

CONCLUSION

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Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

The study made here has been to formulate an innovative understanding and presentation of how the correlation of faith and imagination enables Andrew M. Greeley to formulate imaginative plots into literary edifices. It has been also showed how the same correlation empowers his characters, both clerical and lay, to fulfill their priestly obligation in a greater exemplary manner. The analysis has made it clear that the imagination is at work when the priest involves himself in various dimensions of priestly life. As this study has revealed, Greeley, the priestly fictionist, is one who not only did not find it a problem to combine faith and imagination, but also always upheld the truth that combining the two, constitutes the very basis of his literary creations and the pastoral activities of his priestly characters. All the chapters have attempted to establish that a priest will not be able to do justice to his call and to the people, if he is not following the precepts of imagination.

The introductory chapter, 'Faith and Imagination', which forms the theoretical basis of this thesis, has attempted to elaborate on the concepts of imagination and faith. This effort helps one to understand the meaning and usefulness of faith and imagination, and upheld the inevitability of following Catholic imagination in priestly life, liturgical celebration and in all aspects of human life. After referring to various definitions and interpretations of imagination, a record is given about the views of some leading writers and critics who have comprehended and employed it in literature down through the ages.

The presentation of the major theories of imagination has been followed by an account of various aspects of faith, as viewed by the Catholic Church. Among the Catholic writers, Andrew M. Greeley is considered the foremost, preoccupied with

preaching Catholic faith and portraying Catholic priesthood in his writings. With reference to *The Holy Bible*, the teachings of the Church, the findings of theologians and the like, it has been established that faith is basically a gift of God, though it is essential for salvation. Faith also involves an intense relationship between God and the human being. Faith is not confined to the recital of prayers and administration of sacraments, instead, it compels the believers to fight against social evils and to struggle hard for justice and equality. By its very nature, faith has to be expressed. And one has seen how, many artists and writers considered fine arts as the media for promulgating their religious faith.

In the light of the understanding of imagination and faith, the next steps taken was to explain the religious imagination and, especially, 'Catholic imagination' which essentially means acceptance of faith as revealed by God, who is the fullness of truth, and as interpreted by the Catholic Church. Catholic imagination has its inspiration and justification from the example of Christ Himself. In this context, the significance of merging faith and imagination, and the use of stories and symbols in liturgy is shown. The study also presents various advantages and uses of employing the Catholic imagination, which is analogical, best distinguished from 'Protestant' imagination, which is dialectical.

After highlighting the common features of Catholic imagination, its most important components are enumerated in the following chapters with illustrations from Andrew M. Greeley's novels. The five components are identified as Faith and Reason, Faith and Preaching, Faith and Love, Faith and Administration of Sacraments, and Faith and Suffering. These components have been duly elucidated in the ensuing chapters in relationship with the various priestly duties. Hence, the explanation of these components ultimately portray who a Catholic priest is and what his obligations are, since this has

been a study of the priesthood as portrayed by Greeley in his novels. Five novels each have been analyzed in each of the five chapters. As stated in the first chapter, a detailed survey of these constituents of Catholic imagination became a must, since the very hallmark of Greeley's literary corpus, fictional and non-fictional, is inspired and overwhelmed by Catholic imagination.

Before winding up the first chapter, a restatement of the hypothesis is made to the effect that without resorting to a dialectical merging of faith and imagination, in other words, in the absence of Catholic imagination, a Catholic priest portrayed in Greeley's novels cannot fulfill his pastoral obligations of preaching, shepherding and sanctifying. The introductory chapter has also given an account of a very short bio-data of Greeley and his achievements with special reference to the extent to which he has been influenced by Cardinal Newman, G. K. Chesterton and Graham Greene.

Faith and Reason is the first correlation that has been analyzed in the second chapter. As Greeley's novels reveal, a combination of faith and reason is essential for grasping truth and witnessing to God as the Ultimate Truth. Life becomes meaningful only when a human being knows who he or she is, and what the aim of life is. Hence, this chapter has been an attempt to understand the identity or the meaning of one's vocation especially that of a priest. In concurrence with the Catholic Church, Greeley is of the opinion that, by virtue of one's Baptismal priesthood, even a lay person is a priest and is bound by the priestly obligations. The five novels studied in this chapter convince one that it is the duty of each priest to represent and interpret truth. He is God's ambassador to the world. The identity of a priest consists in his being and becoming a sacrament of God who is the Truth. A priest on earth is the vicar of Jesus Christ, the Highpriest, who is the Truth. That means, a Catholic priest has to search for truth, and witness to it, and fight against falsehood and misinterpretation of history. That is why Greeley's favourite

priests, especially, Blackie and George, are always presented as truth-finders and its custodians. No one can attain truth without abiding by the correlation of faith and reason. As the study has attempted to prove, those who are guided by Catholic imagination go after truth, and those who neglect Catholic imagination, spoil their life as a result of their pursuit after wealth and worldly pleasures.

Ascent into Hell, the first novel dealt with in this chapter, is actually a strong appeal to all to realize their genuine vocation, that is, the will of God inscribed in them. Hugh Dunlon leaves his priesthood and marries Maria, and both of them experience fulfilment in life. In their pursuit after the real vocation and identity, both of them have been empowered by the correlation of faith and reason. The novel has claimed that the attainment of truth and the commitment to one's vocation are impossible without resorting to this component of Catholic imagination. The central theme of *Patience of A Saint* is an illustration of how Blackie interprets Redmond P. Kane's religious experience and thereby, transforms him into a new person. Blackie, who is always a problem-solver and investigator, is a subscriber to Catholic imagination. In and through the portrayal of Blackie, the priest, Greeley is making an appeal to all readers that they must keep the balance between faith and reason. A priest has to be truthful to his ministry and he ought to train the lay people to stand by truth. *Happy are those Who Mourn* tells how Blackie, making use of the correlation of faith and reason, solves the mystery regarding the murder of Charles P. McInerney. Greeley has also portrayed how Father Joe Keefe degenerates into a murderer, mainly because of his neglect of this component of Catholic imagination. A priest who does not live up to the demands of the correlation of faith and reason, can only be a contradiction in terms, and a shame to the entire clergy. In *Irish Gold*, Greeley has presented how the couples, Dermot and Nuala solve the mystery with regard to the murder of Michael Collins. As strong Catholics, both the protagonists are guided by

imagination, and they arrive at truth. The novelist enthusiastically praises both of them for having decided to spend the whole of the gold treasure for educational purposes, which shows their commitment to the cause of faith and truth. *White Smoke*, the last novel scrutinized in this chapter, written against the background of the papal election of John XXIV, upholds the primacy of truth and transparency in all dealings. The new Pope announces a new era of truth and transparency. In attaining and maintaining truth, what is most needed is nothing but the correlation of faith and reason.

To sum up, all the five novels analyzed in this chapter reveal the inevitability of establishing the correlation of faith and reason. Greeley challenges all the faithful to be truthful. Without abiding by this correlation of faith and reason, the first component of Catholic imagination, one cannot recognize one's own genuine vocation nor can anyone fulfill its obligation. Thus, this chapter has made us aware of the fact that every priest, by his profession, is bound to be a seeker of truth and its interpreter. He must motivate the lay people also to do the same. It is the assistance of the correlation of faith and reason that enables and guides the priest in his fight against falsehood and pursuit after truth.

The third chapter entitled 'Faith and Preaching' has tried to establish that preaching is one of the most important duties of a priest and that in order to perform it effectively, the correlation of faith and preaching is essential. The analysis of the five novels convinces one that, in Greeley's opinion, preaching is not the monopoly of the clergy but an obligation of the laity as well. Preaching is inexplicably important, as faith by its very nature, has to be proclaimed and the Catholic Church by her very nature is called and sent to preach. Greeley provides his readers with ideal priests as well as exemplary lay persons who preach the message of the Gospels by means of their words as well as daily life in accordance with the teachings of the Church and the Word of God. These characters obey, interpret and implement the Gospel message.

Nora, the lay woman figuring in *Happy are the Peace-Makers*, always maintains an inseparable relationship between faith and preaching. By virtue of her Catholic imagination, she emerges as a sacrament of God's love and forgiveness. At the same time, Blackie proves how a Catholic priest has to be an ideal preacher, by not only interpreting the Sacred Scriptures but also applying the Gospel values to the life situation. *The Bishop and the Three Kings* is an eye-opener to all priests to realize their role as the promulgators and custodians of faith. This novel presents Blackie, the priest, as filled with Catholic imagination and achieving great things in priestly life. At the same time, the priests who undermine the combination of faith and imagination have very little scope of success. This novel also presents Cindausue as a model for all the lay people, especially, the women, with regard to fulfilling the obligation of witnessing to the Gospels. In *The Bishop and the Beggar Girl of St. Germain*, Claude, the priest and Chantal, his lay and twin sister, appeal to every priest to make diligent use of the media in preaching the Good News, which is possible only as long as the priest or the lay preacher is motivated by the merging of the preaching with Catholic faith and imagination. *Irish Eyes*, which is basically an account of the recovery of the stolen Irish chalice, symbolically justifies the perennial nature of Catholic faith. Though the chief protagonists, Dermot and Nuala, are not technically priests, they 'sell', like the novelist himself, Catholic values, because, they are in possessed by value based imagination. In the same novel, there are people like Roger and Farmer who never care for the preaching of faith, as they are bent upon earning money and fame. *September Song*, the last novel analyzed in this chapter has shown, how and why art and literature ought to be 'manipulated' with a view to preach the Gospels. Charles Cronin, the photographer, and Rosemary, the storyteller, illustrate how this can and has to be done.

In short, this chapter is a strong appeal to all Catholics, both priests and lay people, to become aware of their role as preachers of the Good News. All the believers by virtue of their Baptismal priesthood are bound to be preachers. In order to do this, each one must always abide by the correlation of faith and preaching which is an important component of Catholic imagination. All the five novels, in unison, urge the Catholic priests to struggle hard to improve the quality of their preaching. All the Catholic priests, especially, those who are serving in the parishes, have to take special interest in promoting the cause of women's empowerment and lay leadership. A priest must not be satisfied with preaching from the pulpit; rather he has to resort to other methods of proclamation, as well. The lay people should not be satisfied with silently receiving the sacraments and listening to the priest's sermon, but, they should try to be witnesses to the Gospels, outside the church, too, in their own walks of lives.

All the Catholic teachings are centred around the paternity of God, the Creator, and the fraternity of all human beings. That God is love, is the most fundamental teaching of the Church. Considering the prominence of the theme of love, which has been elaborated by its correlation with faith, the fourth chapter is entitled as, 'Faith and Love'. This study of the mutually binding and enriching relationship between faith and love shows the sacramental character of love, sex and marriage. Greeley's preoccupation with the Catholic understanding of love, both divine and human, is highlighted in all the five novels taken for analysis in this chapter. Exclusive of Catholic imagination, love is a physical urge or biological instinct to make use of the other for one's own gratification. The analysis here has attempted to prove that in association with faith and right imagination, human love, particularly in the context of the Sacrament of Marriage, is the most powerful medium to experience God's love and His forgiving nature. As has already been found in the novels, there are many people, who are haunted and tormented by a

sense of guilt and fear of sex. A Catholic priest has to guide and shepherd his flock. He cannot do this work if he himself lacks in a Catholic approach to the reality of love and sex. In Greeley's opinion, no one can claim to have comprehended love in its Catholic sense, without a correlation of faith and love. According to him, a Catholic priest must be seasoned with this component of Catholic imagination, otherwise he cannot perform his leading or shepherding ministry fruitfully, which is as important as the preaching and sanctifying roles. Only such a priest will be able to do justice to the observance of celibacy and only then, he can maintain healthy relationship with the fair sex. Hence, this correlation of faith and love is of utmost importance to this study.

Even though there is a male chauvinistic tendency to consider a woman as a seducer or temptress, *The Cardinal Sins* proves that she is a sign of God's love and therefore, a sacrament, very much like the Church herself. This novel challenges all priests to mature in their interpersonal relationships and in their contacts with women. The novelist has strongly argued that, without this component of Catholic imagination, one can neither appreciate the beauty of body help another to sanctify his or her body. It is Nora, his [Sean's] brother's wife who, in *Thy Brother's Wife* helps Sean, the Cardinal, recognize his own vocation and remain faithful to it accepting the Pope's order. Greeley has beautifully shown how a woman of integrity and commitment can serve the local church by assisting the priest in fulfilling various pastoral activities. In *Virgin and Martyr* Greeley has narrated how Catherine Collins, the ex-nun, experiences God's love in marrying Nicholas and in the consequent sharing of love. The novelist has also upheld the role of Blackie, the priest, who guides her in the direction of attaining self-discovery and experience of love, divine as well as human, as a result of her possession of the correlation of faith and love. In *An Occasion of Sin*, Greeley has asserted that the presence of a woman, Marbeth, does not disqualify John Mc Glynn from being considered for

canonization. This novel argues that a celibate priest is nothing less than a saint. Greeley expects the priests to regard women as a sacramental vehicle of God leading to the transformation of the believers. Hence, the priest who is the shepherd, has to abide by this component of Catholic imagination. Through the character of Leo Kelly, figuring in *Summer at the Lake*, one learns that God's love can be experienced only as forgiveness, which must be practiced in human relationships. Every priest has to guide his people, above all, setting his own life as an example, to forget and forgive the wrong-doers. Catholic faith cannot be practised or witnessed to, either on the altar or in the family, without the spirit of forgiveness. Thus, all the novels analyzed in this chapter emphasize the correlation of faith and love.

To sum up, Greeley is driving home the idea that a Catholic priest cannot live like a monk in solitude. He is the leader of a community. He has to get involved in the individual problems as well, those related to the family, and other social evils. He has to teach the people how to respect the body of the other and to honour the dignity and sanctity of a human person. This is possible only when he relates love to faith in the context of Catholic imagination. That is why, the correlation of faith and love becomes very essential in the life of a priest. There will not be peace and co-operation in the parish, if the priest does not abide by this correlation. There will not be genuine human relationships within a family, if the parents are not bent upon following this component of Catholic imagination.

Chapter V, entitled, 'Faith and Administration of Sacraments', is intended to identify how each Catholic priest in Greeley's fiction seeks to fulfill his role of sanctification meaningfully and effectively. Every priest is a spiritual leader aiming at the spiritual transformation of the believers, through a process of sanctification. The novels discussed in this chapter, as a whole, appear to convince the reader of the priest's

obligation to offer prayers and sacrifices on behalf of the people with the intention of their sanctification. Each priest is trained to officiate the administration of sacraments, which are signs of God's love and grace. While administering the sacraments, a priest becomes the mediator between God and His people. A survey of these novels has showed that one cannot think of a priest who is not prepared to officiate or celebrate the various sacraments instituted by Christ through the Church. Every sacrament is an exposition of the Catholic faith that God is love, that He is pouring down His graces upon the people, and that His love can and is to be experienced in and through the administration of sacraments. Hence, the priestly existence and ministry essentially presuppose the correlation of faith and sacramental administration. Sacraments being symbols loaded with meaning, they cannot be administered in the absence of Catholic imagination. Greeley's ideal priests figuring in these novels are seasoned with religious faith as well as imaginative faculties.

There are three angels in *The Angels of September*. They are Blackie, the priest, Michael Casey, the lover, and Mary Kate Murphy, the psychiatrist. They assist Anne Reilly to shed her fear, shame and guilt. Anne receives the Sacrament of Marriage only after forgiving all others, which reminds one of the relevance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Finally, Greeley presents her as a sacrament of God's love and forgiveness. The novelist appeals to the priests, who administer the sacraments, and the people, who take part in them, to be sacraments in their respective walks of life. *Happy are the Oppressed* upholds the efficacy of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Marriage. One has already seen how Jane Chantal, hitherto tormented by guilt and fear, emerges as a new person after making her confession to Blackie. Chantal enjoys the good results of Reconciliation, and peace is restored to the whole family as a result of the combination of faith and imagination, channeled through the administration of sacraments. The most

important events portrayed in *Irish Mist* are Kevin's death, forgiving his murderers, and his anniversary Mass. This novel proclaims the relevance of these sacraments and the last rites to the members of the Catholic Church. In this work, too, Greeley argues that a priest ought to resort to the fusion of faith and imagination in his administration of sacraments. *A Christmas Wedding* is also centred on the transforming effects of the two sacraments, Reconciliation and Holy Matrimony. The protagonists, Chuck and Rosemarie, make a whole-hearted mutual confession and receive the Sacrament of Marriage. The novel reminds all priests of their obligation to prepare the congregation for receiving the sacraments worthily. *Irish Love*, the last novel studied in this chapter, highlights the necessity of administering the Last Sacrament. Greeley warns all the clergy not to deny these rites to the believers. The most touching scene in the whole novel, next to the hanging of Myles Joyce, is Thomas Casey's public confession in the church, appearing to fulfill the requirements of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Both the pairs appearing in *Irish Love*, Dermot and Nuala, and Fitzpatrick and Nora, frequent sacraments and always abide by the demands of the binding of faith with imagination.

In other words, Marriage, Holy Mass and Reconciliation are the three Sacraments chiefly depicted in these five novels. The ideal priests portrayed by Greeley in these books, are men of prayer, who officiate the sacraments very effectively making sure that the people who participate in them are transformed. The priests must understand that the liturgical functions will be appealing to the people, only, if and as the celebration is accompanied by rich imagination. Each priest has to improve the quality of his liturgical performance. It is his duty to explain the meaning of liturgical rubrics and symbols to the people. Priests are instrumental to the upliftment of the people. Thus, these novels assert the indivisibility of the correlation of faith and administration of sacraments for which every priest must be moved by imagination. In Greeley's opinion, an ideal priest should

not be satisfied merely with offering sacrifices and celebrating the sacraments. Instead, he has to be another sacrament, in other words, a sign of God's love and grace expressed in forgiveness.

The Sixth Chapter, labelled as, 'Faith and Suffering', was an attempt to understand how a Catholic priest, in spite of his vulnerable human nature, can counsel and console his fellow sufferers. According to Greeley, suffering is a problem which bothers all. In the five novels studied in this chapter, Greeley is seen portraying priest as a man susceptible to suffering. All his ideal priests do suffer for their Church, after the model of Jesus, the suffering servant of Yahweh. The central theme of this section is that a person cannot survive in life without associating suffering with faith. If a priest does not equip himself with this correlation between faith and suffering, he will neither be able to survive his own personal suffering nor will he be able to give consolation to those who suffer. It is the assistance of Catholic imagination which empowers him in the healing ministry. It has been observed in these novels that, some priests who undergo suffering on account of their own scandalous living, lose themselves on account of their neglect of the correlation between imagination and suffering, which is an important component of Catholic faith. This is true with regard to the experience of the clergy as well as the laity.

In *Wages of Sin*, Greeley has proved how suffering can be cured by the application of Catholic imagination and therapeutic counseling. It is the story of Lorcan, the truth-seeker, and Maura, the silent sufferer. When truth is perceived, suffering ceases and reunion takes place. Grace of God wins in the end. When Blackie tries to solve suffering, there is Father Gregory, who embezzles money and causes suffering to many innocent people. Apart from imagination, one cannot understand the mystery of suffering. *Fall from Grace* is essentially a portrayal of the suffering of many owing to some pedophile priests. The novel proves that sin is at the root of meaningless and un-purposeful suffering

in the life of a priest. Sin is nothing but a neglect of the inalienable fusion of faith and suffering in the crucible of imagination. Greeley stresses on the priest's obligation to visit the suffering people and to fill their hearts with hope. The novel narrates in detail how Kieran and Kathleen, even as two married people, and despite their own suffering, do a lot of service for the priests and the Church. *The Bishop and the Missing L Train* portrays how a priest has to suffer at the hands of his own parishioners for his mismanagement. The kidnapped Bishop Quill Guz, has caused a lot of suffering to his people. The analysis has shown that this unfortunate priest was not following the lessons of Catholic imagination. Blackie, the embodiment of the correlation between faith and suffering, redeems Quill Guz and transforms him. By the application of this component of Catholic imagination, Blackie has solved the mystery successfully. In *Irish Stew!* Greeley shows how Dermot and Nuala, who are known for their allegiance to Catholic imagination, saves Seamus Costello from his suffering and make him a new person. The novel also portrays Ned, the journalist, who engages himself in various activities for protecting people from suffering. It is the duty of each Catholic priest to lead the suffering people to self-purification and complete transformation. *The Priestly Sins* narrates how Father Hoffman is compelled to suffer a lot, thanks to another priest, by name, Lenny Leon. A scandalous priest, on account of his neglect of Catholic imagination, causes the suffering of himself as well as others. Greeley has applauded in this novel the services of Horst Heller, the advocate, and Kathleen, who are motivated by their faith and imagination.

To be brief, the correlation of faith and suffering is very important in the life of a priest. Without this correlation he will not be able to survive his own suffering nor will he be able to provide the suffering people with consolation and guidance. Catholic imagination alone empowers the priest to appreciate the redemptive aspects of suffering. He must train the lay people to undertake the ministry of healing in the parish. All these

novels seem to teach that a healthy life is possible only with God's grace and the experience of suffering is the best time to realize it. If a priest is there to guide, suffering will not take a person to despair and helplessness.

At the very outset of the introductory chapter, it is stated that some acquaintance with the fundamental beliefs of Christianity is almost essential for understanding and appreciating the works of Chaucer, Donne, Hopkins, Eliot, Faulkner and the like. This study has proved that such a statement is all the more true in the case of Andrew M. Greeley. For, as it has been established, his novels are all saturated with Catholic faith which is presented with the accompaniment of his rich imagination. This analysis of Greeley's selected novels has, thus, proved that there exists an inalienable relationship between literature and religion, and that the combination of faith and imagination is mutually enriching and complementing. Devoid of Catholic faith, Greeley's novels have neither value nor any message. Likewise, devoid of imagination, his works do not bear either beauty or appeal to the world of literature. In other words, one cannot separate Greeley, the best-selling fictionist from Greeley, the preaching priest. In the process of highlighting the merging of faith with imagination in Greeley's novels, this thesis has, with reference to the five components of Catholic imagination, also enumerated how he has portrayed priesthood in and through them. Hence, this work is an exposition of various aspects of the identity and the ministry of a Catholic priest, as well.