like Emily? Did Edgar, Cecily, and Paul remind you of any of your high-school classmates? What makes **All Saints** both an unusual and a very typical high school?

**6.** What comfort does Emily derive from Mrs. Ramirez? How does it compare to the comfort she derives from going to church, and in particular from being Catholic? Share your own experiences with mystery and faith.

**7.** Compare and contrast Emily?s husbands: dear departed Andrew, Gil of the slot-machine wedding, and Gavin the priest. Is there a theme or progression? What does she expect from men by the time we meet her?

**8.** Was it right that Emily eventually took responsibility for the kiss with Edgar? Do Edgar and Emily imagine each other accurately? What power do they have over each other?

**9.** Discuss the notion of secrecy that permeates many of the characters in **All Saints**. Is secrecy a form of dishonesty? What role does confession (informal and otherwise) play in the novel? What does Paul?s essay reveal in chapter nine?

**10.** In chapter seven, Emily unwittingly confronts Martin about his high-school sweetheart. How did you react to his response? Should he have had to take a vow of celibacy at all? Discuss the various temptations confronted by the characters in the novel.

**11.** Why doesn?t Emily go to Italy with Martin? Under other circumstances, would he have made a good fourth husband? What do you predict for Emily?s future? What does **All Saints** ultimately say about the cycles of birth and death?

**12.** What did you discover through Liam Callanan?s portrayals of unusually devoted church workers, such as salty Father Junghanns, or the nuns who bore the scars of brutality in Central America?

**13.** What aspects of courage does the author paint in **The Cloud Atlas** and **All Saints**? How are heroism and humanity presented in each of these novels?

**14.** Discuss the nature of belief in **All Saints**. Not just spiritual belief, but also the belief people have in each other, and in the concepts of friendship, love, commitment, and forgiveness?

## Author Bio

Liam Callanan's novel PARIS BY THE BOOK, a national bestseller, was translated into multiple languages and won the 2019 Edna Ferber Prize. He?s also won the Hunt Prize, and his first novel, THE CLOUD ATLAS, was a finalist for an Edgar Award. Liam?s work has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Slate*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and he?s recorded numerous essays for public radio. He?s taught for the Warren Wilson MFA program for writers, Bread Loaf Writers? Conference, and the University of Wisconsin?Milwaukee. He lives in Wisconsin.

## Critical Praise

?Liam Callanan is that rare thing, a writer adept and creative enough to inhabit the mind of character entirely different

from himself. He does so completely, with absolute authenticity and emotional truth. Emily Hamilton is unapologetically acerbic and a delight to spend time with. This book is every bit as good as **The Cloud Atlas**, and that is saying a lot.?

---

## All Saints

by Liam Callanan

**Publication Date:** March 25, 2008
**Paperback:** 278 pages
**Publisher:** Dial Press Trade Paperback
**ISBN-10:** 0385336977
**ISBN-13:** 9780385336970