

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY **PROFESSOR CHRISTOPHER A. CURTIN**, National University of Ireland, Galway, on 27 June 2003, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **REVEREND PROFESSOR ANDREW M. GREELEY**

A Sheánsailéar, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle:

Andrew Greeley is an extraordinary individual: a most distinguished sociologist, best selling novelist and outspoken priest. Born to second generation Irish immigrant parents, he decided at a young age to become a priest and was ordained in 1954. A gifted student, he holds a BA in Philosophy, a Licentiate in Theology and an MA and PhD in Sociology from the University of Chicago. By the time he enrolled for graduate studies at the University of Chicago he had already published two books and several articles. He completed his doctorate in twenty months while continuing his parish work and for the past forty years he has combined in a remarkable way the life of the academic, commentator, novelist and priest.

Andrew Greeley holds Professorships at the Universities of Chicago and Arizona and he has been a leading scholar at the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Centre. He is the author of numerous highly regarded scholarly books and articles which combine theoretical flair and insight with systematic empirical research and represent a major contribution to the Sociology of Religion. His writings have had a particular focus on the social context and consequences of Catholic beliefs systems and the way these beliefs are translated into social action. Religion is a story about life and Professor Greeley's academic writings have explored, in an original manner, the power of particular stories and images in shaping Catholic experiences. His book, *The Catholic Imagination*, skilfully examined some of the central themes of Catholic culture: community, hierarchy, space and time. His research interests have extended beyond the United States and in *Religion in Europe at the end of the Second millennium* he explored the complexities of religious beliefs and practices in different European countries.

Professor Greeley is a man from the city of Chicago, a city very much associated with the Irish. At the beginning of the 20th century it ranked just below New York and Philadelphia as the third Irish city in the United States. Through their work, involvement in politics, and their religious activity, including the building of churches and schools, the Irish created a special place for themselves in Chicago. Andrew Greeley's novels provide a unique and important insight into the history of the Irish in Chicago as an ethnic group and their acculturation into American society.

In addition to his work as a sociologist, author and priest, Professor Greeley has been actively engaged in public debates on a variety of issues. A regular contributor to radio and television programmes his column on political, social and religious issues is carried by the New York Times religious news service. He has challenged the Catholic Church to open its doors to critical self-analysis, democratic ways and women priests. Committed to tackling the problems of poverty and disadvantage, he has established an inner city schools fund which provides scholarships and financial support to schools in Chicago with a minority student population of more than fifty percent.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Andrew Greeley has achieved so much and has become the best selling priest-novelist on the planet. Both his parents had an adventurous streak. His mother Grace had flown a plane, ridden a mule down the Grand Canyon and crossed Lake Michigan in a small sailing boat before her marriage. His father, Andrew senior, liked to hunt from the back of a mule and caught malaria while canoeing in the Mississippi swamps.

Already the recipient of many honours and awards in the United States, it is my pleasure and honour to present to you, Chancellor of the National University of Ireland, Professor Andrew Greeley, distinguished Sociologist, Novelist and Priest for the award of Doctor of Laws.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis, hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.