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Faith and Fiction

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The best-selling author of several novels, short stories and essays — including a novel adapted for a film starring Brad Pitt — will speak at the University of Dayton about his faith and his work.

Novelist Ron Hansen will speak at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 8, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom as the recipient of the University of Dayton's annual Marianist Award, which honors a Roman Catholic whose work has made a major contribution to the intellectual life. The event is free and open to the public.

Hansen is the author of *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford: A Novel*, which was released as a 2007 film of the same name starring Brad Pitt and Casey Affleck. His novel *Mariette in Ecstasy* about a Catholic nun who bears the stigmata was also adapted to film in 1996.

Many of his novels and stories carry Catholic themes of love and redemption. His latest novel, *Exiles*, is about how Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins returned to writing poetry after a terrible 19th-century shipwreck that cost five nuns their lives. Hansen also has published essays on the relationship between faith and fiction.

"Ron Hansen is one of the most interesting and important Catholic novelists writing today," said University of Dayton history professor Una Cadegan, chairperson of the Forum on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition Today, which coordinates the Marianist Award for the University. "All his work, whether on Catholic subjects or not, invites the reader to explore the beauty and the terror of the human heart, and what it risks in loving other people and God."

Hansen is currently the Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., Professor in the Arts and Humanities at Santa Clara University. Born in Omaha, Neb., he received his education at Creighton University, the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop and at Stanford University. He has received fellowships from the Michigan Society of Fellows, the National Endowment for the Arts, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and the Lyndhurst Foundation, and he has an Award in Literature from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. In 2007, Hansen was ordained as a deacon in the Roman Catholic Church.

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