

FAITH AND SUFFERING

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Chapter VI

FAITH AND SUFFERING:

*Wages of Sin, Fall from Grace, The Bishop and the Missing L Train,
Irish Stew! and Priestly Sins*

The human being is one of the most vulnerable creatures on earth. Suffering is part and parcel of human existence. Natural catastrophe, wars and contagious diseases cause suffering beyond description. Failures in life, guilt feeling, traumatic experiences of childhood, isolation from others and many more factors add suffering to man's life. Some people suffer as a result of their own immoral and criminal character. No person is immune to suffering. This is true irrespective of the differentiations of religion, race, region, sect, sex and status. One finds that Catholics and non-Catholics suffer, and similarly, believers and non-believers also suffer. One common feature of suffering is that nobody has found out a readymade solution or an all conclusive answer to this problem. Science is groping in darkness in order to arrive at a satisfactory answer to this universal problem. Even, religious teachings in this regard do not convince all people. It is in this context that an inquiry into some novels of Greeley and an examination how his characters respond to the problem of suffering is made.

Catholic faith teaches that God is love and Catholic imagination supports one's faith in God's providence. For Greeley, the correlation between faith and suffering is one of the components of Catholic imagination. Apart from faith, suffering makes people helpless, aimless and hopeless. Suffering usually draws people away from God, Church and her sacramental life. From a purely secular point of view, suffering is nothing but manipulations of fate devoid of any faith-content. For the materialists and hedonists suffering is nothing more than an unavoidable evil or an inescapable predicament. But,

Greeley's characters relate suffering with faith. His protagonists experience that suffering has got some creative and redemptive value. His ideal characters are seen transforming their lives and improving their relationship with God and other people during the process of suffering. Whereas, some of his villainous characters either seek refuge in suicide or take devilish pleasure in inflicting pain upon others. Most of the good characters suffer silently and undergo a process of spiritual renovation. A common feature of such characters is their readiness to forgive all others unconditionally as a result of which they experience God's love in their personal and social life.

A Catholic priest is a guide and counsellor for his people. He is bound to give a Catholic answer to the problem of suffering. He too, as an individual, will have to suffer a lot from others. At the same time, some priests due to their scandalous ways cause suffering to others. Greeley's contention is that a priest cannot understand the meaning and relevance of suffering except in association with Catholic faith. A survey of Greeley's selected novels proves that priests and lay people who follow Catholic imagination emerge phoenix-like as new persons out of their suffering whereas the characters who neglect Catholic imagination meet with some tragic end to mark the peak of their suffering. A Catholic priest who is to assist the people, especially, in their suffering can derive a lot of lessons and examples, both good and bad, from the analysis of these novels. The five novels selected for a detailed study in this chapter are *Wages of Sin* (1992), *Fall from Grace* (1994), *The Bishop and the Missing L Train* (2000), *Irish Stew!* (2003) and *The Priestly Sins* (2004). An examination of each one of these novels will show how far Greeley's claims have been realized in them and how far a Catholic priest can draw insights from these books which will be of great help for him in dealing with the problem of suffering.

Wages of Sin, the first novel to be discussed is the story of unveiling the mystery regarding the fire on the Labour Day, 1954, killing Joseph T. Meehan, the Congress man, and his whole family, a case written off as fire by accident. After thirty five years, Lorcan James Flynn, assisted by Bishop Blackie and other investigators find out the truth. They prove that Maeve, the mother of Lorcan Flynn, is the fire-setter, and they remove the misunderstandings about the alleged involvement of either Maura, Lorcan's lover, or the British people, Joseph Meehan being a supporter of the Irish cause. This novel can be said to be an exposition of how suffering is inevitable in human life and how it has to be tackled with Catholic imagination, therapeutic counseling and family reunion. The novelist is also making a strong appeal to the priests, to be always readily available to the suffering people empowering them to face the problems in life in the light of Catholic faith and a corresponding imagination. An analysis of *Wages of Sin* helps us understand how disregard for Catholic imagination eventually leads one to suffering in life and how this situation can be transformed for the better with the interference of a Catholic priest like Blackie. Suffering, in general, is likely to make human life gloomy and desperate. But, the Catholic approach gives it a salvific and sacramental look.

The worst sufferer in this novel is Maeve and she is the one who causes maximum suffering to others. In her case, the pyromaniac tendency is due to her personal suffering which is perpetuated by her husband's inability and indifference to realize how much she has been suffering. She tells Lorcan, her son, "I hope you realize how much I'm suffering"(142). It is in her tense and nervous moods that Maeve sets ablaze the house of the Meehans, not knowing about the explosives kept inside it by the Congressman, for the use of the Irish rebels. Her action results in the suffering of many innocent ones, the chief being Maura, the lover of Lorcan. Maeve's aim is to prevent Lorcan from marrying Maura. Hence, her real target is the would be daughter-in-law. The immediate cause of

fire is Maeve's shock at having seen, together with Patrick Flynn, Lorcan and Maura, in embrace, at late hours in the beach. She sets fire to the house, for, she fears that if Maura is not killed, she will marry Lorcan and then the mother will lose him for ever. As one reads in the novel, Maura would have succumbed to the fire, had she not gone to New York. One finds that Maeve behaves abnormally mostly because of the prejudice of the Meehans against psychotherapy and counseling. Blackie and his collaborators succeed in altering her attitude to life and, as a result, she herself and the whole family are saved. So, despite its preoccupation with various kinds of suffering, *Wages of Sin* concludes with a romantic note, typical of a true Catholic story, presenting the long awaited reunion of Lorcan and Maura.

Greeley makes aware of the fact that there would not be any fire if Maeve underwent some counseling sessions in time and in that case, a lot of suffering could be averted. He seems to argue that the therapeutic counseling is as helpful to a person, in distress, as the Sacrament of reconciliation is to a sinner in the Church. The first one cures a person of emotional and mental discomforts, where as the second one relieves him or her of the spiritual and moral ailments. This novel will be of intense interest to Catholic priests who have to console people who are at a loss in front of suffering. They are bound to make the faithful realize the usefulness of psychological treatment, the importance of mutual forgiveness, and the necessity of reestablishing broken relationships with God, the Church and the other people. The Catholic imagination which is the stronghold of a Catholic priest enables the sufferer to survive the ordeals in life, and to regain and maintain one's peace of mind and relationship with God and His people. It has to be emphasized that Greeley's characters never advocate immediate punishment for the wrong doers. He is more concerned with the purifying and redemptive element of suffering, understood in the light of a solid Catholic faith and imagination. The Catholic

Church teaches that there is no necessary correspondence between the suffering and the sinfulness of a person. However, the title of the novel, *Wages of Sin*, taken from the first part of Romans 6: 23 itself, suggests that very often the mode and whereabouts of suffering are directly or indirectly related to the culpable or scandalous ways of some of the important characters, figuring in this novel.

As one examines the theme of suffering portrayed in *Wages of Sin*, s/he finds that the suffering of the married people is more prominent than that of the clergy. Most of the underlying causes of suffering are related to and even based on relationships among the members of the family. Of course, there are priestly characters in this novel. Father Edward and Father Gregory are examples. This inquiry will be confined to how and why people suffer in the family. One has to evaluate what should be the attitude of a Catholic priest to the reality or problem of suffering. How Greeley's characters tackle with the issues causing suffering to oneself and others is of great relevance to this context. Bishop Blackie who is equipped with Catholic imagination and Dr. Murphy who is endowed with psychological insights are the two important characters who manage to transform the lives of the suffering ones into a better situation. In order to understand how they do this one must, first of all, have an idea of what a Catholic family is expected to be. In a sense, suffering is an absence or negation of the perfect good. When the family loses its perfect good, it suffers. Those who solve the problem of suffering are supplying or introducing to the diseased family or a broken relationship what it is lacking. In other words, as the problem is solved, whatever has been absent so far, is being restored to that family or friendship. So, a brief attempt is done here as to how a Catholic family is expected to be, in accordance with *Wages of Sin*.

The Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a sacrament and she has always upheld the indivisibility of family life. A Catholic marriage is not a temporary adjustment.

Rather, it is a life-long commitment. When the couples live in harmony they witness to God's love and when they fulfill their obligations in an exemplary manner, they are actually performing their priestly role. Greeley wants the parents to foster a sacramental and respectful approach to the family life. As one reads in the novel, "That sexual passion is a hint of God's passion", the little priest insisted, "will shock only prudes and those who know nothing of either the Scriptures or the history of Christian Symbolism" (242). According to Blackie, God the ever youthful lover is the ideal of the married people. In one of his sermons, Blackie suggests to reflect on "This image of our ever-youthful God, a God for whom it is always spring and early spring at that" (45). It is the duty of every priest to have strong faith in God, the eternal lover, and to be able to interpret this belief with the help of Catholic imagination. Greeley always reminds the Church leaders of their obligation of teaching or evangelizing the world. His preoccupation with the prophetic task of the Church is perceivable in the novel. He writes, "Fortunately, John Paul has no doubts on that matter. He is appointing bishops who will make it clear what the Catholic teaching is" (213). If the couples attach inhibitions and taboos in matters of sex, they will not be able to maintain healthy relationship in the family, for, they fail to recognize the liberating and sanctifying value of the sacrament of marriage. Hence, it is the duty of the Church to educate and prepare the young people.

Lorcan's parents are Patrick Flynn and Maeve. The relationship between these parents cannot be said to be Catholic or exemplary. Maeve is the one who suffers most in the novel. She is also the person who is instrumental to the worst tragedy portrayed in the novel, causing a lot of suffering to many. Patrick is an ex-service man who returned from war in 1945, when Lorcan was fourteen. His sessions with Dr. Murphy reveals that Lorcan hates his father. He thinks that he has been spoilt by his father. The mental restlessness which makes Maeve a fire-setter is mainly thanks to his irritability and

indifference to her. She is at present a neurotic psychochondriac (143). A psychotherapist can easily cure her of her nervous exhaustion and make her a responsible mother. But both the parents have a strong stigma for psychiatric treatment and counseling. Maeve decides to murder Maura who loves Lorcan. She is so possessive of her son Lorcan, that she can never tolerate his marriage with Maura. Maeve is both the worst sufferer as well as a trouble-shooter. The family of Patrick and Maeve is not altogether un-Catholic. For, one of Patrick's brothers, Frank, is a priest. But, the couples, as a whole, do not exhibit any interest in matters of Catholic imagination. Patrick is cruel and Maeve is possessive. This loveless behaviour of the parents adversely affects the character of Lorcan.

In order to prevent Lorcan from marrying Maura, the couples tell them a lie that Maura is Lorcan's sister. As a result, Maura is compelled to marry Halinan. Since, she went to New York after the explosion, Lorcan marries Dorothy Kramer who later goes after one Mark Reed. Lorcan and Dorothy are separated by two blocks of February ice and millions of light years of alienation (38). Lorcan inquires about the origin of Maura. He learns that Maura is not his sister as his father had lied. Really, she is born of Tim Meehan, a womanizer and brother of the Congressman, and Betty Jane Lyndon. Betty conceives Maura just as she is out of her teens. Lorcan and Maura can marry each other legally. They are passionate lovers from young days onwards. Both of them are compelled to marry someone else. The opposition of Lorcan's parents, Maura's wrong conclusion that Lorcan hates her and the misunderstanding regarding the true origin of Maura necessitate the postponement of their marriage. Truth and transparency are lacking in their relationship. Lorcan's inquiries and Blackie's suggestions succeed in finding out the truth which takes away the ignorance. They fill up what ever has been lacking in the mutual relationship between Lorcan and Maura.

One day Lorcan meets Maura, now a widow, on a business tour to Chicago. He tells her that both her parents Tim and Betty are alive. At Dr. Murphy's instruction, Lorcan meets Maura again and they decide to be united in marriage. Though, she has suffered a lot, Maura readily forgives her own parents and that of Lorcan's. As Greeley writes, Lorcan and Maura become one with "A torrent of emotions of desire, affection, passion, tenderness" (352). Thus true lovers get united in a real marriage with full consent and mutual dedication. Their suffering has sanctified them and made them authentic followers of Catholic faith and imagination.

The most striking aspect of the relationship between Lorcan and Maura is the fact that their marriage, despite their initial intimacy, is delayed for about thirty five years and that, in the meanwhile, both of them marry someone else. The postponement of marriage is mainly caused by Lorcan's misunderstanding about Maura's love for him. This strains their relationship and gives rise to a lot of suffering. His Catholic faith urges Lorcan to find out the truth. His imagination empowers him to abide by Blackie's suggestions and trace Tim Meehan, the arch villain, from his hide-out, who eventually becomes a transformed person. The discovery of truth eradicates all misunderstandings and as a result there is a reunion of broken relationships, and many a suffering, thought to be immovable and irremediable, comes to a cease. At the root of the suffering of Lorcan and Maura, one notices the absence of Catholic faith and in the management of suffering there is abundance of faith and patience. When Catholic faith itself causes suffering in the life of a believer by way of challenges and sacrifices, the Catholic imagination provides the person ways and means to withstand it.

In his pursuit after truth, Lorcan has to suffer a lot. Lorcan's younger brother Hank asks him, "Don't open up the case again" (35). He receives many threats over phone like, "If you don't want anything to happen to your grandsons, you'll stop asking questions"

(170). He is accused of having been responsible for the fire in 1954. There are attempts to murder Maeve and Lorcan's kids in a car accident (193). He is asked to forget and not to inquire about the mystery of the fire in 1954. Once Tim threatens Lorcan, "If you value your life and the lives of those you love, you'll forget about what happened that night, got it?" (303). Two special agents from FBI, raid Lorcan's office, and threaten him (84-87). Though he misunderstands the genuineness of Maura's love, because, her love letters and telephone calls do not reach him, he never gives up his search for truth. Nothing less than complete truth will satisfy him. He deals very tactfully with Tim, the man behind all threats, and makes him a true Catholic with a conscience. It is really edifying that Lorcan is growing as a person even in the midst of his sufferings.

Another deep-rooted cause of Lorcan's suffering is his fear of his own father and all women, in general. As a boy, he has been abused by his father and has seen him ill-treating Lorcan's mother. Due to these traumatic experiences, it is very difficult for Lorcan to be reconciled with his father. He fears that his father will take away Maura and make her his own. As he tells Dr. Murphy, "My father took her away from me once. If he can, he'll take her away again" (188). He is also afraid of women, even Maura. As he confesses to Dr. Murphy, "I love her but she scares me" (147). Lorcan is sure that he cannot solve all these problems all by himself. What he needs is healing, both spiritual and psychological. Spiritual healing is impossible without faith and psychological healing is unthinkable devoid of imagination. Dr Murphy, the therapist, gives him therapeutic counseling and she sends him to Blackie, her brother, for spiritual healing who invites Lorcan to the Cathedral rectory for a detailed discussion (314). A Catholic priest has to learn from Lorcan's story that suffering can have no remedy without faith which in its turn, necessitates the assistance of Catholic imagination.

Tim and Betty constitute another couples in *Wages of Sin*. They never bother about sin which in Greeley's words is "A great preoccupation with Catholics" (324). Tim impregnates Betty at a young age. He is a real villain. There is no trace of Catholic imagination in him. He is after money. The wages of his own sins have made it impossible for him to stay in his own place. He has absconded. In fact, he cooks up a scheme to fake his death. As Greeley writes, Tim is "Irish and Catholic and without a conscience" (334). This statement has a great moral significance for a Catholic priest. One who follows Catholic imagination cannot betray one's own conscience. He can never enjoy peace of mind nor can he ever have a comfortable life with his wife and children. He has somehow created the impression that he is no more. He does all he can to obstruct Lorcan's search for truth. People have only contempt for his deceitful living. Finally, Lorcan traces him and brings him to lime-light. The influence of Blackie changes him into a new person. Lorcan convinces him that he is Maura's father and that Betty is her mother. Tim feels guilty for having tried to murder his own daughter, though unknowingly. He asks pardon and is readily forgiven. He decides to lead an exemplary Catholic life. As a renewed person he has learned not to cause any more suffering to others. He has also grown as a Catholic to value faith more than money, power and everything else. Towards the end of the novel, Tim appears to be very generous and grateful to Lorcan in spite of his previous threats and attempts on the latter's life. In Greeley's words, he experiences "A total transformation of personality" (336).

As already hinted, Betty has always been leading a care-free life. She marries first James Patrick O'Learing, then Bobby Riordan and finally, Keeley Allen. In matters of sex she is always unsteady and very indulgent. She undergoes a gradual process of purification and condescends to be at the service of Catholic imagination. A maturing of the Catholic personality is evident in the life of Betty who is now "A pillar of

Catholicism, a friend of whoever happened to be Cardinal, a member of the Board of Catholic Charities, a daily Mass-attender,... Eucharist-celebrator” (190). It is clear that Betty’s denial of her maternal responsibilities to Maura is one of the causes of the latter’s suffering. For Betty, life is never a bed of roses. She suffers a lot at the hands of three husbands, one after the other. This saga of suffering does not make her either an agnostic or an atheist. Rather, she is drawn to religion and prayer. As a result, she has become a sound Catholic who forgives everybody and is forgiven by all. This pretty story of Betty deserves to be referred to by the priests in their presentation of the theme of suffering and its correlation with faith. Betty’s life is an illustration of how God makes good out of evil, how He works miracles through zigzag ways and how He transforms a person giving him or her second chances.

Towards the end of *Wages of Sin*, there is the blessing of the marriage between, Marie, Lorcan’s daughter and Rob Halinan, Maura’s son. Father Edward officiates the ceremony. Blackie gives the message. He explains how God always likes the love stories of the human beings. God complains to Gabriel that contrary to His expectations, they don’t make plenty of love stories all the time. Blackie says, “So, gentle persons, we are here to celebrate this admirable chapter in the love story between Rob and Marie because God loves love stories – all love stories and each love story” (288). He concludes the sermon stating that God loves Rob and Marie even more intensely than they love each other. As Dorothy, Lorcan’s former wife, tries to spoil the marriage celebration of Marie, her daughter, Maeve and Lorcan manage the situation and save everyone from shame and disgrace (290). The readers of *Wages of Sin* are likely to think that the new couple will have a peaceful and cordial married life. For, Marie has learned a lesson from the suffering of her father, Lorcan, and Rob has witnessed to the suffering of his mother, Maura. Being Catholics and followers of the Crucified Christ, this couple have trained

themselves to survive the struggles which form part and parcel of life. Suffering ought to strengthen their individual faith in Catholicism and mutual love in the family. When the lovers suffer together for the good of the family it intensifies and sanctifies their love and solidifies their mutual commitment.

One finds a lot of similarity between the story of *Wages of Sin* and Catholic theology. According to *The Holy Bible*, Eve, the first woman, instigated by the devil, betrays Adam and brings suffering to herself and the whole humanity, as one finds in the *Book of Genesis*. Later, the same Bible presents St. Mary who suffers silently throughout her life and is instrumental to bring about joy and peace to humanity. Maeve is the modern counterpart of Eve whereas Maura is that of Mary. These two characters correspond to two kinds of people. Eve and Maeve remind us of those who cause suffering to others, and who later suffer in their own lives for their wicked nature. Mary and Maura are typically Catholic characters who never inflict pain on anybody else and at the same time, are ready to suffer for the sake of others. A Catholic priest can benefit his own life and his pastoral activities out of this comparison. Together with them, Greeley expects priests to suffer in favour of or on behalf of their people, but, they shall never perpetuate or increase the suffering of the people. The Church wants her priests to be signs of joy and hope even in the midst of and, if possible, unmindful of personal suffering. If a priest who has no sympathy for the suffering people and does not work hard in order to redress their distress, he is not a Catholic priest, worthy of the name. It must be emphasized that it is Catholic imagination which enables the priest to imbibe these ideas and to practise them.

Greeley approaches the problem of suffering in *Fall from Grace*, from a new point of view. In this second novel, the author explains how the pedophile habits of certain priests bring about various kinds of suffering in their own lives and in that of the victims.

Greeley claims to have finished the first draft of this novel before the pedophile scandal of clerics made a sensation in the media during the 1990's. The usual response of the Catholic Church to this problem has been to deny, to cover up and to protect the accused priests appointing them elsewhere. *Fall from Grace* teaches that the root cause of suffering due to pedophile scandals is psychological, that this problem is not exclusively clerical and that the alleged priests have to be sent for medical treatment. The closer look at the characters of this novel reveals that the prevalence of suffering is suggestive of the neglect or absence of Catholic imagination in the life of those priests which necessitates 'fall from grace'. One cannot be an ideal priest without maintaining the basic correlation between faith and imagination. Likewise, a priest can neither perceive nor manage the problem of suffering in all walks of life without following the Catholic imagination.

Fall from Grace is centred around the suffering of Kathleen Donahue in her family, as well as the suffering of many others thanks to Gerry Green, a pedophile priest. Kathleen is forced to marry Brien, forsaking her lover Patrick O' Kerrigan, known as Kieran. As Brien is a woman-beater and homosexual, Kathleen has to suffer a lot. Referring to her long years of suffering she says, "He [Kieran] didn't keep his word. He left me. Or did I leave him? I don't know how it all happened. Suddenly he was gone and my life has never been the same" (69). Brien never cares for her nor does he respect either her body or her soul. He blames his wife for all his failures. At the most Brien is a perpetual torturer. He suffers a lot in his personal life and adds to the suffering of the others in the family. Maeve, one of their girls, finds Brien, the father, swinging a golf club at Kathleen's head. She kicks him to protect her mother. Brien falls against the nightstand, fractures his skull and dies instantly. Greeley does not accuse Maeve of patricide, but he applauds her as the heroine of the story (349). Thus, Brien who is the source of suffering for the whole family reaps his due exactly as he sows.

The family of Brien and Kathleen is marked by frustration and discord. Brien fails to satisfy his wife sexually as he is the last homosexual victim of Gerry Green. The cohabitation of this couple cannot be said to be a sacramental relationship. Their's is not a Catholic marriage. Their understanding of the partner is not in accordance with Catholic faith. One who does not possess Catholic imagination cannot respect the body of the other and he or she will not be able to maintain a healthy relationship with the other partner. And as a result, the whole family suffers. Brien is too late to change his way of living. But, Kathleen makes use of second chances in life. She gets united with Kieran. Kieran and Kathleen are real lovers from early days onwards. They take real interest in fostering the sacramental nature of their marriage. Together they outlive the ravages of suffering. What enables them to remain as one even in the midst of suffering is nothing but their Catholic imagination. How this couples do it is a relevant question which each priest has to take into account.

Viewed from the angle of faith, suffering helps Kieran and Kathleen in many ways. Both of them are purified by suffering and then their mutual love embraces greater heights. Suffering deepens their Catholic faith and widens their Catholic imagination. It intensifies their longing for reunion and it improves their relationship with all others. Again suffering assists them in their attempt to practise Christian virtues, especially, forgiveness. Though Brien has caused a lot of suffering to Kathleen, she forgives him unconditionally. She tells Kieran why she has to forgive Brien. In her words, "I am a Christian; I believe in forgiving even as I have been forgiven" (254). It is Catholic faith which urges Kathleen to forgive others wholeheartedly. When she hears her three children blame their grandparents, Kathleen admonishes them to forgive their offenders, which is an important Catholic precept. She tells the girls, "We are Christians, remember? We believe in forgiveness, don't we? ... We still forgive whatever they do to us, just like God

forgives what we do to other people, right?” (363). Sometimes, forgiving the wrongdoers is more excruciating than suffering physical pain and mental tensions. One cannot admit the meaning and value of suffering except in the light of the Catholic faith.

In the case of Kieran and Kathleen, suffering turns out to be the constituting power and sustaining source of their Catholic faith and imagination. When they renew their love, Kathleen thinks, “The good Lord had made us for one another, body and soul, and was now giving us a second chance” (327). Suffering does not draw them away from their faith in God and the Church. None of them hates the Church. The more they suffer, the more they cling to the Church. Being accused of stealing Kieran has to disappear and live in a distant place for two decades. When he returns, he realizes that it is impossible for him to forget his faith as well as the house. In Greeley’s words, the reason is, “Once a Catholic, always a Catholic” (106). While explaining how the Church inculcates even in the new-born babies, the seeds of faith by means of various symbols and an imaginative language, Kieran tells Jean Commins, a young woman, “Once a Catholic, always a Catholic. They fill your heads with gorgeous images when you are a child and you never get rid of them, no?” (193). When Kathleen asks Kieran if he was a practising Catholic, his reply is again, “Once a Catholic, always a Catholic” (178). Even as they suffer in life these characters do not distrust God nor do they ever leave the Church.

Kieran, always assisted by Kathleen, does not remain as a silent sufferer. He is not satisfied with merely loving the Church. Rather he is determined to serve the Church. He tries his best, as a qualified therapist, to solve the problem of pedophile priests whose scandalous activities are instrumental to a lot of suffering. Seeing the pedophile reports, Kieran expresses his shock in these words, “What’s happening to the Catholic Church?” (109). Though he is a lay person, he thinks that he is, by virtue of his baptismal priesthood, obliged to fight against the evils which are rampant in the Church. Kieran

studies the pedophile problem in detail and gives suggestions to Bishop Leary, with the intention of restoring the credibility of the Church and the confidence of the people in her. He sees to it that his recommendations are implemented by the Bishop who takes steps to send the alleged priests for treatment and not to re-assign them to new parishes. One must always remember that he owes his commitment and courage to work in this area to his Catholic imagination.

When a believer is exposed to suffering on account of some of the teachings of the Church or some activities of the priests, the natural response in most cases is that he or she becomes a rebel or a critic and stops going to the Church. One characteristic of Greeley's main characters is that they never quit their faith in and allegiance to the Church. Catholicism is so deeply rooted in their innermost self that it is impossible for them to alienate themselves from the Church. Take the case of Kieran in *Fall from Grace*. Because of Bishop Leary, he has to suffer the charges of bribery, theft and conspiracy. Despite all these sufferings Kieran loves the Church. He empowers Leary in order to purify the Church though she has wronged him a lot. Kieran's attitude to suffering in his personal life and his relationship with the Church are lessons which every priest has to imitate in his own life. Not even once he turns out to be either revengeful or desperate. He perceives suffering in the light of Catholic faith and he manages it with the help of Catholic imagination. In his character and performance one cannot but notice the merging of faith and suffering.

In *Fall from Grace*, Gerry Green is a priest, unfortunately, a pedophile. In Greeley's words, Green is "A deeply disturbed man with a Sadomasochistic fixation on boys" (353). He even endorses satanic cult. He officiates Black Mass and demands the immolation of a woman, Brijid. A priest as Green, is a sign of contradiction to all and reminds us of Father Lenny Lyon in Greeley's *The Priestly Sins* which is the last novel to

be studied in this chapter. One cannot think of a Catholic priest, who has to officiate the Eucharistic celebration, going after Black Mass. A priest is expected to provide the suffering people with consolation, counseling and rapport. Green gives nothing but suffering to boys, their parents and the like. Any Catholic priest is expected to assist the human life at all levels of its growth i.e. from the womb to the tomb. But, Green is seen demanding the real sacrifice of a virgin. He even presides over a group of sexually active priests at his summer home at Goose Lake. Thus, the suffering resulting from his scandalous ways is simply indescribable.

Green has played a role in spoiling the life of Kathleen, too. Brien, her husband, was a homosexual prey to Green. He cannot satisfy Kathleen sexually, as he is even now, entertaining a male lover. Green has to be taken to task for distorting the sexual behaviour of Brien, which later makes him incapable of managing his life with Kathleen. At the same time, Kathleen has a healthy approach to sexuality which is in tone with the Catholic teachings, as is evident from what she asks Leary, "Didn't they teach you in the seminary that the body is a sacrament?" (78). To the great dismay of the readers, in response to Kieran's questions, Leary admits that he has had homosexual relationship with Green, but, never after his consecration. The novel also reveals that Leary and Green are close friends. The birds of the same feather flock together.

Actually, *Fall from Grace* is Greeley's dig at the integrity of the Catholic Church and her clergy. He blames the Church for not giving proper education on sexual matters, for unjustly protecting the accused priests, for hesitating to take actions against them, for finding fault with the parents of the abused boys, for not taking into confidence the expertise of therapists like Kieran and Murphy, and for threatening priests like Brendan who try to support the right of the victims. The novel strikingly highlights the fallible nature of the Church personnel and the inevitability of relating the causes and

circumstances of suffering with Catholic faith. All Catholic priests ought to know and teach that they cannot witness to Catholic morality in sexual matters without respecting the other's body as God's abode and without abiding by the sacrificial dimensions of love, as stipulated by Catholic imagination. The novel is an eye-opener even to Bishops like Leary. All need conversion and gradual transformation of one's character and attitude to other people. The basic message of the Church is one of healing and consoling to all those who are poor and suffering.

Fall from Grace appeals to all priests to consider themselves as vicars of Christ, the Good Shepherd. As shepherds of the flock, they have to protect their sheep by feeding and guiding them. The shepherds must take special care of the weak ones among the flock. They are bound to heal the wounds of the followers. The pedophile priests are torturers and not healers. They are assaulters and not saviours. Such priests fail to be sacraments of Christ. They augment the suffering of the poor people who are already suffering a lot, on account of various reasons. Those priests are a threat to the virtue/vow of celibacy. Hence, the Church is really anxious about the pedophile problems. She has to take strong actions against the accused priests. Otherwise, the Church will become a cash cow feeding the advocates and the legal systems as it actually happened in the United States of America. In this sense, *Fall from Grace* has a prophetic relevance which every priest has to pay attention to. Anyway, this novel strongly urges priests to improve their moral standards, reminding them of their priestly obligation of nursing and healing the community and never to be perpetuators or instruments of suffering.

One finds in the end of the novel, Kieran and Kathleen going to the Cathedral in order to exchange their sacramental vows. So, *Fall from Grace* has a happy ending which, according to Greeley, is the hallmark of every Catholic story. He comments, "The happy ending in the story anticipated the happy ending in reality, much to my surprise" (369).

Suffering and years of waiting and prayerful preparation have purified Kieran and Kathleen and they are really worthy of receiving the Sacrament of Marriage. Both of them are seasoned with faith and imagination. They are capable of uniting their Catholic faith with their suffering and their living together under the same roof. Kieran and Kathleen substantiate the salvific and eschatological aspects of suffering approached from a Catholic point of view. Every Catholic priest can derive inspiration from the story of *Fall from Grace* as to how suffering leads to happiness and reunion. In this sense, suffering is a blessing in disguise. It is not an evil in itself or a curse to be avoided. Catholic theology maintains that as Christ resurrected on the third day after his crucifixion and indescribable suffering, those who suffer in and because of faith will be rewarded after the model of Kieran and Kathleen. Both of them are driven by Catholic imagination which assures all those who suffer for noble causes of nothing less than celestial bliss.

In short, the story of Green declares that the corruption of the best is the worst. His saga of falling from the sublime heights of grace to the mire and mud of disgrace should be an eye-opener to all priests. They should not be trouble-shooters or problem-creators. Instead, priests ought to be peace-makers. They should be sources of consolation and encouragement for others. Priests are not actors on the altar. They are not mere celebrants. They have to be exemplary persons who are able to guide the community on the road to holiness. Nobody appreciates a lazy and selfish priest. As priests, they have to be available to the people even if they have to suffer and sacrifice many things personally. Suffering, however severe it is, must not disappoint or frighten a priest. After, all he is the ambassador of the crucified Lord. A priest who does not suffer in life, as a genuine follower of the suffering servant of Yahweh, cannot be a committed priest.

The mission of a Catholic priest is not confined to preaching the Catholic views on the reality of suffering. He has to alleviate the suffering of his people. He cannot do this

all by himself. One lesson every priest must learn from the study of *Fall from Grace* is that he must make use of the assistance of psychologists and therapists, in his healing ministry. He shall not be prejudiced against other professionals. Priests have to realize how much service is rendered by lay persons like Kieran, in the realm of redressing the suffering of others. A final point to be stressed in the light of this study is that every priest has to admit the inevitability of applying insights and perspectives of Catholic faith and Catholic imagination to the reality of suffering. Both in his words and deeds he has to be overwhelmed by the correlation between faith and suffering. To sum up, *Fall from Grace* ought to inspire the entire clergy to re-examine their involvement in the area of human suffering, and to re-evangelize their own attitude to suffering in personal lives.

The next novel is to be analyzed is *The Bishop and the Missing L Train* which tells the story of how and why Bishop Quill Guz, newly appointed in Forest Hills, is kidnapped and later recovered. At the request of Sean Cronin, his Archbishop, Blackie undertakes a successful expedition. The missing train which is only a single car, and Hector Gomez, its driver, are found out in a drugged condition. Blackie proves that Guz has been kidnapped by a gang of drug-agents, at the instigation of Theodore Coffey, another priest, who is known for his envy and vanity. Here, Greeley is narrating a story of how priests, who are preachers of love and are models of Christ, cause suffering and insult to the whole priestly class, and how the degeneration among the clergy makes the lay people also suffer. The novelist actually wants to illustrate who an ideal Bishop or a priest is. As this study is expected to make clear, this book also highlights the necessity of more co-operation between the clergy and the laity. Besides, this is a strong declaration of the novelist's insistence on the necessity of ordaining women, and married people, as a remedy for the present suffering caused by the shortage of priests.

While reading the *The Bishop and the Missing L Train*, it is surprising to note that though, kidnapping of a Bishop is rare and shocking, the people of Forest Hills are not affected at all, by what has happened to Guz, their new Bishop. They seem to think that his kidnapers have done a favour to them. They are relieved of a great burden. When he was working in Roman Rota, he was known for his incompetence and stupidity, always signing against annulment cases to the dismay of both the judges and the clients. Having taken charge of Forest Hills he has done the worst harm to the people. Blackie learns that Guz has dismissed the parish council, insulted the catechists, broken the choir and offended the whole parish. He humiliates the staff in public. He fires some of the directors, deacons and officers without any consultation. Every Catholic priest is a shepherd of the people. It is his duty to unify, strengthen and nourish them with the Word of God and His grace. Guz gives them nothing but suffering and frustration. So, the kidnapping of Guz is, in a way, a self-inflicted punishment for this careless and scandalous manner of administering a parish. Greeley warns all parish priests that they cannot work effectively in a parish displeasing all the people.

According to Catholic faith and tradition, the parish is a family. It is the mystical body of Christ. The priest and the faithful together form one body. There is no ideological dichotomy between these two sections. They are one in love and co-workers in service. The priest is not a dictator. The relationship between the priest and the people is not like that of a master and his slaves. The contact Guz has with his people is very poor. He is very demanding and the lay people turn to be revengeful. That means his behaviour is not in accordance with Catholic faith and imagination. He is not able to respect them as persons who are God's children nor are they willing to respect the priest as their spiritual head. The fact that they do not stand united proves that they are not guided by Catholic imagination which has great unifying force. Guz is not a sign of love and unity which

indicates the absence of Catholic faith in his life and ministry. Finally, the people themselves decide to punish their priest. Unfortunately, another priest, by name, Theodore, exploits the situations, hires a group of drug-agents, and thus, Guz is kidnapped. So, the root cause of his suffering and failure as a priest is owing to the neglect of Catholic faith and imagination.

Another apparent feature of his character is that Guz is a man of vaulting ambition. Though, he cannot manage a single parish, he expects to be the next Archbishop, replacing Sean Cronin, the ruling Archbishop of Chicago (153). He claims that he is directly inspired by God and that he does nothing but His Will. Sometimes, he thinks that he will be appointed as the Rector of the Cathedral after Blackie. He appears to have the same fervour of an iconoclast (69). Guz boasts that the Pope has sent him to put Chicago in order. In his words, "I would do great things for the Church back in America" (45). Despite his claim, he is a good-for-nothing fellow who is known as an idiot. As Ted Coffey comments, "Guz terrorized secretarial staff. He is a Nazi" (101). Jenny, one of the innocent persons accused of kidnapping Guz, says, "I hate that bishop even more than I hate my husband. He is a gross, vulgar, evil man" (104). Peter Quill, a businessman who is the brother of Guz complains to him that the latter has really spoilt the parish. Quill says, "All the things you have done at the parish – firing those people, dismissing the parish council, closing down the sports programme. People hate you and they hate me because I am your brother" (119). There are allegations about his contacts with the Mother Superior (147). All these taken together, one must conclude that Guz who cannot manage even a parish will never become an efficient and exemplary Archbishop. His assumed role of a prophet cannot be justified by Catholic faith. His priestly ministry is neither natural nor normal. He is a total failure. Guz is not driven by Catholic imagination. A parish priest must, hence, admit that without having the mutually

enriching Catholic faith and imagination he will be unable to maintain a healthy relationship with God and the people. In other words, the shame of being kidnapped and the consequent suffering which Guz undergoes are all pointing to the absence of Catholic imagination in his character.

Through the characterization of Theodore and Guz, Greeley gives a strong message to all priests. They should not be undemocratic like Guz and they should not be power-thirsty like Theodore. Their activities are often scandalous. The net result is that both of them suffer physically and mentally and on account of them the Church, as a whole, is put to shame. They are anti-witnesses to Christ and His Gospels. Both Guz and Theodore are negligent in matters of Catholic faith and imagination. Neither do they grow as persons qualitatively nor do they let others grow in faith and charity. In their craze after becoming Bishops both of them disregard their priestly obligations. They cause havoc in the parish. The unity as well as the peaceful atmosphere of the parish is at stake. None of them rises up to the expectation of the people. *The Bishop and the Missing L Train* is an appeal to all the priests not to imitate priests like Theodore and Guz. Instead, they shall adhere themselves to Catholic faith and imagination which, in case, they neglect, they will fall short of the sublime ideals of priestly vocation.

This novel presents Blackie as an ideal priest and bishop worthy of emulation by all the priests. Blackie is the embodiment of Catholic faith and imagination. One thing which distinguishes Blackie from Theodore and Guz is related to the theme of suffering. Both Theodore and Guz suffer a lot of shame and disgrace on account of their own wrong doing, as a result of their neglect of Catholic faith and imagination. Blackie does not have to undergo this kind of suffering. Many innocent people are made to suffer because of their scandalous and irresponsible way of life. For example, two youngsters, named Jenny and Tommy are accused of involving in the kidnapping of Guz, and they are taken into

custody. Gripped by shame, Christie, the lover of Tommy, leaves him. Ned, the lover of Jenny, also does the same. In short, Theodore and Guz are instrumental to aggravating the suffering of innocent people. They don't seem to have any prick of conscience. It is mainly because, they are not concerned with Catholic teachings. But, never does one find an innocent one suffering because of Blackie except some criminals like the drug-agents. In Greeley's opinion, Blackie is the ideal model of all Catholic priests as well as Bishops.

The Bishop and the Missing L Train presents Blackie as the personification of Catholic faith and imagination. One notices the merging of faith and suffering reflected in his words and deeds. By virtue of his Catholic imagination, there is no such a thing as an insolvable mystery for Blackie (262). He gives great importance to the healing aspect of his priestly ministry. He finds out the truth and identifies the real villain. Blackie is bent upon mitigating the suffering of other people. He succeeds in reuniting the broken relationships between Jenny and Ned, and Christie and Tommy. Blackie has a unique faith in God as a sufferer. "God", he says, "suffers when we suffer. Jesus reveals to us the suffering of God. He is always nailed to the cross. God is always suffering" (105). If the priest is really a sacrament of this God, he will have to suffer for and with his people. He has to help them get rid of their suffering, if it is changeable. If the suffering is irremovable he has to train them to endure it patiently and boldly. Again, Blackie says, "I think God loves us all as a parent loves a child. He doesn't hate anyone.... When we do suffer, God suffers with us" (177). A Catholic priest should have strong faith in God's existence and His love. This Catholic faith is essential because, as Blackie says, "The parish priest's concern is with the spiritual welfare of his people" (141). If he is not endowed with genuine faith, he will not be able to administer the sacraments effectively. For example, in Blackie's opinion, "We have failed to explain what the sacraments are and hence, the faithful don't understand what it means when we talk about marriage as a

sacrament" (139). Greeley expects all priests to equip themselves with Catholic faith and reminds them of their obligation to sympathize with those who suffer. Because, they are representing Jesus Christ who went about doing good, healing the sick and consoling the suffering people during His public ministry.

Besides, Blackie is abundantly gifted with imagination which provides him with original ideas, insights and solutions to mysterious problems. But for this imaginative faculty, he will not be able to find suitable answers to various problems. Imagination assists Blackie in all his investigative and intellectual pursuits. He says, "I was born with that knowledge" (170). Sometimes he gets premonition about futuristic events. Regarding the villain behind the kidnapping of Guz, Blackie says, "For a fraction of a second I thought I saw a picture of the explanation. As so often happens, it vanished before I could recognize it" (33). As Blackie thinks about the kidnapping of Guz, he says, "An image of the enemy flickered in my preconscious, danced for a moment, and then slipped away" (154). In the light of his Catholic imagination, he believes that the Catholic Church can be renewed and that one of her important duties is healing the sick and the suffering, which is to be carried out by the clergy. His hope is expressed in these lines, "Because we still have the dream of a Church renewed according to the spirit of the Vatican Council II" (175). In short, Blackie, who is Greeley's ideal priest, is in possession of Catholic faith as well as right imagination. Accordingly, his behaviour is exceptionally Catholic and exemplary.

By the grace of Catholic imagination Blackie solves mysteries which is impossible for others, even the police force. Empowered by Catholic imagination Blackie endeavours to enable the Church to get rid of some of her acute problems. As a pioneer of renovating the Church, he makes her aware of the intensity of the problem of paucity of priests. The Church really suffers from clerical shortage. Since she does not have as many priests as

needed and hence, the Bishops are forced to appoint the problematic priests to new parishes. As Father Matt Dribben, the predecessor of Guz at Forest Hills tells Blackie, "Since Rome won't ordain women or married men, we have a priest shortage" (172). Blackie has always been Greeley's mouth-piece. The novelist has always upheld the significance of ordaining women of quality and integrity, and also married men. Similarly, Blackie believes that the problems related to the shortage of priests can be remedied by extending priesthood to women and married men. In the absence of good priests, the Bishops become helpless and they have no other way except re-assigning the accused priests also to other parishes and institutions and not to treatment centres. If the Church introduces these revolutionary changes, different from the present system of ordaining male and celibate persons only, she can remedy the suffering caused by clerical insufficiency. If the Church changes the practice of reserving ordination to male celibates alone, she can easily avoid persons like Guz. With the same intention of lessening the suffering of the Church as well as the innocent people, Blackie pressurizes the Archbishop to take drastic steps against priests like Guz and other suspicious clerics. In the end, the Cardinal orders Theodore, "You resign as pastor of St. Regi effective at once... I will suspend you and appoint an administrator" (279). Priests shall make Blackie, their role model.

The Catholic Church teaches that when someone suffers except for one's own reason, it has redemptive value and sanctifying effects. Those who suffer innocently and patiently because of others, participate in the vicarious suffering of Jesus on Calvary and they step into the shoes of the martyrs. The Biblical story of Job illustrates this idea. His saga of suffering sanctifies him and it only strengthens his faith in God. When God tests the faith of Abraham he has to suffer a lot, as he has to sacrifice his only son. Ultimately, this experience of suffering amplifies his religious faith and to this day, he is known as

the father of all faithful. This can be applied to the youngsters Jenny and Tommy in *The Bishop and the Missing L Train*. They are caught by the police, taken to the prison and so misunderstood and insulted by all. Both of them miss their lovers. What follows immediately is an estrangement between the lovers which is nothing but severe suffering for all of them. But, the same suffering does not separate them for ever, instead, it intensifies their love, and as a result of Blackie's interference all of them get reunited and they are happier now than ever before. In this sense, suffering can be viewed as a creative and binding force.

The cross on which Jesus died is a universally acclaimed symbol, of suffering. As a symbol, the cross reminds one not only of how much Jesus suffered physically, but also of how God loved him/her and continues to love them unconditionally. From this point of view, suffering for a noble cause has a sacramental value. It is not a sign of God's indifference to man or His helplessness. Rather, it is a sacrament of God's saving and transforming love for us. This Catholic understanding of suffering can be applied to all the lovers figuring in the novel under consideration. As they are reunited, the lovers realize that the previous suffering is beneficial to all of them. Many women characters appearing in Greeley's novels, as some of them have already been referred to in this chapter itself, have had similar experiences. This kind of an approach to suffering presupposes Catholic faith and imagination. Exclusive of faith, suffering is always disappointing and it invariably makes the sufferer a pessimist. Hence, each priest must be ready to present the creative and challenging aspects of suffering. No one can say 'no' to the reality of suffering. Even Blackie, being a human being will have some sort of suffering. Since the human life is enveloped in suffering, every priest must be in a position to deal with personal suffering and that of his people, in concurrence with the Catholic faith and imagination. That means, the only one who suffers reasonably is the

person who has correlated faith and suffering. This is something which every priest must understand and witness to.

The Bishop and the Missing L Train renders an important message for all the priests. As a human being in flesh and blood no priest is immune to suffering. The triple virtues / vows which every priest has to abide by, also necessitates some suffering in priestly life. In the eyes of the media-dominated world which highlights sexual permissiveness, a celibate priest is a challenge, and, many a time, a misfit. He has to suffer humiliation for not being in the world as it appreciates. This is a period of survival of the richest. The rich are the fit. The poor are to be dropped, uncared and unwept. This makes the spirit of poverty absurd and obsolete. Again, the poor priest will have to suffer a lot. These are days of self-fulfilment and self-assertion. Obedience is neither respected nor followed. To obey is equal to be a slave. The modern world prefers an efficient priest to an obedient priest. And as a result, the priest who remains loyal to his superiors or the Bishop is put to shame, occasionally. In short, all these three qualities of the priest bring to him some kind of suffering. Good priests like Blackie view the three virtues always in the light of Catholic faith. Then, they cease to be sources of suffering but make them more Christ-like, more committed to the people and more proud of their own vocation. These three virtues or vows are not three problems, but they are springs of satisfaction and sanctification. No priest can do justice to these three virtues without maintaining the correlation between faith and suffering which is an important component of Catholic imagination.

To wind up, *The Bishop and the Missing L Train* is Greeley's interpretation of the Catholic views on the theme of suffering which is part and parcel of human life. No one can run away from it. So, the Church is determined to strengthen her faithful to face suffering in life. The Church is discharging this duty through her priests. Hence, every

Catholic priest is bound to train his people to undergo suffering in a befitting manner. Greeley has written this novel as part of realizing his own priestly duty of preparing the community to face the reality of suffering. As this analysis has proved, only in association with faith, suffering becomes intelligible. In accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church, the novel maintains that the fact of suffering does not deny God's mercy and providence, but, it inspires and initiates the readers to believe in a loving God. Blackie will definitely remain as a source of motivation for all priests, worthy of emulation and illustration.

The next work selected for a detailed treatise is *Irish Stew!*, the latest in the Nuala Anne McGrail novel series. Dermot and Nuala solve two mysteries in this novel, as in the other novels of this series. The present issue of finding out the real culprits, responsible for the attempt on the life of Seamus Costelle, is narrated by Dermot. The story of how they solve the puzzle of Chicago's infamous Haymarket Riot that happened on May 4, 1886, is narrated by Ned Fitzpatrick, the same person who reported the hanging of Myles Joyce and his friends, as seen in *Irish Love*, a book just mentioned above. The story of Seamus, a leading lawyer from the south side of Chicago, illustrates how one's own wrong activities boomerang to oneself in the form of suffering. Ned's account of the Haymarket Riot highlights how the innocent people have to suffer and how justice and other human rights are denied to them. The theme of suffering seems to be hovering around the whole novel. That is why, a special analysis of *Irish Stew!* is included in this chapter. As the inquiry into the novel proceeds, an evaluation on how far the idea of correlation between faith and suffering can inspire and empower a Catholic priest to perform his pastoral obligation in a more exemplary way is also made.

Initially, one finds that many attempts are made on the life of Seamus. He suffers a lot because of these and similar threats. It is very natural that one feels pity for this

suffering person. But, this attitude changes, as Dermot and Nuala make clear that Seamus has cheated many of his partners and subordinates. First, everybody believes that an innocent man is suffering and feels grudge against all those who are responsible for this. Gradually, one begins to understand that Seamus is simply suffering which he deserves as punishment for his wrong-doing. The reader recognises that Seamus himself is the criminal. In the wake of the guidance given by Dermot and Nuala, he survives all attacks and becomes a transformed person. Originally, in all his transactions Seamus is activated by his monetary motives. But, in the next stage he is overwhelmed by the values of Catholic imagination. Now, he gives due importance to faith and imagination in the light of which he trains himself to approach and manage the reality of suffering. Eventually, he realises and confesses his role in aggravating suffering in his own life. And he is ready to amend his ways, as is clear from his confession.

In spite of his legal profession, gentlemanly appearance and social status, Seamus has done ineffable harm to his associates. All of them have been cheated, humiliated and threatened by him. The first attempt on the life of Seamus is done by Helen Shepherd, one-time partner of Seamus, and now his rival's wife. Dermot and Nuala find out what provokes Helen to shoot at Seamus. Helen forces Seamus to divorce his Diane and be her own for ever. Being at a loss, Seamus dumps her to go with Len Shepherd. Nuala is the first one to tell her husband that the killer is Helen (331). Another one, who appears in the robe and role of the murderer, is Hector Papageorgiou, the brother of Nicholas Papageorgiou whom Seamus has betrayed. There are many others like Jim Gigante, Brian McGourthy and Kevin McGourthy, who have to suffer various set backs because of Seamus. It is known to all that he has amassed millions of dollars from an Insurance Company to the detriment of his collaborators. Gradually, it becomes clear that the amount of suffering caused to Seamus is far less than the suffering caused by him to the

partners mentioned above. Seamus never thinks about the suffering he causes to others. He is always worried about his own suffering caused by them and takes all steps to avoid them.

Catholic faith upholds God's love and always insists on human fraternity. Catholic imagination provides people with ways and means for maintaining love and fellowship in the society and human relationship. Catholic Church attaches equal status and importance to love of God and love of one's brethren. This is what a Catholic priest is supposed to promulgate. The priest who leads the prayer inside the Church is actually preparing the community to engage in service and other charitable activities outside the Church. Seamus and his colleagues, now opponents, do not allege any significance to Catholic imagination. Nothing is said about their religious orientation. None of them has any relationship with a priest. Since, they lack in faith they don't trust anybody. Each one cheats the other. What they want to have is money. They want to make money by all means even at the expense of others. Those who follow Catholic imagination give priority to the welfare of others even at the expense of one's own interests. When one is driven by the money motive truth is at stake. The other is regarded as a threat. The other is another hell. Only in the eyes of Catholic faith one can respect the other as a person to be respected and cared for. The story of the relationship between Seamus and his associates is one of mutual distrust and it leads to suffering on both sides. All of them feel threatened by the other persons and spoil their peace of mind and sense of security. Here, is the role of the priest to make them aware of the correlation between faith and suffering.

This priestly duty is performed by Dermot and Nuala who are practicing Catholics. They establish steady contact with Seamus and save his life many a time from his assaulters. The protagonists lead Seamus to a final confession and conversion. Dermot and Nuala help him understand who his enemies are and that it is none but himself or his

craze for money that made them his foes. Finally, Seamus is seen sobbing, saying, "It's all my fault" (336). Dermot and Nuala are guided by Catholic faith which always demands self-purification and conversion. Under their influence Seamus recognises his deceitful nature and this awareness transforms him. John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus, prepares the people for His advent. Jesus also emphasises the need for conversion and reconciliation. A Catholic priest is bound to continue this process of conversion. As one reads the lives of saints, one is often struck by the fact that suffering acts as a catalyst for change in life. In their relationship with Seamus, Dermot and Nuala are performing the priestly duty of transforming a person making use of the situation of suffering. The conversion of Seamus will influence the nature of his rivals. They will no more be his rivals. The Catholic imagination unifies and always brings people to reconciliation. As a result, suffering leaves space for joyfulness and co-existence, as darkness paves the way for brightness. Thus, the priest has to remind the faithful of the inevitability of the correlation between faith and suffering. It is nothing but this correlation that saves Seamus from his suffering, and it is to be stressed that it is neither the police nor the advocates that save Seamus.

A question as to how the two protagonists solve the mysteries, is significant. As have already been established in the detailed study of the Irish novels *Irish Eyes* and *Irish Gold*, Dermot and Nuala are strong Catholics who attribute greater importance to faith than to anything else. Catholic imagination has endowed them with some special sort of inspiration or revelation which is beyond logical or rational analysis. *Irish Stew!* applauds their Catholic faith and the richness and efficacy of their imagination. Even as they suffer, because, their third child Socra Marie is in a Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit, their faith is not shattered. They believe in a God who is love and forgiveness and in their opinion He is one who sheds tears as His children suffer. They frequent the Church and receive the

sacraments which enable them to counteract any and every suffering on their way. Nuala tells Dermot, "There are only two Absolutes in the world, Dermot, a Swedish Vodka and God's love. Who are we to budget his forgiveness" (351). On another occasion, Dermot asks Nuala, "Do you think God loves you more than you love Socra Marie at this moment? Does He touch us the way you touch her?" (10). Both of them fully believe that God loves them more than they love each other. Even as their little child is in a critical condition they do not question either the presence or the providence of God. They pray to God for the sake of their sick child and remain unwavering in God's mercy. Nuala tells Dr. Foley, "Perhaps a Catholic couple would be more likely to take a chance on a very premature child" (360). All these prove beyond doubt that they have staunch faith in God's love and mercy and both of them are gifted with Catholic imagination abundantly.

With the help of the Catholic imagination, they are able to perform unnatural feats. For example, in her imagination Nuala accurately predicts the gender of children (4). Seeing Seamus, Nuala sees "The mark of death is on him" (17). Nuala and her child, Nellie, are able to hear the explosion that occurred in the year 1886. As Dermot says, "My wife had heard the noise. Her daughter knew all about it" (16). Again she tells her husband that there are people who want to kill him [Seamus]. She is sure that another killer would try to kill him (310). Nuala knows the name of the second killer of Seamus beforehand, and writes the murderer's name, and puts it in an envelope (190, 261). If Dermot and Nuala are able to solve mysteries, it is only because, they are guided by Catholic imagination. Suffering does not frighten them, for, they are sure that even God is a suffering one. So, they approach suffering as a sign or sacrament of God's love. Whenever one is in trouble, God who suffers, is by his or her side. They are sure that God loves Socra more than her parents. The little Bishop visits the sick child in the Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit. After reading a passage from the Bible, he explains how much God

loves the sick child and how much He suffers when the human beings do suffer. In his words, “He might say that He loves her more than you do and that as a good parent He suffers with her, even more than you do. When she cries, He might insist, He weeps” (110). Since, the God in whom he believes is one who suffers and one who sympathises with those who suffer, Dermot considers it as his duty to alleviate the suffering of others. In accomplishing this task, he is very much helped by the fey gifts of Nuala.

As already stated, Dermot and Nuala are Catholics and they are proud of their Catholic faith. Even amidst suffering, they love and serve the Church. They strive for truth and are ready to suffer for safeguarding her. As true Catholics, they train their children i. e. Nellie Coyne, Mick and Socra Marie, in Catholic faith. Both the parents have no doubt that their three children will be active and proud members of the Catholic Church. The novel comes to an end with such a bold declaration. Nuala boasts that the children will cheer for the Pope whenever they are in Rome, and asks him if he knows, why. His reply is, “Because they are Catholic”, he admitted. “Always will be, can’t ever be anything else” (377). It is in fulfilment of the Baptismal priesthood that the Church insists on her priests and the parents that it is their duty to educate the children in matters of faith and morality. In order that this be done, effectively, what is essentially required is, the exemplary living of the parents. In this respect, Dermot and Nuala are ideal persons, whom every priest can refer to, whenever he has to handle the theme of parents’ responsibility of imparting Catholic formation to their children. The young generation must be helped to develop a faithful approach to the fact of suffering as the protagonists of *Irish Stew!* do in the novel. The priest has to make the children aware of the fact that those who dissociate faith and suffering, will end up in suffering, and that those who correlate them, will transform themselves for the better.

Regarding the Haymarket Riot of 1886, Dermot and Nuala, assisted by Ned Fitzpatrick, trace the real criminal who threw the bomb. Seven policemen are killed in the explosion. The police version is that some workers and anarchists organized the demonstration against the Government and attacked the police. Half of the convicted persons are hanged. Ned, in his report prepared for *Chicago Daily News*, proves that these convicted persons are all innocent. In his opinion, they died exactly like Nora's husband, Myles Joyce and it is because, "The powerful people in Chicago want them to die" (76). The peaceful meeting is changed into a riot by the police officers, as an excuse to get rid of these people. Ned and the media people, in the presence of a Judge, raid the house over on Grand Avenue, in which Bonfield and Schaack, the corrupt police officers, have stored their stolen treasures. Ned recovers a letter written by Inspector Thomas Cowan to Captain Bonfield warning him of the Fenians, a group of Irish rebels, who have sent one Captain Mayo, a big man with broad shoulders and an odd gait, to murder him. This letter and a group photo in which Mayo figures with a circled face serve as the key to the Haymarket mystery. When the police created the riot, it is this Mayo who throws the bomb at Captain Ward mistaking him for Bonfield. Unfortunately, the bomb hit poor Degen, Ned's neighbour. After reading Ned's report, entitled, "Haymarket 1886" (70), John Peter Altgeld, the Governor, declares on June 26, 1893, "I, therefore, grant an absolute pardon to Samuel Fieldon, Oscar Neebe and Michael Schwab...." (344).

Ned's report lays great stress on the suffering of the innocent people caused by the crooked police officers, corrupt judges and the misinterpreting media. Ned, being a Catholic, is motivated by Catholic imagination. He is committed to give consolation to those who are suffering. He is equally determined to fight for justice, when it is denied to the poor people who are powerless and voiceless. Ned is also encouraged by certain intuitive insights, which form part and parcel of his Catholic imagination. He experiences

some flashes of truth and some sort of psychic revelation. As he claims, “Suddenly, I understood everything as though a streak of lightning that had exploded in my brain. Then the light faded and with it my insight. It would come back, however” (183). Greeley presents Ned on equal par with Dermot and Nuala. These persons are truth-seekers, peace-makers and the source of solace to the suffering people. Josie, whom Ned saves from Ireland and brings to Chicago, along with Nora, as narrated in *Irish Love*, tells him, “Uncle Ned, you are a real angel. You saved Nora and you saved me and now you are going to save my poor Jimmy. God sent you into the world to save people” (186). Ned here, witnesses to the basic vision and mission of the Church.

In Ned’s narration, the execution of the innocent victims is pathetic. None of them curses religion or God. Nor does anyone appear to be timid or despondent. The Chief of the prison informs Ned, “They’ve been reciting poetry and singing hymns all night... They all seem ready to die, eager even” (297). Even during their excruciating suffering, they do not relinquish their faith. They court death with bravery befitting a martyr. The way they are hanged, reminds us of Jesus’ crucifixion, and the hanging of Myles Joyce, the husband of Nora. Their death has eschatological significance. They are sure of their innocence and they hope the world will realize it and the worth of their sacrifice in years to come. That is why Spies, one of the victims, shouts at the last moment, “The time will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you are throttling today” (298). These inspiring words express their wish and prayer that the world must come to know the truth. The police can torture the body but, no one can thwart the will of a person. Ned proudly records that they died for the working class.

Courts and police stations are institutions where the poor people expect justice and human treatment. But, most of the judges and police officers, figuring in *Irish Stew!*, are so corrupt that they have no concern other than catering to their own vested interests.

They are perpetrators of suffering. After the execution, the police officers take pleasure in persecuting the families of the deceased. They try to incriminate Ned, too, but, in vain. They argue that he is an anarchist and that he is part of the conspiracy to kill cops. They are the people supposed to be custodians and protectors of the weak sections. But, the corrupt system makes them torturers. They influence the media and all of them join together in distorting historical facts. Ned is a Catholic who is fully devoted to the cause of Catholic imagination. He can never betray or crucify or falsify truth. Every Catholic priest has to preach the truth. If he does not do it properly, ignorance and falsehood will prevail over the society. In such a situation the rich will exploit and liquidate the unorganized ordinary people like the immigrants in Chicago. They misinterpret history in such a way that it serves their own vested interests. This is what causes inexplicable suffering to the poor people.

Irish Stew! proves that those who follow Catholic imagination become protectors of life. It provides the people with peace of mind and courage to undergo suffering. The correlation between faith and imagination gives orientation, satisfaction and justification to their lives. Dermot and Nuala save the life of their child, Socra Maria. Then, they save the life of Seamus. Ned saves the good name of thousands of immigrants in Chicago who are unjustly accused of extremism and violence. He has given security to Nora and Josie. They strengthen and console the suffering people, and try their best to remove the possible causes of suffering. Sometimes, these characters themselves have to suffer. But they never inflict pain on others. On the other hand, there is another category of characters who never care for the dignity of life. They neglect faith and imagination. They do not seem to respect either their own lives or those of others. They do not even hesitate to commit homicide and suicide. The example of Mayo will substantiate this point. He is a notorious criminal and is the one who throws the bomb, killing seven people, six of

them, policemen. Later, he himself is killed by someone else. His corpse is found in a ditch with a bullet through his head (321). Mayo's tragic end recalls to one's mind, the words of Jesus, "For, all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26: 52). He has paid the penalty for leading a life without either faith or Catholic imagination. This story suggests that one who inflicts pain on others will have to suffer in this world itself. Hence, the priests shall teach the faithful to abide by moral principles, which presupposes and necessitates a correlation between faith and suffering.

As part of his transformation, Seamus undergoes a process of self-purification, which is expressed in his confession. What begins in the form of a conflict and confrontation, gradually, develops into intimate relationship. The net result is that Seamus becomes a purified Catholic under the influence, and after the model, of Dermot and Nuala. This is more or less the way God deals with people in suffering. Initially, God seems to be unmindful of the suffering persons. But, He provides them with joy and peace in the end.

Thus, *Irish Stew!* proves that a good person is one who is able to develop a correlation of faith and suffering in daily life. Even if the novel abounds in various kinds of suffering, it comes to a happy ending, as every typically Catholic story, in Greeley's opinion, has to. The novelist expects the Catholic priests to appreciate the corrective and redemptive aspects of suffering and to highlight this message in Sunday sermons. They have to motivate the faithful to be saviours in daily life, by consoling and supporting those who are suffering. At the same time they have to fight against social causes, which necessitate suffering. To sum up, the believers must be trained to approach the reality of suffering from the angle of Catholic faith and lead a life as inspired by Catholic imagination.

The last novel to be discussed in this chapter is *The Priestly Sins*. As the name itself suggests, this novel is an account of how sins in the life of a priest result in suffering to himself as well as to others, and on account of which many innocent ones also have to suffer a lot. The title, the theme, and the message of this novel remind everyone of *Fall from Grace* discussed as the second one in this chapter. As the ensuing analysis is to reveal that there are many similarities between these two novels. Father Gerry Green (*Fall from Grace*) and Father Lenny Lyon (*The Priestly Sins*) are sources and causes of suffering mainly due to their pedophile tendencies. There are two worst sufferers in these novels; Kathleen in *Fall from Grace* and Father Herman Hoffman in *The Priestly Sins*. Both of them survive all sorts of suffering and their stories are worthy of being illustrated by priests in their sermons. Two lay persons, Kieran in *Fall from Grace* and Horst Heller in *The Priestly Sins* love their Church so much that they come forward and urge their respective Bishops to enact laws in order to solve or control the pedophile problems. *The Priestly Sins* can be said to be Greeley's strong warning to the Church authorities not to cover up the sexual crimes of the clergy. This novel takes the leaders of the Church to task for incarcerating or crucifying the innocent ones in the wake of sexual abuse charges, instead of punishing the guilty.

The Priestly Sins opens with the trial of Father Hoffman in connection with the sexual abuse of a boy named Todd Sweeney, by another priest, Lenny Lyon, by name. Hoffman has seen Lyon raping Sweeney at the quarters of Theodolinda parish which belongs to the Archdiocese of Plains City. For having complained to the Bishop against Lyon, an influential person in the Church, Hoffman has been locked up for six months in St. Edward's Centre in New Mexico. Horst Heller, a lay advocate, takes up this case, releases Hoffman from the treatment centre and argues in favour of him. The Judge Arthur Sturn expresses his shock at the cruelty meted out to Hoffman, the stupidity of the

medical reports presented in the court against him, and the malignity of the Church leadership which punishes the innocent ones and protects the culprits. Seeing the medical certificates prepared at the instruction of Blackie Ryan, the problem solver, the Judge declares that Hoffman is a healthy heterosexual celibate. Treating such a person for homosexuality is nothing but absurdity. The Judge, specially, praises Hoffman for the latter's dignity, courage, integrity and restraint, despite his manifold sufferings. He says, "You have behaved with dignity and restraint, and, if I may say so, courage. I still have some hope for the Catholic Church" (354). It has to be stressed that it was Hoffman's patient suffering and the spirit of forgiveness which prompt him to praise the Catholic Church.

The judgment issued by Sturn necessitates drastic changes. The Archbishop, Simon Isidore Louis, already notorious for corruption and alcoholism, is forced to resign. Father John Horwath of Lincoln Junction parish, a zealous priest, is made the new Archbishop. Dr. Michael Strauss, the director of the treatment centre, is dismissed. All the accomplices of the old Archbishop are removed from their positions. According to Greeley, the hallmarks of these priests are "more stupidity and incompetence than malice" (179). These priests are more concerned with decency, docility, decorum, and doctrinal orthodoxy and they never sympathize with the poor people who are always suffering. They are not driven by Catholic imagination. They cannot or do not exhibit any interest in Catholic faith. They are administrators and not pastors of souls. Very often they are not nice with the lay people. If scandalous persons like Lyon thrive, it is mainly because of the support of these kinds of priests. Every priest has the duty of healing the sick and caring for the needy. Such a priest shall not degenerate to the level of a torturer. A priest who has to sanctify his life as well as that of others must not be as immoral and impure as Lyons. He shall not add sorrow to others, but he has to provide them with joy and hope,

especially, in the midst of suffering. Greeley expects his ideal priest to be at his best, as an eschatological sign of hope, when he is surrounded by various types of suffering.

Hoffman, the priest, is the one who suffers the most in *The Priestly Sins*. For having complained against Lyons he is to endure the worst suffering. Nobody believes what he has witnessed. Justice is denied to him both by his Archbishop and his fellow priests. Even the father of the abused boy blames him. Dr. Thomas Sweeney denounces Hoffman as a liar, and alleges that it is he [Hoffman] who has hurt his son, Todd. Lyons has been accused of similar cases in all the parishes he has served. But, the Archbishop and the police clear him of all charges. He is kept, under lock and key for six months in the treatment centre. It is really ironical that a priest who has reported a homosexual priest to the superiors is forced to undergo treatment on charges of homosexuality. Hoffman says, "I am not a gay, was not gay, and was not cured of being gay" (235). Some priests and doctors who are supporters of Lyons do their level best to prolong the stay of Hoffman in St. Edward's Centre. They fake certificates and threaten Horst Heller, the reputed lawyer who is bent upon saving Hoffman. Many priests think that Hoffman is a Judas Iscariot who is betraying the Church and spoiling the good name of the clergy. On account of all these, Hoffman turns to be a man of suffering.

In fact, Hoffman does not deserve any of these sufferings. He joins the seminary with the purest of intentions, giving up his fascination for Kathleen. He wants to be a good priest. In Hoffman's words, "It was clear to me, nonetheless, that I was called by God to be a priest, a parish priest, to work and pray for and with the people in a parish, to share my life with them and their life with me" (147). When Dr. Goodwin, one of Hoffman's professors, declares, "The Roman Catholic Church needs good priests these days" (170), he thinks that he will become one of the best. Despite all his sufferings, Hoffman continues to be a sincere priest, fully committed to the people at all costs. It

must be remembered that he has no grudge against Lyons who is mainly responsible for all his suffering. Later, when Lyons suffers from AIDS, Hoffman is the only priest who visits him and looks after him. When Lyons dies, Hoffman officiates the Mass and preaches therein, about which he comments, "One pariah presiding over the obsequies of another" (286). He seems to be an embodiment of silent and perennial suffering and typically Catholic forgiveness. For him, even Lyons is not an enemy. Even as he suffers so much, Hoffman always tries to protect others from dangers and tries to mitigate their suffering.

Hoffman knows very well that he is innocent. He is equally aware of Lyon's culpability. As a priest in possession of a moral conscience, it is Hoffman's obligation to protect a boy being raped by a scandalous priest. The Archbishop is expected to be impartial and should have punished Lyons. Instead, Hoffman is insulted and incarcerated. He finds nowhere any justification for his personal suffering except in association with Catholic faith. Jesus the High Priest, the model of all priests, is suffering on the cross for no fault of His. Hoffman believes that he becomes a genuine Catholic priest only as he suffers like the crucified Lord. Exactly as he forgives his offenders, Hoffman unconditionally forgives Lyons and all his accomplices. Naturally speaking, anybody would have clamoured for the punishment of Lyons. What Hoffman aims at is the conversion and purification of Lyons. He is happy when he finds Lyons dying in peace. The Archbishop and his collaborators pay their unavoidable penalty by renouncing their posts. When all of them are put to shame the court praises Hoffman. Finally, the truth wins. This is how God acts. A person who has Catholic imagination alone will have so much patience to wait until the end. A Catholic priest must always train his community to understand and approach the reality of suffering in the light of Catholic faith and imagination.

From his school days onwards, Hoffman has a lover, that is Kathleen. One is likely to think that, as we find in some novels written by Greeley himself, she will be a source of suffering or a constant botheration throughout his priestly ministry. When he reveals to her his plan of becoming a priest, she responds like a perfectly mature person. She tells him, "Have a good life. Be a good priest, I'll look you up on, Judgment Day" (160). She neither seduces him nor bothers him not even once in future. But, she appears as the wife of one Liam to support Hoffman's fight for justice in the Church. On another occasion, he evaluates his affair with Kathleen. He asks himself, "Had she been a temptation? Or was she perhaps a grace?" (220). In no time Hoffman realizes that her presence is really a grace or God's sign in his life. Kathleen, on her part, remembers Hoffman with ineffable feelings of reverence and gratitude. As she writes, "You saved me from my anger, from my bad language, from my melancholy, from my temper ..." (314). Kathleen respects Hoffman as a priest and, on account of that, restrains herself from all physical contacts with him. Being a priest, he refrains from all genital expressions of love, in his relationship with Kathleen. This is possible because they are moved by not biological instincts, but Catholic imagination.

The Priestly Sins presents the priestly life of Hoffman, as already mentioned, as one of suffering. But, wherever he is, he does excellent work. He is a grand success even in the worst parish. Though, he is always suffering, he is a model priest. As a priest he officiates sacraments and his life itself is a sacrament, that is, a sign of God's love and grace. For example, while visiting Lyon in the AIDS Treatment Centre, Hoffman shows mercy and gives his blessing to many sick people. One of the nurses comments, "It's good to see a priest. You're a sign here of God's forgiving love" (265). There are many priests who administer the sacraments. But very few of them succeed in being sacraments of God's love for all. Hoffman really loves his priestly work. So, celibacy does not create

any problem to him. Many people wrongly think that celibacy is the most important cause of suffering in the life of a priest. In the life of Hoffman, celibacy is the unending source of happiness, inspiration and freedom. On this occasion what Dr. Stephen McAteer tells Hoffman during his confinement, is very relevant. In his words, "Celibacy isn't the reason priests leave; the reason is that they don't like the work" (325). Hoffman does not suffer because of his celibacy, but it is because he is celibate, that he is able to work so much for those who suffer. Viewed from the angle of Catholic imagination and faith, Hoffman is really satisfied with his priestly vocation. The priests who do not like their work and go astray are those who neglect Catholic faith and imagination.

In all his frankness Hoffman who suffers a lot, convinces his people that there are sinful priests which means that they are human beings. Priests are not saints directly imported from heaven. There are a few rotten apples among them. It is possible. The people should not follow them blindly. They should know that the priests are not immune to suffering which is natural and unavoidable as far as one is a human person. Whether the priest bears with the suffering in accordance with the Catholic faith and imagination is more important than the question, why the priests should suffer. To the people who came to receive him, when released from the treatment centre Hoffman says, "Never put your faith in us poor priests. Always cling to God's love for us and the beauty and goodness of the Catholic heritage" (358). Bishop Blackie shares the same idea in his conversation with Kathleen. In his words, "You must put your faith in God and in the Lord and His Blessed Mother and our whole glorious heritage and not in us poor priests, even if we are bishops and popes" (367). Any priest has to admit that this kind of an attitude to priests and their sufferings and failures is impossible without Catholic faith. In Hoffman's opinion priestly suffering need not alienate the priest from priesthood nor shall it detract people from their priests.

Hoffman being a man of silent suffering and having no much influence with the Archbishop, he alone cannot bring about any changes in the Church. But, *The Priestly Sins* presents a strong character, Horst Heller, an advocate, who is bent upon curtailing suffering in priestly life. Though, Heller is a lay person, he believes that his baptismal priesthood empowers him to involve in the case of Hoffman and to see to it that justice is not denied to him. If he never interfered, Hoffman would end up in the treatment centre. The honourable court readily accepts his findings and Hoffman is released immediately. His demands are approved by the Church which is resolved to deal with the pedophile priests seriously and impartially, unlike in the past. In Greeley's opinion every Catholic priest must aim at enabling the laity to fulfill their priestly duties. Heller has to meet a lot of threats and criticisms from priests as well as lay persons for taking side with Hoffman. Disregarding his own suffering, he does his maximum to minimize Hoffman's suffering. It is the duty of a Catholic priest to suffer for others on certain occasion and they have to make the lay people aware of doing the same in their own circumstances. It is promising to see that a layman like Heller is able to bring about a lot of changes in the Church. He launches a priestly fight for justice and transparency in all spheres of the Church. Many priests join him in the venture. He is mostly helped by Blackie, the Episcopal detective. Searching for truth is a collaborated endeavour and it is one of the primary duties of priests as well as the laity. Heller systematically proves that pedophilia is not a spiritual problem. It is a psychic one. This problem is not exclusively of the priests.

The Priestly Sins is a typically Greelean novel in the sense that there is a lay woman, named Kathleen, who heroically makes substantial contribution to the Church. In Heller's legal fight for Hoffman, she assists him. Kathleen, the one time lover of Hoffman, is at present the wife of Liam Shannon and they have two children. Even after Hoffman joined the Seminary and became a priest, Kathleen loves the Church. As one

traces her family, s/he finds that she grew up as a motherless child. She is nourished by Catholic faith and imagination. She is a regular Mass server and she sings in the choir. Thus, she has formed a Catholic integrity in her personality. She never attempts to possess Hoffman, the priest. At the same time, she always supports the Church in all her activities. Kathleen encourages Hoffman during the period of his suffering behind the bars. She feels greatly relieved when the corrupt Archbishop steps down and Hoffman is re-assigned to a new parish. Considering the fact that Kathleen is a lay person, and that too, a woman, one cannot but admire the services she renders to the Church. As she tries to help Hoffman, what Kathleen sees is not the body of a lover but the respectful person of a reverend priest to whom justice is denied. This is inevitable for her because, she is driven by Catholic faith and imagination which teaches everyone to regard the other as a valuable person and not as an object.

The Priestly Sins is not so much about the victim of a pedophile priest as it is about the suffering of another innocent priest on account of the same. A pedophile person never cares for the suffering of the victim as he does not want anything else except his own gratification. It is clear that such a person is not endowed with Catholic faith and imagination. A genuine Catholic priest suffers for others after the model of Christ and for the sake of his people. A pedophile priest is an anti-witness to this, in the sense that he inflicts pain on others for his own corporal pleasure. Such a priest never becomes a sacrament of God's love. Hoffman who suffers in spite of his innocence becomes a sacrament. As a firm Catholic, he imagines and believes that God, who is nothing but love, will turn his suffering to happiness. He has hope that He will reward him with celestial bliss. In the light of this faith and this imagination Hoffman never yields to despair. The success of Hoffman as a suffering priest is due to the excess of Catholic

imagination he maintains in his character. The failure of Lyons is owing to his lack of the same imagination.

In short, *The Priestly Sins* is Greeley's response to the problem of suffering of priests because of themselves or other priests. No one has ever been able to present an all conclusive explanation of this problem, which satisfies all. Anyway, Greeley has been successful in convincing his readers that without relating to Catholic faith and imagination a priest will not understand the meaning of suffering. Devoid of faith considerations, suffering is likely to lead a person to the abyss of helplessness and aimlessness. In such a situation, even a priest may relapse into despair. In and through Hoffman's story, it becomes very clear, that a priest, when he correlates faith and suffering, derives a kind of peace, joy and holiness in the midst of bitter experiences and painful incidents in life. This novel upholds beyond doubt the fact that for a Catholic priest celibacy is not a source of suffering. For a priest, who is really serious about his vow/virtue of celibacy, it is a fountain of liberation, availability, sharing and holiness. In the case of those priests who do not possess the merging of faith and imagination the same celibacy may be instrumental to make some of them at times scandalous and perverse in many ways. Though, such cases are rare and exceptional, the entire Church is put to shame, and the dignity of the whole clergy is challenged. That is why, *The Priestly Sins* strongly demands that the pedophile priests have to be sent for treatment, and not to be re-appointed in new places.

In Greeley's opinion, each Catholic priest has to admit that a pedophile priest who causes suffering to others is a scandal. At the same time, a priest who suffers for a noble cause is a martyr. He becomes a sacrament, a sign of God's own love and grace. The suffering of an innocent priest leads to his own sanctification and the conversion of others. One's priestly ministry will not be complete without actively taking part in

programmes and projects with the intention of obstructing suffering as far as possible, which incurs personal suffering in the priest's life. When the priest suffers for no fault of his, he turns out to be an eschatological sign of hope and bliss. This suffering will result in God's glorification and his own resurrection. For this what is needed is the correlation between faith and suffering. The priestly life must be a reflection or cross section of this correlation and it is his duty to motivate the lay people to abide by the same. In doing so, the priests have to assure the co-operation of the lay people, including that of the women. This seems to be the message of *The Priestly Sins*.

The examination done in this chapter was on how Greeley handles the problem of suffering, with special reference to five of his selected novels. His ideal characters are those who analyze the cause and extent of suffering in relation to Catholic faith. Apart from the correlation of faith and suffering, a Catholic will not find joy and peace in daily life. Destined to be a guide and a model of a given community, a priest must equip himself with this correlation. Only then he can survive the suffering in his own life and console those who suffer for various reasons. In brief, *Wages of Sin* is an account of how Lorcan James Flynn finds out that Maeve, his mother, is the fire-setter, responsible for the tragedy of Joseph T. Meehan's family. Greeley argues that suffering can be cured by the application of Catholic imagination and therapeutic counseling leading to family reunion. Each Catholic priest has to remember and teach his people the fact that, in most cases, it is neglect of Catholic imagination and faith that expresses itself in the form of suffering.

Fall from Grace narrates how the pedophile priests necessitate suffering in their own lives as well as in the lives of the victims. The novel is a strong appeal to the Church leaders to take actions against such priests. In spite of the bitter experiences, Kieran and Kathleen have suffered, they love and serve the Church. In Greeley's opinion, suffering is so rampant all over the world that the celibate priests alone will not be able to solve all

the problems. So, each priest must motivate the lay people, especially, the women, to take up the cross in order to provide those who are suffering, with consolation and encouragement. All priests have to be at the service of the people, in fulfilling the healing ministry. The message of the novel seems to be that the correlation between faith and suffering empowers a person to consider suffering as a blessing in disguise.

The Bishop and the Missing L Train enumerates how Blackie redeems Bishop Quill Guz, who is kidnapped by another priest with the support of the parishioners, who suffered a lot because of him. Greeley makes it clear that suffering in priestly life is mostly thanks to the jealousy of the fellow-priests. He appeals to all priests to realize that their task is to unify, strengthen and co-ordinate the people and different activities, and not the other way. Every priest must lead a life in accordance with Catholic imagination. They ought to maintain the correlation of faith and suffering, if not, suffering can easily enfeeble, dissociate and disarm one's self-confidence and spiritual life. This novel also contains Greeley's controversial recommendations for introducing married clergy and women priesthood in the Church. He earnestly requests each and every priest to imitate Blackie, for, he is a personification of proper correlation between faith and suffering. Summing up, one must say that this novel highlights the redemptive values and sanctifying effects of suffering.

As in the other Irish novels, Dermot and Nuala solve two mysteries in *Irish Stew!*. The protagonists find out the criminals hunting for the life of Seamus Costelle and they solve the mystery regarding the Haymarket riot of 1886. This novel portrays how innocent people have to suffer because of the corrupt legal systems and the police officers. Dermot and Nuala convince Seamus that he himself is responsible for his suffering. He is transformed and he submits himself to be overwhelmed by the correlation of faith and suffering. *Irish Stew!* teaches that one's life becomes joyful and peaceful only

when the person is in harmony with the Catholic imagination. Under the influence of Catholic imagination, Seamus decides not to cause suffering to others. Ned, a journalist, is always motivated by the correlation of faith and suffering and engages himself in all sorts of activities meant for saving other people from suffering. Greeley presents this novel as a clarion call for self-purification and complete transformation. Every Catholic priest has to derive inspiration from Catholic faith and imagination in order to deal with his personal suffering and to convince others of the medicinal and liberative aspects of suffering.

The Priestly Sins is the last novel discussed in this chapter or in this thesis. This narrates the suffering of Father Hoffman owing to the sins of another priest by name Lenny Lyon. The story of Hoffman proves that a Catholic priest will have to suffer, even if he is innocent, like the true follower of the crucified Lord. As a result of Hoffman's forgiveness Lyon becomes a new person and dies peacefully. Two prominent characters in the novel, Horst Heller, an advocate, and Kathleen, Hoffman's former lover, are lay persons, yet, they are of immense service to the Church and the clergy. Their attitude to suffering is modified by the considerations of Catholic imagination, and they remind us of what St Paul writes to the Thessalonians. In his words, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted ... it is for your consolation and salvation" (2 Thes. 1: 5-6). To sum up, *Priestly Sins* argues that those who lead scandalous lives are instrumental to aggravate the suffering of themselves and that of others. The Catholic priest has to understand and teach the people that they cannot meaningfully and effectively deal with suffering without connecting it with faith. Suffering turns out to be heroic and salvific only in the context of Catholic imagination.

Before concluding this chapter, some of the non-fictional writings of Greeley where he refers to his own suffering and explains how he has survived all of them with the guidance of Catholic imagination, is given. Enquiring about the probable reasons of suffering in his life, one finds that due to his controversial ideas Greeley has been subject to severe criticism and suspicion in the Church circles. The media people have sidetracked Greeley to a great extent. Many a high-browed academician undermine his literary excellence. A lot of people are explicitly jealous of his profuse and prolific publications and the ensuing popularity. The number of people who have accused him of pornographic and pot-boiling stories, is never less. He has suffered a lot being alienated from the fellow-priests and misunderstood by the Church leaders. As he writes in his prayer journal *My Love: A prayer Journal* (2001), at one time he thinks he has been “A permanent pariah” (111). One comes across so many passages in this book, which are relevant to the discussion on suffering. With regard to his personal sufferings, Greeley writes, “My dreams were troubled by memories of the past, disappointments, frustrations, betrayals” (206). Again, he states “I’ve survived through worst taumas in the Church...” (209). These references are more than enough to substantiate that Greeley has been a man of suffering inspite of his popularity as a writer and professor.

In response to the accusations of being very rich, leading a life of luxury and writing trashy novels, Greeley writes in *The Prayer Journal-Letters to A Loving God* (2002), “Obviously he knows nothing about me or my life or my work. The letter tells more about him than it does about me, yet, I must realize that most priests think about just the same about me though perhaps in less violent fashion (and sometimes more violent)” (124-125). Despite a lot of publicity as to his having left priesthood or about to do it immediately, Greeley still remains a Catholic priest proud of his achievements in priestly ministry and contributions to literature. In one of his earlier prayer journals, *My Love:*

Prayer Journal (1978), he declares, "I have no regrets about being a priest and few about what I have done as a priest" (164). However criticized or alienated, Greeley is resolved to be a priest thanks to his love for priesthood and the Church. Referring to how he persists in the Catholic priesthood, Greeley writes in *A Piece of My Mind on Just About Everything* (1978), "I will remain both a priest and a writer. I can be thrown out of papers, but I won't leave the priesthood even as they try to throw me out for saying what I think" (213). All these references prove that as far as Greeley is concerned suffering in his personal life is not a hindrance to priestly satisfaction or literary performance. He manages suffering and survives all other ordeals by means of his adherence to Catholic imagination. He has anchored himself in the correlation of faith and imagination.

For a Catholic, suffering is a period of spiritual renewal. Greeley also realizes more and more about God's love, as he advances in years withstanding various forms of suffering. He realizes that God is not one who causes suffering but He is one who sustains him during suffering. With reference to how bitter experiences in life enable him to modify his idea of God's nature, he explains in the *Prayer-Journal-Letters to A Loving God* (2002). His first image of God was one of awe and, perhaps, terror. Then, "The image of a father, a consoling spouse, and finally, a vulnerable God who needed me" (66). The main purpose of Greeley as a priest, writer and storyteller is witnessing to this loving and forgiving nature of God. In order to emphasize this real nature of God, Greeley has written many non-fictional works. Most important among them are *Jesus Myth* (1970), *Sinai Myth* (1975) and *The Mary Myth* (1977). His views on God's loving nature are best expressed in these triple myth studies. In these books Greeley argues that God is not a grave judge waiting for punishing man. He is not a sadist who enjoys seeing people suffering. He is not one who is not bothered about their suffering. God should not be envisaged as a distributor of suffering. But, He is the source of solace and strength to all

who follow Catholic imagination. About God's Catholic nature, Greeley writes in *The Catholic Imagination* (2001), "She [Mary], the Mother Love of God, the generous and loving, life-giving power of God, the tenderness of God, the fertility of God, the nurturing of God" (90).

The core of the Catholic theology is the Passover Mystery, which includes the whole of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. As Greeley writes in his latest book, *Jesus* (2007) the life of Jesus is "The greatest story of all. And the widest surprise of all" (169). Jesus is the only Son with whom God the Father is well pleased (Matthew 3: 17), and He is also, the one who suffers the most and the worst in crucifixion. Greeley reminds all the priests that they are to preach this Christ, the suffering servant of Yahweh. First of all, the priests have to face suffering as the Church expects them to, and they must conscientize the lay people to approach the reality of suffering from the angle of faith. According to Greeley, there is nothing more powerful than the memory of Good Friday which can motivate the clergy as well as the laity to take of the cross in daily life. He confesses his belief in a God who suffers with us and strengthens us in our suffering. He writes in *My Love: A Prayer Journal* (2001) "The lesson of Good Friday is that God suffers with us. Like a very good parent, he suffers when his children suffer... The Catholic crossifix is the symbol of the ongoing suffering of God with us" (203). The belief that one is not alone in moments of suffering but in God's company, is, infact, vivifying.

Without resorting to a correlation of faith and understanding, life misses all its value, charm and surprise. Priests must allow themselves to be bound by this correlation. Otherwise, they will find life meaningless and miserable. Even as he suffers, the Catholic priest has to witness to the loving nature of God. If he does not convey the image of a loving God, he will be counter-witnessing, and thereby, damaging Catholic sensibility. Greeley's readers have to take up the challenge of suffering, putting all their trust in a

God, who is vulnerable and suffering. This is what and how Greeley's ideal characters, and, to a great extent, the novelist himself, is doing in the middle of suffering. The fundamental teaching of his fictional and non-fictional corpus is that this type of an approach to the fact of suffering is possible only in the light of a combination of Catholic faith and imagination. Hence, the message of this component of faith and suffering is very significant to all the believers, and especially, to the Catholic clergy.