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In Memoriam: The Reverend Andrew Greeley (1928-2013)

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Abstract

Founding Editor of the *Journal of Religion and Film* William Blizek reflects on the influence and legacy of the Reverend Andrew Greeley.

Keywords

Andrew Greeley, Roman Catholicism, Popular culture, film

Author Notes

William Blizek is the founding editor of the *Journal of Religion and Film*, and is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is also the editor of *The Continuum Companion to Religion and Film* (2009).

The *Journal of Religion & Film* would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the death of the Reverend Andrew Greeley on Wednesday, May 29, 2013. Greeley was well known as a Roman Catholic priest who was also a professor of sociology at the University of Chicago and the University of Arizona, and he was for many decades a prolific author of popular fiction as well as scholarly books and articles. Not everyone knows, however, that Andrew Greeley was the inspiration for the *Journal of Religion & Film*. Back in the 1990s, Greeley came to Omaha to present a lecture on “The Faces of God in the Movies.” Ron Burke and I attended that lecture. We then went out to see if we could find the faces Greeley had described in the movies that he had discussed. We were amazed that the “faces of God” could be found in so many different characters, including Danny Aiello (in *Jacob’s Ladder*) and Jessica Lange (in *All That Jazz*). Ron and I thought that our students would enjoy finding God in the movies, so we taught a course on the subject, although we expanded the subject from faces of God to religion and film in general. We did not find many resources available at this time and thought that it would be nice to have a forum for sharing ideas about religion and film, and this led to the establishment of the *Journal of Religion & Film* in 1997. At this time, we asked Greeley if we could publish the lecture he gave in Omaha in the *Journal*, and he kindly agreed to write it up for publication. Andrew Greeley’s essay on the faces of God in the movies was the very first article the *Journal* published. At that time we wanted to publish pictures of our authors, so that readers would feel some connection to the authors. In typical Greeley fashion, he sent us a picture of himself wearing the jacket of his beloved Chicago Bulls. I have shared this story before, but thought it bore repeating on the occasion of Andrew Greeley’s death.

Greeley had a formative influence on many of us who were beginning to write about religion and film at that time. He will be remembered as a theologian who was able to forge connections between popular culture and religion at a time when many church leaders remained suspicious of such efforts. We are grateful for all that he did to help this fledgling field, especially in providing the inspiration for our work in this journal, and for laying the groundwork for so many other scholars who study religion and film.