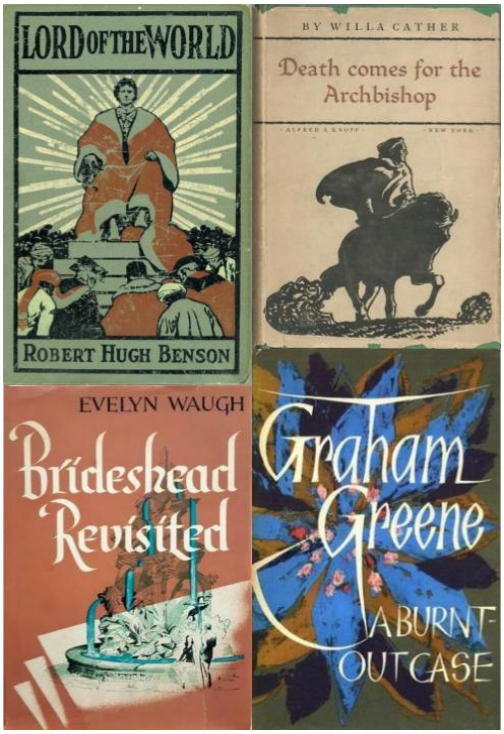
Tridentine Community News

November 22, 2026 – Twenty-fourth and Last Sunday After Pentecost

Four Catholic Novels

By Walter Plymale

The Catholic Church possesses a vast and notable literary tradition. With the winter rapidly approaching, now is an amazing time to pick-up a brand new book and discover an important aspect of our Catholic culture. These four novels by both Catholic and non-Catholic authors are monumental achievements of literature that illustrate various aspects of the Catholic faith.



In 1903, England was shocked by the news that Robert Hugh Benson, the son of the Archbishop of Canterbury, had converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism. In 1907 he published *Lord of the World*, which is considered one of the first dystopian books of the 20th century. *Lord of the World* is set in an alternate 2007, where socialism and materialism have replaced Protestantism as the main religion in England. Most people have abandoned religion for atheism, and only the Catholic Church remains. Theologically, the novel explores the idea of the antichrist and the role of the Pope as the head of the Church. The main character is a Catholic priest, and the Tridentine Mass features throughout. The book was recommended by Pope Francis numerous times during his Pontificate. The book is in the public domain and is available from a variety of Catholic booksellers.

Many Catholics in the Midwest may not be aware of the rich Catholic history of New Mexico. Willa Cather's 1927 novel *Death Comes for the Archbishop* is inspired by the stories of New Mexico's own Catholic heroes, mainly Archbishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy and Bishop Joseph Machebeuf. Willa Cather was an atheist but became interested in the Catholic Church following the horrors of the First World War. The novel is beautiful, with vivid imagery of the landscape of New Mexico and the devotion of its inhabitants. The novel explores the concept of a priestly vocation and mission work. It is available in the public domain and through Amazon.

Evelyn Waugh's literary career spanned through most of the first half of the 20th century. The author of fourteen novels and numerous essays and short stories, Waugh was a titan of mid-20th century English literature. A lapsed Anglican and later, an atheist, Waugh dramatically converted to Catholicism in 1930. His novel *Brideshead Revisited* was published in 1945 and follows Capt. Charles Ryder and his relationship with the Flytes, an aristocratic Catholic family. The novel is witty and humorous commentary on the role of faith in a person's life. The novel features an emotional depiction of the Last Rites and Extreme Unction. The novel has been undergoing a renaissance, largely in part due to Bishop Robert Barron's vocal love of the novel. It is available through Amazon.

A Burnt Out-Case by Graham Greene is a story of disbelief, mission, and sanctification. Published in 1960, *A Burnt Out-Case* was the last of Greene's "Catholic Novels." Greene, who had an on-again, off-again relationship with the Church, converted to Catholicism in 1926. *A Burnt Out-Case* is a striking portrait of an architect named Querry who is haunted by his past and seeks solitude in the African bush at a Catholic leper colony. The novel addresses the idea of disbelief, and what leads a person to abandon religion. Being set in a Catholic leper colony, the novel features many instances and descriptions of the Tridentine Mass. The novel's themes of faith and belief hold especially true today, as more and more people disaffiliate from organized religion. It is available through Amazon.

Beauty and art serve as important forms of evangelization. In his 1999 "Letter to Artists," St. John Paul II reminds the Church that "true art has a close affinity with the world of faith, so that, even in situations where culture and the Church are far apart, art remains a kind of bridge to religious experience." Beautiful novels can serve as an entry point for those curious in the Catholic faith. The same holds true for the evangelizing power of the Extraordinary Form of the Mass. All four of these novels prominently feature the Tridentine Mass. They each give different examples of people living out their Catholic faith (or lack thereof). As Catholics in the 21st century, we can use good novels to fulfil the Great Commission in our contemporary society.

Windsor Festival of Choirs

On Sunday, December 13 at 5:00 PM, the Windsor Heritage Family of Parishes (consisting of St. Benedict Tridentine Community, St. Daniel Comboni [African] Community, Assumption Parish, St. Alphonsus Parish, and St. Angela Merici [Italian] Parish) will hold a Service of Lessons and Carols at Assumption Church. Notably for the readership of this column, the St. Benedict Tridentine Community Choir will be singing, along with choirs from the other parishes. There is no charge to attend.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Tue. 11/24 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *St. Benedict/Holy Name of Mary, Windsor* (St. John of the Cross, Confessor & Doctor)

Comments? Ideas for a future column? Please e-mail info@windsorlatinmass.org. Previous columns are available at www.windsorlatinmass.org.