Discussion Questions for
Gregory Boyle’s **Tattoos on the Heart**

1. Begin with a discussion of the book’s title: "Tattoos on the Heart." What does it mean...or refer to? And what is the purpose of tattoo removal?

2. How would you define, or describe, the central lesson that Father Boyle passes on—both to the young men in gangs...and to us, his readers?

3. How do inadequacy and shame function as barriers to giving and receiving love?

3. Does Father Boyle's approach to gang violence offer a realistic solution to a nationwide epidemic of poverty-violence-despair? Can it be (has it been) replicated in other areas, other cities? Or is his project too idealistic to work on a national scale? What do you think?

4. Talk about the book’s individual stories: which are your favorites...which ones made you want to weep? Which made you laugh? Do you have a favorite?

5. What has made Boyle so successful in reaching the gang members? Is it his message...or is it his personal charisma...or what?

6. Discuss the role of faith in the men's transformation? Talk also about Boyle's inclusive philosophy—drawing on the wisdom of diverse faiths, as well as on history, philosophy, poetry.

7. How does Boyle interpret the Biblical parable about the paralyzed man being lowered through the roof of the house? Boyle agrees that the story is about the healting power of Jesus. But he also sees "something more significant happening. They're ripping the roof off the place, and those outside are being let in." In what way does the parable apply to the work of Homeboys?

8. What does this sentence mean—"We are all trying to learn how to bear the beams of love"?

9. In what way were you changed by this book? What surprised you most...moved you...angered you? What did you learn by reading Tattoos on the Heart?

10. Boyle challenges readers to "stand in awe at what the poor have to carry rather than stand in judgment at how they carry it." Is he successful in challenging you?