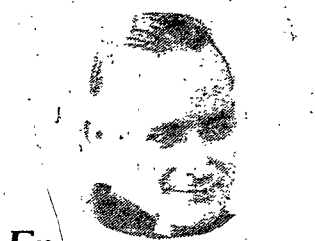


## The Church 1975



Fr. Andrew Greeley

Bad news continues to mount for American Catholicism. The most recent General Social Survey, conducted by NORC shows that the Catholic apostasy rate has climbed to 18 percent. Almost a fifth of those who were raised Catholic no longer consider themselves to be part of the Church. In 1955, the apostasy rate was 7 percent; in 1967 (after the Vatican Council but before "Humanae Vitae"), the rate was still 7 percent. By 1973, it had doubled to 14 percent. It apparently is continuing to climb.

The data are from a national representative sample of approximately 1,500 Americans — the same size that the Gallup and Harris organizations use to predict Catholic voting in national elections and changes in Catholic attitudes toward presidential performance. In such samples there is room for several percentage points of error. One must be cautious about exact percentages, and even more cautious about analyzing differential rates among subgroups; but there is no doubt that the Catholic apostasy rate has been moving up sharply and continues to do so.

Our Protestant brothers are not suffering from the same problem. Their rate in the 1950s and '60s was slightly higher than ours — 9 percent. During the last troubled eight years, the Protestant rate has edged up to 11 percent; it is now 7 percentage points lower than the Catholic apostasy rate. The increased Catholic departure from the Church, then, is not part of a national phenomenon; it is a special Catholic problem.

The highest rates of apostasy seem to be among the young (under 30) and among the college-educated; but the rates among these two groups seem to have stabilized since 1973 at about 25 percent. The increase in the last couple of years seems to be especially concentrated among people in their 30's and

40's who have not gone beyond high-school education. In other words, a trend which apparently started among the younger and the better educated now may be infecting other population groups.

Obviously one would like to know more about who is leaving and why. But since the Catholic Church in the United States resolutely refuses to do research on itself (for fear of what it might find?), we are forced to be content with data scrounged from other people's surveys. Doubtless critics will be dissatisfied with the data I have cited — but not so dissatisfied that they will attempt more detailed research on what is rapidly becoming a deadly serious problem for American Catholicism. Quite simply, people are leaving in droves and apparently are continuing to do so.

My colleagues and I think we can account for the change in behavior of those who remain Catholics from the 1963 and 1974 NORC Catholic school studies (and will do so in public before the year is out). But such explanations are not automatically transferable to the apostasy phenomenon. Before the Church can do anything about the steady outflow of its members, it must know why they are leaving. The technique of random-digit telephone interviewing — a gift to research of the energy crisis (interviewing by phone doesn't use gasoline) — has now developed to such a point that a relatively inexpensive study of Catholic apostates could be fun. No one in their right mind thinks it will be done, however. Who cares about apostates?

This column has been taking knocks in certain quarters lately for being "negative." I don't like being negative; I am, one-quarter leprechaun on my mother's side. But we live in a negative situation. The Church in the United States is in dire crisis. To pretend otherwise in the name of seeking a "positive" attitude would be to lie.

A long time ago I used to argue with visiting French sociologists who, after four or five interviews, insisted that there was a massive apostasy in the American Catholic Church. They were wrong. There was very little apostasy then. I am reluctant to admit that their inaccurate descriptions have become accurate predictions. But they have, and it's time someone in authority somewhere began to worry about it.

## Bible Reading in Space Dead Issue at NASA

Phoenix [RNS] — Christians who are engaged in a letter-writing campaign defending the right of American astronauts to read from the Bible while in outer space are involved in a useless endeavor.

That's the opinion of Charles Redmond, public information specialist for the National Aeronautic and Space Administration in Houston.

The issue was settled years ago in the courts and "what the astronauts say is their own business," Redmond said in a telephone interview reported here. There are no restrictions placed on astronauts concerning Bible reading.

Letters have been circulating in Phoenix (and many other communities) encouraging readers to stop an alleged attempt by atheist Madalyn O'Hair to pressure NASA to censure any spaceman who reads from the Bible while in space.

Mrs. O'Hair initially objected to Col. Frank Borman's reading from the Bible on Christmas Eve of 1968. After losing a suit and several appeals, she dropped the issue in 1971. Redmond said no pressure is being brought to the agency and that the issue is "almost a crank."

In the July 11 issue of The United Methodist Reporter, an editorial urged its readers to ignore requests to write NASA about the issue and "check the facts before spreading a rumor like this one."

"The well-intentioned pleas for letters to NASA is not only useless but counterproductive," it said. "It stirs people up unnecessarily. It gives unnecessary publicity to Ms. O'Hair, crediting her with more clout than she has."

"It wastes the time of persons at NASA who have to wade through the unneeded letters. And it diverts the attention and energy of many Christians from real issues to this pseudo-issue."

### NORTHWEST SENIORS

Northwest senior citizens will have a social meeting tomorrow, 7-4 p.m., in the Ss. Peter and Paul school hall.

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## Business in Diocese

The Security Trust Company has announced the election of Mrs. Mary A. DiSalvo as operations officer and Mrs. Kathleen R. Whelehan as staff development officer.

Mrs. DiSalvo, who joined Security Trust in 1950, is also assistant manager of the bank's Customer Services Group. She attended St. Joseph Business School and has completed several courses offered through the American Institute of Banking. She is an active member of the Webster Republican Committee and the Bishop Kearney Mothers Club Alumni. She and her husband, Sam, and their two sons, Tom and Len, live at 636 Ironwood Circle, Webster.

Mrs. Whelehan, staff development officer, has been in charge of skills training since joining Security Trust in 1972. She will now take charge also of the hiring, training and development of all staff personnel. A 1971 Nazareth College graduate with a Business and Economics degree, Mrs. Whelehan is completing her Master's of Business Administration degree at Rochester Institute of Technology. She and her husband, James, reside at 1491 Creek St., Penfield.

G. Thomas Clark has been named vice president and assistant manager of Security Trust's Commercial Loan Department.

A Rochester native, Clark attended West High School and earned a Business Administration degree at Bucknell University in 1959. He is a member of the Monroe County Health Council, Rochester Chamber of Commerce and the University Club of Rochester. Additionally, he serves as the chairman of the Finance Committee of Blessed Sacrament Church.

The Board of Directors of Dunbar, deZeng & Langie Audio-Visual Company, Inc. has announced the election of Michael L. Langie as President and General Manager. He succeeds Alexander D. Dunbar, president since 1960.

Langie formerly was partner and sales manager for Sloan and Company, Inc. He is president of the Rochester Sales Executives Club and of the Georgetown Club of Rochester. He and his wife, Linda, and four children reside at 35 Kurt Road in Pittsford.

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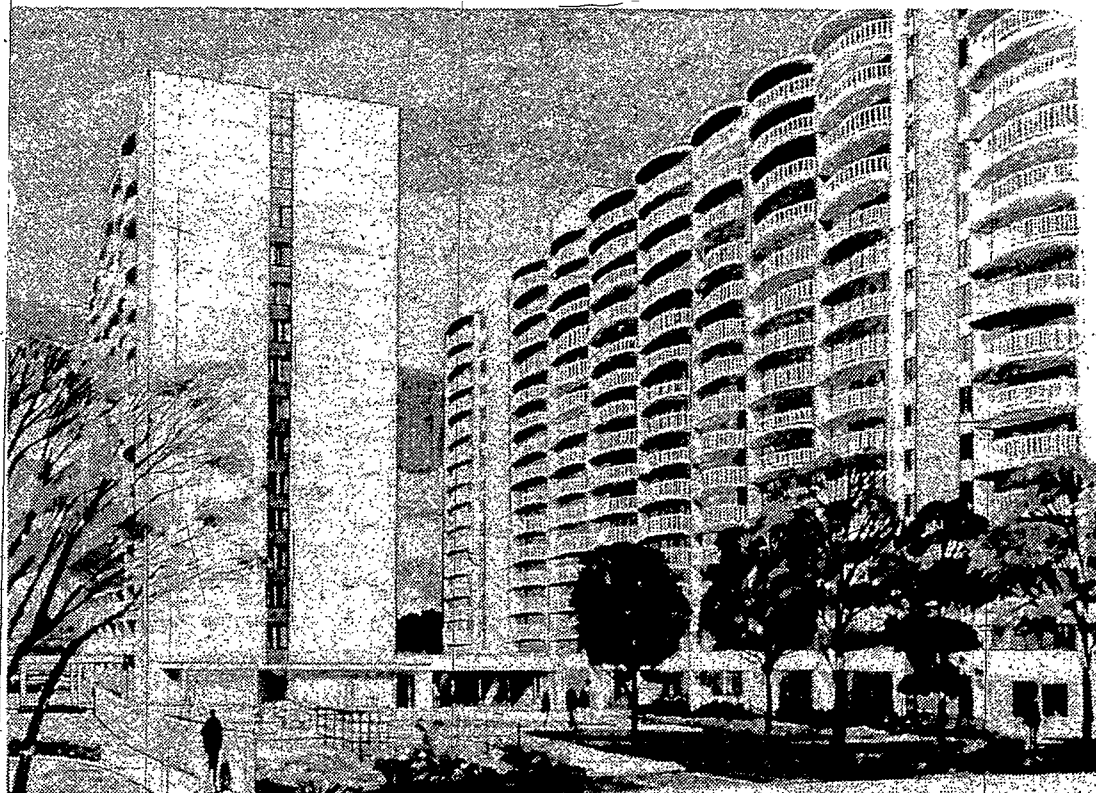
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### PARISH FESTIVAL

Honeoye Falls — The sixth annual parish festival at St. Paul of the Cross is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 6, from 2 p.m. on into the night.



### KEELER PARK

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