

## Hiking for a good cause



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Participants in the eighth annual Dimitri House 'Hike for the Homeless' held April 29 take off from the city homeless shelter located at 102 N. Union St., Rochester. More than 300 hikers raised \$34,000 in pledges while completing the 10K course around Rochester's city streets. An 'Open Soul' benefit concert held one day prior to the walk, combined with parish collections, brought the fundraising total to more than \$50,000 for the homeless shelter operated by Rochester's Corpus Christi Parish.

## Study: Media 'deeply confused' over religion

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The media's chief role is to inform — yet a University of Rochester study has concluded that the American press is "deeply confused" about coverage of religion.

"They don't know what's important about it," said William Scott Green, professor of religion and dean of the university's undergraduate studies.

Green served as co-director of the UR-sponsored study, titled "Faith vs. Fact: Press Images of Religion in the United States." The findings by a team of senior UR religion majors were released publicly May 1.

Information for the study was gathered by scanning religious coverage in seven U.S. major-market daily newspapers from Feb. 6-March 5. The study included any stories in which religious references were made — from people quoted as saying "Oh, my God," to coverage devoted exclusively to religious matters.

According to results of "Faith vs. Fact," religion is frequently mentioned but rarely the primary focus of stories. Even when the latter holds true, Green said, newspapers' slants lean more toward controversy than beliefs and values.

A recent exception, Green reported, was coverage of the Oklahoma City bombing by *The New York Times*

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”

William Scott Green  
UR religion professor

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## Fr. Greeley knocks press take on faith

ROCHESTER — Father Andrew Greeley, the famed novelist and sociologist, believes the news media regularly distorts the religious picture in the United States.

In a press conference prior to his speech at the University of Rochester Sunday, April 30, the controversial and outspoken priest noted, for example, that the press portrays religious conservatism as equivalent to political conservatism. Yet, both President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore are Southern Baptists, and neither would hardly be considered politically conservative, he said.

The press also inaccurately portrays Islam as a violent religion, Father Greeley said.

"Islam has become equated with Islamic fundamentalism and fundamentalism with Islamic terrorism," he argued.

Father Greeley was slated to participate in a panel discussion of "Press Images of American Religion," a national media study conducted by University of Rochester religion majors, which was released May 1. The study echoed many of the priest's criticisms of press coverage of religion. (See related story on page 4.)

The press also unfairly characterizes Catholic clergy as riddled with pedophiles, he said, when, in fact, such men comprise a tiny minority of this nation's priests.

Yet, he also insisted that the church move swiftly to remove pedophiles in the priesthood, and he called on his fellow members of the clergy to own up to the problem.

"I don't think many priests, even now, are ready to admit it's a serious problem," he said of pedophilia.

In other statements, Father Greeley spelled out his support for women's ordination, and the public funding of vouchers for non-public school students.

"I don't think the public schools will improve until the public school monopoly is broken," he said.

He also noted that he was pleased with Pope  
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## Church sees God as mother, too

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Catholicism proclaims God's presence in the world, not beyond it, and emphasizes the Lord's maternal love by the church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to Father Andrew Greeley.

"The Mary story constitutes the Catholic tradition," Father Greeley told listeners during a speech at the University of Rochester's Hubble Auditorium Sunday afternoon, April 30. "God loves us like a mother as well as a father."

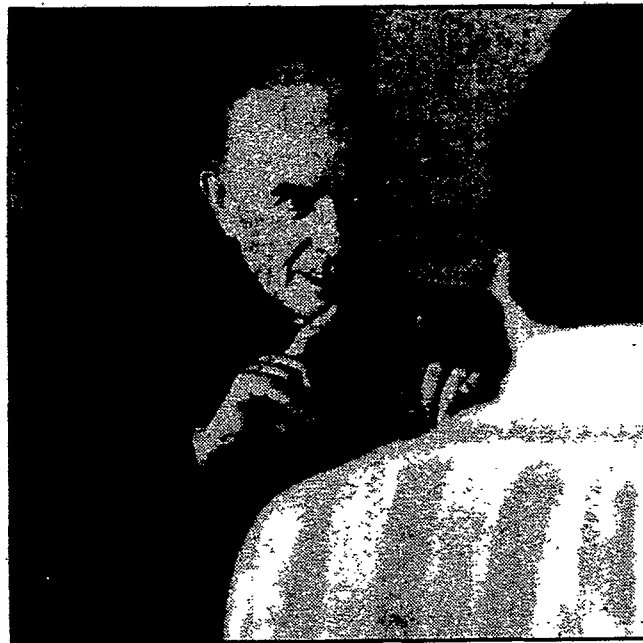
Author of 30 works of fiction and 60 non-fiction books on Catholic behavior and the role of clergy and laypersons (see book review on page 16), Father Greeley peppered his speech with numerous Irish jokes and stories and continually drew laughter from his appreciative audience.

Speaking on "The Catholic Religious Imagination," Father Greeley noted that Catholics are often falsely characterized as worshipers of Mary, when, in fact, they are her devotees. He did, however, note that the Marian devotion does echo the goddess worship prevalent in many pre-Christian cultures, and fulfills a yearning for the faithful to connect with God's female side.

"We worship the mother-love of God through Mary," said Father Greeley, a professor of social science at the University of Chicago and professor of sociology at the University of Arizona.

Many people find it easier to worship God's female aspects — aspects that the church and Scripture have long acknowledged — than God's male attributes, Father Greeley added.

"We can honor God as a mother or father depending on our spirituality," he said.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Father Andrew Greeley, noted novelist and sociologist, speaks with reporters during an April 30 press conference preceding his speech at the University of Rochester.

Protestantism tends to focus solely on Jesus as the only manifestation of God, Father Greeley said, noting that Protestantism is rooted in a view of God as transcendent and above creation. Such a view proclaims what God is *unlike*, as opposed to Catholicism, which uses images to point to what God is *like* — such as music, friendship or nature.

"The Catholic imagination emphasizes the presence of God, the immanence of God," he said.

But he cautioned that such a view can lead to idolatry.

"At its worst, this imagination can turn in to superstition, folklore," he said.

Yet, at the same time, the Catholic imagination,

which has produced such works as stained-glass windows and saints' statues, gives the faithful rituals, traditions and stories that allow them to feel God's personal presence, he noted.

"You can say a church is a storytelling community that acts out its storytelling in rituals," he said.

Indeed, religious stories Catholics hear from childhood onward play a more important role in their lives than the church's creeds and dogmas, he said, because they become the basis on which Catholics interpret their religious experience.

"I suspect Jesus had such crowds following him because he was such a great storyteller," Father Greeley said.

Stories and traditions are designed to highlight God's concern for His people, Father Greeley explained. For example, the recent upsurge of interest in angels in the popular culture reveal many people's desire to know God cares for them, he said.

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