

Greeley was outspoken as priest, sociologist and novelist

News in the [June 26, 2013](#) issue

Andrew Greeley's sharp-tongued critiques of the Catholic Church, drawn from his priestly experience and sociological research, often irked the hierarchy. And as if those platforms were not enough, the Chicago native later became a prolific novelist with best sellers that explored the good and bad sides of church life.

Greeley's public voice was silenced by a fractured skull sustained when his coat was caught in the door of a departing taxi and he was thrown to the pavement in November 2008. On May 29, not long after he celebrated the 59th anniversary of his priestly ordination, Greeley died in his sleep at his Chicago apartment at age 85.

"He served the Church all those years with a prophetic voice and with unflinching dedication," said a family statement. "He resides now with the Lord of the Dance, and that dance will go on."

Distressed by serious fault lines in the Roman Catholic Church, Greeley was one of the first priests to publicly criticize the Vatican's decision to ban artificial birth control in the late 1960s. For many years a syndicated columnist, Greeley called politicians and bishops to task for their foibles.

In a 2004 book, written after the first major Catholic sexual abuse scandal, Greeley suggested the U.S. Catholic Church may go down the drain not because of sexual abuse, secularism, priestly celibacy or homosexuality, "but because of incompetence, stupidity, and clerical culture—all enemies from within."

Martin Marty, professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School and a *Century* contributing editor, told the *Chicago Tribune* that Greeley's blunt criticism set him apart from other Catholic sociologists. "He took risks all the time. But he was extremely careful to be sure he had the data."

There was never a doubt that Greeley loved the church. "He was a very, very faithful Catholic, and he was a proudly celibate priest," Marty said.