

The Sermon and the Short Story
A Workshop by Mike Graves, PhD

"God doesn't care at all what we write,
 but when we get it right, [God] can use it."

—John Irving

"Perhaps it will not be taken as irreverent to say that the
 movement of a sermon is as the movement of a good story."

—Fred Craddock

The Sound of Mosquitoes Coughing: Apologetics

Source of illustrations

Cousin to narrative preaching

Brevity

Feeding of our souls

Real-life honesty

Literary Exegesis

Literary Questions:

What is the basic plot?

What scenes are revelatory?

What is the story's tone?

What lines give it texture?

How does it end and where does it take us?

Theological Questions:

What glimpses of deity do we sense?

What does it say about the human condition?

What does it say about sin and redemption?

Where do we see grace breaking in?

Homiletical Questions:

Will it preach?

What passages of Scripture are brought to mind?

What could be omitted in a retelling?

What has to be included?

How might story and Scripture interact in the sermon?

Personal Questions:

How does the story speak to you?

What do you want to say?

This Set Next to That: Juxtaposition

From story to sermon; from sermon to story

Narrative options

For Further Reading

Anthologies of Stories

Breslin, John B., S.J., ed. *The Substance of Things Hoped For: Short Fiction by Modern Catholic Authors*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1987.

Booth, Mark. *Christian Short Stories: An Anthology*. New York: Crossroad, 1984.

Carson, Paula J. and Hawkins, Peter S., eds. *Listening for God: Contemporary Literature and the Life of Faith*, 4 vols. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.

Curtis, Michael C., ed. *Faith: Stories*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

Curtis, Michael C., ed. *God: Stories*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

McVeigh, Daniel and Schnapp, Patricia., eds. *The Best American Catholic Short Stories*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2007.

Maney, J. P. and Hazuka, Tom, eds. *A Celestial Omnibus*. Boston: Beacon, 1997.

O'Connor, Flannery. *The Complete Stories*. New York: Noonday Press, 1946.

Preaching and Literature

Graves, Mike. *The Sermon and the Short Story: Another Kind of Narrative Preaching*. (in progress).

Rice, Charles L. *Interpretation and Imagination: The Preacher and Contemporary Literature*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970.