

Oral History with Sister Patricia Ann Crowley
November 16, 2018
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Other participants: Dr. Bren Ortega Murphy and Teresa Neumann
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Note: Participants' remarks are distinguished by initials placed at the start of each person's comments. Vocal expressions and sounds that are not words are placed within parentheses; peripheral and editorial clarifications, as well as questions, are placed within brackets. Words spoken with emphasis appear in italics.

[00:00:00]

NF: Alright. It is November 16, and we are here for an interview with Sister Pat Crowley, and my name is Nancy Freeman. (Sound is somewhat distorted) And Bren Ortega Murphy is with me. And, we will get started.

Could you talk a little bit about the interplay between the Benedictines, and I know you do some work with Jesuit spirituality, and then we have the BVMs [Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary], kind of, from Mundelein. So, you could you talk a little bit about how those three interplay, or work, or something.

[00:00:38]

PC: Well, I'm really rooted in the Gospel. I mean, that's what I grew up with, through my parents, Christian Family Movement [CFM]. And, in my adult life, rooted in Benedictine spirituality, which is very old. [Audio is distorted.] I do believe that the Jesuits learned from Benedict. And, as I learned Ignatian spirituality—through the Ignatian Spirituality Project that I participate in now, that does retreats for women who are homeless and addicted—I learned that.

For example, those three—call them different kinds of spirituality—kind of blend. And the whole word of Lectio, which is mulling over the scriptures in a way that the words, or the phrases, or the spirit of it becomes part of your daily consciousness. It's interesting, because, when I participated in the Comunidad de Base—when I was in Central America and Mexico, in the early '90s—that's what *that* whole movement is built on, also.

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I think it's really a Gospel orientation. The Jesuit spirituality that I learned, the Ignatian spirituality, also takes advantage of some of the techniques of imaging and trying to put yourself in the scene of the scriptures. And Benedictine spirituality really is just—it's very down-to-earth, for one thing—but it's just a very conscious awareness of God in daily life, and of the scripture. So, to pick one word or one phrase, and then try to remember that during the day, as you have moments of awareness.

So, I mean, they blend together very well. They're just a little bit different approaches. I just finished a course in spiritual direction that was at a Dominican center. So, maybe that fits in too! I don't know. But I think it's all the same. I mean, Benedictine life works on repetition, because we pray the Psalter. According to Benedict you pray it every week; we pray it every five weeks. Those words become part of your consciousness, because of that kind of repetition.

[00:03:58]

NF: Could you describe the Ignatian Spirituality Project, and how you got involved?

PC: Sure. The Ignatian Spirituality Project started, I think, twenty-five years ago. I'm not sure, now. (Chuckles) We probably should change that. Is it twenty-five years? [Spoken to someone.] Is that what we celebrated, the other night?

Bren Ortega Murphy (BOM): I think so. (Background talking)

PC: Twenty years! Okay, okay. That's why I thought, "Oh, I'm wrong. (Laughs) That's not right." So, I'll start that over.

The Ignatian Spirituality Project started twenty years ago. And, my understanding, Father Bill Creed—who is a Jesuit here at Loyola—wanted to work with people in homelessness, and to learn about homelessness. His provincial was very much encouraging that. So he started doing retreats, based on the Ignatian spirituality, for men who were homeless and addicted. Ignatian spirituality fits very well with the twelve-step program, in Alcoholics Anonymous.

So I, at the time—after Bill had done the retreats for a number of years, he wanted to expand it to women. And I got involved because he came and asked if he could do one at Deborah's Place [nonprofit organization for homeless women in Chicago]. So, he did. We worked it out. We had had retreats; Edwina Gateley had come and done retreats with the women, at Deborah's Place. But, I said, "We could do this."

[00:05:48]

Two of our staff went with him, and he brought somebody else—I don't remember who—and they did a retreat. Afterwards, he said, "So, how did it go?" And I said, "Well, it went *really* well. But the feedback is that a woman needs to do that." So, he accepted that. And maybe a year or so later, he started a team of women. So I'm involved in a team. I think there are almost thirty of us, now. And we have four since September who have joined, or are in the process of joining the team. So, it's growing. And it's in many different cities. And I think it's in Toronto, too. So it's international as well as national. It's a wonderful program.

NF: One of the things that we talked about, were your various professional roles. And where we left our last interview was, I believe, that you had left Deborah's Place and had gone to the Chicago Continuum of Care. Could you talk about your work there, a little bit?

[00:07:08]

PC: Sure. So, a point in history where the Chicago Continuum of Care had sort of lost credibility with the providers of homeless services. A friend of mine, actually, was running it. But she wanted out. She only ran it for a short time. Some of the funders asked me to step in. I had, quote, "retired" from Deborah's Place, partly because my mother was not well, at the time. And she was better. So I thought, "Well, I could do that." So, I did it for two years.

The Chicago Continuum of Care is the collaborative organization in Chicago—it was, it has a different name, now—that funnels the HUD [United States Department of Housing and Urban Development] funding toward homelessness, in Chicago. So, HUD requires that there be some collaborative effort among government and private funders, and people who are homeless—or have been homeless—and also with providers. You know, we had started the Partnership to End Homelessness, so there was a lot of trust in the four of us that had started that—or five of us, who had started that. And so, I was the one that was free. And so they asked if I would run it. So I ran it for two years. I didn't really know the technical HUD contracting, as such. I knew the overview. But I had wonderful staff who knew it. And so we did it.

In 2007—well, right at the end of 2006—we merged the Chicago Continuum of Care and the Partnership to End Homelessness. And it's had different names since then. So, it's still going on.

[00:09:24]

NF: What did you do after those two years?

PC: I took a little break. (Laughs) Went to France for three weeks, which was wonderful. And then I was elected prioress of my community, in April.

NF: Can you talk about that?

PC: Sure.

NF: Like, what that meant?

PC: Yeah. Our community was changing, a lot. And I had sort of avoided accepting a leadership role, because I was doing things in homelessness, and felt like that was really important, too. But, I mean, it's a privilege to take on the role of leadership. And a prioress—Benedict has unbelievable expectations of the abbot, according to the Rule. And it's very *good*, you know. But it's also hard. The Benedict[ine Rule] talks about the presence of Christ, and specifically mentions the abbot, or the prioress. But he also talks about the sick—that the presence of Christ is there. And he talks about guests, where Christ needs to be seen. So it's not *just* the abbot, but it's fairly all-inclusive (Chuckles), you know.

But it's also a humbling role.

[00:11:15]

In that role, I loved being with the sisters. Particularly the older sisters, who were moving toward death and were living so fully, in that kind of transition. I mean, I love to plan, so we did a lot of—we're very slow-moving as a group. We ponder things, and think. And Benedict talks about the whole chapter; the whole monastic chapter has to make decisions. The abbot or prioress doesn't alone. So I enjoyed it.

And then, in that role, there's a national organization—the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses—and I became the president of that, for four years, toward the end of my second term. And then also, in *that* role, became a delegate to the CIB, which is the international collaborative effort among Benedictine women across the world. That's in Latin, *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum*, but it's called CIB.

Women don't have a legal organization, internationally. The men do. The men have a confederation, and they elect an Abbot Primate, internationally. But we have a loose organization, which I think is better [spoken softly]. So, I was very privileged to be in *those* roles, as well as prioress of my own community.

NF: How long *were* you prioress?

PC: Eight years. Yeah.

NF: Was there anything that—like, what changes happened in that time?

[00:13:12]

PC: Oh, there was a lot that happened. I'm trying to think in sequence. I mean, we were looking at our school, you know, and the financial situation of that. And the fact that the enrollment was down, but the faculty and staff numbers hadn't changed. And there just—it had to move. So, that was all the way through, and eventually we closed—we voted to close the school, in 2012.

And then, the apostolic visitation of American women religious happened. I think it started in 2009. So that would have been in my first term. And I was on the board of LCWR—the Leadership Conference of Women Religious—at that time. And we were the first Benedictine community to be visited by apostolic visitators [sic].

And then, LCWR also was the subject of a doctrinal assessment. And I was part of that, part of the board, for part of that process. Not the whole process. Because, the term limit for the board is three years. I mean, I was chair of Region Eight, of LCWR. That's how I got on the board.

What else happened? Well, certainly our numbers decreased. I think there were fifty-seven when I started, and I think there were thirty-nine when I ended. What else happened? I think those are the main—those are the main things.

NF: Those are pretty big, those three.

PC: Yes. They were huge.

[00:15:19]

NF: So, let's go back, about St. Scholastica—like, closing the school. You talked about, that it was because of enrollment issues. What did that mean? I mean, talk about that a little bit. Because it had to be very painful, in many ways.

PC: Oh, it was awful. Well, I taught in the school for fifteen years, in my early years. Taught French and English and Theology. We had a thousand students at that time. And when the school closed, it had an hundred and twenty-some, you know, in a huge building. And a wonderful—still continued to have wonderful education. They did that by keeping the staff. But then, eventually, financially that just didn't work, to have all those expenses.

So, it was very, very hard. And it was very hard for the community to make a decision to do that. And as a result, we didn't make it 'til February of the year that we closed, in June. So it was very, very fast for everybody. And *terrible* for people that weren't part of the process, the decision-making process. I mean, it was hard for the community, but the community had been talking about it for several years, and looking at what we might do. But, for the students, for the parents, for the alumnae—I mean, it was just incredible.

You know, there has to be—in any situation like that—there has to be a point person that gets the flak. And that happened to be me. (Chuckles) I mean, we worked through it. But it was not a good time.

[00:17:28]

BOM: So, can we pull back just a little bit, and talk about your reflection on what that meant, in terms of the history of Catholic education in the United States. Catholic schools, particularly—which were founded primarily by women religious—contributed a huge amount to our culture and our society. So, what were your thoughts as you look back on that transition, from a thousand to a little over a hundred?

PC: I mean, the transition was gradual from that. And also, in the early years, when I went to school there, it was mostly—I would say, ninety-some percent—Catholic. Whereas, when we closed, it was, I think, less than fifty—a little bit less than fifty-percent Catholic. Which was a wonderful thing, because of the diversity, you know, of the neighborhood, and of the city, and of our church, and of our world. But, on the other hand, that was a real difference between there.

And I think—I mean, the headline on the [*Chicago*] *Tribune* was something like: "Revered academy closes." It was on the front page, of the *Tribune*! So, I mean, we had—as a community—made the decision to continue as an all-women's school. And, as people reflected back on that, some people said: "Oh, we should have gone co-ed when St. George closed," as some other young women's schools did. But, who knows?

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I mean, I think it was an important decision: that single-sex education is important, and women's education is important. But that, too, was painful. Because it was a bigger issue than even just education; it was about women, and the Church.

The history of Catholic high schools in Chicago is that orders ran them—both men and women orders. We got *no* financial support from the dioceses, you know, to do that. So you look back, and you think: Oh, is there a way that that could have happened? Or, we looked at maybe becoming a Cristo Rey school, because one of our sisters—Sister Judith Murphy—was one of the—was *the* first principal at the Cristo Rey school, the *first* Cristo Rey school, in Pilsen [neighborhood in Chicago].

So we looked at that. And we looked at: How could we do this in a way—we tried to think of ways, but in the end it just didn't work. Very sad for Catholic education. Although, I think the girls' schools that have continued—I think there are five or six of them, in Chicago, that are all girls—they seem to be doing okay, and have some financial assistance now, in the last year or so, from the state.

It's important. And I think St. Scholastica, the faculty that was there at the end, and the faculty that I participated in, felt like we were *very* special. There was just a wonderful feeling. I'm not sure—when I look at the bigger picture—that that's *that* different from other high schools, or other—especially girls'—Catholic high schools. But, it felt *really* positive, and really nourishing to young women. I'm not sure what else to say about that.

[00:21:56]

BOM: Why do you think there *has* been this decline—overall—in terms of Catholic education, after being such an important part of American culture?

PC: I don't know. I haven't thought about that too much. I mean, I suppose that our world changed, our Church changed. There wasn't the same sense of Catholicism as: from parish school to high school. At our school—and I'm sure in other Catholic schools—there were *bunches* of girls that came from St. Gertrude's, St. Henry's, St. Margaret Mary's, Queen of All Saints. You know, there was just that sense of: it's a continuing community; you just keep going. And I think the world has changed in that, in that we're very much more aware of diversity, and aware of—I don't know—the importance of being part of the secular world as well as the Church world.

So, I think there are lots of sociological reasons for that. But, those are my thoughts on it.

BOM: Can we do a little bit about the invest—I call it the "inquisition"—of the women religious. (Laughs) Okay, thank you. And the twist that I'm going to add—and then I'll shut up—is: Why? My impression is, this was only done to American women religious.

PC: Right

BOM: Okay.

PC: Well, Yes.

BOM: So, can you describe what it was, and then why the United States?

[00:23:53]

PC: Okay. So the apostolic visitation—was very unusual. There had been a conference at Stonebridge, in Massachusetts—I think that's the name of the college—and there was an American woman religious, I can't remember her name, but she changed from being pretty—let's call it—liberal, to being pretty conservative. Broad-minded to being a little narrow. And, for example, LCWR wasn't even invited to that. It was on American women religious, and we heard about it later. I mean, even the top people—and I was one of the top people—didn't.

And then, a few months later, this notice of the apostolic visitation happened. You know, I think that—the United States has three conferences of religious, whereas most countries have only one. Most countries have men and women together. And we have CSMS [Conference of Major Superiors]—whatever that is—for men. And then we have LCWR. And then in—I think it's just in the late nineties—CMSWR, which—Conference of Major Superiors of Women Religious. Yeah. So that's unusual. And that—LCWR represented, I think, in the ninety percentile of women religious. Whereas, the other conference of women represented a more conservative compartment, and a smaller number.

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And I think—I mean, I think LCWR's meetings were trying to broaden the understanding of Church, and the understanding of world, for the major superiors who were gathered there. And, at times, there were speakers that challenged traditional. And it was to help people think. So, I think that's really the background for it. And women religious have been—in the States—have been much more active and outspoken than in other parts of the world.

Now, in the years after the doctrinal assessment, there was an effort to speak—and there's a document called *votum dea* that speaks to cloistered women religious [nuns] around the world. And I can talk about that a little bit, but let me go back to the doctrinal assessment. The women—we were in shock, when this happened. And as we processed it, we decided not to—well, we *didn't* react. We never re-acted to it; we tried to step back and see what we could do to change something in this.

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And people—I remember, at the LCWR board, people had no doubt that *all* women religious communities are faithful. And that, you know, there wasn't any reason for this, except maybe some fear of women. I think it's a—it reflects the whole role of women in the Church. It's not just about women religious. And the decision was—and it always felt really slow but, you know, sometimes things have to be slow—was to try to create deeper dialogue among ourselves. And then, to try to transfer that to a dialogue with the bishop, who was the point person for this in the States.

And, gradually, that really made a difference. I mean, it made a difference in the LCWR, among members itself. I mean, I remember my first meeting of LCWR, 2007, I was at a table where people were like: they didn't have any energy. And they didn't—they didn't want to talk about, you know, important things. But that wasn't true after this happened. So, I mean, negative things sometimes spur you onto new growth. They aren't good, but they do that. So, they did that.

So, eventually there was a resolution, you know, to it—publicly. I'm not sure. I mean, I think it changed American women religious—the perception of women religious. We got much more attention, in the press and—we exist! Before that I'm not sure. I mean, some people knew. But, publicly, I don't think people knew.

[00:30:04]

So the *votum dea*—when I was a delegate to the CIB in Rome, we went to talk to the Vatican about this, and I was sort of the sole woman religious from the States, with four other cloistered sisters, who are (Unintelligible) (Chuckles), not the image you have. And this was coming. And I think, in a positive sense, it comes out of the Vatican and whoever's concern for some very isolated women religious—communities of women religious—who are cloistered. And that's a fact. You know, some of them in parts of the world are very poor, and don't have enough to eat, and don't have enough money to support themselves. So, it's very—there was a lot of fear of it, and we talked about it [this request from the Vatican], and they were—the Vatican was, the Vatican dicastery was forming guidelines for this. They just came out last year, I think.

The one thing that happened, was that the—that I can measure—was that the Vatican asked all cloistered communities to be federated. We're federated, you know, in this country and in a lot of countries. But [the Vatican] asked them—so, to be connected to other communities. So there could be some help if there were problems. I have a friend who is an abbess in Belgium, and her community wasn't exactly federated, they were connected to a men's community, but not with other women's communities.

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So, they're forming, really—they're not calling it a federation, they're calling it a—I can't remember what they're calling it! But anyway, it's a collaboration. And they're twelve communities, and they're from all different countries in Europe, and it's got a wonderful spirit. So there's some positive things that have come out of that. And they look to us, in this country—to the Benedictines particularly, because a lot of them are cloistered in Europe—to help them figure out how to respond to this, rather than react. So we had a lot of good dialogue.

NF: You mentioned that *your* community was the first Benedictine community—can you talk about that—that was "visited," or whatever the term is.

PC: Ours wasn't the best experience. And I think partly because the visitators that came were inexperienced, and they just didn't understand Benedictine life. Like, I remember, one of the visitors said: "Well, um, do you know Magnificat [songs of Mary]?" And I said, "Um, well,

yeah, maybe 15 of them?" You know, I mean, it just was—it felt like a disconnect. So that's one thing.

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I mean, our report was fine. We had the opportunity to invite laypeople to talk with the visitors. And so, we had a group of eight. I remember, Dick Heidkamp was one of them. I forget all the others. But anyway, he told me later that they kept trying to push the group to say something that was not so good about us. And so, he said: "We finally said, 'Well, they don't toot their own horn.'" You know! (Chuckles) So they wrote, in the recommendation, that we should do more on social media, and that kind of thing.

I mean, it was—we were very happy when it was over.

NF: And so, just to explain: The visitors were from Rome?

PC: No.

NF: No?

PC: The visitors were trained by the group in the United States—I can't remember her name, that's terrible. The Mother—I can't remember her name. But she taught, and they organized trainings for visitors, and you could volunteer to be a visitor. Now, I have to say that other Benedictine communities, and a lot of other communities who later were visited, had really good experiences in that. Because they just sort of celebrated their lives, and their history. And the visitors seemed to be better prepared, than ours seemed to be.

NF: Looking over the apostolic visitation, you talked about some good things. Because it had to be very painful, just—

PC: Oh, yes.

NF: Looking back, were there two or three things that you say: "Oh, you know, that was good."

[00:35:29]

PC: Well, I think the deepening of dialogue—what we call "contemplative dialogue"—which is basically good process (Chuckles), you know. Where you take some time, and listen to yourself, and listen to the group, and then dialogue. And it's rooted in prayer, and awareness. So that was good. I think most communities use that, now, and maybe didn't before. Some did.

I mentioned that the public was more aware of the role and the contributions of women religious because of that. Yeah, I think those are the things that stand out for me. And there are several books, now, that have been written. One about the apostolic visitation, and then one that just came out—by the presidents of LCWR—on the doctrinal assessment. And that's a powerful testimony.

NF: Well that leads well into my next question, is about LCWR—Leadership Council of Women Religious. And so, you were on the board from when to when?

PC: You know, I can't remember. (Laughs) Um, I think it, like, transgressed—or, was over my two terms. So, it must have been at the end of my first term, which would have been 2010, maybe, to 2013. It might have been 2009 to 2012, I'm not sure. You can tell I don't hold numbers in my head very well! (Laughs)

[00:37:18]

NF: So, LCWR had—you know, all this was going on, at the same time. Can you describe? Well, describe what it meant to be on the board. Kind of, what that looks like? And maybe the next question is, what that looked like at that time?

PC: I think the thing that stands out for me, that those were—I met a lot of really holy, active, strong women, in that experience. And I mean, I think, women grappling with the fact that numbers were changing; the sociological phenomenon of religious life was changing. And I think, women who obviously had made choices to stay in the community—probably had entered, as I did, when lots of people were entering. And watched lots of people leave, and had chosen to stay.

I mean, it was clear that there was strength in that group, and courage, to explore new ways of thinking about life: the universe story, the cosmology, that kind of thing. Spirituality in new ways.

It felt like a privilege to be with those women. And, representing so many years of women's lives, in this country. Yeah, it felt like a privilege.

[00:39:24]

NF: Do you have anything else? [Not directed toward the narrator.]

BOM: I'm just marveling at your ability to turn this into something good!

(Narrator and others laugh)

PC: I know!

BOM: Because I'd have been pissed! (Big laughs from all)

PC: Well, it didn't feel good. And I felt angry, at times, you know. I think everybody did. But, you know, if you're choosing to stay within the Church—and you're thinking, "Okay, look at what this is. This is about women in the Church. And we gotta do this well, because it will impact women down the road, how we handle this." So, I mean, there *were* a lot of people who wanted us (clap) just to do this. I mean, maybe that would have changed history in some way. The way we did it changed history, too. So, yeah.

I don't think it was all—it wasn't all roses, at all. I didn't mean (Laughs) to give that impression! Because, it was like: "Oh, come on." The patriarchy that we experience and know—and it keeps going on—continued. And it didn't feel good.

I remember, we were trained to be confidential about what we were doing. And I remember having lunch with Tom Fox from *NCR* [*National Catholic Reporter*]*—*who is a friend of our family's—and with Jeannine, Sister Jeannine Gramick. And my approach and her approach were quite different! I think both are important. And I kept saying to Tom: "You know, I'm not going to talk about what we're doing right now, because we're still working through it." And I think he was disappointed.

[00:41:41]

BOM: What was Jeannine's approach, in this?

PC: She thought we ought to confront the Vatican in some way, at that time. I mean, she's certainly been a person that has taken strong action. She never has been in leadership. There is something about being in leadership—and knowing that you're part of this tradition, but you're also part of what's going to move ahead—that is different than somebody that hasn't been in leadership, I think. So, I think her role is important; and ours is, too.

NF: I'm struck by the sense of responsibility—

PC: Yeah.

NF: —to those who came before, and those who will come again.

PC: Right. And to women in the Church, you know. Because, what we do—I mean, because we're—we were—there's no real worldwide organization of women in the Catholic Church. But there *are* worldwide organizations of women religious. And there's power in numbers. So, to use that kind of power.

And I learned about power from Marjorie Tuite. From the NARW [National Assembly of Religious Women]. She really understood that we have a gift, when we come together, and that is power. And we need to use it. I mean, she learned that—or taught that—at the [University of] Notre Dame, and in her life, in community organizing.

[00:43:35]

And I understand—when I worked at Deborah's Place, I took training with—what is it?—Saul Alinsky's [community organizer] group. But anyway.

Teresa Neumann (TN): I-A-F [Industrial Areas Foundation]

PC: IAF! (Claps) Thank you! I'm not just forgetting numbers!

TN: United Power [coalition of organization to address community issues], I think, is the—

PC: Yeah, we were a part of United Power. (Cross talk) So I learned it in a different way. But I'd initially learned it from Marjorie.

And my first experience—my mother used to have women's liturgies, and meetings, on the 88th floor of the Hancock building, on a monthly basis, that Marjorie's NARW—National Assembly of—was *first* the National Assembly of Women Religious, so N-A-W-R. And then it changed to the National Assembly of Religious Women, so it would include everybody. And so my mom had that for years. So that was a wonderful, formative experience.

My first venture into Central America was in a NARW retreat in Nicaragua, right after Marjorie died, actually. Half of her ashes were buried in Nicaragua, and half with her community in Spring Hill, New York, I think. So, that was very special, too. It was during the Nicaragua, Contra war.

[00:45:16]

NF: Did you? [Not spoken to the narrator.]

TN: Can I ask a quick question?

NF: Uh huh.

TN: What do you think you learned, moving forward—if something like this were to come again, where Rome would send people—you know, like, if that were to happen again, what do you think—how do you think you would do something differently? Or, how are you better prepared, now, for something like that, so that it isn't, potentially, as painful, or as upsetting?

BOM: Talk to us.

PC: How would I do it differently? [Asking herself.] You know, I think you have to trust—I have to trust—the spirit that moves in the group. That's really important to me. So, I don't really know—and the Church is different, right now. than it was at that time. I think the American Church is changing so, so slowly. As the international Church is—I hope. I don't know. I think it's important to do things from a community basis, you know, from a communal [emphasis on "com"] basis. I think that's part of who we are, rather than as an individual.

I don't think the Church will do that again, to American women religious. But I don't know. They did it—the Church did it to seminaries, here in this country, too. I think, ten years before that. And nothing really came—oh, well, a little bit came of it. I'm not as familiar with it. And universities, relation to the Catholic Church. So, I don't know what I would—how I would change it, except that I would—I mean, the experience of working with the community of women religious, nationally, was very rich for me.

[00:47:29]

BOM: Talk to us about—tell us about Marjorie Tuite. So, just tell us—for the camera's sake—I mean, who was Marjorie Tuite, and why—what were her contributions.

PC: Right. Marjorie was a bigger-than-life woman. (Light laugh) Both physically, and her presence, for sure. She was a Dominican, from New York. And she worked—what I know of her—she worked on organizing with Harry Fagan, at Notre Dame. They trained community organizers in the churches, at Notre Dame—during summers, particularly—for a long time. And she worked—I don't really know the history, but there's a Center for Concern at Notre Dame, that kind of morphed out of all that movement, eventually. It still exists. I know, when Marjorie was becoming ill, two people ran the NARW office, here in Chicago: Kathy Osberger, who is a marvelous community organizer. She's in Chicago. Worked as a Maryknoll volunteer, I think, in Chile. And then worked in New York, in the South Bronx, organizing. And still is working with—particularly with [Elena Sefura at] the Office of Immigration in Chicago [organizing the Pastoral Migratoria movement]. And Judy Vaughan, who is a Sister of St. Joseph, Carondelet, from California. So those two—so it was a nice combination of a laywoman and a professed religious [along Marilyn Wolfgram, OSB].

[00:49:43]

You know, Marjorie—I know them better than I knew Marjorie, personally. Although I did know her, because she was around and I heard her talk a lot, and I've heard many, many people talk *about* her. I feel like I imbibed some of her spirit, you know. I remember going to the cemetery in Nicaragua, when we were there, and just feeling like: This is really special. She spent a lot of time in Nicaragua, I believe, in the early years, and loved that people, and loved what was happening at that time—which was a great revolution, at that time. It hasn't materialized in the way that they hoped. But she was part of that whole spirit.

So, just an amazing woman. And never in leadership, in her own religious community. But I think they were always proud of her and not sure what to do with her. Which happens in groups, when you've got somebody that stands out, publicly. But she was a very—she was a lovely person to be with, you know. Because she just was jolly, and embraced everybody.

BOM: But fierce.

PC: But what?

BOM: Fierce.

PC: *Oh* she was fierce. Yes! Absolutely, she was fierce! (Laughs) Good word. Yeah, she was very amazing. I mean, there was no nonsense, with Marjorie, at all. I feel very grateful that I knew her—and knew *of* her—and had some experience, personally, of her.

[00:51:43]

(Some background talking)

NF: You had mentioned Saul Alinsky's organizing program. Can you talk about that, or?

PC: Yeah. I got involved in it because we were trying to get zoning for building a convent at St. Alphonsus Parish. United Power for Action and Justice [UPAJ], which was a Chicago [IAF] group, was helping us to do that. Because at first there was a NIMBY [not in my backyard] reaction to a home for homeless women being in their neighborhood. So I went [to UPAJ]. Josh Hoyt was the organizer; he's a consummate organizer in Chicago, and nationally. And he said: "You know, you should really go through the ten-day training." So, I reluctantly went.

But it was really helpful. I think I did a shift during that training, because they talk about: that all engagement in social action takes place because of people's self-interest. And I went: What? (Laughs) That's not Christian! But the more I learned about that, the more it's true. You know, I mean, my self-interest might be that I feel good when I do things for other people; but I'm doing it because I feel good. And so, there is something, when we're trying to bring about change, you know, that it's not just because it *should* happen, but kind of being aware of what's important to people. Because they're not going to change unless it's something important to them. So I learned that.

[00:53:55]

And also learned the value of what they call "one-on-ones," personal relationship with somebody, knowing something about people's history. And also, that there are no enemies. Don't make enemies, because, who knows? They could be helpful to you. So they were very simple things, but things I hadn't articulated or thought about. And I think I've used them—sometimes well, and sometimes not. (Laughs lightly)

BOM: Did you get to know Saul Alinsky?

PC: No, he was gone. Ed Chambers.

BOM: Oh, okay. Alright.

PC: I did know Ed Chambers, some. I'm currently—I'm just leaving this position, but I'm on the Community Leadership board, for the Presence Health, St. Francis Hospital. And there's a United Power group, in St. Nick's, that's trying to get in Evanston some facility—what do they call it? A crisis center for mental health. So they're working with the police district, and with the hospitals, trying to get either Evanston Hospital or St. Francis to do this. And St. Francis is in a lot of transition, because they've merged now with another hospital organization.

So, you know, I did—I have met them, and I got them an appointment with the president—the new president—at St. Francis, so that they could talk about it. It's not moving yet, but we'll see. It's a good group, still, and I think it still has power.

[00:55:50]

NF: Well, to kind of back up—although it's all related—after you were done with being prioress, and then LCWR, what did you do?

PC: Well, I had to finish my term as Conference of Benedictine Prioresses president. So I finished that in 2017. Or was that 2015 to 2017—no, 2014 through—I don't know. Four years, whatever. '13 I guess! So in February—I wanted to learn about immigration. Because, so much was changing in our country. So I contacted Michael Gosch[, CSV], who's a Viatorian. Because he was working—we had worked together at the Howard Area Community Center.

So, Michael told me about the ICDI [Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants] that had been—had gone by Sisters Pat Murphy[,RSM], and JoAnn Persch[,RSM]—they're Mercy sisters. It has six different ministries. So I chose, actually, three out of the six to do, to learn, about immigration. One is visiting in the detention centers; so I still go, on Thursday mornings, to Kenosha, to visit. And then, the second—for a while I did some presence at their House of Hospitality, that they have for adults. And then, I also go to court—immigration court—on Thursday afternoon, just to watch.

[00:57:39]

Then—well, just before that, in January, I had been at Viator House, which the Viatorians started for young men who were turning eighteen, had come here as children, and would go to adult prison when they turned eighteen. They would have to move out of the children's centers, or detention. And at that, there was an open house; so, somebody asked: "What about the women, young women?" So, afterwards I said to Michael, "You know, I could help with that."

So I—in February of 2017, I called a meeting of all my LCWR contacts, and also my own community, and twenty people came. So it was just to brainstorm about what we could do about this. And by October of last year, we had opened a house. It's called Bethany House of Hospitality. And it's supported by, I think, thirty congregations—communities of women religious. And it's—we have a board of eight, now, from different communities religious. We're trying to get a few more on it.

The house holds ten; we're trying to move it into the city, because it's waaaay out. Bartlett, Illinois, which I'd never heard of before! (Chuckles) And the girls come into Truman College for school, because at Truman College there's a high school ESL [English as a second language] program for immigrants, that's wonderful. And most of these young women have not had much formal education. So, it's really amazing.

[00:59:31]

It sort of grew, like, topsy. And I ended up doing a lot of things; I had a lot of experience in administration, so I knew what pieces you had to put together to do a not-for-profit. But we got pro-bono work, from lawyers and different people: doctors, health clinics. It's kind of a surprise every day, (laughs), you know. We now have—well, last time we had a meeting—we have nine women living there; three are from Africa, one's from Venezuela, and the rest are from Central America. We've had twenty-five over the past year. We had one—I think it was thirteen months

or fourteen months-old child who was reunited with his mother in the terrible separation of families. That was—you know, he didn't know who she was, at first. And then he wouldn't let her out of sight, at all.

And then, we took a woman with two children who had been in children's detention, with her children, so we took her so she wouldn't be separated. She went to Florida—long story—now she's back. She has a four-year-old, and a one-year-old. That's not our mission; our mission was for just the young women. But, how do you say no? So, we're trying to do that. We're growing; and, you know, it's a good board. Just kind of amazing. Everybody's taken on a lot. Some are in leadership; some are not. Those of us that aren't in leadership right now are able to do more.

[01:01:28]

So, I've learned a lot about immigration, personally. And it's been—it's been eye opening, and it certainly makes me very angry about the policies that are being enacted today. He [President Donald Trump] is doing more, enactment. Just, you know, you're just trying to help one person at a time. They are very brave, courageous young women; and they are kids. So, it's a real combination. They have their kids that haven't had a childhood. And so, they're having to experience themselves and grow up; so that has it's own problems, as you can imagine! But it's wonderful. The wonderful thing about it is the collaboration among groups of women religious. We're funded primarily by women religious. Maybe in the future we won't be; have to do more fundraising. But, right now we're doing pretty well.

NF: I'm struck that this has some similarities to—you taught high school. So, you're talking about kids and young women, and then the whole piece of: you did so much administrative work. And so, kind of making sure everything runs.

PC: Uh huh. Yeah.

NF: It almost feels—I mean, it's like all your skills in what *seems* like a different area, but in some ways maybe it's not.

PC: Yeah. I mean, certainly the administrative skills. I'm not there day to day; we hired staff, now. But, relationally, with the young women—I mean, that's what I loved about teaching high school, was getting to know young women who were burgeoning. That's lovely, now, too. Most of the time. Now I can act like a grandmother (Laughs) to them. So I spoil them.

[01:03:40]

BOM: And I'm struck by the historical continuity. Women religious—young women came to the United States, to work with the immigrant population.

PC: That's true.

BOM: And to keep us Catholic. But there is this thread, of women dedicated to whatever the situation is, for immigrants. And so, it sort of *looks* like your work has changed, but it hasn't.

PC: No, that's true. I mean, our own community came for immigrant children; you know, came to teach German immigrant children, in Chicago. That history is probably true in most communities, that there's some continuity with that. Yeah. And now we're teaching in our buildings; that's another interesting thing. You know, we rented our buildings to a charter school that's *for* immigrant children. So, we no longer have the person power, as such, for teaching. But we're using our other assets. That feels good to me.

(Light talking in the background)

TN: So, you talked about organizing, and you talked about the real frustration with current policy. Is there any hope or dream, or energy, around pushing—with, kind of, like the skill base you have, with the relational organizing—to really move beyond, like, the people that you get to work with directly, and kind of push higher up the political and policy, you know, structure.

[01:05:32]

PC: I mean, people are on the border today. I didn't go. But, the former SOA movement—the School of the Americas—moved to the border. So they're in Nogales today, tomorrow, and Sunday. I think those things are important; I think those things are *very* important to impact public awareness. What can *I* do? I mean, I certainly respond to pleas for petitions, and writing letters. And going to tell our story, of Bethany House, to people is—I can do that, Michael does that, and sometimes we do it together—particularly at parishes—so that people hear personal stories and understand that this is not about the enemy; this is about people who are suffering because of U.S. policies in those countries, over decades and decades. And now they're coming because they don't feel safe. I mean, who else would come all those miles, with a child on your shoulders? You couldn't do it.

So, I think, to tell the story is very important. I probably could do more, in terms of speaking to politicians. I encourage people to vote, so we get some change—which I *hope* will make a change, in policy. I don't want to feel helpless in this atmosphere, and yet, in many ways, I do. So I focus my energy on: What can I do for people who are in detention, or coming out of children's centers, etc., to use my energy as I can.

[01:07:59]

(Some discussion in the background)

NF: I think we've come up to present, in terms of your present—

PC: Yeah. Probably the only other thing that I would mention: I decided to go into Spiritual Direction training. Partly, it's a recognition that I probably have done that—certainly with ISP [Ignatian Spirituality Program], and companioning women, and at Deborah's Place, too. And probably before. And, certainly in leadership in my own community. But, I wanted to get the skills to do it, which has now opened a new door for me. So I just finished the program. So I am doing some spiritual direction with people. One, I'm just going to begin in December, a ninety-

five-year-old woman, this wonderful woman (Chuckles). She said, "You know, I've been looking for a spiritual director for years." (Laughs) So I said, "Okay! Well, let's see."

I was invited—through my experience in the Benedictine world—to spend a year in Africa, in an international Benedictine missionary community, which is a little different configuration than Benedictines usually are. And that will be doing spiritual direction with—they have a community of over a hundred, and over half of them are in formation. And the prioress studied here in Chicago, at CTU—Catholic Theological Union—and recognizes the importance of somebody coming from the outside that can help those young women sort through why they're doing what they're doing. And if it's the right thing for them.

[01:10:00]

I'm both excited and scared (Laughs lightly), you know, of that new opportunity. But, it'll give me a chance to focus on spiritual direction—which will be wonderful—for a year. Because I tend to go in many directions when I'm home. And that'll give me a focus. We'll see what that does (Laughs).

BOM: So, I want to pull back—go back in time—and talk a little bit more about your parents and the role that they played in terms of lay involvement. So, my understanding is that your parents were—played a critical role, along with other people, in terms of increasing the role of laity in the Catholic Church, after Vatican II [Second Vatican Council, which brought a series of reforms]. You talked a little bit about this before. But, if you've got some things to say. So, what was—how did the role of laity change, in the Church, after Vatican II; and what role did your parents and others play in that?

[01:11:14]

PC: Well, I may have said this before, but I think that the role of the Christian Family Movement—through the fifties and early sixties—laid the groundwork for Vatican II, in terms of its approach and inclusion of laity. I think—you know, my father and mother were both very public figures. And, it wasn't just CFM; they were very active in politics in Chicago. They were active in racial concerns in the very non-inclusive suburb of Wilmette, where they lived. And they always worked together. My father, his profession was law. But it was more in terms of a—I don't know—a helper. Not necessarily a philanthropist, because they didn't have that much money at that time. But he always found a way to help anybody who came to his office. And my mother always supported that. You know, he always brought people home for dinner, and she supported that and helped—I mean, provided dinner.

My father had a way of reaching out to people. He would hear about somebody, and bring them to the CFM convention, or bring them to our house. So, like, Julius Nyerere—who was the president of Tanzania, a Catholic, probably will be—*hopefully* will be the first politician to be a saint, one day, if they do it right—came to our house. He was studying here, before his was president. My father kept in touch with him [and organized a meeting with the World Council of Churches in Tanzania in 1974].

[01:13:25]

Sargent Shriver, there's a funny story about—my father had invited him and Eunice to dinner, and forgot to tell my mother. And then *he* forgot about it, I guess. I don't know. But, we had dinner and then the Shriviers showed up. And so, my father entertained them; my mother went and pulled a couple of steaks out of the freezer, and had dinner. So, there's always that—kind of the dynamic, that happened.

I think they had a way of connecting. I mean, now we have such potential for connecting, via the social media, and networking, and cell phones, and other ways. But they—I mean, he wrote letters to people and connected across the world. They traveled; I was a sophomore, I think, in high school—so I was fifteen, sixteen—they went around the world and touched base with CFM groups all over the world. And they were gone for two months, I think. Because planes were just beginning. And, my father loved—he loved to venture out into new things. So, even planes. He would not be on time; he would run after a plane, when you could do that.

[01:15:11]

I think just the connecting, across the world. I mean, in a very humble way, in a way. But going back to that self interest in community organizing—I think he *loved* to know and be known by different kinds of people. And so he would always reach out. And my mother was very supportive of that. I always think she came into her own after he died, in many ways, as a real leader, and did her own thing. But, they worked as a kind of a unit, which was powerful.

So, I think Church leaders supported that. Like, he reached out to Helder Camara, the archbishop of Recife, in Brazil—who was such a humble man—and also—I remember when he died; who was the bishop in Mexico that was *so* much with the people? Sergio [Menendez]—I can't remember now. But, anyway, we got a letter from him when my father died. And also when my mother died, we got that. Which was many years between.

So, I think they interacted with the hierarchy, especially the hierarchy—Charles Buswell, who was a CFM chaplain in Oklahoma, and then became bishop of Pueblo [Colorado], and was one of the best—early on—Vatican II bishops. Marvelous, marvelous man, Charlie was. So they connected with, and *encouraged* those bishops, who were not in the majority very often. [Raymond] Hunthausen, they knew. Just a lot of different, different people.

[01:17:27]

BOM: So, speaking of bishops and cardinals, Chicago has had a wide array of very influential cardinals who have left their mark on—physically, and spiritually—in this area and in the nation. Who would you like to talk about, in terms of their—

PC: Yeah. My personal knowledge is more of Cardinal George than of any of the previous cardinals. Although, I certainly knew of Cardinal Cody. I knew of Cardinal Meyer because that was who received the letter inviting my parents to be on the birth control commission; so I knew of him. I knew of Cardinal Cody primarily because, in reaction to some of his policies, Call to

Action emerged. There was a lot of *life* in the Church, in that whole period of activity. And certainly Joseph Bernardin was close to the priests in Chicago that we knew well, and also to some of the women religious in Chicago.

But, Cardinal George—who certainly was not of the ilk, pastorly, of Joseph Bernardin or of Blase Cupich—he was amazingly open to our work at Deborah's Place. And I have two instances of that. One was when we were fighting a zoning battle, that I mentioned before, that United Power helped us with. The alderman of that district was a Catholic, and was in Dominic Grassi—who was a priest of Chicago diocese—in his parish. And so Dom and I went to the alderman's office many, many, many times together, to talk about how he needed to do this, not just from—it might not be political, but certainly was Christian, gospel-based, to do this.

[01:20:00]

Well, when push came to shove, there was going to be a vote in the city council. And, the cardinal came to visit Marah's [transitional housing program]—which was at Holy Trinity parish; that's where we were moving *out* of. And he came there, and Channel Two [CBS Chicago], I think, came to interview him about this. Because this became *very* public. During that—right before that, Terry Gabinski, the alderman, knew that the cardinal was coming to do a public presentation. And he called, and he said: "We'll support it, we'll support it. You don't need to have the cardinal on the air." And I said, "Ah, no. We're going to have the cardinal go on the air. But thank you. I'm glad you're going to support it."

So we did. So, Cardinal George was very supportive. And he went out of his way to be there, to do that. It's not the usual image of Cardinal George. So, I like that story.

The other story is: One Christmas Eve, when we were working on Milwaukee Avenue, as part of Deborah's Place—Irene's, the day program, was upstairs and my office was downstairs—our offices were downstairs. And so, this woman who literally lived on the street, but she spent her days at Irene's and she was an artist, she came down and she said—and she was a Catholic, she lived by a garage behind a local parish over there; I can't remember the name. She came down and she said: "I want to give the cardinal a present, for Christmas. Can you take me over there?" So, I said—(Laughs)—I said, "Sure. Give me an hour and come back down." So we drove over to the cardinal's house, and we knocked on the door—without notice—and I thought, well, we can just leave it for him. So we told the sister at the door—I told the sister at the door—what this woman wanted to do. And she told the cardinal, and the cardinal came and met with her.

[01:22:34]

She had made this—it was like cloisonné [decorative handicraft]. It was a virgin with a child. It was lovely. So, he asked her: "How did you make that?" Because he knew where she was. And she said, "Well I took a coat hanger—" and she explained the whole process of how she made it. And he took it. And he said, "Thank you very much. And I really wish you a blessed Christmas." It was very special, that he would take time to meet with her. And we didn't make a show of that, in the press or anything like that. It just, for me, I saw a warmth in him that I didn't usually see, and probably most people didn't usually see. But I think there was a place in his heart for

homelessness, for the most vulnerable. And maybe he didn't know *how* to show it, too often. But he definitely showed it to her—

BOM: That's a beautiful story.

PC: —and to me.

BOM: I think I'm finished. I mean, I could—I could go on forever. I mean, not me. But I could listen to you forever. But I'm mindful of the time, too.

NF: Right. I think we have a little bit. What time is it?

BOM: OK. It's a quarter to 12:00.

NF: I'm curious about a couple things, follow up. You talked about your parents and politics—so there's the Sargent Shriver story, at the national level. In terms of Chicago politics, did they have connections? And, kind of, what did those connections look like?

[01:24:23]

PC: Yeah. My father was an interesting combination of very progressive politics and kind of traditional practices. He was a fan of the first Mayor Daley, which—when I look back on it—is like, *really?* (Laughs lightly) But, he was. I mean, I think it certainly came out of the Irish reality; maybe that was part of it. And then, in terms of Chicago, I think he worked on the campaigns, probably as part of the [political] machine (Chuckles), but not in a huge way. But then, I think he also—like, he supported emerging leaders, like Renault Robinson, who ran the African American Patrolmen's League. Renault could have been—he got himself into issues, but he could have been a real leader in Chicago, in politics. I think he also supported Jesse Jackson, in the early years. Paul Simon—that's not Chicago, but Illinois. He was very, very supportive. I think he had a leadership role in one of Paul's campaigns in Illinois.

My mom got more involved afterwards, she wasn't too much into that. She did it, but that wasn't her thing. One of my father's ancestors was with—was it Mayor Cermak that was shot in Chicago? He was the mayor. I think one of my father's relatives was with him when he was shot. So, obviously there was some family involvement in politics over the years, for him.

[01:26:36]

He worked more nationally, with Gene [Eugene] McCarthy's campaign; he was the Illinois chair of his campaign. And my mother and my—well, I'm not sure. Two of these three—my mother, my sister, and my foster brother—were delegates to unseat the Illinois delegation at the '72 campaign for McCarthy. So, my mother kept that going. Yeah. Gene McCarthy was the main one. I think my father loved him because he was a poet and a politician. And my father—I don't think he ever wrote poetry, but he was a poet at heart, for sure.

So, I mean, there were lots of little connections in politics. But not *so* vocal, always.

BOM: I want to ask about Eugene McCarthy. Do you think his—I just heard a discussion about Joe McCarthy, very different, and the role that Catholicism played in his public life. Did your father, or did you ever think about Gene McCarthy's Catholicism, in terms of what he did?

PC: Yeah, I think so. Certainly the idealism that can pretty much be part of Catholicism, was true. And Gene was a teacher, you know. I think he taught in a Catholic college, didn't he? In Minnesota. I think so. I'm not sure of that. I think yes. I think they supported—I mean, certainly supported Kennedy, but not in any kind of direct way. But, I think because—and Daley was a Catholic, you know. I mean, I think there were—a lot of the same values, even though they played out differently in different people in politics, was rooted in Catholics. They never *talked* about that, directly. But if I stop and think about it, I think there was a connection.

[01:29:12]

BOM: The poetry. I heard a presentation on the Berrigans [brothers who were Catholic peace activists], they were talking about Phil and Dan. And Phil was, supposedly, the very practical, hard-nosed one. And one of Phil's children was saying: "And then there was uncle Dan, who mostly lived in heaven and every once in a while came down." (Laughs) He just would go back into—

PC: Was that Frida [Philip Berrigan's daughter]?

BOM: (Laughs)

PC: And I think my father knew Dan Berrigan. And Elizabeth—oh, yeah. Elizabeth McAlister [Catholic peace activist] was at their house, one time. Because there's a story that Bob Berner tells about that—I'm not sure I can, I can't recount it. I think my grandmother saw a picture with Elizabeth McAlister, and she went—because my mother's mother was not, not liberal in any sense of the word. (Chuckles) Yeah. I was going to say something else—oh, and Cesar Chavez [American labor leader] was at their house. So, he connected with a lot of different *leaders*, in different ways. Not necessarily political.

[01:30:29]

NF: Well, and that kind of leads me to non-Catholic networks. You know, how did that work, for both your parents and for you?

PC: Um, so, in the end—in 1974, before my—in July, June and July—my father died in November of '74—they organized a meeting with the World Council of Churches, on the family, in Tanzania. And I got to go, just sort of as an add-on. So, there was a lot of work that they did with the Christian Family Movement, and the World Council of Churches. So, on an international level, that was true. There's a film—I actually have it—of that Familia '74 meeting.

I think some of the actions of the CFM group, when I was growing up, were to reach out to non-Catholics (Chuckles), you know. Our parish was very much a community, so it was, we didn't—and we went to school with a Catholic school—so we didn't connect with a lot of different

people. But our neighbors weren't Catholic. You know, the people next door; the people across the street. Chuck Percy [later Senator Percy] lived a couple lots down from us. There weren't many houses in between, at the time. And he wasn't Catholic.

[01:32:30]

So, there were relationships, but I don't remember it in an institutional way until, like, the World Council of Churches—and CFM sponsored that workshop. I know, when I was teaching theology at Scholastica, in the sixties, I remember we got Paul Simon to come, because he had a mixed marriage. Because Jeanne was not Catholic. And they came to talk about that, to the students. That was through my parents, that that happened.

I think there were little efforts to make themselves aware of that reality in our world, beyond the Catholic world.

BOM: So Senator Paul Simon was Catholic?

PC: Or, Jeanne was Catholic and he wasn't. Maybe that's right. Maybe it's that. I think that's right. I think his wife Jeanne was a Catholic. Yeah, he wasn't.

NF: So, I have two more questions that are—I hate to say random (Chuckles).

PC: That's all right.

NF: One is: You were talking about growing up. And we had on this list, kind of—I'm not quite sure—that Bill Murray lived down the street from you. We find that fascinating, I think. And also, maybe, what Wilmette was like at that time. Because, that was in Wilmette, correct?

PC: Yes, yeah. Yes, Bill Murray lived with his parents and his seven brothers and sisters—or, yeah, I think seven. He's younger than I am. So, my brother was in Brian's class, I think. And my sister Cathy was in Nancy's class. Nancy's a Dominican, Adrian Dominican. They lived in a little house. I think it's now painted blue, because Laura [one of the younger Murrays] lives in it. His father was a plumber, and his mother was a homemaker, with all those kids. They had a lot of kids. They were just ordinary people, you know, at school and down the street. I didn't know them particularly. I got to know Nancy, later. We were both women religious; we both taught high school and then both worked in social action. And my mother was her Girl Scout troop leader. So she knew her.

[01:35:34]

Wilmette was—I mean, my parents moved there because, I guess it was the place to move for young families. I was two years old. They built a house, and Cliff Noonan was the architect, they designed it. He's very famous across the North Shore. There were a lot of empty lots. We lived on—Elmwood went from Ridge, down. And Mallinckrodt was on one side of the street, and it was, like, a couple blocks of property. And the Murrays lived right across from the big building of Mallinckrodt. And then, Elmwood jogged, and we lived around that jog to the right, out there.

There were a lot of new houses, some not so big. Ours was probably a *little* bigger, but not huge. And it was—I think I mentioned that I never knew about Jewish people ‘til I was, probably, in high school. We didn't have any (Chuckles), you know, at all. Now I have a lot of Jewish friends. And my parents started a Catholic-Jewish dialogue group, in Chicago, that's been going for over thirty years now. Maybe forty. And I'm still part of that. So they were aware of that, but I just know, neighborhood-wise, there were non-Catholics and Catholics. There were the Catholic-school kids and the publics. We didn't even call them public-school kids; "publics."

So, it was pretty suburban, in the traditional way. And churches were the centers of community, I think not just for Catholics, but for others. Yeah.

[01:37:53]

BOM: Were you aware of any anti-Catholic bias? I mean, Wilmette isn't a Catholic stronghold. It's pretty white-Protestant, and it would have been—

PC: No.

BOM: Our car was egged when John Kennedy was elected president.

PC: You what?

BOM: Our car was—people threw eggs at our car, because we had a Kennedy bumper sticker on it.

PC: Oh, no. No. I don't remember anything like that. (Chuckles) I mean, I think I knew it—I remember when Kennedy was being elected—but I was an adult by then—I remember people thinking that the pope was going to—the Vatican was going to take over the country. But it didn't affect me. (Laughs)

NF: We also had a question on here to ask, kind of, "inquiring minds want to know" if there is a secret nuns' club that you are aware of? (Laughs)

PC: A *secret* nuns' club? I think there are a lot of great connections (Laughs), you know, but I don't know. No. I don't think so. I mean, when you think of Bethany House—and I just put out one email and twenty people came, just to brainstorm. There's a lot of affinity, you know. The sisterhood is strong in that.

[01:39:29]

TN: I kind of framed that question, a little bit. Because we were also curious—Nancy told a couple stories about the good work that, like, Sister Ann Ida had done, to really—there's a story about getting the park—sorry—the—

(Cross-talking)

NF: Street light. Or, crossing.

TN: Yeah, so that you could safely cross Sheridan at Kenmore [streets in front of Mundelein College]. And it was, like, a really interesting kind of organizing tactic; she made it so that he had to have a meeting, and he had to cross that street. And it was a nightmare and very dangerous to cross that street. And they had been asking Streets and San[itation], they had done all of the things that you're supposed to do to get this light put in. And then (snap), you said, within a week or so they had a light put in.

NF: Right, very quickly. It was Mayor Daley, and his driver had a terrible time picking him up from Mundelein. And the story goes, that he said to Sister Ann Ida: "You need a light here." And she said, "We've tried to get a light here." And then we have a picture of Mayor Daley throwing the switch of the light that was installed down there. And so, I think the whole—as you said—the sisterhood, you know, I think that was part of that framing, was how things happen or don't happen. And now that I think about it, in terms of power, also, almost perceived power: who has it? And how is it used.

[01:41:05]

PC: Ann Ida, I knew—she was president here; I never had her as a teacher. But she was a high school classmate of my mom's.

NF: You had mentioned that.

PC: So that's how I knew her. In my mom's waning years, and also in Ann Ida's, I kept in touch. And she kept in touch with my mom. And I would get her to go down there, because she was healthier. She was older than my mom, a year. No—she was younger than my mom by a year. Because she advanced through school; my mother flunked one grade, because she fooled around. (Laughs) That's another whole story.

But they were good friends through the years. And that's my main understanding. And then, Ann Ida's sister is in our community—my community. Joan Gannon[, OSB]. They're very, very different personalities. Joan's still alive. She was the baby of the family.

I mean, I loved Ann Ida. And I remember going out to Dubuque [Iowa] to visit her, after I was prioress. I was finished, and I was kind of fishing, trying to figure out what I was going to do. And she—I went twice—and she urged me to do the same thing each time. She never—I mean, she was very dogged, I think, when she wanted something. She said she was hearing from older women, who were widows longing to connect with other women. And that I should do something to bring them together, in some way. I never figured out how to do that. Maybe that's the next chapter (Laughs), after Africa.

[01:43:11]

But she was always thinking about how to work, how to get people together, to connect them. That's what I know of her.

TN: So were there any—I guess part of the, like, "the sisterhood is strong." Was it informal, the way you kind of like swap stories on, "Well, this tactic worked," or, "You might want to think about it this way, this has been something that I've seen as productive."

PC: I think it's more among us—if I think something needs to happen, and I know a woman religious who's in that area, or whatever, I might call her up and say: "Have you ever thought about contacting so-and-so to do such-and-such?" That kind of thing, more than strategizing. At least in my experience. There probably *are* women religious that strategize, just theoretically. But I'm more, the connection of people, and using the network that's there.

BOM: My understanding, too, is that a lot of this, that before the—is it the Sister Formation Movement? (Background comment.) Right. Is that, there was a bit of tribalism on the—

PC: Oh, yeah.

BOM: So the Dominicans stayed with the Dominicans, and the BVMs stayed with the BVMs. And that it's really the Christian—not the Christian—the Sister Formation effort that encouraged them to—so, out of that would be something like LCWR, where there were ways to make those connections.

[01:45:09]

PC: That's probably true, because we studied with young women religious from other schools. I mean, here, we studied. And there were Felicians, and there were BVMs, and Benedictines, and Charities. So, yes. There's some of that. I think that—as you call it—tribalism, I think that even less after the apostolic visitation. Because we—I don't know, there was a common thing we were working against. And that's why Bethany House, I think, is sort of an example of that.

And it's not the only example. I hear of places all over the country, where religious are coming together to do things because they can't do it alone anymore. They can't run a hospital, or open a school—most of the time. Maybe a small center. So they come together. Yeah, that's very true.

BOM: This has nothing to do with anything we were talking about, but, there used to be—before women religious, so many women religious decided to put aside the formal habit—that there were—do you know this? That there were guides to recognizing nuns. And they used to call them the *Bird Book*, because you would open it up and there would be a picture of a woman religious in her full habit. And then it would say something about Dominicans founded in—and blah-blah-blah, and blah-blah-blah. And it would tell you how to recognize them! "A thin blue stripe," like you would identify birds, right? (Laughs) And there would be these minute—"four buttons on the sleeve," or whatever it was that (Laughs)—they would be issued every once in a while! I had an old one! (All laugh) This fascination! "Is that an Ursuline? Well, I don't know. Maybe it's a—" right? The number of pleats. It was funny. Anyway, *Bird Book*. (Laughs in background) Did you—you wore a habit?

[01:47:26]

PC: We wore a habit, yeah. We wore a coif, a pleated coif, band. And we wore black.

BOM: Do you regret coming out of the habit?

PC: No. (Laughs) No, I mean—no. (Laughs in background) I mean, we justify it by saying that Benedict promoted the dress—simple dress of the time. I don't think he imagined colored scarves. But, no matter. So, no. It was what it was, so it's part of my life story. Because I was in it for ten years. But, it's fine.

BOM: Was it difficult at the time, though?

PC: It was hot.

BOM: So the transition wasn't difficult?

PC: Oh, again, it would take a long time to make decisions. And at that time, in our community, it was the time of the burning issues. And we have this little house up near Antioch [Illinois], on the lake, that someone's parents gave us. We used to go up there. Now, if you had *three* people in the house it would feel crowded. We used to go up—ten, or twelve, you know. And we would try on different clothes, and talk, *deep* into the night, about changes.

It took a long time. It felt like it took a long time. But in a way, it didn't. Because, Vatican II was over—what? I don't know. But, we changed in '68. And I don't think we were—we weren't the first, but we weren't the last of communities around us that were changing.

[01:49:22]

BOM: I mean, to me, as a woman, I'm still struck by how—I think it could have been difficult for some people, especially who had been in the habit for a long time.

PC: Oh the older people.

BOM: And then they had to do things like: figure out what to do with their hair. I mean, they had to make decisions that they hadn't had to make before. And this is neither an argument for or against. But, I have trouble in the morning, opening up the closet and figuring out what goes with what. And they're people who hadn't had to make those decisions for forty years, right? So.

PC: That's very true. I think—I mean, we left it up to each individual. And we didn't say: "You have to wear black or blue or brown," or whatever. And that's very Benedictine. It is. The individual is very important to consider. And everybody doesn't have to be the same. So, we did that. But I think it was difficult. And then, of course, we were young—I mean, I was a young woman. So, then, what's appropriate? And more, I wanted to try out things. And so, we did.

BOM: I wish somebody would do a—actually a documentary, because it's so visual, about—

PC: Well, you did!

BOM: I know, but I'm talking about the transition in dress, which—on one hand—is very trivial, but on the other hand, if you're considering—there's a *really* bad movie (Laughs lightly), called *Change of Habit*, with Elvis Presley and Mary Tyler Moore, have you seen this? So this isn't part of the job here, but anyway.

[01:51:13]

[Explanation of movie for about 90 seconds.]

[01:52:39]

PC: I mean, it would be interesting to talk to some of the students who were—one of my good friends was a sophomore at the time that we did this. She tells me sometimes—

BOM: Well we became aware of you as humans.

PC: Yeah, yeah.

BOM: You were a sister, before. Right?

PC: And the other thing was, that there were bigger decisions to make, you know. What that meant. *That*, and also our decision to have each person decide where they were called, instead of being assigned things. Those are huge. That was a huge shift. I think I talked about that. Yeah. And I think, well, for our community, I think that there were other decisions that didn't get made, that we're still trying to live out. I can't articulate those now. Because these external things were clear decisions, and you kind of adjusted to it. But then all the inner-life kind of decisions. How do I live, if I don't have a regulated schedule, how do I adjust to that? And continue my development as a spiritual being and a prayerful person. So that took a lot of adjustment. I think that might be one of them.

BOM: [Unintelligible] has written about that—

PC: Yes.

BOM: A great deal.

PC: She has.

NF: Well we are at two hours, and also this is probably a good time to say: Do you have anything to add?

[01:54:29]

PC: No, thank you. (Big laugh) I hope this is helpful.

NF: Oh! Teresa has one.

TN: If you had to think "legacy," both yourself and then your parents, is there anything you want us to remember, specifically, that you haven't said already, or want to say a different way?

BOM: Great question.

PC: I mean, I think, you know—I don't know—the rootedness in the Gospel was important from the beginning, for me. And still is. I think the value of connectedness, relationships, small group. The importance of action; that we each do what we can do, as we can do it. I think their legacy, in a way, is Vatican II, because it moved the Church. And certainly the fifty years since then, how things have developed or not developed. I think they really impacted the Church, by the Christian Family Movement. Maybe a hundred years from now we'll look differently at that, and somebody will be doing their PhD dissertation online, or something, on it. But, I think it had a huge impact on Church relationships in lots of different countries.

[01:56:13]

I just did a—I facilitated a retreat for the Office of Immigration staff; they're doing fantastic work in Chicago. And one of the women was from Puerto Rico, and she—in her early married years, she's older—was in CFM, in Puerto Rico, and talked about how that impacted *that* church. I think that there are just lots of ripples yet to be discovered, in what CFM did.

TN: Any legacy for yourself, that you'd want us to—really, the highlights you'd want us to remember.

PC: About me?

TN: Yeah.

PC: I feel like I—I mean, I inherited some qualities of both my mother and my father, and have been able to use them. My mother was a great organizer, and I'm a good administrator. And my father had that sense of networking with people, and thinking about that always. And I do too. So, I'm very grateful for that. And also for my Benedictine upbringing. Just the opportunities I've had. I'm grateful.

BOM: Thank you.

NF: Thank you.

[Applause and thanks.]

[01:58:06] [End of recording.]