



The Catholic Imagination

Andrew Greeley

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Catholics live in an enchanted world: a world of statues and holy water, stained glass and votive candles, saints and religious medals, rosary beads and holy pictures. But these Catholic paraphernalia are merely hints of a deeper and more pervasive religious sensibility that inclines Catholics to see the Holy lurking in creation. The world of the Catholic is haunted by a sense that the objects, events, and persons of daily life are revelations of Grace. In this fascinating discussion of what is unique about the Catholic worldview and culture and what distinguishes it from Protestantism, Andrew Greeley--one of the most popular and prolific authors writing today--examines the religious imagination that shapes Catholics' lives.

In a lively and engaging narrative, Greeley discusses the central themes of Catholic culture: Sacrament, Salvation, Community, Festival, Structure, Erotic Desire, and the Mother Love of God. Ranging widely from Bernini to Scorsese, Greeley distills these themes from the high arts of Catholic culture and asks: Do these values really influence people's lives? Using international survey data, he shows the counterintuitive ways in which Catholics are defined. He goes on to root these behaviors in the Catholic imagination.

As he identifies and explores the fertile terrain of Catholic culture, Greeley illustrates the enduring power of particular stories, images, and orientations in shaping Catholics' lived experience. He challenges a host of assumptions about who Catholics are and makes a strong case for the vitality of the culture today. The Catholic imagination is sustained and passed on in relationships, the home, and the community, Greeley shows. Absorbing, compassionate, and deeply informed, this book provides an entirely new perspective on the nature and role of religion in daily life for Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

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