

# Author urges Catholics to spread Gospel in secular culture

Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., says that Catholics must be modern-day missionaries and bring the Gospel of Jesus to an increasingly secular culture.

Father Rolheiser, president of Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, brought to Baltimore Oct. 11 his message along with copies of his book "Secularity and the Gospel: Being Missionaries to Our Children."

"Go to dark places, but don't sin," he told about 45 people, mostly religious, at St. Mary's Spiritual Center & Historic Site. "Like Jesus, who went into the singles bars of his time, except he didn't sin, walk in great freedom, go into dark places, not to assert human autonomy, but to take God's light there."

Father Rolheiser, a widely published columnist, highlighted advice from "Secularity and the Gospel," which includes chapters he wrote and other contributions he edited.

"Our churches are graying and emptying, and many of our children are no longer walking the path of faith, at least not public and ecclesial faith, with us," he writes. "The most difficult mission field in the world today is Western culture, secularity - the board rooms, living rooms, bedrooms, entertainment rooms within which we and our families live, work, and play."

He called secular culture a "narcotic," but stressed the need to avoid thinking in terms of simple duality in which we see ourselves as good and the secular world as evil.

"Our culture carries many things," he said. "We survive it by living a certain tortured complexity, which means we have to love the world and love its beauties even as we are rooted and grounded elsewhere."

Father Rolheiser, who spoke at St. Mary's bicentennial lecture, offered suggestions:

•