

Dostoevsky and Flannery O'Connor help Marcel Proust edit his long sentences

Who I'd invite to my writers' dinner party

by [William H. Willimon](#) in the [May 10, 2017](#) issue

To my scriveners' dinner I'd invite three who have meant much to me, telling me truth I could never tell myself, forcing me to look at myself and my world in ways I would have never risked. They're all Christians, but in very different ways. Flannery O'Connor—and if she couldn't come, I would wait until she was available before inviting the others—my own dear, dark, southern muse. Marcel Proust, if he feels up to it. Flannery would think Marcel an introverted degenerate who is no more than a superficially aesthetic Catholic, but I hear that he was great company, and I'd love to see what he would make of her. They share a wicked sense of humor. Between them I would place Fyodor Dostoevsky and hope he was in a good mood that night. He and Flannery are blessed with excessive God-hauntedness, even if they don't know it. The two of them might help Marcel say what he wants to say with shorter sentences. I promise that I wouldn't attempt my usual domination of the conversation. I'd sit back, listen, laugh, and enjoy the verbal fireworks.