

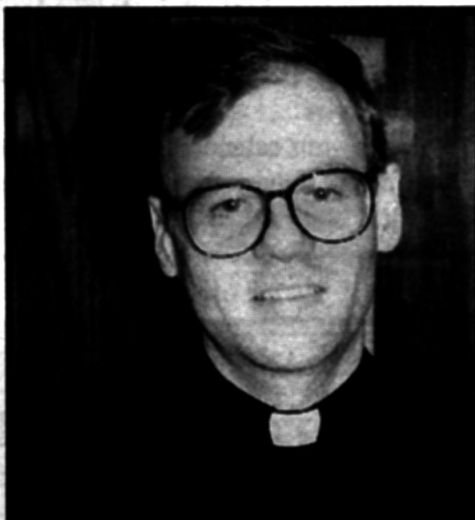
# Finding Religious Inspiration in Fiction

By Neal J. Conway, Jr.

How does God's sacramental grace work in our lives? Father David Diamond believes that the answer to that question can be found not only by reading scripture and theology but by reading fiction as well. Concluding de Chantal's Lenten lecture series with talks on the work of Catholic authors, Graham Greene and Flannery O'Connor, Father Diamond stated that fiction can be "a conduit to greater realization of who God calls us to be."

Father Diamond is in residence at de Chantal while he pursues his doctorate in education at Catholic University. He is from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and concedes that clergy seem to be that city's "chief export." He has already earned the reputation among parishioners of being a very engaging speaker.

In his first lecture, Father Diamond



Father David Diamond

addressed two polarized concepts of grace at play in Graham Greene's *The Power and The Glory*, a novel about a licentious priest who is hunted by communists in 1930s Mexico. The "Whiskey priest" is torn between a formula for

grace that demands moral perfection of human agents (i.e. priests) to work and a formula that requires only specific performance of certain prescribed actions uninspired by faith.

Both extreme views of grace are incorrect, reminded Father Diamond. Virtue is always in the middle.

"Matter does matter," said Flannery O'Connor. She recognized that a sacrament has a physical aspect and that physical beings have meanings that extend to the divine. Thus, her stories are filled with things, including and especially the grotesque that symbolize the ongoing dialogue between humanity and God.

Human beings can break off this dialogue. O'Connor's work was a war against religious indifference and hypocrisy. Like many modern artists, she created with the intention of disturbing her readers. Father Diamond's mere description of some of her plots drew shudders from the audience.

Once again, de Chantal's Lenten lecture series has been edifying to those who attended. As Monsignor Madigan remarked, the de Chantal community is blessed with many fascinating and accomplished people.

## Post Cana Spring Fling

By Frances McCaffrey

St. Jane de Chantal's Post Cana invites all widows and widowers to a Spring Fling Dance on Friday, April 30th, from 8:00 p.m. until midnight in St. Jane's Caulfield Hall.

Music will be provided by Pat

Pulvirenti's Band, BYOB. Setups and light refreshments will be served. The cost is \$7.00 (per person). Call Norine, 530-5730, Esther, 530-1743 or Frances, 530-8385, for more information.

Post Cana is an organization open to all widows and widowers regardless of religious affiliation.

"Finding Religious Inspiration in Fiction" by Neal J. Conway was first published in the April 18, 1993 issue of *Our Parish Times*. Neal Conway is the author of *Tales From Old Bethesda* and lives in Washington, DC. See [nealjconway.com](http://nealjconway.com). Subject: Father David Diamond talks about catholic fiction authors Graham Greene and Flannery O'Connor.