

Faith in Fiction, History, and Reality: Presence and Possession

History and fiction presuppose some notion about truth. For example, both can claim there is truth, question what it means, or express desires to search for it, etc.

News, science, philosophy, marketing, propaganda, also have similar ideas. Some are interesting, some entertaining, others just things we need to know, whether we like it or not – like fixing a tire.

The two key presenters this evening focus on a mix of history and fiction. This introduction is simply to ask a few questions, then, about the role of history and fiction in matters of Faith. For example, how do each compare to reality? That is, what is their relationship to the here-and-now? to the everyday things we hold near and dear to our hearts, and to everyday life - to the present and our possessions?

Stanley and Bob are skilled in the art of mixing history and fiction. And, just as when advertisements are mixed to appear as a news articles (advertorials), which have their special purposes, it is good to question what we might be reading or hearing when we mix any two disciplines- including history and fiction.

I want to propose that mixing fiction and history can offer new approaches to Faith and meaning just as do science-fiction, historical novels, biographies, metaphysics, and philosophies.

The story of Priest Field, and the history of the characters that have brought us to this present moment - to discuss its possession by the Catholic Church, and what its purpose might mean, needs to be grounded on Faith, Reality, and the Sacred. Yet, the story also needs to be shared as a Journey in Faith, or as a Salvation Journey. History and Fiction, whether written or presented in art and movies are wonderful ways to bring the invisibles of love, hope, faith, goodness, truth, and beauty to us all.

Both Bob O'Connor and Stanley Williams have spent more than ten years each researching facts, fiction, fallacies, history and interpretations of the people and events, including documents such as letters, legal trusts and deeds that have led to Priest Field now being a Catholic Retreat Center. The material is vast and reveals much about the character of the United States and how the Catholic Faith has influenced the Great American Experiment which, many reasonably argue, is a unique idea about the boundaries and relationships between people and property – about real estates, here and now, and how ideas like freedom and unity are the realities that will “bring us all together” while we continue to shout “don’t tread on me.”

-D.P.

