

# *FAITH AND PREACHING*

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## Chapter III

### FAITH AND PREACHING:

*Happy are the Peace-Makers, The Bishop and the Three Kings, The Bishop and the Beggar Girl of St. Germain, Irish Eyes and September Song*

As Jesus commissioned His priests/disciples to go and preach, preaching is one of the important duties of every Catholic priest. The Catholic Church expects her priests to preach the Word of God on all solemn occasions, especially, on Sundays, during the Holy Mass. The laypeople have a duty and right to listen to the preaching priests. If the content of the sermon is not seeped with both faith and imagination, the preaching will not reap the destined effects. In Greeley's opinion, it is Catholic imagination alone, which enables the preacher to inspire the body of listeners with the evangelical aim of transforming their lives. The attempt in this chapter is to analyze how Greeley's characters, both clerical and lay, fulfill their priestly role of preaching in deed and word, and how they are assisted by the merging of faith and imagination in doing it.

With this end in view, the selected five of Greeley's novels and this study will confirm, as anticipated in the introduction, that this merging is an essential component of Catholic imagination without which it is impossible for both the priest and the married person to perform their priestly duties. The novels are *Happy are the Peace-Makers* (1993), *The Bishop and the Three Kings* (1998), *Irish Eyes* (2000), *The Bishop and the Beggar Girl of St. Germain* (2001) and *September Song* (2001). Of course, there are preaching scenes in other novels also, priests officially preaching on the pulpit and the laypeople preaching by means of leading exemplary lives, but, these novels have been selected due to the prominence of the priestly and the lay characters in them who preach the Word of God, more effectively through their exemplary lives.

*Happy are the Peace-Makers* (1993) which is the first work to be discussed in this chapter can be summarized as the life-long struggle of Nora MacDonaugh for finding peace and making peace in her own personal life in the family as well as in her native Ireland, now, given to violence of all kinds. This novel reaches its climax as Nora who is alleged to have murdered both of her former husbands, finally, consents to marry Tim Mac Carthy, a retired police officer. A probe into the novel convinces that preaching is not the monopoly of a Catholic priest and that it should not be confined to interpreting God's word contained in the Sacred Scriptures. Greeley does this by portraying Blackie, the ideal priest and investigator and Nora, the silent sufferer. Blackie interprets God's Word in life-context. Nora realizes it and follows it in her life, which is nothing but a life long sermon. As preachers of God's Word, both of them excel the other and witness to the effective interplay of faith as well as imagination both of which are essential for a Catholic. When the two protagonists employing Catholic imagination find out the truth, peace is established. Greeley's message is obvious that all Catholic priests ought to enact Blackie in their preaching ministry and that the married people have to do the same role of preaching but through their exemplary lives like Nora, which is impossible without Catholic imagination.

One finds in the novel, Blackie preaching during the Mass, on 'happy are the peace-makers', and giving a warning that "Our happiness does not dispense us from the same diligence and prudence as war makers" (172). Not only does he interpret the Word of God recorded in the Holy Bible but also does he apply it to the individual's concrete life situation. For example, as he proves that Nora is innocent and that she has not killed either of her husbands she regains her lost peace of mind and reunites with her broken family. What Blackie does is what all Catholic priests have to do, and the reunion that occurs in Nora's family is precisely that must take place in all families, in each parish.

Blackie succeeds in the role of a peace-maker, when Nora who has repeated many a time, "I will never marry again...I won't destroy another man" (139), finally, concedes to be the wife of Tim. How much he is moved by Catholic imagination is evident from his comments on the Catholic orientation of James Joyce. One reads, "He was one of the greatest theologians of all times, as I presume is patent to you. And the story has a happy ending, as all good Catholic stories must"(77). Without blending faith with Catholic imagination, Blackie cannot have said, referring to the graceful and peaceful life of Tim and Nora, "The emptying of self in erotic love is a revelation, a hint, a metaphor for the self-emptying of God in the incarnation of Jesus"(79). Giving blessing to the new couples and appreciating Nora's patient suffering, his comment is, "Happy are the peace-makers"(293), a comment that brings beauty and breeds meaning to the title of the novel. Referring to their decision to marry, when Greeley comments that it "was the same response of Mary to Gabriel"(300), the reader is again, reminded of the novelist's intentions which ought to be an eye-opener to all Catholic priests in improving the quality of their preaching.

On the other hand, Nora too, preaches the necessity of peace in her own way, though she is not, and cannot be a priest by profession. She sets apart the substantial wealth, inherited from her former husbands who died under mysterious circumstances for the sake of bringing peace to Ireland. She says, "I don't think you can buy peace. I want to do all I can for my poor native land to find peace. I want to be one of the peace-makers" (55). In doing so, Nora is actually serving the Catholic Church, which always clamours for peace, and condemns bloodshed. Greeley wants the Catholic priests to enable the married people to emulate Nora. They must promote peace, joy and love to the detriment of the evil forces, which thrive on violence, and destruction of life and property.

This novel also upholds the truth that reunion and forgiveness are the necessary conditions as well as the results one experiences and gathers in the pursuit after peace.

The Catholic priest can derive a lot of inspiration from this novel with regard to his ministry of preaching. A sermon is of no use if it is full of theory. It is of no appeal to the community if it is mere faith. The Word of God becomes relevant to the people at present only if the priest gives some practical guidelines as to how God's message can be applied to, outside the Church. Hence, there should be a correlation between what a priest preaches inside the Church and how the listeners live outside it. As already hinted, in Greeley's opinion, the Catholic priest is a narrator of stories, a story-teller. That means he has to accommodate imagination in his homilies. All human beings are inclined to drive home to their memory, the message contained in each story. Stories capture their attention, appeal to their hearts and accordingly listeners become transformed. For this, Catholic imagination is the best tool each priest must be equipped with. A sermon devoid of imagination can only be a dry exposition of abstract theological concepts, and it will not yield the desired renewal of life. Then, the sermon has no more value than the verbal exercise of the preacher. So, the Catholic priest must not be immune to myths and stories, and he should not be indifferent to the various problems brewing in the society.

*Happy are the Peace-Makers* makes it clear that preaching is not an isolated function of the Catholic priest, rather, it is very much related to his other prophetic, shepherding and sanctifying functions. Greeley's Blackie is not only a speaker but also a person who interferes in the lives of his people and from their service he derives immense job satisfaction. He listens to his people sympathetically; he guides them prudently, and solves their problems effectively. As a priest, Blackie takes pain and spends time to unveil mysteries in order to liberate the victims suffering from their sense of guilt, shame and confusion. In other words, the Catholic priest, to be an effective preacher has to be

available to his people in their distress and at their service. A sermon not accompanied by practical implications and imaginative insight can only be confined to the four walls of the Church. Such a sermon neither motivates the people nor does it empower them to fight against the social evils. That is why, Greeley has always emphasized that priests ought to improve their quality of preaching, and that they must give due regard to Catholic imagination. Besides acquainting his people with Jesus' teachings and official views of the Church, the Catholic priests have to make them responsible citizens. This is how the priests assist the Church in fulfilling her obligation to the world. Hence, the Catholic priests have to make themselves more aware of the significance of their preaching ministry. In Greeley's fictional empire, Blackie is the priest *par excellence*, who performs his duties to the Church as well as the society by using the Catholic imagination, as this novel under study amply proves.

A closer look at the novel reveals Greeley's appeal to all priests that they ought to give priority to the theme of women empowerment in their preaching. Blackie, first of all, is a confounded celibate, without any prejudice against women. He respects them as co-peace makers after the model of Nora, the silent sufferer, thought to be a killer by all, who never reveals her husband's impotence, "out of exemplary respect for her husband's memory and for the feelings of his mother and father while they were alive"(276). Blackie is assisted by two very attractive women, Brigid Murphy, his niece, and Patricia, his sister. He is the one who establishes Nora's innocence beyond all doubts. The special power of imagination helps Blackie foresee the attack and the face of the killer (258, 264). Added to this, he has a strong Catholic faith, characteristic of a priest. This combination of faith and imagination is shared by Nora without which she might not make Tim declare that sex is a hedge against death, and a hint that something is stronger than death (104). The novel reaches its zenith as Greeley compares Nora to Mary, the

mother of Jesus. As the Word of God makes Mary the co-redemptorist, Catholic imagination empowers Blackie, Nora and Tim to be redeemers in their fields as peacemakers. Bearing it in his mind the Catholic priest must become a redeemer and make many redeemers in his community. With this intention, he has to preach and nothing helps him more than Catholic imagination, in achieving this goal.

The second novel proposed to be studied in this chapter is *The Bishop and the Three Kings* (1998) which is an account of how Bishop John Blackwood Ryan, known as Blackie, successfully investigates and solves two mysteries; one regarding the scandalous disappearance of the relics of the Magi or the Three Kings from the great Cathedral of Cologne, in Germany, and the other regarding the patricide of Cindausue Mc Clored, the Coast guard officer, by his own wife. An analysis of this novel, once again reminds how a priest like Blackie, when assisted by proper Catholic imagination, works wonders in the parishes, in his dealings with others and attracts others to the Catholic Church and solves many a mystery. Through this novel, Greeley provides Catholic priests with a lot of practical ideas with regard to what and how they have to preach, which must be endowed with both faith and imagination for its perfection and efficacy. This novel is an earnest appeal to all Catholic priests to realize the importance of their preaching ministry and the role of Catholic imagination occupying in it. A priest who preaches Catholic faith to the faithful ought to love the Church and her teachings. First, she must know what she believes and be proud of that. Then only, he will be able to preach from his heart. The relic of the three kings, is never lost forever but is misplaced for a temporary period. As Blackie states, "Patently the Shrine of the Magi did not ever leave the dome" (295). Greeley seems to suggest that it is the same case with the Catholic faith and the Church. No one can destroy either the Church or the faith forever. Though faith is handed over by human beings, though there have been mistakes during the course of the journey of the

Church on earth, the Church survives all the struggles and prosecutions. The primary duty of every Catholic priest is to protect faith or never let the relic get lost. An important purpose of preaching is promulgation of faith. He is also the custodian of faith. By virtue of his ordination he is committed to the cause of safeguarding the Church and her interests. This spirit of dedication and love for the Church and the faith must be part and parcel of the identity of a priest.

Instead, if the priest does not have love for the Church and faith in her teachings, he will not hesitate to sell the properties of the Church. He will cause scandals to the people and make the Church the sinkhole of corruption and favouritism. This is what Bishop Frederick Heidrich, the Dompfarrer does in the novel. Though he is the vicar of the Cologne Cathedral where the relics of the Magi is kept and venerated, he joins hands with Heinz Zellner, the art hoarder and together they design a plot to plunder the relics. The priest who is professionally expected to protect the Church and everything it contains takes the lead to steal valuable statues in order to misappropriate money for himself unmindful of the consequences of the scandal. The Dompfarrer has neither faith nor imagination. Blackie who is moved by Catholic imagination saves the Church whereas Frederick who attempts to sell the relics is sure not to possess Catholic imagination. As a priest, Frederick ought to be an example to the lay people and has to correct them incase they go wrong in their words and deeds, or in other words, in deviating from the path of Catholic imagination but, here is a priest in Frederick's person who instigates a lay person and his associates to drain property that belongs to the Church.

While preaching the Gospel, the priest usually exhorts the community to abide by the rules of the Church and that they must always obey the hierarchy as the sheep follow the shepherd. Surprisingly, Frederick never obeys his Cardinal Graf von Obermann but, challenges him and tries in vain to occupy his position. It is with the hidden agenda of



discrediting and dethroning the Cardinal that he is organizing the stealing of the relics. The novelist surely has clear-cut views in portraying the character of Frederick. Every priest who asks the people to be obedient must be loyal to his own superiors. The priest who demands the cooperation of the parishioners must, first, cooperate with his bishop and thereby set an example. If he advises his faithful to be holy, he should be holier in his own life. Here precisely comes the relevance of the role of the Catholic imagination. The priest cannot be a Catholic preacher without possessing in himself a merging of faith and imagination. Without leading an ideal life no Catholic priest can be an effective preacher. As one cannot be a priest without being a preacher of God's Word, he cannot be a preacher without being inspired and guided by Catholic imagination.

A priest, not following the ways of Catholic imagination can only be a threat or a headache to the authorities, and a scandal to the people who look for priestly models whom they rever as replicas of Christ. For example, Greeley comments that Frederick's relationship with Zellner, the hoarder, is "a grave danger to the Catholic Church"(189), and that his conspiracy against the Cardinal "is a threat to the welfare of the Church and the faith of the people"(190). At the same time, there are many good priests known for their meritorious services. In the same novel, it is a priest, by name Kurt Klein who removes the original shrine when he comes to know the plan of Frederick, and saves it under a canvas cover in the workroom of the studio. Zellner and his gang attach the dome not knowing that the original shrine is replaced by a duplicate one, a temporary substitute. Thus, Greeley clearly distinguishes a group of good priests employing Catholic imagination from the other group of priests who never care for either faith or imagination. The Catholic Church will have a bright future only if she has at her service more priests like Blackie or Greeley himself both of whom claim that not only did they not feel any

problem between faith and imagination but also did gain a lot from the merging of these two forces in their sermons and priestly duties.

As one probes into the secret of the success of Blackie, the priest and investigator, s/he finds that the credit goes to his faith and imagination. In unveiling mysteries and arriving at right solutions, imagination helps him to a great extent. As he says, "I believe the solution came to me several times in my dreams"(266). Solution to each problem owes to "a lot of grace and a huge amount of luck"(266), Blackie admits. The same imagination coupled with faith enables him to appreciate the beauty and the worth of women. For example, Blackie tells Peter Murphy, the lover of Cindausue, "You must pursue her, Peter Murphy, like God pursues us, implacably but tenderly" (140). God pursuing man comes under the purview of faith but, a man chasing his beloved pertains to one's romantic imagination. Again Blackie's comment that women, of course, are "the braver of the two genders"(238) cannot be justified without reference to his Catholic imagination. The same spirit of the Catholic imagination is at the root of Church's tolerant attitude towards non-Catholics, which is very relevant to our pluralistic culture. This is very evident in the Cardinal's words addressed to Cindausue, a non-Catholic, "We must all be what we were and are. That is the nice thing about being Catholic. People do not have to give up what they are. Rather, they bring it to us and enrich us with their own heritage"(71).

Next to Blackie, Cindausue appears to be mostly influenced by and drawn to Catholic imagination. Even as a non-Catholic, Cindausue is able to understand the uniqueness of the Catholic Church and she is well aware of how a person who is endowed with Catholic imagination has to behave with women. She is so much impressed by the personality of Blackie and the beauty of the Church, he serves, that Cindausue tells her lover Peter Murphy, "If I ever become a Catholic, I'll go to him for confession. He'll

know my sins without my telling them” (285). Again, she assures Frau Strauss the former Senior Assistant at the dome, “Well, you are at least a Catholic and know that the body of a woman is not evil” (158). Actually, Greeley, the Catholic priest, through the examples of Blackie and Cindausue, is upholding some of the important themes which all the Catholic priests must do justice to in their preaching, if at all they want to be significant to the modern times. In doing so, they must incorporate into themselves and their sermons the insights of faith and inspirations of imagination as fused into one, i.e. Catholic imagination. In Greeley’s opinion, what Blackie, the male priest preaches is important and useful, but, what Cindausue, the female lay person and initially a non-Catholic, teaches is also of same value, as both of them are performing their priestly functions in their respective walks of life, as ordained by Catholic imagination.

As already mentioned, Blackie interferes in the family of Cindausue, which is an essential part of the pastoral life. He inquires into the whereabouts of the murder of Cindausue’s father and asserts her innocence. Greeley intends to maintain that an irresponsible woman like Cindausue is as scandalous to the family as a degenerate priest is to the Church. The family ought to be as important a place of experiencing God’s love and forgiveness as a parish headed by a priest. Cindausue’s father is murdered by his wife and Frederick is punished by the Church. Due to the fear of her father’s ill treatment Cindausue is afraid of all men and any dating. Blackie’s timely assistance empowers her to be a person and even as a non-Catholic, she is better than many Catholics. The newly born Cindausue appreciates men. For instance, she praises her lover, “He is an angel, and a wise man and a star all put together” (176). It is to be noted that Frederick being a priest is a teacher and Cindausue’s father is also a teacher by profession. Both of them fall from grace whereas Cindausue who volunteers to follow Blackie, who is always motivated by Catholic imagination, reunites her broken family and abundantly experience

God's love and mercy to the great appreciation of Blackie. Hence, a Catholic priest has to take into account the moral and spiritual needs of the families residing in each parish, when he preaches. Likewise, he shall not neglect his commitment to educate and empower the womenfolk, who once awakened, will heal and save others very much like Cindausue does in this novel.

Another point Greeley seems to emphasize in this novel is the corrective dimension of preaching. It is impossible to eradicate social evils without taking punitive steps or remedial measures. The ultimate aim of a sermon is that the individuals have to correct their lives and shift to a new mode of life. The preacher has to undergo the process of purification. Very often priests are unwilling to take decisive steps for fear of incurring the displeasure of his people. Many malpractices prevail in the Church mainly, because the authorities are scared or ignorant of the perpetrators of various crimes. But, at Blackie's insistence, one finds the Cardinal in this novel, vacates Frederick from the Cathedral, sends three young priests accused of pedophile charges to treatment centers, and entrusts Zellner and his gang with the police. These corrective steps taken by the cardinal prove that there will be more justice and impartiality in the Church and her institutions, in years to come.

At one time, pulpit was the only means for the Catholic priest to preach the Good News. Since the invention of the television and the computer, one cannot but marvel at the explosion of a variety of the media to evangelize the world. The Catholic priest has a duty to make use of the media to evangelize the world. At the same time, they should beware of the risks involved in handling the media. This is precisely the prominent theme, Greeley presents in his novel, *The Bishop and the Beggar Girl of St. Germain*, which is an awe-inspiring detective story in which Bishop Blackie Ryan, solves the mystery involved in the sudden disappearance of Father Jean Claude, a television

superstar, celebrated preacher and confessor from Paris. Though people suspect suicide or murder or some kind of mishap, Blackie finds out that the real priest Jean Claude died five years back in Italy, of tuberculosis, in the presence of a priest and receiving the last sacrament and that the priest who has recently disappeared is, in fact, Claude's twin sister named Chantal who has been enacting the role of a priest very resourcefully, herself being a good actor. This novel gives an irrefutable lesson to all Catholic priests to undertake necessary preparations for communicating God's message through the media.

As every one knows, preaching is a priest's important function. The essential theme of any priestly preaching is that God is love. If the preaching is made through the media befitting the present electronic age, this message reaches more people, more powerfully, and more rapidly, than it did in the past. Jean Claude is one who does it superbly. And he says about the genuineness of his preaching, "I just try to tell people how much God loves them.... I merely preach about God's love as revealed in Jesus and the Church" (97-98). No priest is an exception to what Claude does. As Claude is instrumental to conversion of many, a Catholic priest has to provide his people with God-experience resulting in joy and peace, by means of preaching Good News. Shortly, Claude realizes that preaching is not that easy. He has to suffer from the envy of the other media people, jealousy of his fellow priests and his own fatal disease on account of which he quits to die in peace, with the help of his twin sister. But, he has the satisfaction that he did as much as he could. According to Greeley this is what every Catholic priest has to do, preach the Word of God despite opposition and personal discomforts. The intention of the preacher ought to be the spreading of God's love and should not aim at one's own fame or popularity.



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The Catholic priest who preaches must be a man of integrity. There should not be any dichotomy between what he believes and what he preaches. Again, the way he lives

and what he advises others to follow must not be mutually contradictory. Greeley expects all priests to be endowed with strong faith and imaginative skills. A merging of faith and imagination is what makes their sermon appealing and convincing to the people. Sometimes, the way some priests preach, makes the people doubt whether they really believe what they say. Priests are not immune to crises in their spiritual life. Greeley calls priesthood, 'a call in crisis', and it forms the title of one of his books, *Priests: A Calling in Crisis*(2004). Very often the priest is torn between belief and non-belief. In Blackie's words, "Most priests, if they have any sense and imagination, wonder if they truly believe all the things they preach.... They both believe and not believe at the same time" (181). On another occasion, Chantal, Claude's sister asks Blackie, "Priests do lose their faith, do they not Monseigneur?" (152). When battered by tension and insatiability with one's own spiritual life no priest can preach gracefully and peacefully. It is in such a situation that Greeley presents Catholic imagination as a panacea for the priests, which will help them cling to the meaning of the priesthood and performance of their duties. When he writes, "In France you could be a Catholic and not a believer" (147), priests must realize that there is a dig at themselves.

One's inquiry into *The Bishop and the Beggar Girl of St. Germain* proves that Catholic priesthood is not a bed of roses. This novel teaches that the Catholic priest can neither be a priest nor be a preacher for long without possessing the Catholic imagination. Claude who owns this combination in his personality in the right proportion remains in priesthood as a satisfied person until it becomes physically impossible for him to preach. But, the sister who steps into his shoes, is a non-believer and, she has no Catholic faith. Hence she calls herself, "a faker", "a hypocrite" "a coward", "some one playing the role of a priest who does not believe"(162-163). And that is why, she says good-bye to her priestly robes and disappears mysteriously. In other words, neglect or loss of Catholic

faith ends up in one's leaving the priesthood. There are others who spoil their vocation and scandalize their preaching as a result of loose life. For example, Mother Marie tells Blackie in the convent, "It is possible that life is more difficult for priests today than it was a half century ago...Now a priest can do whatever he wants and probably never be caught unless he goes too far" (190-191). What is consoling is that in the Church there are priests like Blackie, who is happy about being a priest and does tremendous service to the community, and knows that preaching is one of the best services a priest can offer. For such priests even celibacy is not a problem. They work wonders in the parish. People listen to their words, which lead them to transformation. As Blackie says, "For those who are happy in the priesthood it [celibacy] is usually no more difficult than marriage which is not very easy"(80). These Catholic priests do not frighten their congregation, preaching about the punishment in hell, instead they convey to the listeners the true love of God, who, in Greeley's opinion, is nothing, "If not a God of variety, often, truth to tell, comic variety"(124). And for these priests, a woman is neither a scandal-carrier nor a temptation-breeder. For instance, Mother Marie tells Blackie about the character of Claude, "He did enjoy women however. He liked to talk to them and joke with them. But, he encouraged no one to forget that he is a priest" (72). Without merging faith with imagination a Catholic priest cannot develop this kind of a healthy attitude to women nor can he preach to his people how they should behave towards women in a Catholic manner. That is why, one concludes together with Greeley that Catholic imagination is of greater importance to each preaching Catholic priest than anything else.

A Catholic priest preaches because it is what he is called and appointed for. He is a missionary by profession. Hence, that priest who succeeds in bringing more people to the Catholic communion has to be regarded as the best priest. It is he who performs his

missionary task or the preaching ministry better than the other priests. In this context, one has to remember that Claude is the best Catholic priest, may be second only to Blackie, because as a media star his preaching has reached more people than that of any other priest addressing the faithful in the traditional way. Indeed, he has served the Church as a preacher more than words can express. Related to this, one must also discuss why he asked his sister to impersonate his priestly duties till his death, which he knew will not be very late. And she fulfills her brother's last wish splendidly, fooling the simple nuns and many others. By her television programmes, in a way, she has cheated the entire world. But, according to Greeley, she has a definite motive. As one reads in this novel, enacting the role of a Catholic priest, Chantal who was a non-believer becomes a believer, a staunch Catholic. As Chantal herself acknowledges, "Jean Claude has made me a priest so that he could make me a Catholic" (229). It can be said that the greatest achievement of Claude is nothing but the conversion of his own sister. As Mother Marie certifies, "Claude's miracle is that he made you a good Catholic" (232). In other words, the purpose of preaching of priests is making people Catholic. In this regard, Claude's priestly life, however short it is, is a grand success.

Of course, Chantal cannot be a priest for a long period, for, she is a female and besides she is a layperson. Hence, as per the existing restrictions in the Catholic Church, she sheds the priestly life at the earliest. But, being an actor and media person, she can continue the priestly mission of preaching sometimes better than many priests working in parishes, now that she is a firm Catholic. Here, one does hear the preaching of Greeley, the Catholic priest or rather what Greeley wants other priests to preach about. First of all, all Catholic priests have to recognize the worth of lay vocation and train the faithful for performing their priestly role wherever they are, doing God's Will and spreading evangelical virtues in and through their lives. Priests must be ready to share their pastoral



responsibilities with the lay people. For this, they have to empower their parishioners keeping in view the possibility that the Catholic Church might alter the present laws regarding the celibacy and implement the idea of married clergy and women priesthood which are Greeley's favourite themes. Catholic priests ought to respect the laity and preach frankly that they are the people who witness to God's love and mercy in the secular world. In Blackie's words, "Marriage is both a Sacrament of God's love for his people and an extension of that love" (178). One who looks at the marriage from the point of view of Catholic imagination cannot but conclude that a lay person can preach more impressively and convincingly about God's love in daily life than an ordinary Catholic priest does verbally out of necessity or obligation in and for the congregation.

As a woman priest, Chantal is a great success, to the consolation and satisfaction of Claude who finds that all his programmes are being carried out with no delay. Admiring her impersonate priesthood, she recollects, "He told me that if Rome should decide that I am a real priest, he would want me as his auxiliary bishop. He said he would be a distinct improvement" (246). After Claude's death, while narrating the new series on Notre-Dame, she goes into the crypt, carrying a suitcase as usual and disappears without being noticed by anybody but only to emerge as a smart woman as she really is, after changing her priestly adornments in no time. This is suggestive of the crucified Christ who after vanishing into tomb bearing the sins of mankind, resurrects as the eternal priest. Greeley hints that the new Chantal, the woman priest or the lay priest will perform better than Chantal, the impersonate priest. So, it is the duty of all Catholic priests to preach to the laypersons, to make them aware of their priestly personality, and to empower them to perform those duties in their respective walks of life.

Another character in the novel who teaches the Catholic priests, the necessity of women empowerment to be incorporated into their sermon and the training, is the beggar

girl of St. Germain, figuring in the title itself. As a mere beggar sitting at the gate of the Church of St. Germain, Marie Bernadette does not appeal to anybody. Blackie makes her his translator and she proves to be an efficient woman. The beggar girl thus, gets employed and later marries Jacques Yves, a carpenter. On one occasion she comments, "You are a very good *tec*, *Pere* Blackie. Probably because you are a very good priest who understands people, even silly weeping beggar girls" (49). Either faith or imagination alone does not drive Blackie to uplift the beggar girl, it is a combination of both. It is Catholic imagination that motivates or activates him in the light of which he sees in her a daughter of God the Father, with an enormous room for improvement. The Catholic priests shall not confine their ministry to verbal service alone, instead they must try to reduce the problem of unemployment and other social issues. They must work aiming at the total growth of the whole person. In order to do this, priests must depend on Catholic imagination for inspiration and implementation. It is not enough to be speakers but, they have to be persons who understand other people and their needs, as the portrayal of the Bishop and the beggar girl amply suggests.

This novel can also be explained as Greeley's regret that the attitude of the Catholic Church to the media is by and large, one of neglect. As a body of men specially trained for preaching the Good News to the whole world, Catholic priests have no other tool better than the media. So they have to make use of the media for telling the truth, guiding their people, and thus fulfilling their priestly obligations in a better way. Priests who are obliged to preach the truth, have a duty to find out the real truth. They must consider it as the challenging aspect of their evangelizing mission to see to it that the media does not distort the truth. Without the investigative tasks of Blackie, the people would never have heard the real truth about the mysterious disappearance of Claude or they would never know that it was Chantal who really disappeared after five years of her

brother's death. If Blackie never came across the beggar girl and perceived her real worth, she would never have come up in life. As already mentioned, what is characteristic of Blackie is the correlation between faith and imagination in his personality. In other words, Catholic priests who are given to Catholic imagination and evangelization must always seek after truth and stand for truth in their preaching as well as their priestly life.

Catholic priests, who preach on the meaning and efficacy of Sacraments and officiate them, have to learn a lot from the death of Claude. As Chantal explains, he died in Rome of tuberculosis, in the presence of a priest and only after receiving the anointing of the sick. A Mass is said for the repose of the soul. Here, Claude is a Catholic priest who dies in peace enjoying all the benefits of the Catholic Church. As a priest, he preaches on the value of Sacraments, knowing pretty well, that he himself is a Sacrament, as loudly as he can when he is alive, and now at death too, he preaches the Catholic significance of Sacraments, but in silence. In this sense, the whole priestly life is preaching that continues not till death, but in and after death as well. In other words, as long as he is alive and active the Catholic priest administers the sacraments, but, at death he is administered the sacraments, befitting a dying priest. The chapter on the correlation between faith and Sacraments will elaborate this point. It suffices to recapitulate that preaching is an undeniable and life-long obligation of a Catholic priest, and it is possible only when and as long as the preacher abides by the merging of faith and imagination. That is why we maintain that the correlation between faith and imagination is an essential component of Catholic imagination.

*Irish Eyes* is the next novel, which has been selected for a detailed exegesis. Set against the background of the ramming of a passenger ship named City of Benton Harbour by the five-masted schooner, Charles C. Campbell, captained by Hale Reed, off

Michigan City, on a foggy night in October 1898, Greeley is teaching the Catholic priests the importance of being truthful to faith, imagination, and preaching. The wreck of the ship which carried three hundred members of the Chicago Chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, to support the Irish revolutionaries, is caused by apparently unfavourable weather conditions and too much of hurry on the part of the organizers. What is more important to the novelist is that a stolen chalice, carried by Thomas Doolan the chief organizer of the cruise which is a strong symbol of Irish Catholic faith, to be sold for money in order to buy arms for the rebels, is nothing but a violation of faith. Parallel to the tragedy of the ship, one century old, there is the recent murder of Nick Farmer and the suicide of Roger. Right from the school days Farmer and Roger have been rivals and the former has been on many occasions accused of faking or stealing stories which is worse than polluting the imagination. Violation of faith and imagination leads to the tragedy of persons, disintegration of families and disasters in social life. Hence, it can be said that this novel is intended to urge the Catholic priests to preach the truth and cultivate the inevitable relationship between faith and imagination in their own lives as well as in the lives of their listeners.

It is equally true that this novel is the story of a successful investigation to find out a lost treasure, that is the chalice, a valuable symbol of Catholic faith. Hence, there is always a correlation between faith and preaching. No priest can turn a deaf ear to such an unfortunate event. He who preaches the truth and the faith has the duty to search for, truth and fight for the faith. As long as the chalice remains hidden under the ocean, a priest's preaching is incomplete. When a chalice is being stolen, it is a scandal. If that sacred vessel is sold for money, that too, for buying destructive weapons, it is simony. Unless and until it is restored to its real owners there is injustice. A Catholic priest, who ought to preach and practise truth and is committed to train the parishioners to do the

same, cannot be indifferent to this situation. He has to strive for recovering the Holy Grail, here, the chalice. And in this story of the treasure hunt Greeley presents some Catholic priests who are endowed with the Catholic imagination or persons who value the merging of faith and imagination. First and foremost we have Father George, the brother of Dermot. Another one is John Devlin the librarian. Without the assistance of these two priests and the books they provided, Dermot and Nuala will never have succeeded in finding out the lost chalice. The contribution of Father Dorney is also significant for saving the girl, Ellen, who later preserves important documents related to the ship-wreck, which immensely helps the protagonists arrive at truth resulting in the discovery of the chalice. It is to be noted that all these priests are proud of their Irish Catholicism and they always keep a balance between their faith and imagination. One finds that it is Catholic imagination that prevails over them and it is the same that they follow in their lives and try to promulgate by their preaching.

With the help of the priests mentioned above, it is Dermot and Nualah who actually find out the metal box containing the chalice. Both these are Catholics and as Catholics they believe it is their duty to seek after truth to safeguard their faith together with their imagination. In Greeley's opinion, laypersons are also obliged to perform priestly duties. They need not be pulpit-preachers. All the struggles Dermot and Nualah undertake, are as good as the preaching of a Catholic priest. Both of these protagonists are greatly impressed by the ideas and suggestions of Blackie Ryan who is indisputable embodiment of Catholic imagination. He always represents and interprets the Catholic faith and wherever it is distorted or misinterpreted, he who is also an eminent investigator is determined to unveil the mysteries and he proclaims the truth. So, every Catholic priest shall, not only preach faith and stand for truth, but also empower the faithful to do the

same in their own walks of life. The priest must always bear in mind that as children of God, all Catholics are duty bound to perform their priestly responsibility of preaching.

Anyone who is fond of Catholic imagination is aware that proper use of the imagination is essential for making human life successful and peaceful. Those who give priority to envy, pride and revenge at the expense of due regard to imagination will have to fail. The Hibernians, who organize a cruise very late in the year for money, exhibit lack and neglect of real imagination. The stealing of the chalice and the consequent attempts to sell it also show misuse of imagination and challenge of faith. While in school when Roger submits a fake story, Farmer saves him saying that it is fiction. Both these are adulterating genuine imagination. Later in life, as Roger's probe on Nigeria becomes a grand success, Farmer in his envy plans to do away with the former. This provokes Roger to murder Farmer employing a Balkan gang and later, on the brink of exposure and disgrace he commits suicide. As media personnel, Roger and Farmer must have followed proper imagination and should have sought after truth. Instead, they are after money and popularity, and they end up in tragedy, invariably and irremediably. A writer or any person for that matter who is endowed with a combination of faith and imagination cannot degenerate like this. Probably, Roger and Farmer missed the right orientation right from the very beginning. Here, there is an important message for the Catholic priests, namely they have to educate the people in such a way that they are enabled to coordinate and correlate faith and imagination in their lives.

As already mentioned in the exposition of *Irish Gold*, there is a correlation between the past and the present in all the Irish novels of Greeley. The theme of this correlation assumes various dimensions in *Irish Eyes*. The ship-wreck of 1898, is conspicuous for the stealing of the chalice and the recent tragedy of Farmer and Roger is noted for the stealing of a story. This can be equated with the stealing of faith and

imagination. An analysis of faith makes one aware of its historical connectedness with the past and the present. One who lives at present has to look back to understand how his forefathers lived with their faith in the past. That person learns lessons and derives inspiration from the past in order to improve the quality of living one's faith at present and to correct aberrations, if any. If the stealing of the chalice means loss of faith, discovery of it after a century marks the regaining of faith. Likewise, there is another parallelism between misuse or non-use of imagination in the wreck of the ship and the missing of the chalice, and an abundant and fruitful exercise of imagination in the current restoration of the chalice by Dermot and Nuala who are always accompanied by Catholic imagination.

Again, in the relationship between Farmer and Roger another parallelism is evident. As classmates they collaborate in the story stealing. This is a clear case of the violation of truth and so of Catholic faith which preaches truth, and at the same time an assault against genuine imagination which every writer is blessed with. For the lack of Catholic faith and abuse of the literary imagination in their behaviour, the Catholic priest is morally responsible. It is a clear case of either failure or insufficiency of Catholic preaching which aims at Catholic formation and moral uprightness. Right now, Farmer and Roger collaborates in the media. Due to envy and mutual rivalry with the intention of gaining more popularity and wealth, they vye with each other and both of them meet with untimely and inauspicious death. They do not seem to have tried to get at their critical moments, any assistance from a person like Blackie or a Catholic priest who can guide them by resorting to his Catholic imagination. Besides, maliciously tarnishing the good name of Nuala as an acclaimed singer, and mistaking Dermot for his enemy, Neck appears to be a man who never cares for either Catholic faith or pure imagination. So, the analysis of what Farmer and Roger did at school and how they destroy themselves now,

tells about the necessity of having a proper merging of faith and imagination in one's life which is the primary duty of every Catholic priest to nurture. In this regard, the study of the story and history, which together is a record of faith, truth and imagination, alone, enables a priest to establish the connection of the present with the past and to derive lessons from that relationship. Such a connection is possible only with imagination. That is why, Greeley's priestly characters are marked by the combination of faith and imagination in their behaviour, preaching and tackling the problems in life.

One thing unique about this novel seems to be Greeley's insistence on the duty of a Catholic priest to teach the parents as to train their youngsters in a Catholic manner. The children do play an important role in this story. Nelliecoyne, Dermot's daughter, and Siobhan, another girl are the first ones to find out the remnants of the wrecked ship. Both Nuala and her daughter experience the vision of that ship. The imaginative and intuitive faculty of the young one helps the elders to locate the venue of the tragedy. The records preserved by Ellen, the replaced child, in her later years, provide the most important clues to Dermot and Nuala in finding out the misplaced chalice. It can only be deliberate that Greeley presents Nuala in this novel as a singer of lullabies very much appealing to all children and to the bitter envy of the rivals like Farmer. It has to be noted here that Father George takes great interest in the Catholic formation of Nelliecoyne and it is one Father Dorney who saves Ellen and entrusts her with Thomas Doolan. For Nuala, singing lullabies about God's love is equal to a priest preaching the Good News. She believes that every mother should sing lullabies exactly like God does to His children. Lullaby inculcates faith in children and activates their imagination both of which are essential for the development of the Catholic imagination. When mothers sing lullabies to their children, they are imitating God Himself. So, Catholic priests ought to sing lullabies for his parishioners, who are his spiritual children. Singing has to find a place in preaching in



order to be more appealing, especially, to the young generation. Nuala asks, “Don’t I think that God always is singing lullabies to us? Hasn’t God brought us into the world just like mothers do? And hasn’t He fallen in love with us? And don’t mothers have to sing lullabies to their children?” (85).

If the Church is the proper venue of the Catholic priest for preaching to his people, the house itself is the pulpit of the married people for preaching to their children. The responsibility of parents to ‘Catholicize’ or evangelize their children is in no way less than that of a priest doing it in the Church. In other words, when parents set a good example or give a good advice to their children, in agreement with the teaching of the Catholic Church, in Greeley’s opinion, they are performing their priestly role. Nuala’s words express what should be the right attitude of the parents to the children. She tells Dermot, about their daughter, “We must take very good care of her, so when she’s grown up we can give her back to God as a healthy, happy adult. God only lends children to us”(38). Many a times priests preach that parents are accountable for their children before God. Greeley reminds the preaching priest, that he too, is accountable on behalf of his parishioners. For, the same God who has appointed the parents as priests in a family, has entrusted him with regard to the salvation of the whole community. Here is a challenge for all priests to renew their commitment to God and all the people.

Catholic formation by no means is merely verbal. The children need and deserve concrete examples for emulation. *Irish Eyes* abounds in such scenes. Dermot and Nuala believe that they can not be authentic Catholics without practising love and forgiveness. They are aware that without abiding by these virtues they have no right to instruct their child to follow the Catholic ideals. They readily forgive Farmer’s wrongs done to them, and as he is dismissed from the job, they offer special prayers for him. Nuala says, “We really have to pray for him when we say our prayers tonight” (141). Later, the whole

family takes part in Farmer's funeral prayerfully despite his evil doings. With reference to the Catholic spirit of forgiveness, Dermot comments on another occasion, "Catholics, especially, Irish Catholics have a dangerous habit of being ready to forgive everything at the time of death- however temporary that forgiveness is" (197). Even the villainous character, Farmer writes in his letter to Martha his wife, "I am terribly sorry for having let you down so many times. I hope you will forgive me... I want to tell you how sorry I am" (200). For this, married people require a great amount of patience and practice. That is what Father Dorney exhorts Thomas Doolan and Mary, his wife, "Many People are married for fifty years and never get to know another. Getting to know someone else takes work and patience" (241). To cut it short, the basic training of every Catholic takes place in one's own home and parents are the most important teachers in our lives from a Catholic point of view. The parents have to remember that they cannot advise their children if they do not lead an exemplary life, and that when they do so they are fulfilling their priestly role even if they are not technically or officially ordained as priests.

The Church has entrusted the parental role of teaching the new generation with the priests. They should not only preach but also set examples. Looking at a priest's life the lay people ought to realize that God is love and that it is forgiving love. Forgiveness has to be the characteristics of the Catholic Church. As Nessa, Nelliecoyne's baby-sitter asserts, what she likes most about the Church "is that it always forgives you" (280). Greeley makes an appeal to all preaching priests to examine how far they are at present able to reflect in their lives this aspect of God's love and Church's forgiveness. Of course, as human beings, the priests are fallible. In the words of Blackie, "If the Lord wanted perfect men sitting at the throne of the Fisherman, he would not have turned the job over to human beings" (279). But God's generosity must not be mistaken for a justification either to cover up or perpetuate priestly sins. As preachers of God's love and

forgiveness, Catholic priests have to be examples for the community. This seems to be an important message of the *Irish Eyes*. As stated more than once, a Catholic priest essentially needs a properly nurtured Catholic imagination in order to lead such a life and to be an authentic preacher of Catholic values. Last, but not least, in all the Irish Novels, it can be said that 'Ireland' is the hero. Ireland is Catholic. For Greeley, Catholic is one who is in possession of both faith and imagination or one who abides by the precepts of Catholic imagination. Somehow Greeley has taken it for granted that the really Irish Catholic people have perceived truth, and that they are God-fearing people because God who loves them and whom they adore, is the truth.

'Irish eyes', typified by those of Nuala and her daughter Nelliemoynne are green eyes, smiling eyes, truth-finding eyes and capable of stealing away everybody's heart. Their fey and fair eyes serve as divining rods and always assist Dermot and Blackie in their investigations into mysteries. 'Irish eyes' are so powerfully transparent that forces of darkness or ignorance can never diminish them. They are perennial truth-seekers and will never be satisfied with nothing other than truth. Faith and imagination are the two eyes of the 'Irish eyes'. It is the fusion of faith and imagination that makes the 'Irish eyes' function as one in their pursuit after or struggle for truth. Without possessing the 'Irish eyes' a Catholic priest will not succeed in perceiving truth. Without grasping the truth a priest cannot preach truth. Without preaching nobody can be a priest. So, one can conclude that *Irish Eyes* teaches that the Catholic priests and all truth-seekers need 'Irish eyes', especially, in a world which is given to all kinds of falsehood and false appearances.

The last novel to be discussed in this chapter is *September Song*. This novel teaches how the laypeople represented by the couples, Charles Cronin O' Malley and Rosemary, can preach the Good News of peace and love to this secular world faster and

better than any priest. *September Song* has political, ecclesiastical and domestic significance. As a political novel, this is Greeley's outcry against American imperialism, which perpetuates wars in Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia. As an ecclesiastical work, this novel is the record of the protests that arose from the lay people all over the world against Pope Paul VI for publishing *Humanae Vitae*, which contains the official teaching of the Catholic Church on birth control, without considering their opinion even as they are the people mostly affected by the Encyclical. As a domestic novel it is the story of the final reunion of all the members of Charles Cronin's family. Though the couples constitute the hero and heroine of this novel, it is not totally exclusive of priests. For example, one finds Father Edward O' Malley who takes an active role in all demonstrations for the cause of peace. But, the service of the priest gets eclipsed when compared to manifold activities undertaken and organized by Chuck and Rosemary, though they are not pulpit-preachers.

The first thing to be pointed out is that the couples are strong Catholics. For them, faith is more important than anything else. They really love and serve the Catholic Church. It is because of their fascination for the Church that they criticize it very strongly. At the time of the explosion, while traveling by an aircraft, Chuck says, "All I can remember was clutching my rosary desperately"(171). Referring to another occasion, when the couple is exposed to an attack, Rosemary remembers, "A rosary wrapped around his hand. Astonishingly I was clutching my rosary" (245). This is enough to conclude that both of them are strong Catholics. Together with faith the couples possess imagination abundantly. This is evident from the professions they have chosen. Now, Chuck is a reputed photographer. Rosemary is a popular writer of stories. It is Rosemary who inspires her husband to emerge as a photographer, otherwise he would have been only an accountant. If Chuck did not have motivated his wife to publish her stories, she should have remained a mere housewife. As everybody knows writing and photography

are two areas where the imagination has its profuse performance. No other proof is needed to conclude that these couples are in possession of Catholic faith as well as imagination.

Greeley portrays Chuck and Rosemary as persons greatly endowed with Catholic imagination, after his own example. By means of Catholic imagination they have experienced God as love and forgiveness, which is a fundamental truth about Catholic faith. As their faith is seasoned with imagination anyone feels some romantic overtones in their expression of the same. For, Chuck and Rosemary, love is prayer and all love-making is a kind of seduction (16). Rosemary refers to their mutual surrender in bed as “a ritual”(350). Both of them believe that “God is a God of infinite second chances. We always have the opportunity to start again” (56). Chuck always loves Rosemary even though she leaves him temporarily. It is because he knows that God’s love is implacable and everlasting. As Chuck says, “Because he’s hopelessly in love with her. Implacably in love. He would never not love her... Something like God loves us” (331). Towards the end of the novel one finds a beautiful confession of God’s forgiving love, from the lips of Rosemary, “It’s taken me a long time in life, April Rosemary, to realize that real love is implacably forgiving”(368). Thus the protagonists of *September Song* are real Catholics who, according to Greeley, are persons whose nature is characterized by the combination of faith and imagination.

It is not enough for parents to have Catholic imagination. One becomes a Catholic only as and to the extent one preaches one’s faith to others. The Catholic Church teaches that the parents fulfill their priestly duty when they see to it that their children grow in Catholic faith and live according to Catholic values. In the novel, Chuck and Rosemary are really responsible parents. Both of them take intense interest in the Catholic formation of their children, three boys and two girls. Chuck tells his wife, “God gives us

children to take care of for a few years, then He expects us to give them back to Him” (45). All the five children find it easy to imbibe the spirit of the Catholic imagination as their father is a photographer and their mother is a writer. The parents feels proud of April, their daughter as she organizes young people and take part in the anti-war movements together with Father Edward. All the three sons have great fascination for music. One of them, Kevin specializes in “Catholic novelists” (111). In his letter Chuck reminds Rosemary of her responsibility to go for Mass together with all the children, and pray for him (137, 141). When April becomes a fulltime activist and gives herself to drugs for a period, hurting the feelings of her parents, they forgive her. Rosemary asks, “We have forgiven her already, haven’t we Chuck?” He replies, “That’s what Christians do, isn’t it?” (306). On one occasion, Rosemary asks her younger girl, how she knew all about the parable of the Prodigal Son. Moire’s reply is, “Because I am a Catholic” (361). I have referred to these contexts just to conclude that both Chuck and rosemary are responsible parents who perform their priestly or prophetic role of teaching or preaching in the family in an excellent and exemplary way.

The overall thrust of *September Song* recalls to one’s mind what *Blessed are the Peace-Makers*, the first novel elaborated in this chapter, preaches, namely, the importance of peace. The protagonists of this domestic novel, Chuck and Rosemary are peace-makers. The whole novel looks like an impressive sermon on the necessity of peace. In this sense, the *September Song* is an anti-war work. Chuck says, “My strategy is to win people over against violence without using violence” (197). When Lyndon Baines Johnson decides to send 165,000 troops to Vietnam before the year is over, Chuck protests against it relinquishing his post of American Ambassador to Germany. He flies back to Chicago from Bonn and becomes a photographer. Very often, the lay people “Keep their mouth shut and their wallets open” (72) in the Church. But, being a zealous

Catholic, Chuck speaks out the truth. He speaks through his pictures. When the media publish falsehood about the warfront, he risks his life, takes photos and publishes them to teach the people the real situation. The exhibition he conducts causes a sensation and many people turn against American Imperialism. Just one incident is enough to illustrate his fascination for peace and hatred of war. Once, a few suicide squads of sappers reach the outside of perimeter and the American soldiers eliminate them immediately. The media give a wrong version that Vietnamese attacked and occupied the Chancery of the American Embassy in Vietcong. Chuck presents original photos and proves that nobody occupied the Chancery (139). Very many times he cautioned the American government not to send more troops to Vietnam and to put an end to the war.

The Catholic Church never supports war and always stands for peace. War is nothing but organised slaughter of human beings. Both suicide and homicide are against the spirit of Catholic faith. One must not forget that this novel is written against the background of *Humanae Vitae* which categorically teaches that human life has to be preserved at all stages from the womb to the tomb. In this sense, the Encyclical upholds the dignity of human life as well as the inevitability of peace and security in the world. Thus, the Pope performs his priestly ministry of preaching by publishing the Encyclical. Chuck is also doing the same by means of his photography. Both are champions of peace. The Church exhorts all the faithful to be peace-makers. Those who use the media for the cause of peace, are really fulfilling the obligations of their priestly and prophetic roles as true Catholics. In this sense, all artists are preaching Catholic faith if they work for peace. Since, they are spreading Catholic faith and the teachings of the Church, Chuck, the photographer can be said to be witnessing to the correlation of faith and preaching.

In the context of the Catholic parish, it is customary that the priests preach ideals of love and truth from the pulpit. In the context of the family, parents are the priests who

have to preach the Catholic views. This preaching is to be done in and through their exemplary living. Chuck and Rosemary are aware of this parental responsibility. Every child grows imitating the words and deeds of its parents. If the parents are wreckless and scandalous, their children are likely to step into the same shoes. The children born of ideal parents have a better chance of developing an exemplary character. Greeley comments that President Jack Kennedy is an incorrigible womanizer like his father(4). Chuck and Rosemary have taken part in the peaceful demonstrations headed by Martin Luther King. Now, they feel really proud of April, their daughter, when they see her as one of the leaders of the Bridgeport March held on August 28, 1968, demanding the right of voting. When the police charges, into the mob both the parents and their daughter secure minor injuries. Church strongly protests against the police for handling the peaceful demonstration in a violent manner. Looking at April leading the demonstration, Chuck observes, "The young people of America are demanding peace"(263). Rosemary is a writer of stories. After her mother, April writes an article in *The Nation* (350). As practicing Catholics, Chuck and Rosemary abstain from drinking and their children take note of it. When April asks her mother why she does not drink, Rosemary replies, "I did too, before Daddy stopped me" (4). In short, they are preaching Catholic faith through their exemplary lives. Greeley wants the priests to promote this kind of families in each parish. The Mother Church wants more parents who are witnesses to the correlation of faith and preaching in daily life.

Greeley points out that though Chuck and Rosemary are champions of peace and committed activists, all the leaders are not genuine. In *September Song*, not only the lay people but also some priests like Edward take part in the demonstrations. Greeley questions the intentions of some of these activists. His reservations in this issue are vibrant in the words of Father Packy Keenan who asserts, "Some of the priests and nuns



in the peace-movement seem to be running away from their own religious problems. They are not certain about religious faith and since they need to be certain about something, they turn to politics”(200). Some of them do not have Catholic faith. In the case of some others, there is no congruity between their words and deeds. That means, there is no correlation of faith and preaching in their social activities. Such priests do not give adequate importance to the primary duties of their vocation. Greeley’s dig at these priestly characters reminds one of the story of Catherine Collins figuring in *Virgin and Martyr* explained in the chapter of this thesis. Father Ed Carny, a revolutionary priest, in whom Catherine puts all her trust, leaving the convent, is later exposed to be a fake with a foot of clay doing dirty work. The novelist seems to highlight the point that one cannot be a priest worth the name without either faith or imagination. No one can be a complete priest without possessing the correlation between faith and preaching. The analysis of *September Song* and this casual reference to *Virgin and Martyr* pose a warning before all priests to examine their real intentions and the basic commitment to the Church before they undertake social activities. When the priests who do not have real faith engage themselves in social service, they are not fulfilling their priestly role, for, they are not motivated by Catholic imagination.

In his activities for bringing about peace, Chuck is inspired by his Catholic faith of which he is very proud. He introduces himself, “ I am a Catholic, brother, a priest, Archdiocese of Chicago”(152). At his departure to the warfront as a photographer, Chuck declares that he has to do more than enough, “Because we are Catholics”(128). The children promise to go to Mass and Communion every day till he returns. Later, Chuck writes, “I am glad that everyone back home is going to Mass for me”(137). In his opinion, every Catholic has to fight peacefully against war. Priests are all the more bound to preach that the Church stands for peace. He has to conscientize the people against

colonialism and imperialism. So, what Chuck does is really the role of a priest. Of course, he criticises the Church and some of her teachings. But never does he hate her nor does he leave her. He loves the Church and is keen on serving her. Otherwise, he will not think of doing a book on priests (73). Another priestly role Chuck does is that he becomes a link between the leaders of the Church and the ordinary faithful. Every priest is a bridge connecting the lay people with the Magisterium. He has to represent and interpret the laity to the authorities of the Church. At the same time, he has to be the spokesman of the Church to the faithful. He shall never betray the rights of the one to placate the interests of the other. As part of this intermediary role, he goes to Vatican and listens to the Pope as the latter shares his anxiety about unbridled sex (78). He agrees with the Pope that the Catholic Church is not against love, but she is always against sin. The fact that Chuck is a prophet of peace, and healthy relationship between the clergy and the laity deserves the special attention and emulation of all priests who must realise how Chuck with his camera and Rosemary with her pen spread more Catholic ideals than the priests preaching from the pulpit.

If Chuck, a married man, can be said to be doing the role of a priest, one finds a female counterpart of a priest in *September Song* in the person of Maggie Ward, who is a qualified therapist. But for Ward's healing service, Rosemary will have to be a mental patient. As a girl, Rosemary has been sexually exploited by her own father. Many people accuse her of having murdered her mother with the help of a friend by name Peg. Really what happened is, during the scuffle between the mother and her daughter, the former lost balance, fell against the door that sprang open. This is how the tragedy occurred. It is Ward who relieves Rosemary of her bitter feelings (108). She is also instrumental to Rosemary's becoming a popular writer, which clearly proves that the latter has regained her Catholic imagination. Healing the sick and the weak is part of shepherding them,

which is one of the triple duties of a Catholic priest. Ward works like the female counterpart of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37). The Catholic priest who may not have enough time to visit all the bed-ridden persons frequently, can easily train a few lay women who will be of great assistance to the entire parish, even as Ward is. Greeley may intend Ward to be an anticipation of a woman priest, and a model of an empowered woman, in whose case, the encouragement of the Catholic priest is a must.

Every person is fallible, so are Greeley's characters. Some of the priestly characters as well as lay people fall short of their expectations and commitments. There are similar instances in *September Song*. Even Chuck and Rosemary undergo the ordeal of separation, though for a short period. April, who appreciates her parents for not being drunkards, later, becomes an alcoholic for some time. She is seen "Totally naked, her body painted red, zonked out on LSD cavorting around with a crowd of naked boys" (308). The Catholic faith, as Greeley portrays in his novels, is neither pessimistic nor fatalistic. God always gives second chances. He forgets and forgives the failures of human beings. Of course, Chuck and Rosemary have preached high ideals. April has accomplished meritorious services among the youth. Yet, they 'fall from grace' occasionally, as to err is human. God does not leave these persons to suffer or to be doomed for ever. As Chuck acknowledges, 'The Lord God must have assigned the most skillful angels to protect us....'(274). A parish priest ought to teach the people that when they neglect or lose the correlation between faith and preaching they will have to suffer, and correct their ways. He has to save them from falling into despair and at the same time convince them that God is preparing them to sing the 'September song'.

The very title, *September Song*, is suggestive of great jubilation or celebration which becomes a reality as a result of the final reunion of the entire family. The mutual forgiveness and acceptance of all the important characters mark the climax of the novel.

Chuck and Rosemary are reunited. Kevin, their son, falsely reported to be missing and dead, returns from the battlefield, the Distinguished Service Cross being awarded posthumously to him, by the Defence Department (341). He is now happily married to Maria Elena. April, who is believed to be spoilt for ever, returns, as a new person, with her lover James Nettleton of the medical profession. Above all, the Vietnam War is over. Peace is restored to the family of Chuck and Rosemary. The whole world feels greatly relieved. In Greeley's opinion there will be no better time for a 'September song'. This family reunion looks like an anticipation of and a partial participation in the heavenly bliss. Anyway this is a sacramental experience of God's love and forgiveness. Hence, *September Song* is actually a preaching of the Catholic faith in God's love, and forgiving nature. As the Church is a sign of God's loving presence, the family of the Malleys becomes the sacrament of the same. Any priest can make use of this story to illustrate the theme of necessity of peace and family reunion, which can be realized, only when the correlation of faith and preaching is restored.

The ministry of preaching will be effective only when it is accompanied by Catholic faith and Catholic imagination. This study has proved that priests as well as lay people can and must preach the Word of God in their respective walks of life. *Happy are the Peace-Makers*, the first novel, is the story of Nora MacDonaugh who, though not a nun, interprets and implements the Gospel message, motivated by Blackie, the personification of faith and imagination. Nora thinks that by virtue of her Baptismal priesthood, she cannot but preach the Word of God. In Greeley's opinion, she is Mary incarnate. Nora preaches the necessity of peace, the importance of family reunion and the inevitability of the spirit of forgiveness. She is performing exactly what Jesus has commissioned the Church to do. So, she can be rightly said to be a sacrament of God. In short, Nora illustrates how a lay person has to preach Catholic values in daily life,

whereas, Blackie proves how a priest can best preach the Gospel officially, and at the same time, train the laity to be effective preachers. Faith by its very nature has to be preached and preaching has to be backed up by faith. Hence, there is an inseparable relationship between faith and preaching.

The next novel, *The Bishop and the Three Kings*, also establishes the correlation between faith and preaching. In this novel, Blackie solves the mystery regarding the disappearance of the relics of the Magi or the Three Kings from the great Cathedral of Cologne. For Blackie, every investigation is an extension and expression of his priestly obligation to preach the truth. The novel appeals to every priest to realize their role as the promulgators and protectors of truth. But, Frederick Heidrich, even as a Bishop, instead of safeguarding the relics of the Magi, takes sides with some businessmen in stealing them. He can never be a preacher of faith and truth. For, he is not inspired by Catholic imagination. The female counterpart of Blackie in this novel, is Cindausue. He frees her of her inhibitions and complexes, and she, being reborn, offers herself at the service of the Catholic imagination. She unites her broken family and emerges as a sign of God's love and forgiveness. The stories of Blackie and Cindausue prove that a Catholic priest has to maintain a mutually supporting relationship between faith and preaching.

*The Bishop and the Beggar Girl of St. Germain* is expected to proclaim the unique role of the media in preaching the Gospel message, and at the same time, reminds us of the dangers involved, as a priest dominates in the media-world. Jean Claude, the priest, preaches very effectively over the television and under his influence, Chantal, his twin sister, continues the preaching ministry, in his absence. Since the ultimate aim of preaching is conversion of the listener, Claude has converted his sister. Greeley argues that a lay person, that too, a woman, can and has to preach the Word of God like Chantal. It is the duty of the parish priest to train the lay people to take up this missionary task.

The novel also highlights the significance of teaching the faithful about the importance of frequenting the sacraments, which is to be elaborated in the fifth chapter. It suffices here to state, that, in order to be an effective priest, he necessarily needs to combine his preaching with Catholic faith and imagination. In other words, each priest must abide by the component of the correlation of faith and preaching.

*Irish Eyes* is the fourth novel discussed in this section. This is an account of how Dermot, Nuala and Blackie, the three ideal characters of Greeley, recover the stolen Chalice, which is a strong symbol of Irish Catholic faith. The novel is a strong declaration of the perennial nature of Catholic faith and that of the preaching ministry. As long as there are human beings, there will be Catholics; as long as there are Catholics, there will be priests, and as long as there are priests, there will be preaching. The Chalice is never destroyed, and likewise the Catholic faith will never be destroyed nor will it ever wither away on its own. But, the priests have the duty to preach for which all of them have to follow the precepts of Catholic imagination. It is only when Blackie and the two protagonists link themselves with the correlation of faith and preaching, that they are able to witness to the teachings of the Catholic Church, both in their words and deeds. This novel can be said to be Greeley's intense warning to all the priests not to disregard their preaching ministry. The novel also portrays the story of Roger and Farmer, the collaborators in the media, who in their pursuit after money and fame, violate the spirit of faith and imagination. They are unable to preach truth, and consequently, both of them meet with untimely death. In other words, they fail in performing the preaching duty expected of a Catholic. The novel ought to be an eye-opener to every priest to be more faithful to his own preaching ministry as well as his obligation to train the lay people to be ministers of the Word of God in daily life.

*September Song* is the last novel discussed in this chapter. Written against the background of *Humanae Vitae*, the Magnacarta of human life, this book proves that both the clergy and the laity are bound before the Church to preach the Good News. The ideal couples, Charles Cronin O'Malley and Rosemary, perform this duty as good as any ordained priest, and even better than some of them. With regard to the spreading of peaceful and anti-war activities, the camera of Charles Cronin and the pen of Rosemary are as eloquent and expressive as the microphone, an ordinary priest uses for his sermon. Whether it be a priest or a lay person, in order to fulfill the prophetic mission of teaching and preaching, a Catholic needs, not only oratory skill but also solid faith. It is the combination of faith and preaching as an important component of Catholic imagination, which enables a person to perform this duty effectively. By the end of the novel, Vietnam War is over. And there occurs the final reunion of all the members of the family of the chief protagonists. In other words, the preaching of a Catholic, activated by the merging of faith and imagination, bears fruit in the life of the individual, in the family and in the entire world.

To wind up, Greeley is of the opinion that preaching is one of the important obligations of a priest by virtue of his ordination. At the same time, each lay person as partakers in the Baptismal priesthood has to preach and witness to Catholic virtues and Biblical perspectives. Those who preach have to make use of all the media, but prudently. Every Catholic must stand for truth and peace. The priest should preach the truth about the real nature of God that He is nothing but love and forgiveness. He has to fight against violence and war. In order to make the preaching effective, Greeley stipulates that the speaker has to maintain the correlation of faith and preaching. In other words, faith is the content of the preaching of a priest, and imagination is its source and strength. This chapter is to be wound up with a partial and very brief reference to some non-fictional

writings of Greeley just to see how much the novelist insists on the importance of this component of Catholic imagination in them.

That Greeley is very much preoccupied with how the Catholic priests fulfill their prophetic role of teaching and preaching becomes very evident, as we look at his non-fictional writings. He takes the priests to task for the poor quality of Sunday sermons which is mostly due to their neglect of Catholic imagination. He writes in *A Piece of My Mind on Just About Everything* (1978), "The first most serious problem facing the American Church is not clergy morale or finance, or women etc. but the problem of rotten preaching..." (143). Commenting on the low quality of homilies heard in the Church, and referring to the Marijuana Mass, he writes in *The Friendship Game* (1970), "Given the quality of homilies heard in the Roman Catholic Church today, the marijuana ought to be used, if it is going to be used at all, before the homily instead of after" (112). This is Greeley's dig at the sleep-inducing effect of sermons usually preached in the churches. He regrets that most of the clergy are not even worried about how boring and ineffective they are on the pulpit. As Greeley writes in *The Making of the Pope* (2005), "Only 20 percent of the priests thought quality of preaching was a serious problem for the laity, while 80 percent of the laity thought so" (XXVI). According to Greeley, every Catholic priest must be aware of this unpleasant situation and they must endow themselves with Catholic imagination without which preaching will not be appealing to the people.

In Greeley's opinion, each parish is a storehouse of stories and each priest is a storyteller. In this respect, Jesus himself is the model for all priests. Jesus' parables are unforgettable to this day not only because of the originality of the content but also due to the richness of imagination in each of them. One encounters the real Jesus in the stories. The priest can present and represent this Jesus only by means of stories which are impossible without the fusion of faith and imagination. Since preaching is essential for



the priest, and stories are essential for every preaching, what Greeley writes in *Jesus* (2007) is very relevant to all those who preach Jesus and his teachings. In his words, “But if you want to know what Jesus was really like and what he really believed, if you want to get to the “essential” Jesus, then you must read and re-read the parables” (164). It is this Jesus who has called and sent the priests to go and preach. Hence, they have to tell and retell the parables of Jesus and other Catholic stories with happy endings during their sermon. In short, this chapter substantiates that every Catholic is bound to be the preachers of the Word of God. Without maintaining the correlation of faith and preaching, neither an ordained priest nor a lay person can perform his or her priestly witnessing.