

*FAITH AND ADMINISTRATION OF  
SACRAMENTS*

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## Chapter V

### FAITH AND ADMINISTRATION OF SACRAMENTS:

*The Angels of September, Happy are the Oppressed, Irish Mist,*

*A Christmas Wedding and Irish Love*

As already enlisted in the first chapter of this thesis, the triple duties of a Catholic priest are preaching/teaching, leading/shepherding and sanctifying. As he teaches, he is fulfilling his prophetic role. As he administers a parish, an organization or runs an institution, he fulfills the duty of shepherding. A Catholic priest performs his sanctifying ministry mostly by administering the sacraments and offering sacrifices. It is when he officiates a liturgical ceremony that the priest is at his best as a mediator between God and man. The correlation between faith and administration of sacraments forms part and parcel of the daily life of a Catholic priest. One cannot think of a priest as one who does not administer the sacraments. As everyone knows, he cannot officiate a religious function or lead the community meaningfully without having strong faith. The sacraments being symbols, imagination is also as essential as faith in making a liturgical celebration effective. This presupposes that a priest possesses a solid spiritual life. One without holiness in himself cannot give it to others. Hence, the Catholic priest must be a man of prayer. Otherwise, he can never be Christ-like. In other words, the title of a Catholic priest as a holy man or a praying person, individually as well as collectively, cannot be realized except through the faithful administration of the sacraments.

This chapter is an attempt to evaluate how the priestly characters do justice to the role of sanctification in their ministry through the proper administration of the sacraments which presupposes a solid spiritual life. It is with this end in view that a detailed study of the following five novels written by Greeley is done. They are *Angels of September*

(1987), *Happy are the Oppressed* (1996), *Irish Mist* (1999), *A Christmas Wedding* (2000) and *Irish Love* (2001). It must be borne in mind that to be holy and to make others holy is not the monopoly of the ordained priests. The Catholic Church teaches that by virtue of baptism every Christian is a priest. For the lay people, marriage is their ordination. The family or the whole world is their altar on which they offer their exemplary life in accordance with the evangelical virtues, as sacrifices and sacraments, though they are neither trained nor authorized like priests to officiate the services on behalf of the community. So, the focus of this study is not only how the priests administer sacraments meaningfully and effectively, but also how the lay people witness to Catholic values and teachings and become sacramental in their respective walks of life. This will also be an eye-opener to all Catholic priests to improve the quality of their liturgical celebrations, and to the lay people in order to prepare themselves for active participation in prayer and worship, and thereby sanctify their daily life. The following analysis of the five novels mentioned above will make us aware that there are more priests among non-priests who represent God's love and are living sacraments in the world than among the official priests who work as vicars in the parishes. As already suggested, this attempt is to prove that Catholic imagination is a must both for the priests and the lay persons to acquire the fruits of administering the sacraments and taking part in them. During this process, an examination is also made to show how these novels are flavoured by the undercurrents and overtones of the correlation between faith and the administration of sacraments.

*Angels of September* is the first novel dealt with in this chapter. This book portrays the story of the redemption of Anne Reilly from her emotional and psychological slavery due to self-imposed tortures based on a misunderstanding. Anne Reilly is a girl spoilt by the bad life of her parents and the bad knowledge she got in her younger days about sex. She has been haunted by fear and sense of guilt until recently Bishop Blackie as an angel

of September removes her misunderstanding, enables her to give up her obsessions and completely liberates her. When the angel of truth incarnates, the devil of ignorance and bondage disappears leaving space for joy and happiness. The administration of sacrament is expected to bring about new life in the recipient. Blackie's interference in the life of Anne results in a similar experience. Hence, it is nothing but a sacrament. By this, Anne herself becomes a sacrament of God's love for others. In the light of *Angels of September*, a Catholic priest has to admit that there can be sacramental experience or God's intervention, even outside the churches and the liturgical celebrations without any prejudice to the existing seven sacraments usually officiated by him. The priests have to realize that they are not the only people who can provide the people with a sacramental experience. They must educate the lay people that the latter are not merely the recipients of the sacraments but that they too have the duty to be sacramental or to be sacraments or God's signs to other people. At the same, time it must not be neglected that the awareness of the seven sacraments is a fundamental quality and condition of every Catholic. The lay people who participate in the celebration of sacraments and the priests who solemnize them both require solid Catholic faith and rich imagination the absence of which is likely to diminish the efficacy of these sacraments.

Anne is always haunted by the horror of the Mother of Mercy School fire that occurred in 1935 in which her two sisters, Connie and Cathleen, and many other students died. She takes it for granted that she is responsible for the fire and that she is a murderer of many innocent children. She thinks, "I was the arsonist who was responsible for the Mother of Mercy fire. I killed my two sisters and ninety other children and nuns" (415). Blackie, the investigator, produces a letter written by Michael Casey's mother to her husband who was in Poland. This letter refers to her visit to Mary Anne Laverty, the heroine's mother, and proves Anne has not gone to school on the day of the fire (449).

When this truth is revealed, Anne's mind is relieved of its shock and tension. The school was actually set ablaze by a former student, a pyromaniac, who had been expelled from there. The other factor that worsened Anne's mental health is her sight of Divine Justice, a picture painted by Desmond Kenny, an ex-priest. It looks like a raging inferno – a mass of dark and twisted colours of fire and suffering. She thinks that being the worst sinner she deserves nothing but punishment in hell. Blackie's interpretation of God's loving nature, Michael Casey's encouragement and Dr. Mary Kate Murphy's rapport help Anne regain her integrity. Without their timely and collective assistance, Anne will have ended her life in some mental asylum.

According to Greeley, God sends three angels or assistants or sacraments to empower Anne. The three angels are a priest angel in the form of Blackie, a lover angel in the form of Michael Casey and a Psychiatrist angel in the figure of Dr. Mary Kate Murphy. As a result of the timely help of these angels of September, Anne who was on the verge of mental breakdown recovers her peace of mind, reconciles herself with all others including God and the Church and thus becomes a new person. The three angels are like three sacraments transforming the life of Anne, the recipient of the sacraments. When the three angels of September collaborate, the net result is the emergence of a fourth angel that is Anne herself. She is an angel as well as a sacrament. When she behaves like an insane person, it is clear that she has no harmony in herself. She possesses neither faith nor truth. As everyone knows the imagination of a mentally disordered person lacks accuracy and propriety. In other words Anne has lost her Catholic imagination. The achievement of the three 'angels of September' is that they succeed in filling her mind with Catholic faith and imagination. As she is endowed with Catholic imagination she becomes worthy of receiving the sacramental assistance which makes her a new and better sacrament. She marries Casey, her classmate and they begin a new life, a

way of life which according to Greeley, is the best opportunity to witness to God's passionate love for men, His loving children.

A second glance at the school fire and Kenny's painting also convinces everyone of the necessity of having personal integrity for which it is necessary to have the combination of faith and proper imagination in one's life. Greeley calls the former student who sets fire to the school, a pyromaniac. No sensible person will ever indulge in such an act. Any school is supposed to be the abode of truth. In the case of Catholic students it is also the place where they grow in religious faith and the Catholic imagination. So, any school deserves our respect and admiration. The one who attempts to destroy it doesn't have either faith or truth or a proper imagination. In the case of Kenny the artist, he is an ex-priest which means 'his faith' is to be doubted and his loyalty to the teachings of the Church is at stake. His 'Divine Justice' is a violation of the Catholic teaching on God's love. He presents a punitive figure of God which evokes fear in the viewers. A Catholic artist is expected to project the true nature of God that He is a loving father, which is a form of evangelizing the world and must be considered as part of fulfilling the priestly duty of every believer. Kenny leaves his priesthood. He perverts and misinterprets God's nature by means of his pictures. Instead of becoming a sacrament of God, Kenny appears to be an anti-witness. In him there is neither faith nor Catholic imagination. He is nothing less than an insult to the Catholic Church and the priesthood as it exists in the world. The horror of the school fire and the sight of 'Divine Justice' split Anne's personality and take her to the point of disaster. Blackie's orientation based on Catholic imagination reunites all aspects of her character and all the members of her family as a result of which she becomes a new person. When he lacks faith and imagination Kenny deserts priesthood making himself disqualified to administer sacraments officially. By misusing his artistic talent he forfeits the possibility of spreading the Good News even as a non-priestly

person. Greeley wants all Catholic priests to realize that an effective administration of any sacrament is possible only if, a correlation of faith and imagination exists in the personality of the priest.

The inquiry into Anne's life brings forth a series of failures in marriage. First, she marries Limbo, a brutal man, secondly, she lives with John Dunan, a Senator, and again she marries Matt Sweeney, an ex-priest. None of these marriages survives for a long span of time. It is mainly due to the wrong ideas she has taught herself in the light of the loaded and biased teachings of the Church about sex and marriage life. Everywhere she senses sin. The only thing she is sure of is that she is damned to be punished in hell. Sometimes, she assumes the responsibility for the sins of other people too. She fears men and sex. She has faith in none, not even in the nuns teaching in the school. She is incapable of trusting anybody. As Mary Kate Murphy tells, "Her monumental guilt attaches itself to the actual or imagined violation of various and Sunday Church regulations, laws, norms, canons and other obligations - past and present" (106). Again as her daughter Bethie goes astray, she says, "If she is spoiled, then it is my fault for spoiling her or letting Jim do it" (151). As a student Anne thinks that it is a mortal sin to be disobedient to Sister (244). If at all she has any faith it is against the Catholic faith and the imagination that drives her is not in agreement with the Catholic imagination. As a result, she does not understand the meaning of marriage as a sacrament. She bluntly states that nobody prepared her for a Catholic marriage. In her own words, "And because no one, any time in my life, prepared me for marriage, neither my family nor my Church nor my friends, I was utterly unready for it" (173). When Anne is divorced by Jim Reilly, her husband, Blackie suggests the possibility of a remarriage. Being so much obsessed with the idea of the indissolubility of marriage in the Catholic Church, she responds negatively, "I'll never remarry, Mr. Ryan. I am a Catholic" (252). But, later one sees the

same Anne indulging in immoral relationships with other men. So, it is true that her Catholic imagination is not true. Anyone can easily notice Anne's double standards as she upholds the indissolubility of the Catholic marriage and at the same time living with other men. For instance, while living as the Senator's keep, Anne tells him, "We view marriage as a sacrament. Even God couldn't dissolve my marriage to Jim Reilly" (307). Her life seems to be for ever mired in a Catholic backwater. In short, the failure of Anne's marital life is owing to the false knowledge she has got from the family and the Church. Hence, she remains immature with regard to the use of Catholic imagination. There is an important lesson here which all the Catholic priests should listen to, that all of them have to be more qualified and committed to the area of forming the Catholic imagination in the children and preparing them for choosing the right vocation. In *Angels of September*, Greeley strongly regrets at the negligence of priests in guiding youngsters in matters related to sex and marriage, "You pack the students in, process them through their courses and credits, collect tuition fees, announce an annual retreat, award them their degrees and tell yourself you've done the work of the Lord" (333). That means, the Church does not sufficiently prepare the young people to embrace the Sacrament of Marriage.

The Catholic Church teaches that the Church herself is a sacrament in the sense that she is the sign of God's presence on earth, and the continuation of Jesus' redemptive ministry. She is in fact a treasury of many sacraments and the members of the Church have to subscribe to them in order to nourish their life of faith. That is why, a Catholic is said to be in close association with the Church in spite of her imperfections and deviations down through the ages. Regarding Anne's life, indeed, it is marvelous how passionately she is in love with the Church despite her problems related to faith and imagination. Whatever happens, she will never quit Catholicism. As she says, "The Pope himself could tell me I had to leave the Church now and I wouldn't go" (311). On another occasion,



when Blackie asks her why she remains in the Catholic Church, she tells him, "It's the only Church I have, and I don't know what I'd do without Midnight Mass at Christmas" (399). As everyone knows, compared to the other Christian denominations, the Catholic Church abounds in celebrations and feasts and stories. All these cater to the development of one's faith as well as imagination. As a mother feeds her babies, the Church sees to it that the faithful grow in the quality of faith and the knowledge of her teachings, through the celebration of mysteries or the administration of sacraments which are sources of sanctification. The Catholic priests do have an important role in this process. For this, they should always maintain the correlation between faith and the administration of sacraments. That is why, one considers it as a decisive constituent of Catholic imagination.

In a sense the message of *Angels of September* is that the Catholic Church must take special care of people like Anne who suffer crises in their spiritual life. In Anne's case, God sends Blackie the priest, Dr. Murphy the Psychiatrist and Michael Casey, the lover, as three angels to console her and to consolidate her faith in communion with Catholic imagination. These three angels are three assistants sent by God to save Anne from her problems. As signs of God's providence and assistance these three persons are three sacraments. They are at the same time, symbols and assurance of God's presence and grace. Anne is immensely grateful to God and the Church for this timely help but for which she might have spent her last years in a mental sanitorium. In admiration of Blackie's service, she says, "God sent me someone who offered to help, the most helpful priest I've ever known" (325). As Kenny disappoints Anne saying that there is no escape from God's impending punishment, Blackie motivates her saying that an escape is possible by telling the truth. And he makes the possibility, a reality. Greeley explains how Blackie does it, with the intention that it should be a model for all other priests. In her

fight against demons and despair, Blackie entrusts her with the care of three guardian angels including himself. Blackie tells Michael Casey, "I'm going to see her every day, you're going to talk to her every day, and she is probably spilling her guts to Mary Kate several times a week" (343). When this plan is realized, Anne, who at one time considered herself as "A vile stinking swamp, a cesspool of filth and corruption and death" (347), emerges as a new person or rather, a new angel or even a new sacrament.

The newly born Anne can be seen as a perfectly balanced person, or a melting point of faith and imagination. Blackie being a priest sees to her spiritual needs. Dr. Murphy caters to the needs of her mind and imagination. Michael Casey, as her lover, is primarily concerned about her bodily needs, but subject to Catholic imagination. When he plays with Anne's body, it becomes the merging centre of faith perfected by Blackie, and imagination strengthened by Murphy. Then the body becomes an altar on which love is offered as a sacrifice and it reminds us of the altar inside a Church where a priest officially offers the Holy Eucharist. Thus, Greeley brings about a parallelism and some kind of an identification between the husband administering the sacrament of love in the family and the priest officiating the sacramental celebration at the altar. What is central to this chapter is the fact that this celebration or glorification of the human body and the sacramental administration of a priest in the Church are impossible without the assistance of the three angels who provide the priest and the parent with Catholic imagination. This analysis of the sacrament of matrimony can be wound up stating that both the priest who officiates sacramental celebration in the Church and the parent who performs his or her obligations at home are administering their priestly roles and that this sacramental administration is possible only when they are endowed with Catholic imagination.

Another theme which has a reference connected with a sacrament in *Angels of September* is forgiveness. The inevitability of the spirit of reconciliation is many a time

upheld in this novel. There are direct and indirect references to the sacrament of reconciliation. There is the notorious incident of Kenny threatening Anne in the confessional saying that she is irremediably damned to hell and forcing her to pose naked for him to paint a picture. This man is an insult to the Catholic practice of confession which confers and confirms God's forgiveness to repenting sinners. Blackie comments about this priest, "That man was a disgrace to priesthood. He never should have been ordained" (418). A priest must have the readiness to forget and forgive the sins of others. A priest who is hostile in style and always unprepared to forgive others cannot administer the sacrament of reconciliation meaningfully. Hence, it is a must that he should have strong faith in the existence of a God who saves us by loving and forgiving us. Nothing but Catholic imagination can empower the priest to do this.

The spirit of reconciliation or the readiness to forgive is essential not only in the confessional but also in the family life. The parents cannot hold together and live in harmony without practising forgiveness. In *Angels of September* one finds the marriage of Jim Reilly and Anne on the verge of divorce. Though, her husband is an irresponsible person, she is willing to tolerate him. The only demand she makes is that he must take part in an alcoholic treatment programme after which he must consult a psychiatrist. This is perfectly justifiable because her ultimate plan is to sustain their family. Another instance worth mentioning, in this context, is the marriage between Mathew Sweeny and Anne. Sweeny quits his priesthood and marries her. Though this marriage does not last for long, a piece of advice he gives has perennial relevance. He asks Anne, "Is there no forgiveness in your heart? Forgive others as you yourself expect to be forgiven" (123). The concluding chapters also highlight the necessity of forgiveness. Greeley always argues that the Catholic priests as well as the lay people have to be activated or animated by Catholic imagination. Only then they will be able to give solace and guidance to those

people for whom guilt is like a heavy piece of luggage that grows more onerous the longer they carry it.

There is one more reference in *Angels of September* to the administration of another sacrament and it is Baptism. It is only a casual and very short reference to the fact that after the death of Jim Reilly in Thailand, the boy delivered by Jennifer is christened as James Reilly. According to the teachings of the Catholic Church, Baptism is the first sacrament one receives and it is one of the initiatory rites which makes one a Catholic and empowers that person to receive the other sacraments in the coming years. Thus, the marriage and the rite of reconciliation are the two sacraments Greeley has specifically elaborated in this novel. Of course, nobody is to expect a detailed treatise of all the seven sacraments in any of the novels analyzed here. The analysis already done, is more than enough to convince of the mutually complementing nature of faith and imagination in the administration of the sacraments. The administration of any sacrament or any liturgical celebration, for that matter, becomes lively, meaningful, attractive and fruitful only when Catholic imagination is applied to it properly. Hence, the Catholic priests as well as the lay people must be ready to abide by the demands arising from the correlation between faith and administration of sacrament, which, for Greeley, is an important component of Catholic imagination.

The second novel to be examined in this chapter is *Happy are the Oppressed*. This book is an account of how Jane Chantal Reynolds Cardin tormented by a sense of guilt and fear of immediate death regains her peace of mind making a general confession to Blackie who is, as usual, sent by Archbishop Sean Cronin, to unveil the mystery regarding the curse that still haunts the Cardins. Blackie finds out the truth, brings the real murderers before the law and thus makes the curse of Colonel Pettigrew ineffective. He proves that the curse due to obsession with money is worse and more dangerous than the

words of the dying Confederate Colonel. The most evident message of this novel is that a genuine confession not only absolves sins but also solves problems and results in the reestablishment of human relationships. As Blackie reveals the truth, the craze for money which makes people blind and belligerent disappears and then a family reunion takes place. The theme of reconciliation as experienced in confession or resulting from it, and an emphasis on the loving nature of God as witnessed by exemplary family life are the prominent hallmarks of *Happy are the Oppressed*. There are partial references to the vocation to priesthood. That is precisely why a detailed study of this work is given in this chapter. As this study progresses, one is to realize that, as already stated, for the effective administration of the sacraments, both the priests who officiate and the people who receive, need Catholic faith and Catholic imagination. Every sacrament presupposes faith which is intensified when the sacrament is administered properly with the accompaniment of a high degree of imagination. As the priest officiates the administration of sacraments he nourishes the faith of the community as well as that of himself. Thus there is an unbreakable affinity between faith and the administration of sacraments.

While dying Colonel Pettigrew tells Pete Cardin, known as Red Pete, "I curse you, you vicious murdering bloodsucker! May death haunt you and your family for every generation! And may you all burn in hell for ever!" (39). The tragedies which have been storming the Cardin family for a century prove that the curse is still in full swing. Cardin I dies of heart attack in 1896, Cardin II succumbs to influenza in 1918, Cardin III is killed in action in 1944, and Cardin IV dies in a plane crash in 1985. Rose Tennon, the wife of Cardin I, was brutally murdered in 1895. Now in 1985, Jane Chantal, the wife of Cardin V, fears that she too, will be killed to mark the hundredth anniversary of the first tragedy. Blackie's investigation makes it clear that the murderers of Rose Tennon in 1895 and the recent attempts on Jane's life, are provoked by the same motive that is craze for money.

Regarding the tragedy of 1895, someone else had killed the wife to implicate the husband in a murder charge that would lead to his hanging (297). Then, the someone gets all that Cardin I was in possession of. Blackie finds out that at present the villain is Patrick Reynold, Jane's own brother who is an ingenious improviser and manipulator. In both these issues, the killers are in dire need of money, and there is a tendency to incriminate the husbands, in order to misappropriate huge amounts of money. For these murderers, whether they are people who lived in the past or they are living at present, there is no God but money. Man is always hunted or haunted by the same sinful nature. They have neither love nor faith. Those who possess Catholic faith will always respect the body of the other at all cost. Anyway, they will not kill anybody. Those who have Catholic faith believe that God is the father of all and that all are His children. Hence, one who has a strong faith cannot kill anybody. Anyway, it is very clear that they don't have Catholic faith. It is also true that the murderers, in Jane's case, Patrick Reynold, and in Rose Tennon's case, Joe Carey and his secret lover Peg Mc Gevin, are not endowed with Catholic imagination which will never prompt anybody to act against Catholic faith. The tragedies that occurred between 1895 and 1995 teach that the criminals are those who neglect or lack faith, and have perverted their imagination. What brings about tragedies in Cardin's family is this disintegration of the Catholic imagination and not the curse which is one century old. In Greeley's opinion, the remedy for these and similar tragic problems is the reestablishment of Catholic imagination. This is what Blackie achieves by means of the confessional which is the highest expression of God's loving forgiveness as well as the inauguration of a renewed life.

In *Happy are the Oppressed*, Jane Chantal Cardin is the mostly oppressed person. Her life is a cesspool of suffering. In the words of Blackie, "Chantal Cardin had been attacked from three sides, each attacker with a different goal, each one with their own

responsibility. But, only one attacker had been responsible for the physical violence done to her” (277). Her suffering at the hands of her husband, her brother, the hired assassins and the police, knows no bounds. It is very significant that Jane recovers her mental health as a result of her making a general confession to Blackie at the Cathedral rectory. According to her, Blackie is a man of understanding. She doesn't like the priests of Corpus Christi or the Jesuits. As Jane says, “We need kind priests, more than stern or lenient priests” (23). She approaches Blackie in a restless and highly agitated manner. In the confessional, she experiences God's love and mercy, and as a result she regains her identity and integrity. Her mental and physical strength improves considerably. The confessor consoles and convinces her, “I believe that our God is helplessly in love with us and does not desire so minute explanations of our past sins as much as She requires our reflection on Her great love for us” (13-14). After the confession and some therapy, Jane assumes the directorship of the new Cardin Foundation. She never thinks that she is worthless. The words of Blackie, the confessor, reveal that he is inspired by the correlation of faith and imagination. He says:

The essence of our faith is a dream, a vision, a possibility.... We can all live with one another in peace and affection.... This is the story Jesus told us. This is the faith that keeps us Catholic, this is the vision we see in the eyes of our children.... It's a dream about what is possible if God really loves us the way Jesus says He loves us. In the light of that dream, the worst of all sins is to say that one is worthless.... If you don't believe that, woman, you have no right to claim to be Catholic. (86-87)

By virtue of Confession, Jane reconciles herself with God and, as instructed by Blackie, she is willing to share the spirit of forgiveness with her husband as well her assailants. This readiness to forgive, subject to the conditions put forward by Blackie,

works miracles such as Cardin V becomes a new person, and Jane's husband who has had adulterous relationship with Peg Mc Gurn for about twenty five years, now feels sorry for his deception and assures cent percent faithfulness to Jane. As he confesses in front of Blackie, his wife is more important than his riches and power, for in his own words, "Riches and power do not bring happiness, Bishop" (167). The reorientation which Blackie and the confession have created in Cardin is well expressed in his conversation with Dr. Milanie Jefferson. Fed up with the humiliating words of the Countess, the doctor asks, "What is more important to you, Sir, your wife's life or this woman's whims?" Cardin's answer is, "My wife" (267). The best result of the confession seems to be the family reunion of Cardin and Jane. The novel reaches its climax when Jane, the most oppressed person, emerges as the happiest one. Here is a special lesson for all the Catholic priests. It is not enough to officiate the sacraments. What is more important is that those who receive the sacraments must be ready to forgive and be reconciled with one's partner and the other members of the family. In this regard, priests themselves ought to be models. For this, they have to appreciate and encourage the mutually supporting correlation between faith and administration of sacraments. That is why, the Catholic Church insists on the priests and the lay people to recognize the need of following Catholic imagination in one's personal life, liturgical celebration and social relationships.

Having discussed some aspects related to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the focus is shifted to the Sacrament of Marriage. The attitude to the human body and sex, the mutual responsibility of the parents in the family, and the relevance of empowering the women are discussed here. That the marital love is a reflection or symbol of God's eternal love is a favourite theme of Greeley. One cannot point out any novel written by him which does not elaborate upon this sacramental nature of human love. To be a sacrament



is to be a symbol. When one says matrimony is a sacrament it is self evident that the human body is not evil in itself, that sex is not a taboo, but that sexuality is a means of experiencing God's love. As the pioneer of the analogical nature of Catholic imagination, Greeley always maintains that proper expression of sexuality is an anticipation of and a participation in God's love. In *Happy are the Oppressed* Blackie tells Jane, "You must remember Ms. Cardin, that God loves each of us with a parent's tenderness and a lover's passion" (1). He continues to comment that nothing in this world is more powerful and more expressive than the love of a parent to communicate God's love for us. The Trinitarian God shares love, expresses love and creates. The parents, too, do the same. The Catholic priest who has faith in God, the creator, has to preach the Good News about the creative aspect of human love. Without faith love will be nothing more than indulgence in carnal pleasures. Greeley's characters often remind that each person ought to safeguard the safety and sanctity of one's body. According to him, it is a part of realizing God's Will in one's life. In Blackie's words, "Proper care of one's body is virtue and not vice... When you follow your instincts to conserve that beauty, you do God's Will" (84). It is impossible to believe this without imagination and it is equally impossible to imagine this without faith. That is why, the Catholic Church holds that for the proper understanding of marriage one needs Catholic imagination which is also composed of the correlation between faith and the administration of sacraments.

Catholic imagination understands love basically, as respect for the other. This respect is not confined to the body alone. It also implies listening to the partner and respecting his or her views. In Greeley's opinion, the relationship between the husband and the wife is not one of superior and inferior. One is not the leader nor is the other a mere follower. Both the parents are collaborators with equal rights and responsibilities. The woman is not a silent slave. The husband is not to be an imposing boss. When Tony

O'Boyle, the coachman of the Cardin family and Clare go to the 'den' or Pat Mc Carthy's Saloon to catch the killers red-handed, she tells him, "If you are going to marry me, you would be clear that I'm no weeping and fainting female who needs protection all the time" (201). These words convey to all Clare's self-confidence and her self-asserting nature. She will not be a slave either in the family nor in her profession, though she is a maid. On another occasion, she says, "But I'm young and strong and I don't intend to spend all my life as a maid of all work" (115). To consider the other as a human person with equal dignity and rights, one needs, according to Greeley, Catholic imagination. What Blackie does in *Happy are the Oppressed*, is providing Jane with Catholic imagination through the administration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Then he prepares her husband to accept and co-operate with his newly born wife. Now, he is obsessive about not being obsessive with money. He devotes more time to his family and public service.

The third sacrament referred to in *Happy are the Oppressed* is Priesthood or the vocation to ministerial service in the Church. Blackie, the perfect embodiment of Catholic imagination, is the ideal priest, investigator and inventor of solutions to difficult problems. He is a grand success in his parishes, he performs excellently as a Bishop and works wonders in the confessional, as it has already been discussed in this chapter. The way he administers sacraments especially, his hearing the confession and making the sermon, are very much appreciated by the people. His preaching is saturated with knowledge of faith and embellishment of imagination. In Greeley's novels, Blackie is a living example for all priests to emulate. They must learn from Blackie's life and achievements how to combine faith and imagination in their priestly ministry. If they desire inspiration from the correlation between faith and administration of sacraments the

priests can fulfill their commitment to God and to the Church with greater zeal and more efficacy.

In the novel, one also comes across partial but noteworthy references to vocation to priestly life and religious life. For instance, the first son of Pete Cardin is known as Peter Junior or Cardin II. Born in 1871, this young master likes to be a priest. He wants to be a priest only till the death of his father, due to influenza in 1918. He falls in love with Clare and dies as Colonel in action in the year 1944. In the words of Clare, the young master has "The mark of the priest on him and a good priest he will be" (110). But he never becomes a priest, he marries Clare. The Cardins are handsome empty men mad after money and power. The family abounds in neither Catholic faith nor Catholic imagination. There is no wonder that the young master or any other member never becomes a priest, for the Cardins, as a whole, are so much obsessed with their family and wealth. The desire to become a priest, in their case, is nothing more than a teen age 'crush'. A thorough change takes place in the family of Cardin V as a result of Blackie's interference. Since the attainment of family reunion this Cardin and Jane seem to be interested in leading a true Catholic life free from the obsession of money. This Catholic reorientation is noticeable in Cardin's words, "We need to teach our young people the old religious values" (22). This is evidently an expression of the responsibility of a typical Catholic parent. Accordingly, a great change is visible in the character of Cardin VI who is a young man now and surprisingly he wants to become a priest.

One particular scene towards the end of the novel is suggestive of another sacrament, that is the Anointing of the Sick. This is the last sacrament usually administered to the sick people in death bed. The Forest Lane Squad finds Jane beaten, raped, water-sprayed and tied to a tree near the lakeshore. She is taken to a hospital. In this critical condition Blackie visits her. Of course, he does not administer the Last

Sacrament for Jane. But, the prayer he leads beside her bed and the consolation it gives make it as good as the Anointing of the Sick. Blackie invites all to pray for the suffering Jane. As Greeley writes, they "Said a whole rosary. The nurses and the residents joined us. Papists everywhere" (272). Technically speaking, there is no administration of sacrament in this context. But, here Blackie himself becomes a sacrament of God's grace and mercy. He teaches all the priests that they have a duty to visit the sick and assure them God's blessings, especially at a time when every patient craves for consolation and rapport. When Jane regains her consciousness Blackie sends Dr. Joseph Murphy, the psychiatrist, to her. As a consequence, the patient recovers quickly and the process of family reunion is accelerated. Rosary is a typically Roman Catholic devotion to Saint Mary and the fact that all the nurses and the residents take part in it, for Greeley, is a matter of the glory of the Catholic faith which is by its very nature associated with proper imagination. Blackie's Catholic imagination gradually enters and changes the mind and attitude of Jane and she becomes a new person ready to forgive all and to be reunited with her husband.

Before winding up this discussion on the relationship between faith and the administration of sacraments, a quick glance at the social significance of administering the sacraments as Greeley expresses it in *Happy are the Oppressed* is made here. The ultimate purpose of the sacraments does not consist in simply conducting a function in the Church with unction. Any meaningful celebration aims at the building up of a given community. Each sacrament is the external sign of God's gratuitous love for us. So, those who officiate or participate in a sacramental administration ought to be transformed persons who live in harmony with others. In Greeley's opinion, sacraments are levelers making people equals, and they have great unifying strength. Those who receive the sacraments ought to form one community and live as brethren. In his Christmas Eve

message, Cardinal Sean Cronin, Blackie's boss, explains that no one who claims to celebrate Christmas can exclude anyone whether by reason of race or ethnicity or religion or gender or age or sexual orientation. He concludes, "Catholicism means here comes everyone" (190). Various discriminations rampant in the modern world are the violation of the spirit and meaning of the sacraments. The inequalities prevailing in the society are a scandal and a shame to the Church and all those who frequent the sacraments. Clare asks in the novel, "If there is so much equality why do some people live in such beautiful homes and others in those terrible slums in Chicago and why are the niggers treated like slaves, even though they have been free these thirty years?" (116). These and similar examples amply prove that many a time sacraments are administered mechanically and the people are not transformed. Hence, this novel is a challenge for all priests to make their administration of sacraments more effective. This is possible only when sacramental celebration is coupled with faith, and faith is seasoned with Catholic imagination.

*Irish Mist* is Greeley's attempt to portray certain events in Irish history which are shrouded in the mist of mystery and tarnished by misinterpretations. This novel presents how Dermot and Nuala, the chief protagonists, assisted by some priests and police officers, remove the mist that has been surrounding the disgraced and desolate life of General Tudor in Newfoundland and the disappearance of Lady Augusta, which pertain to the past, and the present problems instigated by the jealousy of Marve Doyle. Mist always obstructs light and hides reality. Greeley explains how, when he applies the light of his faith and imagination, this mystery is unveiled or in other words, the problems are solved. Dermot and Nuala find out that General Tudor, the youngest British officer sent to Ireland by Winston Churchill, lived till his death at 95, in Newfoundland, in utter disgrace of either his ill-reputation as a cruel officer or his illicit love affair with Lady Augusta Downs, the widow of Colonel Sir Arthur. Kevin O' Higgins, the successor of Tudor,

while going for Mass at Booker Town is shot dead by Tommy the only survivor of the Whelan gang – a group of Irish rebels – who fought against Great Britain, whom Tudor tried to exterminate under the pretext of saving the life of Lady Augusta. The investigation reveals that Lady Augusta survived the fire, became a Carmelite nun with the help of her parish priest, and rose to the position of the Mother Superior. At her death, that priest arranged things in such a way that her body was buried near to that of her husband as it was the last wish of Augusta. The protagonists also prove that Marve Doyle is behind all the attempts on their lives, the cause of provocation being nothing but sheer jealousy and envy.

Thus, *Irish Mist* is apparently concerned about answering a few questions regarding some past historical problems and some present problems related to the life of Dermot and Nuala. In the process of unfolding these issues the novelist expresses his views on the correlation between the Catholic faith and the administration of the sacraments. It is because of this preoccupation with the exposition of the sacraments that *Irish Mist* is included in this chapter. This novel enables each priest to understand the sacraments as a manifestation of his Catholic faith and to uphold the significance of the sacraments to the faith-formation of the faithful. Hence, this study is to inspire the priests to improve the quality of sacramental administration giving due importance to faith and Catholic imagination. The sacraments mostly highlighted in *Irish Mist* are the Eucharist, Confession and the Anointing of the Sick. A separate treatment of each of these sacraments is attempted below.

In Greeley's own opinion, *Irish Mist* is an explanation of how the anniversary Mass in memory of Kevin O' Higgins came to be. Kevin is shot dead on July 10, '92, while going to take part in the Holy Mass. The novel mentions this event in many contexts. The anniversary Mass is attended by Kevin's daughter, a nun, Tommy, the

killer, and the man who gave the signal to the murderers (92). Both the Catholics and the Protestants mourn the death of Kevin. The priest says a Mass even against the laws (105). The central theme of the epilogue is Kevin's anniversary Mass. A special mention is made of the homily preached by the priest (359). The references to the Holy Mass in *Irish Mist* are not always in association with Kevin's death. For example, it is mentioned that Mass is said in the Catholic Church, at the death of Tudor and Hazel, his wife (246). Being genuine Catholics, Dermot and Nuala go to Mass early morning (253). These manifold references prove that the Eucharist is the apex of the Catholic sacramental system and liturgical celebration.

The Holy Mass is not a part but the very heart of the life of a Catholic. The Church teaches that the Eucharist is the commemoration and celebration of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. It implies and initiates a new life in Jesus. The Catholic priest offering Mass at the altar represents Jesus dying on the cross, and leads to redemption. In the case of a Catholic priest, his self-realization is proportionate to the meaningful way of celebrating the Holy Eucharist. He cannot offer the Eucharist, or any other sacrament for that matter, if he does not have faith which has to be accompanied by Catholic imagination. The Catholic Church insists on all her clergy that they must say the Holy Mass every day even if there is no audience. She teaches that the faithful must participate in the celebration of the Holy Mass on all Sundays and days of obligation. Those who join the community in offering the Mass do witness to their Catholic faith and thereby they strengthen their own faith. Thus, the altar is the revivifying reuniting centre of the parish. It is the duty of the Catholic priest to officiate this celebration in the most appealing, convincing and exemplary manner. For this, he has to give due regard for Catholic imagination. In order to make this celebration more effective and interactive both priests and the lay people need training.

A survey of Kevin's murder reminds of the Sacrament of Confession. The Holy Mass is very much related to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These two are as inalienable as the two sides of the same coin. *Irish Mist* highlights the nobility and necessity of forgiveness. Kevin O' Higgins forgives his assassin. At the moment of his death, Kevin tells Tommy, "The killing has to stop; I forgive you" (360). During the anniversary Mass, the officiating priest, in his sermon, elaborates on God's gratuitous love and stresses the need for forgiveness after Kevin's model. The priest reads a passage in which Jesus teaches the 'Our Father'. He argues that Catholicism is nothing but forgiveness and makes a strong appeal to the Irish people and the whole world to forgive each other. Kevin is one who has taught us how to realize the theme of forgiveness contained in the "Our Father", in our daily life. Jesus dies on the cross saying, "Forgive them, Father! They don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23: 34). The fact that he is shot dead, while going to the church, in order to take part in the Eucharist shows that he has Catholic faith. He has faith in the forgiving nature of God. His readiness to forgive his enemy unconditionally proves that he is guided by the Catholic imagination. Neither does he curse or condemn his assailants nor does he demand that they must be punished. He sacrifices his life in an exemplary way, with no hostility to anyone. Jesus says, "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, ...first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5: 23-24).

Kevin's death ought to be an eye-opener to all the priests who officiate the celebration of the sacraments, especially those of the Confession and the Holy Mass. The Sacrament of Reconciliation imparts God's forgiveness to the penitents if they are willing to forgive those who have committed sins to them. This divine forgiveness is effected through the medium of a priest. To be a worthy confessor, every priest must be pure in



spirit. There is no place for enmity or grudge in his heart. He has to show forgiveness to his superiors, fellow-priests and the laity. He must also forgive his enemies as Kevin does at the point of death. The life of the priest has to be a good example for others to imitate. It is taken for granted that a Catholic priest must have faith in God's mercy and in the efficacy of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. For this, he needs an intense degree of Catholic faith and imagination. One cannot comprehend even a spark of God's nature or character without faith and Catholic imagination. Every lay person has a right to see in the life of the priests a reflection of a healthy merging of faith and Catholic imagination, the expression of which is at its best at the time of the celebration of sacraments.

Another occasion on which Greeley upholds the inevitability of forgiveness is in chapter 33. Father Placid who is accused of misappropriation of money confesses his sin and asks for forgiveness (327). It is Placid who invites Nuala to Ireland for a concert at Point after which he absconds with the fund to New York. Though late, Placid has the magnanimity to make a public apology. As a Catholic priest, he is supposed to abide by, if not the vow of, poverty. But Placid goes after money at the expense of all other values. He forfeits the credibility, truthfulness and accountability which are hallmarks of any priest. Here is a man who raises an enormous amount of money for some noble cause and then disappears with it in pursuit of one's own vested interests. This shows a gradual deterioration of his Catholic faith, a proper imagination and all priestly virtues. The priestly ministry is not meant for accumulating wealth for personal whims and fancies. As a priest one has to collect money but, it should be spent responsibly and in an accountable way. Placid is not a good model for any priest. He is a scandal to others and an insult to priesthood. The possibility of a renewal is naturally implied in his apology. Each priest has to appreciate this, and learn a lesson that no one can serve two masters, God and money, at the same time. If he preserves the correlation between faith and administration

of sacraments, and if he lets himself be led by Catholic imagination, he will not fall a prey to the temptation of money. The novelist expects the priests to understand how his misappropriation of money makes Placid a misfit among his own people and forces him to migrate to the States. A priest who gives up faith and neglects Catholic values is abandoned by all. His apology, of course, is a sign of hope and beginning of a new life.

Kevin's murder also reminds us of the relevance of a third sacrament, that is the Anointing of the Sick, also known as the Last Sacrament. Greeley makes a deliberate mention of this rite. Kevin is killed as he is going to the Church at Booters town. The murderer pours the content of his revolver into Kevin's body at point-blank range. A boy rushes to invite a priest who rushes to the spot. The priest comes and administers the Last Sacrament (49). Kevin receives the Anointing of the Sick, forgives his assaulters and dies as a martyr. Kevin is a known believer. He has Sunday observance. In Greeley's opinion, Kevin is a Catholic who took religion seriously and lived in its light (206). One of his daughters is a nun. It is both his duty and right to be anointed with the sacred oil at the time of death. All these prove that he is a practising Catholic. He is a stern and upright Catholic (204). Though he is brutally assassinated, Kevin dies peacefully in the presence of a priest. And here is a priest who readily obliges the invitation to administer the Last Sacrament to a dying man. His immediate and positive response makes him a worthy pastor who takes the trouble to console and bless the dying person. On Kevin's part, his readiness to forgive his enemies makes him a worthy recipient of the sacrament. Both Kevin and the priest are motivated by their Catholic imagination, and in this administration of the sacrament, one finds a solid witness to the Catholic faith. In Greeley's opinion, the Catholic priest working in a parish for the people, assisting them and guiding them even at the death bed is the ideal man on earth. He has great fascination for the ministry of a Catholic priest. And he exaggerates, "God respects all orders equally;

but God is, in fact, a diocesan priest” (289). The diocesan priest becomes an exemplary person only when and if he promulgates his Catholic faith in and through the administration of sacraments fulfilling all the demands of the Catholic imagination.

To one who examines the life of Lord Arthur Downs and his relationship with Lady Augusta, the influence of a Catholic priest in the behaviour of the people becomes very clear. Both Arthur and Augusta, are good Catholics. About his spiritual life, one reads that he is close with the priest (138) and he doesn't believe any more in the war (140) because it is against the Catholic faith. Lady Augusta, too, is a firm Catholic. She writes poems which are expressions of her spiritual experiences. Greeley comments, “Her religious faith permeated all of the poems” (135). Thus it is clear that the priest who administers the sacraments exert lasting influence in the life of the faithful. This is true with regard to the life of Tudor also. Tudor spends his last years in Newfoundland. As a lonely and neglected person, he derives solace from his faith. About his last years, Greeley writes that he has become “Friendly with an Irish priest” (352). These examples amply prove that the priest and the sacraments have an important role to play in the faith formation of the lay people. The Church teaches that the parish priest is accountable before God for the spiritual welfare of the people. He has to advise the people to lead a Eucharist-centred life endowed with Catholic imagination, deriving strength from the faithful celebration of the sacraments, officiated by the priest.

Another sacrament which Greeley discusses, rather in detail, in *Irish Mist* is the Holy Matrimony. The novel portrays the traditional views of the Catholic Church on sexuality as well as the modern, even, controversial views of the novelist on this subject. Greeley presents the life of Dermot and Nuala as the ideal marital status and by means of their words and deeds the novelist promulgates his personal views as well as the Church's official views on sexuality. Before analyzing the attitude of Dermot and Nuala to sex and

family life, the fact that this couples are genuine Catholics and that they are inspired by the Catholic imagination, have to be ascertained. As practising Catholics, Dermot and Nuala abide by their faith. Dermot is a novelist and Nuala, a musician. These professions by their very nature presuppose imagination. Writing for Dermot is an expression of the Catholic faith. Singing for Nuala is also a manifestation of her religious faith. When they land in the airport in response to the dyspeptic Placid's invitation, the media people ask them about their religious beliefs. Both of them reveal that they believe in God and that they are church-going. Nuala always listens to priests and regulates her life according to their direction. An important justification for all her activities is, "That is what the priest said" (19). Her programme at the Point sounds like a religious experience after which Geen Keenan, the police officer, comments that Nuala knows "what Catholic Ireland is and that the Archbishop might ask her to teach religion..." (184). Her performance reminds Greeley of the words of St. Irenaeus, "The glory of God is the human person fully alive" (188). Referring to Nuala's singing and recording some songs for the monks, Dermot comments that it was a very moving religious experience (301). "It is a resurrection celebration with Mary" (336). The couples are interested in Church activities. One finds Dermot going to the Vicarage and he contributes a substantial amount of money to Father Mike who says, "This is the golden age of Irish Spirituality" (316). These examples are more than enough to convince about the Catholic character of the protagonists of *Irish Mist*. Their behaviour appears to be seasoned with Catholic faith and imagination. What is important to our study is that both of them respect and frequent the sacraments and maintain a healthy relationship with the priest, as the Church expects her faithful to do. They are faithful and law-abiding members of the Church, who take pride in being Catholics.

The Catholic attitude of Dermot and Nuala is very evident in their understanding of sex and married life. The two lovers are torn between their loyalty to the Church on the one hand and the fascination for carnal pleasures on the other. It is very significant that the protagonists in *Irish Mist* postpone the consummation of their love to the end, despite the repeated persuasions of the 'adversary' to assault the other for one's own sexual pleasure. The 'adversary' advocates anti-Catholic views as projected by the American culture which encourages free and immediate sex which is detrimental to the redeeming aspects of sexuality and fidelity and stability of family. They regard and respect the bedroom as a sacred sanctuary. In both these places there is death and resurrection, resulting in new life. In the act of love-making with the right motive, the couple die with and for the other, at least temporarily. After the consummation of love Nuala says, "I died of pleasure" (357). Both the partners redeem each other and die for resurrection i. e. the birth of a child. For Greeley, sexuality is not for the selfish pleasure of an individual at the expense of the other. But it is complete self-denial in the context of marriage.

Dermot and Nuala believe that sexual pleasure in the context of marriage is a reminder of God's real loving nature (125). For both of them God is a passionate lover. Nuala is exceptionally immune to all kinds of inhibitions regarding sex. She remembers her mother's views on marital relationship. The mother tells her that love is like fire and that the wife has the right to initiate the process of love-making (194). It is the duty of the married partner to satisfy the other sexually. Nuala thinks that if she is unable to satisfy Dermot, "The marriage won't be everything that it should be" (239). Marriage, viewed from this point of view, does not detract the couple from loving God and leading a spiritual life, but it works as a sacrament and unites the married people with God more intensely. In fact, Nuala thinks that she has two lovers; one is Dermot, her husband, and the other one is God Himself (358). She sees in God her husband, the lover, and in

Dermot , God, the lover. One lover reminds her of the other. She says, “I believe that you [God] exist and that you loved me. I never knew why. So you sent Dermot as your representative” (357). That means every partner has a duty to teach the other partner that God loves him or her. Thus, marriage is a means for knowing that God is love. Marriage is so, a sacrament, a sign of God, experienced as love. To regard and respect the other as God’s sacrament, both partners need Catholic faith and imagination. Dermot and Nuala are genuine Catholics. The Catholic priest must not think that his pastoral obligation will be over if he blesses and officiates the marriage celebration. He has to inculcate in the lovers the right Catholic understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage which is impossible without maintaining a solid correlation between faith and imagination in the administration of the sacraments.

From a purely biological point of view sex is nothing but an urge for possessing or using the other, even forcibly, for one’s own pleasure. In the case of Dermot and Nuala, they respect the body of the other, for, they are driven by Catholic principles on sex and its functions in the context of the family. Though the ‘adversary’ always challenges Dermot for indulging in pre-marital consummation, he postpones it, as we have already mentioned, to their married life. Likewise, when the same ‘adversary’ insists on repeating the process of intercourse, Dermot does not oblige, because, he decides not to ‘use’ his wife. None of them has got a hidden agenda. Each one is transparent to the other, as God Himself is. This aspect of transparency reminds one of Nuala’s words to Dermot. She says, “When I am with you, I feel like I am completely naked all the time” (284). The Catholic Church teaches through the priests that history is the story of the on-going manifestation of God’s gratuitous love towards humanity. The story of Dermot and Nuala tells us that marriage is really an ever-flowing sharing of love between the partners which is a symbol of the unconditional divine love.

An evaluation of *Irish Mist* makes it clear that all the good characters are persons who frequent sacraments and maintain healthy relationship with priests. Dermot's brother, George, is a priest. Tudor and Kevin were in good relationship with the Church, especially in their last years. The same can be said about the life of Lady Augusta, who became the Mother Superior. All these characters are proud of their Catholic faith and very much interested in receiving the sacraments. All Catholics, no matter if one is a priest or a lay person, are expected to have a combination of faith and imagination in his or her character and way of living. Those persons who neglect or lack one or two of these characters appear to be defective or problematic in individual and social life. In short, *Irish Mist* seems to remind the priests of the necessity of improving their own understanding of the correlation between faith and sacramental celebration, and of preparing the community for a meaningful celebration of the sacraments. To recapitulate, both the clergy and the laity have to realize better the sacramental significance of liturgical functions and all of them ought to incorporate into their words and deeds the characteristics of a healthy blending of faith and imagination.

Another novel in which Greeley has portrayed the Catholic teachings on the Sacraments of Confession and Marriage is *A Christmas Wedding*. The entire novel is overwhelmed by an aura of forgiveness without which Confession will not be complete and Marriage will not withstand its challenges. The central story in *A Christmas Wedding* is the marriage relationship of James Patrick, known as Chuck, a member of the O' Malley family of Chicago, and Rosemarie, born of Joseph Powers and late Helen. This novel reaches its climax when it unfolds the mystery of the death of Clancy, Rosemarie's mother, and it proves that Rosemarie is not a murderer but a redeemer of many families, and, above all, instrumental to the popularity and success of her own husband. Greeley presents Chuck and Rosemarie as persons firmly rooted in Catholic faith and are guided

by Catholic imagination. A Catholic priest can make use of the story of this couple when he has to illustrate the themes of mutual respect, mutual understanding and acceptance, in family life. For, Chuck and Rosemarie are persons who survive all concussions on their way and live together despite their temporary misunderstandings and complaints. The discussion here shows how and to what extent *A Christmas Wedding* highlights the Catholic teachings on the Sacraments of Confession and Marriage, through the example of the chief protagonists, Chuck and Rosemarie, better than an ordinary priest does it on his pulpit. This serves as an eye-opener to the Catholic priests convincing them of their pastoral obligation to prepare the lay people for making the confession and receiving the Sacrament of the Holy Matrimony.

At the outset of the novel, Chuck and Rosemarie are college students. As passionate lovers, they are awaiting 'a Christmas wedding'. Both of them fear that they are too young and too unprepared for marriage. Moreover, Rosemarie is always hunted and haunted by her traumatic past, at the hands of her father who had molested and raped her many a time (123). She is under the bondage of guilt and shame. The fear that she has killed her mother is tormenting her day and night. Rosemarie's liberation is brought about by the confession of Peg, her husband's sister and a close friend of hers, which is, perhaps, the most striking event in the whole novel. Peg confesses that it was she who bashed the brains of Clancy in order to save the life of Rosemarie, her friend. She did so only because she felt sure that Clancy would murder both Rosemarie and Peg with a poker (441). Of course, Peg's is not a priest assisted confession. But, this confession makes Rosemarie a free person, a new person. According to Catholic faith, confession assures God's forgiveness and results in mutual forgiveness in the community. The Church teaches that the spirit of reconciliation is the hallmark of a good confession. A flame of forgiveness is enkindled in the heart of Rosemarie. She is forgiven by others and



she is willing to forgive all others including the Church and her lover. She readily forgives Chuck who never revealed to her the fact of infidelity that he had in Germany a lover, by name Trudi, and a son, Karl. Rosemarie reconciles with Trudi and enfriends her who now lives with Herr Weiss, a former pilot (412). The scene of their mutual confession is really touching and fully Catholic. Chuck confesses his infidelity saying, "I am the one who needs to be forgiven". At that she responds in tears, "I do forgive you... the way you forgave me" (435). This mutual forgiveness is only an inauguration of a series of reunions which will be explained shortly.

Peg's confession does not occur in a confessional. There is no priest to absolve her. But it works wonders. This confession sanctifies Peg and relieves Rosemarie of her sense of guilt and despair. Nobody condemns her for what she did. Father Raven thinks that she is a heroine (441). Chuck praises Peg and thanks God in these words, "Dear God in heaven, how You must have loved my Rosemarie to send such a fierce and tender woman to protect her" (443). The newly born Rosemarie is bent upon making her husband a man of worth. He takes initiative to publish his photos. Again, she conducts an exhibition of those photos in Germany. But for his wife's active support, Chuck will be a mere accountant and occasional photographer. The novel attains its zenith as President Jack Kennedy appoints him to serve as his ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany. Already Chuck is a Pulitzer Prize winner (306). Now he is a renowned journalist and artist. At a time when he lacked self confidence, Chuck thinks that he is a good for nothing fellow. He says, "A published photographer not quite twenty four was bad enough, Irish and Catholic was worse, and from the West side of Chicago settled the matter. How could I be any good?" (225). A Catholic priest who wants to narrate the story of Chuck and Rosemarie must know what is responsible for these changes and achievements in the life of Chuck. As far as Rosemarie is concerned, Peg's confession is

her retrieval to Catholic imagination. Both Chuck and Rosemarie are very steadfast in their spiritual life. As a Catholic, Chuck has strong faith. As an artist, he is endowed with a high degree of imagination. Many critics are of the opinion that Chuck's pictures have great sacramental and evangelizing effects. For example, *New York Times* comments on his pictures, "Perhaps only a Catholic artist could see so much religious quest implicit in the bodies of two adored women. Mr. O' Malley is a photographer of Sacraments" (261). The fact that both of them work for the Christian Family Movement is a clear expression of the Catholic imagination in them, as their guiding principle. Any Catholic priest can employ the experience of Chuck and his wife to explain the behavioural changes which are effected as a result of making confession or receiving some other sacraments. Those who listen to this story will really believe that faith and imagination are not mere ideas or ideals, but that they are the source of energy enabling the recipients of the sacraments to be better persons in the Church as well as in the world.

As already hinted, Peg's confession has corresponding effects in the life of Rosemarie. In the first part of *A Christmas Wedding*, Rosemarie has a miserable appearance. In Greeley's words, "Grief had blotched her face... a wounded, frightened little girl. All the hurt of her life was branded on her face and her shrunken frame" (173). She is a sinking ship. She takes to drinking. As a result of Peg's confession and Rosemarie's readiness to forgive, the latter turns out to be a new person, a born leader, who accomplishes great things in life. She is also in possession of certain mystical traits, and intuitive and imaginative experiences reminding one of Nuala in Greeley's Irish novels. She gives up her drinking habit and attends to therapy. Rosemarie can be said to be an incarnation of the transforming possibility of Catholic imagination. In Dr. Stone's opinion, she has been a blessing to all crazy O' Malleys (477). She is not a temptress as she has never been accused of any adulterous relationship. Rosemarie's prime concern

seems to be making aware that God gives second chances to renew one's life. This is what every sacrament is supposed to be. This is what all Catholic priests are expected to be doing. Hence, one can say, Rosemarie is a sacramental character, a sanctifying sign.

As the title of the book indicates, marriage is the most important subject dealt with in *A Christmas Wedding*. Greeley has stuffed the mouths of the important characters with a lot of ideas which he wants the priests to listen to and witness to in their preaching. Actually, this novel narrates the story of how Chuck and Rosemarie wait and prepare themselves for their Catholic marriage on Christmas and how their co-dwelling obtains its fulfilment, notwithstanding many a struggle on the way. An inquiry into their lives tells that for both of them the first and best partner in life is the Catholic Church or the faith. They love the Church and gladly abide by her teachings on sex and marriage. As college students they deeply regret at the sight of young people deserting the Church for not changing her teachings as fast as they want. Greeley expresses their anxiety, "We feared that many young people would be lost to the Church unless Catholic scripture teaching was modified to take into account what Bultmann had taught about the process of demythologizing" (16). As lovers they complain that the Church has not taught them sufficiently about the meaning and purpose of sex and marital life. As Chuck comments, "The Church once again was doing too little, too late for its laity" (106). For them sex is not evil and love is to be expressed. They learn to shed all taboos attached to the subject of sex and its use. As any other favourite character of Greeley, Chuck and Rosemarie believe that God is a passionate lover. She asks, "Anyway, do you think God is going to send us to hell for a little gentle loving? Isn't it the way He made young people? Isn't that how He prepares us for marriage?" Chuck makes a pertinent reply, "I think God probably understands, but the Church doesn't" (79). When Chuck was in Germany, he had immoral relationship with one Trudi. But, ever since his engagement to Rosemarie he claims to be

cent percent faithful to his partner. Though he has many women-fans he does not any more entertain either dating or a new affair. When Millie Edward makes some amorous advances to him in her parlour, Chuck refuses saying, "I am sorry, Millie... I am a Catholic" (378). In short, Chuck as a true Catholic husband is determined to obey the Church's teaching that sex is to be enjoyed with another one of the opposite sex in the context of marriage.

As a true Catholic, Rosemarie is in unison with her husband with regard to their approach to the matrimonial sacrament. She thinks that the Church has to withdraw the stigma attached to matters related to sex. She does not fear that the loving God will punish anybody for some 'necking and petting'. Rosemarie's assumption is that the Catholic Church will gradually change or lessen the gravity of some of the conventional laws regarding the use of sex. With reference to the difficulties of the married couples in sexual life, she regrets, "God understands that, even if the Church doesn't" (385). But, for the time being, she gladly submits to the precepts of *Humanae Vitae*. She has delivered five children. Rosemarie has neither inhibition nor any shame to proclaim, "I want everyone to know that I am not practising birth control" (199). Christmas is the day of the birth of the Lord. 'A Christmas wedding' is always open to more and more births. It is one of the basic teachings of Catholic sexual morality that the parents shall not obstruct this openness to new life in their conjugal relationships. In this respect, Rosemarie and Chuck are responsible and practising Catholics devoted to their faith and committed to abide by the teachings of the Church on marital sexuality.

The long awaited Christmas wedding takes place at St. Ursula Church in 1950, in the presence of Father John Raven and Monsignor Branigan. Chuck's brother Michael, a seminarian, is the altar server. The lovers are so happy. Rosemarie is a delightful and mysterious obsession to Chuck. In Greeley's words, they melted in each other's warmth

like butter in warm apple syrup. Sometimes it happens that the couple consider their career and family as an excuse to avoid the challenge of maturing intimacy and their love, because it is not tended, grows cold and perhaps dies. At one time, Chuck and Rosemarie are seen on the verge of separation. But the Catholic spirit of forgiveness overtakes them. They consider every problem as a blessing in disguise. For them their love is a reflection of God's love. In the light of Catholic imagination they have learnt that the love of parents in the family is a continuation and expression of Christ's love for the Church. As far as the married people are concerned their family is the altar in which they make their offerings and in doing so they are fulfilling the obligation of their Baptismal priesthood. Seeing his sister and her husband, huddled on the couch, Chuck exclaims, "What a wonderful picture of forgiving love it was" (370). These words are more than enough to vindicate the attitude of Chuck and Rosemarie to Catholic marriage. Chuck confesses how much he and his family are indebted to Rosemarie in the following words:

I would not be a photographer if she had not edged me into it. Both my sisters' marriages would have fallen apart if she had not intervened, rather dramatically in fact. My brother wouldn't be a priest, much less the effective priest he is, if Rosemarie had not installed herself as his confidant. My parents would not be as happy as they are today if Rosemarie hadn't mandated that they be happy. God only knows how much she has helped our nieces and nephews and our friends. (476)

*A Christmas Wedding* does not deal, in detail, with any other sacrament except that there is a partial reference to a Holy Mass being offered in memory of the soldiers who are killed in South Korea. This mentioning of the Holy Mass is so casual and brief that it does not deserve any detailed analysis. But, this reference to the celebration of the Eucharist assumes great significance when we anticipate a scene from *Irish Love*, the last

and the next novel to be discussed in this chapter. The people of Maamtrasna are so poor that they can't afford a priest to offer the Holy Mass. The murdered victims are buried in the open ground, with no priest to bless their graves. Unable to afford the Eucharist, the illiterate people say the rosary. The absence of the priest in a burial is a matter of shame to the Church. Saying the Mass in honour of the dead is an expression of the Catholic faith in the communion of saints. The Catholic Church has always upheld the custom of remembering the dead people, especially, on special occasions like the death anniversary, and praying for the repose of the souls. In *Irish Love*, Greeley vehemently criticizes the clergy for not being present during the funeral of the poor victims. Here, in *A Christmas Wedding*, the novelist specially mentions that a Holy Mass is offered in memory of the dead soldiers. As the leader of a Eucharist-centred community, and the Eucharist being the highest expression of God's love and presence, a Catholic priest has great responsibility to administer the Eucharistic Sacrament in the most appropriate manner.

To conclude, all sacraments are efficient prayers and they cannot be administered by a priest who does not pray. His prayer life has to be a model for others. A last point to raise is related to the priest's appreciation and encouragement of the lay apostolate. Even the pedagogical part of the sacraments can be made use of by the priests for the promotion of lay leadership and women empowerment which have always been Greeley's favourite topics. In this democratic age, clericalism and triumphalism do no more make any appeal to the faithful. The priests and lay people shall go forward as collaborators, in the process of bringing about God's Kingdom on earth. This venture is to be inspired by Catholic imagination and nourished by sacramental grace. The role of the parish priests in this attempt is that of catalysts or facilitators.

The last novel to be analyzed in this chapter is *Irish Love*. This is the fictionalized version of actual historical events related to the cold-blooded murders of the five

members of John Joyce's family, in their house at Maamtrasna, near Connemara, in the West of Ireland on the 17<sup>th</sup> August, 1882. The novel is based on the document prepared by Edward Fitzpatrick, a journalist, for *Chicago Daily News*, and is also indebted to *Maamtrasna: The Murders and the Mystery*, a book written by Father Jarlath Waldron, and the findings of Michael Mc Greil S. J.. *Irish Love* can be said to be an elaborate report which gradually reveals the real motive and identity of the true murderer responsible for the tragedy. In connection with the trial of Maamtrasna murders, Greeley makes a vehement criticism against the corrupt legal system which the English hegemony perpetuates in Ireland. Simultaneously, his chief protagonists - Dermot and Nuala - the new Watson and the new Sherlock Holmes respectively - through their detective expeditions solve some current problems like bomb explosions, killing of Russians in the hotel, and the attempts at the heroine's life. In the background of these two stories, one ancient and the other recent, the main concern is Greeley's sacramental preoccupations. This inquiry will convince of the importance of sacraments not only to the life of the priests who administer them but also to the religious experience of the lay people who participate in the sacramental celebration. What follows is the individual treatment of all the sacraments which Greeley portrays in the novel. An examination of how a mixture of Catholic faith and Catholic imagination is essential for the effective functioning and the fruitful reception of the sacraments also forms the integral part of this chapter.

The one sacrament which enjoys greater emphasis in *Irish Love* than in other Greeleyan novels seems to be the last one, the Last Sacrament known as the Anointing of the Sick. This does not mean that there are many scenes in this novel where priests are seen administering the Last Sacrament to dying persons. In fact, there is not a single case of a Catholic priest performing the last rite in an official manner. But, Greeley has upheld the nobility of this sacrament surprisingly by the absence or denial of the same, to persons

when and where they need it most. The most pathetic episode in *Irish Love* is the fact that the innocent people brutally murdered by John Casey are denied a decent burial. The bodies are buried in the open ground with no priest to bless the graves. According to the Catholic tradition, the priest has to anoint the sick person with holy oil in the death bed, he has to officiate the funeral ceremony and it is his duty to offer the Eucharist in memory and honour of the dead, for the repose of the departed soul. In the case of the victims of the Maamtrasna tragedy the situation is worsened by the absence of the Catholic priest. Unable to afford a priest in the right time, the poor people say a rosary instead of offering a solemn Mass. And Greeley asks, "Where was the priest for the people when they needed a priest?" (106). The presence of a priest by the death bed is for a Catholic believer more valuable than the best service of an expert doctor. The denial of a priest to a believer especially at the moment of death is more cruel than even the severest physical torture or the pain of any sickness. For an average Catholic, the absence of a priest at the time of the funeral is a matter of insult to the dead person and a shame to the relatives. The novelist really feels pity for the poor villagers who say a rosary knowing very well that any number of rosaries will not be a proper compensation for the Eucharistic celebration. As the assistance of the priest is indispensable and irreplaceable, every Catholic priest must try to be available to the people in the moments of their distress, and strengthen them by prayer and consolation.

The uniqueness of the presence of a priest when someone dies can be understood better if one compares this episode with the death of Myles Joyce at the stake, though he is totally innocent. All attempts to redeem this man fail. At the stake, Joyce proclaims his Catholic faith and hopes in resurrection. He compares his martyrdom with that of Christ. He derives great satisfaction, even as he dies at the stake, seeing a priest standing below, praying for him. At the last moment Joyce shouts, "I will see Jesus Christ soon. He was



hanged in the wrong too... But now I have my priest with me" (225). The man dying at the stake is sacrificing his life. The priest standing below is offering his priestly service. Both of them witness to their firm Catholic faith. According to Fitzpatrick, as long as Irish men are alive anywhere in the world the memory of Myles Joyce and his horrible death will never be forgotten. In the eyes of a dying person who has Catholic faith like Joyce, nothing gives more solace and peace than the presence of a praying priest. This is how Greeley argues in *Irish Love* that the Last Rite is the right of all Catholics and that faith is an essential characteristic of all sacraments. So, priests have to be very careful not to deny this rite and right to the people. In the case of Confession or the Mass, one can receive them later. But, in most of the cases, the Last Sacrament is really 'the last'. Once denied, there may not be any more chance to repeat it.

Another sacrament to which Greeley attributes great importance in this novel is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Confession, Greeley presents in *Irish Love*, is quite different from the usual way of one going to the confessional, in private, confessing the sins and getting absolution for them. The unique confession in *Irish Love* is the declaration of Thomas Casey as to the villainy of John Casey and the innocence of Myles Joyce. Thomas Casey makes this confession in public, on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1883, before Bishop Kane, in full regalia, assisted by two priests on either side (268). That Joyce is innocent is confessed by Casey, under the inspiration of Father Corbett, the new parish priest and it is done in the presence of Nora, the wife of Joyce, and their child. The novelist stresses that this programme takes place during the Mass, on a Sunday. Corbett, the parish priest prepares the community for this confession of truth by preaching about informers and perjurers on a few consecutive Sundays (260). After Casey's confession the Bishop speaks, "Denouncing the killers, violence, the silence of the valley about the crimes, and the English" (268). Though the English court does not change its verdict on Joyce, under

the pressure of this confession, this function proclaims truth and proves who the real villain is. It is to be noted that the legal system is corrupt and innocent ones do not get justice either from the court or from the police. Perjury is the mark of the jury of an Irish court which is the manifestation of the tyranny and hypocrisy of English imperialism. Fitzpatrick finds most of the jurors sleeping and many nodding when the trial is on. In this context, the services rendered by Father Corbett has to be insisted on.

Corbett makes use of the altar on which he offers sacrifices and officiates the rites in order to create public opinion in favour of the innocent Joyce, unjustly punished by the court. It is because as a priest he is endowed with Catholic faith which never makes any compromise with falsehood. A priest known as the custodian of truth, has to fight for truth. In this undertaking, he is activated by Catholic imagination. The parish priest does not fulfill his prophetic mission by simply reciting prayers or performing rituals. He has to safeguard truth, protecting the weak persons who are liable to be victimized by the unjust and inhuman social structures. The fact that Joyce makes his confession in the presence of a Bishop and his two priests also deserves special mention. Besides, Bishop Kane writes two letters to Earl Spencer, the Lord Lieutenant requesting him to order an inquiry into the proceedings of the court, though of no use. This miserable condition reminds Greeley of the words of Lord Acton, "Power corrupts and absolute power absolutely corrupts" (319). Money and power are the driving principles of Casey, the villain and his accomplices. Justice Barry who pronounces the judgement also shares the same corrupt character. According to Greeley, these people do not have Catholic imagination. Faith and truth do not make any appeal to them. The same can be told about Colm Mc Manus, Matt Howard and Tomas O' Regan who planned the explosions and the blowing up of houses in order to scare the inhabitants so that they can possess all the gold

lying beneath the Maamtrasna mountains (315-317). These people who lack faith betray truth and indulge in all kinds of crimes. Nothing seems to prick their conscience.

At the same time, *Irish Love* presents another set of characters who subscribe to sacraments as per the Catholic tradition and live according to their faith and the guidance of their Catholic imagination. Their respectful attitude to sacraments, and sacramentals which refer to various pious practices followed in the Catholic Church, is very clear in their speech and life style. Since, some exemplary priests appearing in this novel have already been mentioned, the consideration goes to examples of two pairs, Dermot and Nuala, and Fitzpatrick and Nora. All these characters are practising Catholics. They love the Church and respect priests. Their daily life is an extension or a manifestation of Catholic imagination. When they receive the sacraments and follow the sacramentals they are actually witnessing to their Catholic faith. Their love of God is expressed in the service they render to the poor people. *Irish Love* is replete with examples which illustrate the merging of faith and administration of sacraments in the lives of these protagonists.

Dermot and Nuala are ideal Irish lovers. They are staunch Catholics. Their Catholic faith is best evinced by their frequenting the sacraments and their investigation for the hidden truth. They are not tempted by money or power. Dermot is in possession of intellectual faculties and physical might. Nuala is adorned with Irish spirituality, psychic sensitivity and physical fitness of an athlete and looks like a Celtic Goddess (22). If Dermot has more of faith, Nuala has more of imagination. The husband is a writer whereas the wife is a singer. Both are seasoned with faith and imagination. In her hyper imaginative moods she is able to sense dangers (252), predict the future, get clues to solve mysterious phenomenon and foresee if the enemies will attack again (46). On one occasion when Nuala makes the sign of the Cross, Dermot asks, "Should I get the holy water?" (233). Nuala puts into her lover's mouth a scone, "With the same reverence a

priest might have put the host on the mouth of an elderly person who didn't want to receive the Eucharist in the hand" (142). When Jack Lane, the young priest, serves him tea, Dermot thinks, "He did so with the grace of a Bishop presiding over a solemn liturgy" (50). They are aware of the sex-abuse scandals, some priests are accused of. Yet, Dermot and Nuala firmly believe that still most priests are good persons (49). All these show that both of them are earnest in their Catholic faith, committed to the cause of the Church and really interested in fulfilling the obligations of their lay vocation. Besides, they are fully satisfied with their marital relationships, especially with regard to sexual matters. Nuala's words prove this beyond doubt, "Isn't the greatest pleasure for a woman in that moment when she gives herself to her man?" (26). The couples are very happy about their mutually satisfying and generous co-operation in sexual intercourse. Referring to such an occasion Nuala asks, "How is it, Dermot M. C. lyne, that you know exactly what I want, exactly when I want it?" (23). They consider it as sacred and enriching as a religious experience. The mutual love existing between Dermot and Nuala and their attitude towards the Church are clear indications of the authenticity of their sacramental life which nourishes their faith and imagination.

The story of Fitzpatrick and Nora also is characterized by their sacramental life and their devotion to Catholic faith. There are ever so many episodes in the novel supporting their spiritual life. Fitzpatrick leaves Chicago and arrives at Ireland in order to be "an ideal Catholic gentleman" (69). To Nora's question if he is a religious man, he answers, "I try to be good Catholic" (10). Nora is an Irish Catholic whose treasures are the Rosary and her father's books which include the Bible (162). When Joyce dies at the stake, urged by the virtues of Catholic faith and charity, Fitzpatrick determines to protect her, and he prays to all saints, especially, the Irish ones (166). He later marries Nora and saves her. Fitzpatrick and Nora enjoy their married life with their children. The novelist

specially records that they are both involved in Church activities (323). They never go after money and power, but remain as law-abiding members of the Catholic Church. Even after becoming one of the leading journalists in Chicago, Fitzpatrick finds time to receive the sacraments regularly. The parish records certify that the couples celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their wedding, and that they died respectively in 1936 and 1938. The last chapter of *Irish Love* reveals that Nora's daughter has become a holy nun, which substantiates the Catholic character of her parents.

The inquiry into the religious preoccupations of the two couples has made it clear that all of them are practising Catholics or persons who consider their faith as more valuable than everything else. As mentioned in the first chapter, faith can neither exist nor can it be understood without relating it to imagination. When the Catholic priest officiates a sacrament, the main target is the spiritual nourishment of the participants. But, the ultimate aim of the sacramental celebration ought to be the total growth of the human person. Hence, the priest must have a comprehensive view regarding religious, physical and moral requirements and aspirations of the people. Hence, a detailed analysis of the character and achievements of the above said pairs will be beneficial to all priests. In addition to having a high degree of Catholic faith, Dermot and Fitzpatrick are saturated with imagination. Both of them have earned name and fame in their literary career. Dermot is a novelist and the other is a journalist. No one can produce a literary piece without making use of the imaginative faculty. In the case of Dermot and Fitzpatrick, their imagination is not merely romantic or natural. They are endowed with what Greeley and other analogically thinking theologians call a Catholic imagination. Writers of this type are motivated by their religious faith and they give utmost priority to truth and to the reorientation and the restructuring of the personality and behaviour of the readers. For them writing is a medium of evangelizing the world. In this respect, a special mention

must be made of Nuala, who is endowed with hyper imagination. By means of this special faculty she knows beforehand that there is a bomb in the car (252) and that final document is lying under a stack of old church records dumped into a closet (272). In this way all the important characters in *Irish Love* are in possession of Catholic imagination. They live in harmony. They love the Church and their brethren. For them, there is nothing more decisive than faith in God as love, truth and forgiveness. When he administers any sacrament the Catholic priest must remember that his primary duty is to activate the Catholic imagination of the participants and to empower them in the process of leading an exemplary life.

The study of *Irish Love* so far has been focused on the Sacraments of Anointing the Sick and Confession. It has also referred to the Sacrament of Marriage as it is understood and practised by the two pairs, Dermot and Nuala, and Fitzpatrick and Nora. One common effect of every sacrament is that it sanctifies the recipient and the celebrant. As Casey stages a public confession in the Church, he makes amends for his sins and his conscience is purified. He assumes a new personality. A court verdict can punish a culprit physically, but, it is unable to clean his or her heart, the seat of all sinful motives. Any sin first originates in one's heart and is, then, translated into action. It is what comes out of the heart and not what comes from outside that makes a person unclean. Purification of one's heart is possible by means of a priest-assisted sacrament. Since, sanctifying is one of the important obligations of a priest he must be aware that in order to make the sacramental celebration more effective and meaningful there should be co-operation or correlation at two levels. Firstly, sacraments are manifestations of faith in God's intervention, and they are symbolic in nature. That means, in every sacrament there should be a co-ordination of faith and imagination. Secondly, every celebration is a collaborated activity. A better harmony and understanding between the priest who

officiates and the persons who participate in the function are likely to magnify the efficacy and beauty of the celebration.

To wind up this discussion, one finds in *Irish Love* that 'Irish Love' which is basically love of God not excluding love of others and sexual love, makes better citizens and committed lay missionaries of people who frequent sacraments and abide by the Church leadership. 'Irish Love' is not against sexual love provided it is expressed and enjoyed without prejudice to one's faith and imagination. 'Irish Love' does not exclude sexual love. But, sexual love does not necessarily reach the level of 'Irish Love'. As has been suggested, in the case of Dermot and Nuala, sexual love is a sacramental experience or 'Irish Love' is a Catholic experience which caters to the growth of one's faith as well as imagination. Sex or love as a sacrament ought to sanctify the person or persons, as the case may be. That is why, Greeley demands that the priests who administer sacraments for the sake of sanctifying himself and the people, must speak about the sanctity of sex. In order to do this successfully, a priest must first let himself be guided by Catholic imagination which presupposes a healthy blending of one's faith and the administration of sacraments. Greeley attaches great importance to this component of Catholic imagination because, as *Irish Love* has proved, beyond doubt, a priest without administering Sacraments is as unthinkable as administering a sacrament without faith. In other words, faith and imagination are as inseparable as the priest's personality and his pastoral ministry. Hence, the priests must always take care to maintain a cordial concordance between his faith and his sacramental celebration.

The above analysis of the five selected novels of Greeley has proved beyond doubt that the correlation of faith and administration of Sacraments is an important component of Catholic imagination. Besides being a teacher and leader, every priest is a sanctifier. He has to sanctify his own life as well as those of others. The most effective source of

sanctification for the priest is the administration of sacraments. This can be done only as and if the priest is endowed with the merging of faith and administration of sacraments. Greeley appeals to all the priests to subscribe to the qualities of Catholic imagination in their officiating the sacramental celebration. Let me just recapitulate here, how these five novels highlight the inevitability of this correlation. One must bear in mind that none of these novels elaborates on all the seven sacraments. But, all of them refer to some of them, in varying measures. Whenever a sacrament is referred to, Greeley repeats that a sacrament has to be administered meaningfully and effectively, which is enabled and embellished by the correlation of faith and imagination.

The first novel, *The Angels of September*, narrates how Anne Reilly, suffering from the bondage of fear, shame and guilt, are liberated by the assistance of three angels, that is Blackie, the priest; Michael Casey, the lover; and Mary Kate Murphy, the psychiatrist. The novel reports the total transformation of Anne, which reaches its climax, as she marries Jim Reilly. This book has direct and indirect references to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Marriage. It is only when Anne forgives everyone and admits truth, that her renewal starts. Equally important it is, as Greeley insists, that the officiating priest must have deep faith and rich imagination. There is also a partial reference to the Baptism of Jennifer, who is christened as James Reilly. Every sacrament is the inauguration of new life. In Greeley's opinion, not only does Anne become a new person but also, does she herself become a sacrament. Anne emerges as a sign of God's love and forgiveness. It is not enough for a Catholic priest to be the celebrant during the administration of a sacrament but he has to train the people in such a way that the recipients of a sacrament will become like sacraments in life.

*Happy are the Oppressed*, the next novel, narrates how Jane Chantal Reynolds Cardin tormented by sense of guilt and fear regains her peace of mind and emerges as a



new person, when Blackie administers the Sacrament of Reconciliation to her. As a result of Jane's readiness to forgive the past, peace is restored to the whole family. If a sacrament is administered with the accompaniment of a high degree of imagination, it will intensify the faith of both the priests who officiate and the people who participate. Both the clergy and the laity are co-celebrants as members of the Baptismal priesthood. This novel also contains some reference to the priestly vocation, as well, and Greeley presents Blackie as his ideal priest, in whom one finds the culmination of faith and administration of sacraments. There is detailed treatment of the Sacrament of Matrimony in this novel. As it is typical of Greeley, here he emphasizes the Catholic attitude to the human body, the sacredness of sex, the mutual and parental responsibility of the couple and the relevance of the empowerment of women.

The unveiling of the mystery involved in the desolate death of General Tudor, the disappearance of Lady Augusta, and teaching a lesson to Marve Doyle, for having tried to endanger Nuala, are the main concerns of *Irish Mist*, the third novel. The entire novel is centred around the anniversary Mass of Kevin. The fact that Kevin died forgiving his murderers is very much stressed by Greeley. Kevin's death reminds one of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As one reads, a priest is summoned, in no time, to the spot, and so it anticipates the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Father Placid's apology or confession, depicted in chapter 35 recalls to our mind the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As it can be reasonably expected of a typical Greelean novel, *Irish Mist* contains detailed discussion on the uniqueness of the Sacrament of Marriage and it highlights God's unconditional love as expressed in the self-giving sexual relationships of Dermot and Nuala. In short, this novel explains how a priest must sanctify himself as well as others by administering the sacraments, with due regard for their correlation with faith, as is inspired by Catholic imagination.

*A Christmas Wedding*, as the fourth novel discussed in this chapter, revolves around the marriage relationship of Chuck and Rosemarie. As a result of their mutual encouragement Chuck becomes a famous photographer and Rosemarie emerges as a writer. Both of them are known for their Catholic faith and imaginative and artistic tastes. As the title of the novel indicates, Marriage is the mostly enumerated Sacrament in the book. They believe that the love of parents in the family is an expression of Christ's love for the Church. *A Christmas Wedding* demands that the priests can administer the Sacraments worthily, only if they are men of prayer. Prior to the blessing of their long-awaited marriage both Chuck and Rosemarie make a whole-hearted mutual confession, though not in the confessional, which purifies them and unifies them in marriage. Thus, this novel highlights the transforming effects of two Sacraments; one is Holy Matrimony and the other is Reconciliation. The novel also contains a casual reference to a Holy Mass offered in memory of the soldiers, killed in South Korea. No priest can ignore the essential correlation of faith and administration of sacraments, and at the same time the necessity of the merging of faith and imagination in the celebration of the sacraments.

The last novel scrutinized in this chapter is *Irish Love*. The novel being an elaboration of the report of Ned Fitzpatrick, originally, prepared for *Chicago Daily News*, the main thrust of the writer is targeting the villain responsible for the Maamtrasna murders. The most pathetic aspect of the end of the innocent victims is that the bodies are buried in the absence of a Catholic priest to bless their graves. The denial of a decent funeral to them, marked by the priestly absence, proclaims the greatness of the Last Sacrament. Each priest has to be very careful never to miss the right of the Last Rite to the believers. The public confession of Thomas Casey, which he makes in the church, is suggestive of the forgiving effects of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. There are a few references to the Holy Mass being offered during the course of the novel. The two pairs,

Dermot and Nuala, and Fitzpatrick and Nora, frequent the sacraments, and each one of them seems to be a sacrament to the other. A comparative study of these two pairs, proves beyond doubt that they combine in themselves strong Catholic faith and proper imagination. Whenever they participate in sacramental celebration, they witness to their faith. And these couples do wonders in their families and in the Church. Hence, each parish priest shall always maintain the correlation between faith and administration of sacraments.

To put it in a nutshell, the three Sacraments of Marriage, Reconciliation and the Eucharist or the Holy Mass enjoy more prominence in Greeley's novels. At the same time, as we have noticed in the selected novels, there are casual references to Baptism, Priesthood and the Anointing of the Sick. Anyway, most of the sacraments have been mentioned in his novels. That means, the correlation of faith and administration of sacraments is an important component of Catholic imagination. It is equally true that a priest can administer the sacraments only with the accompaniment of his imaginative faculties. Before winding up this survey of the correlation between faith and sacramental administration, let me have a quick glance at Greeley's non-fictional works, and try to assess how the same preoccupation of the novelist is perceivable in them.

Greeley has always stressed that the Catholic religious experience is sacramental and that Catholic imagination is analogical. A Catholic learns Catholic sensibility in the parish, which, for the priests and the laity, is their 'Church immediate'. Hence, he insists on the priests to conduct religious functions with unction and to develop a symbolic language with the help of Catholic imagination. Commenting on Greeley's *The Sights and Insights of a Parish Priest* and *Furthermore – Memories of a Parish Priest* (1999), David Lauter refers to these ideas in *Los Angeles Times* (2000). In his words, "Catholics are bound to the Church because of the attractiveness of Catholic metaphors: the emotional

and spiritual resonance of the sacraments, the symbols and the stories” (2). The administration of the sacraments and the telling of stories with happy endings unite the believers inalienably with the Church. In Greeley’s opinion, and as the Catholic Church teaches, all sacraments are signs of God’s love and forgiveness. For example, with regard to the Sacrament of Marriage, he writes in *The Catholic Imagination* (2001), “Our experience of falling in love parallels God’s falling in love with us and reveals to us God’s grace. God’s love and our love correlate – they disclose each other” (109).

Greeley is dissatisfied with the way in which sacraments are administered in the parishes, at present. He complains that the Church does not care for the mysterious and imaginative aspects of celebration. In his introduction to the book, *The Devil, You Say!* (1974), he writes, “Catholics, of course, seem to be always the last to catch up. We abandoned the mysterious, just about the time the counter-culture was discovering it” (10). The only solution to this problem is an immediate retrieval of Catholic imagination. In his opinion, the liturgical celebration does not always impress or transform the people. In the book, *Everything You Wanted to Know About the Catholic Church- But Were Too Pious To Ask* (1978), Greeley makes a dig at the clergy saying that sacraments are, above all, signs, and that many priests are showing bad signs. And the result is, he explains, “A poorly said Mass, a hastily mumbled baptism, a shuffling confirmation, a tasteless marriage ceremony, the presence and operation of God’s loving graciousness is not adequately revealed” (131). That is why, he insists on the inevitability of the combination of faith and imagination in the administration of sacraments.

No Catholic can undermine the relevance of the sacraments. The very word ‘Catholic’ is reminiscent of a person who takes part in the celebration of sacraments. Catholic life is sacrament-oriented. As Greeley himself explains in his *That Most Distressful Nation* (1972), “To be Catholic, of course, was to go to church, to receive the

Sacraments, and pass on the symbols of faith to one's children"(82). According to Greeley, there is still hope for the Church as there are many Catholics who assemble in the churches to take part in the sacramental celebrations, and to listen to a good sermon. One reads in, *My Love: A Prayer Journal* (2001), "All kinds of people will turn out for the Masses, proof that they are still Catholics and perhaps proof that they still hope for a good sermon – or at least have not given up hopes on the sermons" (174). Each Catholic priest must train himself to make the liturgical performance more appealing to the community. The lay people have to be made familiar with the meaning of symbols and rubrics involved in the administration of sacraments. The understanding of a sacrament and active participation in its celebration will be impossible without employing Catholic imagination. Therefore, all the priests have to improve the quality of organizing, and officiating the sacraments. Greeley is of the opinion that this can be done only by means of fostering the correlation of faith and administration of sacraments without which a priest cannot think of fulfilling his pastoral obligation of sanctification.

For Greeley, his literary career is only an extension and continuation of his administration of sacraments inside the Church. The purpose of his writing, as it is the case with the sacraments, is revealing God's loving nature. In *Letters To A Loving God: A Prayer Journal* (2002), he prays to God, "Help me to do a good job, especially, since I want to write about who and what You are" (190). That means a priest is always a priest, not only during the celebration of a sacrament. He has the duty of being God's sign and spreading the Gospel inside the Church as well as outside it, during and after officiating the sacraments. Greeley wants all Catholic priests to do this after his own model. A priest who does it will be a sacrament himself.