

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Ursuline Sisters Project

Ursuline Experiences  
O. H. 100

SISTER MARY CONROY

Interviewed

by

Donna DeBlasio

on

February 28, 1975

## SISTER MARY CONROY

Ursuline nun, Sister Mary Conroy, is a native of Youngstown, Ohio, where she was born on September 4, 1931. The youngest child of Michael and Bridget Conroy, she attended St. Dominic elementary school and Ursuline High School. She received her Bachelor of Science in Education from Youngstown State University in 1956. From there, she went on to Marquette University, where she earned a Master of Arts in English, in 1963. In 1968, Sister Conroy received her doctorate from the University of Notre Dame, where she specialized in modern American literature.

Throughout her career as a nun, Sister Conroy has been involved in education. She has taught on every level, from elementary school through college. Her first teaching assignment was at St. Nicholas elementary school in Struthers, Ohio. She then taught at Youngstown Cardinal Mooney High School, Ursuline High School, and Youngstown State University. Presently, Sister Conroy is the Mother Superior of the Ursuline nuns, an office she has held for several years.

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INTERVIEWEE: SISTER MARY CONROY

INTERVIEWER: Donna DeBlasio

SUBJECT: Ursuline Sisters

DATE: February 28, 1975

D: This is an interview with Sister Mary Conroy for the Youngstown State University, Ursuline Sisters Project by Donna DeBlasio at the Ursuline Mother House, on February 28, 1975, at 3:20 p.m.

Sister Conroy, could you tell us a little about your family background?

C: I am the youngest of my family. My mother and father were immigrants from Ireland. My father is dead and my mother is living at Assumption Nursing Home. I have four older brothers living in Youngstown. I am the only girl in the family. Other than my four brothers and their families I have no relatives in this area.

D: Were you born in Youngstown?

C: Yes, I was born in Youngstown, September 4, 1931. We lived on Auburndale Avenue, a block and half away from St. Dominic's Church.

D: Where were you educated?

C: My elementary education was at St. Dominic's School. I went to Ursuline High School and graduated in 1949. I attended Youngstown State University and earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education. Later at Marquette University I earned a Master's Degree in English. Then I attended the University of Notre Dame and earned a Ph. D., specializing in Modern American

Literature. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on Claude McKay, a Black American poet and novelist. During the writing of that dissertation, I became interested in Black American Literature. After I finished my graduate work at Notre Dame and began teaching at Youngstown State, I continued my education in Black Literature by taking post-graduate courses in Black Literature at Southern University, the second largest Black University in the United States. I did graduate work at the University of Iowa. Then, I did further research in the Beinecke Library at Yale University in New Haven.

D: What influenced you to enter the Ursulines?

C: From my early childhood I remember thinking that somehow or other I wanted to be a nun. I was taught by the Dominican Sisters at St. Dominic's. During my grade school years often the thought would occur to me that I wanted to be a nun. The only thing that I really associated with being a nun was being holy. I never thought that nuns taught school or did anything in a professional way. I just sort of thought that nuns were holy people and I wanted to be holy. I can remember as a seventh or eighth grader feeling and thinking very often that I wanted to be a nun.

When I was in high school, again, the thought would come back to me that perhaps what God wanted me to do with my life was to serve him in a specific way as a nun. It was a recurring thought. Each time it recurred, in a sense, it became more intense because I was getting closer to the time when I had to decide what I was to do with my life. As a junior in high school, again I felt very strongly that I should become a nun, that I should enter the religious life. I suppose because I was at Ursuline at that time and because the Ursuline nuns were teaching me, it seemed a very normal thing for me to contact the Ursuline nuns and say, "This is all sort of a mystery to me. I feel that perhaps God wants me to be a nun. I don't feel very much like I would like to be a nun, but I feel that is probably what I should do."

I would like to say that an angel appeared to me and said, "You should be a nun!" But that wasn't it at all. My vocation began as a deep feeling that perhaps I should become a nun. And yet although there was an attraction to religious life, I can't say that other things didn't attract me as well. I can't say that I wasn't interested in social life; I can't say that

I wasn't interested in men. It certainly wasn't that I didn't want to become a mother, But this other urge to dedicate my life to service in the Church was stronger. Eventually I found that through religious life I was able to know that I had responded to a mysterious call that I could never really completely describe nor completely understand.

D: Could you describe a typical day when you first entered the convent?

C: I guess the easiest thing to say is that it was a very monastic day. When I entered the Ursulines, the Novitiate was on Logan Road across from the Mahoning Country Club. I remember we used to tease when we were novices and say that we thought that we were going to the country club and we took a wrong turn and ended up in the convent. But really when I entered, life in the convent was not country club life. It was a very monastic life. As novices, we were pretty well closed-off from every other part of society--even from our parents and our brothers and sisters. The purpose of that closing off was to have us come to terms with our intentions of serving God. I suppose in the very strict sense it was cutting off all the distractions to make sure that we knew what we were doing. That was 1949, and at that time people generally thought that religious should be separated from the secular world. You know, at that time the prevalent idea was that there was a secular world and there was a religious world, and never the twains should meet. We were to be all taken up with the religious world and denounce the secular world. Thus, our life was really separated, from our families, from our relatives and from our friends. In that separation we went through a very thorough religious training period. Although, the particular community that I entered was the teaching community, as I mentioned, I never really thought of teaching. Nevertheless at that time I was involved in a two-fold process of training: One, I was learning things about the spiritual life. I was learning things about prayer, I was learning how to pray, and more importantly, I was given time to pray. And, secondly, I found myself involved in an educational program, in which I was earning a degree so that I might teach. If there was a stronger emphasis anywhere, it was on the religious aspect of the training.

We got up early, about five thirty in the morning. And after dressing and before breakfast, we would

have some time for praying together. We prayed at that time, as we still do today, the official prayer of the church, the morning prayer of the church. At that time, we said it in Latin. Most of us didn't know exactly what we were saying, but we reverently said all the Latin words and knew that God understood Latin even if we didn't. After the morning prayer of the church, we would have a half hour of silent meditation. Following that we would celebrate the Mass. Then we would have breakfast, eaten in silence. After that, depending on the day, but most typically we had some housework to do. Then we would have our various college classes, and time for study. At noon-time we would meet in the chapel again and pray. At lunch we would have spiritual reading during the meal. This spiritual reading would be on the lives of the saints or about practicing some appropriate virtue. After we did the dishes, we would have a period of recreation in the afternoon. After recreation we would go to private prayer or to study or to housework. Then in the later afternoon we might have another college class. Around five o'clock we would meet in the chapel again and pray for about a half hour. After supper, and the dishes, we would recreate for an hour or so. Then we would have night prayers and it was time for bed. As I said our lives were very monastic. We didn't go out to shows. We didn't go downtown. We didn't even go to the University. Everything came to us at the Novitiate. In a sense, we were completely cut off from what was happening in the world. But while we were cut off from what was happening, there was abundant time for our own personal and spiritual development.

In retrospect, I can see that we were a little too cut off from the world. We were a little too separated. Some of the changes that have occurred in religious life since Vatican II have come about because of the need to integrate our lives more completely with the world at large. The particular community that I belong to is really not a monastic community at all. We are a community that was founded with the purpose of helping young women in the world. We really should have always been part of that world and should have understood how people were living and have known what they were thinking. But like every religious community of the early Twentieth Century we fell into the pattern of the monks of the Middle Ages. So convents became almost like medieval monasteries. Convents were supposed to be helping people in the middle of the world but were completely closed off from that world.

Nevertheless, the typical day that we had in 1949, when I entered the convent, was intended to enable us to develop and to live in a continuous presence of the Lord. It did do that very well.

D: How would you say that typical day has changed throughout the years?

C: Well, I think chiefly, that there is more involvement in all of life. I began to teach at St. Nicholas elementary school in Struthers, in the early 1950's. I would leave the convent in the morning after breakfast for the school, teach all day and be home for prayer by five o'clock. The day was the same as it had been when we were in novitiate training, except we taught school. The only change that occurred when we went to school was that we left the convent and we did our teaching, and then we came immediately back to the convent. But basically we followed the same monastic pattern of life.

Over the years, and especially since the second Vatican Council, when the council fathers called for religious to have a greater involvement in the world, religious communities began to examine what they had done in the past and what they were doing. They began to look and say, "Maybe it would be best if the religious serving God also understood something about the people whom they were trying to serve." So then the day became a much freer day. Although a nun still has certain prayer obligations, she also has certain work obligations and certain social and community obligations. Today, a nun has to pretty well design her own schedule of prayer. She has to incorporate her life of prayer with all of her varied activities. Many nuns belong to various community boards, serve on many committees, belong to various organizations that meet at different times; so we really have had to forego the formal monastic aspect of our lives. On the one hand this is good; but on the other hand, it is dangerous because we can so easily become too involved and lose our religious orientation. This is really the constant struggle that many nuns today are facing. We need to serve the infinite Lord but we can't lose sight of finite people either. It's a hard balance to achieve.

D: As a teacher, where and when did you teach?

C: My first teaching assignment was at St. Nicholas in Struthers. When I began teaching at St. Nicholas in

the early 1950's there were about 140 children in the school. When I left St. Nicholas in 1958 there were close to one thousand children in the school. The Catholic school was growing tremendously at that time. Those were the years when schools experienced the World War II baby boom. I spent my first seven or eight years of teaching there. I taught fourth grade, sixth grade, and eighth grade. By that time, I had finished my Bachelor's Degree and was working on my Master's Degree in the summer at Marquette University. In 1958, Cardinal Mooney High School needed someone to teach Journalism. So I went to Cardinal Mooney. For two years I taught English and Journalism. For the next two years I taught and was also Dean of Girls. Then the following two years I served as registrar and worked in the office. Then I left Cardinal Mooney to spend a year completing my Master's Degree at Marquette. Then there was an in-between year when I taught at Ursuline High School. Next, I went to the University of Notre Dame and spent three years completing a Doctorate. I came back to Ursuline High School for the 1967-1968 year. Then I taught at Youngstown State University until 1972. At Youngstown I was an Assistant Professor in the English Department. So I have really taught in the elementary school, in both Catholic high schools in Youngstown and at the university. I have taught grades one through graduate school.

- D: Would you describe a typical day at one of these schools?
- C: Well, maybe I will describe a typical day at Cardinal Mooney.
- D: Okay.
- C: The years that I worked in the office either as a dean or as the registrar, I would spend the before school time in the office. I usually taught one or two periods of English or Journalism. I would begin my day in the office before classes started, teach two periods, and then go back to work in the office. I discovered especially when I was working as a dean and registrar, that an awful lot of time was taken up with administration of the school. In time, my days became less involved in teaching, and more involved with discipline and administration. As I look back now, what went before the work day and what went after the work day was my involvement in and the development of my own religious life--my prayer



life as a member of the Ursuline Sisters. I suppose the work that we do as nuns is important, but more important is a nun's way of life. I believe that in teaching in any one of the schools I've taught in or doing whatever kind of educational work I've done, what has made the difference is the religious orientation of my life. I've brought to my work a whole philosophy of Christian life. When I was teaching at the University, I wasn't teaching the Catholic doctrine, but I think that I brought to my teaching my inner beliefs and convictions without ever preaching them.

D: Did you have any grades that you prefer to teach?

C: Strangely enough I don't know if I have a preference. Probably one of the happiest years I ever experienced was my student teaching in the fourth grade. So I tend to think that I like the fourth grade a whole lot. But then I look back at my teaching at Mooney when I was teaching freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. I enjoyed that tremendously. Yet when I look back on my experience at the University, I must admit I enjoyed that too. Maybe right now I would feel a preference for college teaching, but I don't know that I really have a definite preference.

D: Would you say that there were special discipline problems that you had to deal with at each level?

C: Oh yes. In the elementary school discipline is a matter of helping children to contend with their own nature. Grade school children can be very rambunctious. High schoolers can be somewhat rebellious. And both of those things reflect the development of a person. In an elementary school children are in constant motion and a teacher has to be patient and learn to capture all that childhood energy. In high school, there are the teen-age growth problems. There is the need for the teacher to help the student to feel that he is a person. In high school teaching I learned that it was very important to respect the student for what he was, for what he did and to be very careful never to embarrass a student. In that way there was never need for discipline, in the bad sense. At the University I really didn't have any experience with discipline problems. I think the university is a different world because students are quite mature at the college level. I suppose the only discipline problem in my university experience was those rare occasions when students did not think that the university professor was a master of

his subject. A university professor might have a lot of difficulty if he were not a competent person. I think that most students that I have had at the college level respected me because I demonstrated that I knew what I was teaching.

Good teaching demands that the teacher take into consideration what developmental stage the student is in. Then the teacher has to teach around that stage. At the elementary level a teacher has to expect the constant motion. At the high school level it is important for the student to be respected and considered an adult. College teachers can not subject college students to educational trivia.

D: Do you recall any of the outstanding teachers in your own teaching career?

C: You mean teachers that taught me?

D: Or who you taught with.

C: I suppose I have been interested in English because of two English teachers that I had. One is Sister Winifred Melody, an Ursuline sister who taught at Ursuline High School. The quality that she brought to teaching was her own interest in what she taught. I remember she used to tell us about books that she was reading. When we read the book, it would never be so good as the way she told it! I just loved that quality in her. I loved the way she made everything about English interesting. She was a tremendous teacher. I learned from her never to tell a student that he had given a wrong answer. She could always find something right in whatever was said about a poem, or about an author, or about anything that we were reading. She was able to see something correct in what was said and so students never hesitated to give answers in her class.

I think the second teacher that had a great influence on me was a professor at Marquette. His name was Joe Schwartz. He was interested in American Literature. His classes were just tremendous because he dramatized everything. I was greatly influenced by him and ended up studying American Literature because he made it so appealing.

D: How good were the teachers you taught with at Youngstown?

C: I was most impressed with the teachers at the University.

The University was a whole new experience for me because I had always taught in a totally Catholic situation. When I went to the University, I went with a little bit of fear and trembling. I was really impressed to discover the great deal of time the teachers in the English Department put into the preparation of their classes. I was delighted to see what interest and what concern the teachers had for the students that they taught. I don't know why I should have been surprised but I was. I was really inspired by them, because so many of them really dedicated their lives to the students they were teaching. Of all my University experiences, I guess I was most impressed with and inspired by the teachers in the English Department.

D: Can you describe holidays and how they were celebrated among the sisters?

C: I will go back, way back, to the days of the Novitiate. Saints' Days and holidays were free days. On a free day, we were free to talk, and we had extra time for recreation. In the convent on Logan Avenue there was a bowling alley in the basement. The bowling alley had been built in by the original owners of the house, the H. K. Wick family. On a free day, we would bowl in the afternoon or in the evening. Or we might play baseball. I remember one particular baseball game we had. It was the White Souls versus the Red Hearts. The Red Heart players had big hearts on their veils. The White Souls wore a gingerbread man cookie-kind of thing that was cut out of white cardboard. Oftentimes we would square dance. I suppose that most basically we made our own fun. We had a television at that time, but we didn't use it very much. Only occasionally would we listen to the radio. Sometimes we would read the newspapers. However, most of the fun we had we made in our own way, much as fun was made in the frontier days of our country.

D: Could you describe special things done at Christmas or Easter or perhaps the Fourth of July?

C: There was something special about each of those days. I remember my first Christmas in the convent. It was a happy day and a sad day. It was happy because of the religious joy of the occasion. For all of us young people, it was our first Christmas away from home. That was the sad thing. I remember that on my first Christmas Eve in the convent, we were sent to bed early so that the older novices could get our Christmas presents ready

and get the tree decorated. We didn't like that one bit. In fact, we were sort of mad, because we felt like children being sent to bed. On Christmas morning, of course, we prayed the Latin Office that was very special because of the feast. And, of course, the Mass was a very festive Mass for Christmas. Breakfast was special. First of all, we had talk, and secondly we had sweet rolls or Kolachi that we ordinarily didn't have. After breakfast, we all went to what we called the Novitiate Room which was our gathering room, a forerunner of the family room. A beautifully decorated Christmas tree was there under which were presents for us all. They were simple presents. We were delighted to receive needles and thread for our mending. All the gifts were small little gifts. We also gave one another gifts. They were gifts that we had made ourselves--something that we had sewn or something that we had painted. In the afternoon we had visitors from our homes. Our fathers and mothers came to see us. And they came bearing gifts. We visited in the afternoon. At five o'clock our parents went home and we had supper. And on a big day like Christmas we would have some kind of celebration after supper. And then after that it was nighty-night. It was a simple life, a good life.

D: How about some of the other holidays?

C: Well, Christmas and Easter would be pretty much the same. Bowling and baseball would be the summer things that we did on the Fourth of July. It is probably more interesting to realize that as years have gone on, most nuns celebrate our holidays in very different ways. Most of us on Christmas, or on Easter, after praying and eating together as a group, go to the hospitals and visit there with patients. Many of the sisters I know whose parents are dead, and whose relatives live out of town, spend Christmas and Easter visiting nursing homes. One sister that I know, a relatively young sister, goes with her father who is a doctor, and makes hospital rounds every Sunday. She goes with him to visit with and pray with patients in the hospitals. He takes care of the patients, as their physician, and she prays with them. I think that the way that nuns today celebrate Christmas or Easter, or any one of the holidays, is as varied as the nuns involved. We still begin our celebration of holidays by coming together ourselves in prayer and fellowship, but what we do after that is greatly varied.

D: What sisters stand out in your memory the most?

- C: There are so many it would take too long to answer that question.
- D: How about just a few of them?
- C: I really think that there are too many for me to talk about just a few.
- D: What years in your own religious life stand out?
- C: Probably the last three years are the most unusual in my life. In 1972, I was elected General Superior of the Community. Since that time my life has been very different. Maybe these years are the closest in memory and therefore they stand out most. But these years have been very different because I haven't been involved in teaching. I have given most of my time to dealing with individual sisters, and to planning programs for the community. Part of the Superior's job is to plan for continual spiritual enrichment for all the sisters in the community. Another part of the Superior's job is to help plan for the professional preparation sisters. A Superior must make sure that sisters have the opportunities to continue their education and to qualify professionally for this work. Another part of the Superior's job relates to administrative tasks. She must assign sisters to the different schools to teach in a way that these assignments will enrich the sisters in their spiritual life and as human beings.

One of the things about the past of religious life is that the vow of obedience was emphasized very greatly. The idea was that the Superior would say to do this and all the sisters did it. Today we do not discount obedience, but we realize that obedience has to be a mutual understanding between the Superior and the sister. So a great deal of my time is spent talking with sisters, talking over their work, planning for future work, and in making administrative adjustments that will help sisters to develop spiritually and professionally. Because I have dealt so very much with individual sisters in the community, these past few years have been a most different part of my life. I have enjoyed them.

- D: Do you have any problems as Mother Superior?
- C: Yes. Any person who is constantly dealing with other persons faces relational problems. Even though the persons that I have dealt with are adults, they are

highly motivated individuals. They are individuals with a strong spiritual orientation. Nevertheless, they are very real human beings. As human beings meet another human being who is in authority, sometimes there is difficulty. I've had difficulty.

D: What do you remember about Ursuline High School when you went there as a student?

C: I remember that the new building was not there. Ursuline High School in my day was just a three floor structure. I remember that each class numbered about one hundred students, and the whole school was fewer than five hundred students. I knew everyone personally in my own class and I knew most of the people in the other classes. And of course, I idealized the seniors, because I knew every one of them personally, too. The thing that is different is probably that when I went to Ursuline, every class at Ursuline was taught by a sister. The only lay person in the school was the coach, Cy James. Ursuline was a much smaller operation, a much more personal operation in my day. My years at Ursuline were very happy years. I liked what I was learning and I liked the way I was learning it. I thought that my teachers were great.

D: What unique things do you remember about any of the convents that you lived at?

C: I mentioned that the convent out on Logan Road had bowling in the basement, I guess that was a unique thing. The convent I remember most I think was the Rayen Avenue Convent. The young people who were just entering the community lived out at Logan Road, and so most of the sisters who lived at the Rayen Avenue were older sisters. I now realize that they really weren't that much older, but at that time I was much younger and the sisters at Rayen Avenue seemed much older. I remember that when I moved to the Rayen Avenue Convent, it was very crowded. There were so many sisters living in the house that two other sisters and I had to move out on the back porch to sleep. So the back porch became a dormitory with three beds in it.

The fourth floor of that convent, the Rayen Avenue Convent, was really one huge room. There were no doors; but there were three very large rooms that were somewhat separated by the structure of the house. At the time when I lived at Rayen Avenue, in those three rooms, without any walls, without any lavatory facilities, about thirty-eight sisters were living. The electricity

in the house was very old. We often wondered why the place didn't go up in smoke. Everything was connected to everything else by extension cords. There must have been an angel from heaven who was assigned to guard all extension cords, because there is no other way that place could have lasted. Although Rayen Avenue was an old house, although it was ill-equipped and wasn't very comfortable, there was a tremendous spirit among the sisters who lived there. It was the kind of spirit that made a piece of bread and a cup of coffee or a cup of tea, a real meaningful sharing. Sharing was the tremendous spirit that developed at Rayen Avenue. That is what made it unique, although it had all the physical disadvantages. The house was overcrowded, but that physical disadvantage did not create a bad spirit among the sisters who were living there. In fact, it seemed to create a very good spirit.

D: What was memorable about the Mother Superiors that you had served under?

C: We have a belief in our community that each person who is the Superior brings to that office the talent or gift needed at a particular time. Mother Blanche was the first General Superior in my life. She was elected Superior in 1949 or about that time. Those were the days when the schools were expanding rapidly. I pointed out how St. Nicholas School increased in enrollment over the years that I taught there. The increase in enrollment in all of the schools demanded an increase in the number of professional teachers. Mother Blanche had the wisdom to see what was happening in the 1950s. Throughout her years as Superior, and she was Superior for fifteen years, the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Youngstown were multiplying and the enrollments were climbing, and there was a tremendous need for professionally trained teachers. Mother Blanche centered her efforts on educating the young women who came into the community and preparing them for teaching assignments. During those years over eighty sisters earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees. What Mother Blanche brought then to the community at that time was the vision of professional preparation. What she built into the Novitiate training program was a strong program for professional training.

Mother Edna Marie was elected Mother Superior after Mother Blanche. Mother Edna Marie was faced with that living situation I described in Rayen Avenue Convent. Too many sisters were living in an ill-equipped building. It was through Mother Edna Marie's leadership

that this particular facility, the Ursuline Motherhouse and Educational Center, was planned, built and completely financed. During her twelve years in office, her focus was on a building project, and completing that project, and making that project financially sound.

You just have to walk through the facility to realize this is a very adequate facility. It is a facility that is really a marvel. When you look at this whole plant and realize that this building cost only a million dollars, you begin to understand Mother Edna Marie's genius! This is a tremendous amount of building for a million dollars. There have been only two superiors in my religious life. Each of them is a reflection of the time in which she served. Each of them brought something different and something wonderful to the community because each was responding to the different needs of different times.

- D: Why do you think it is difficult to get modern women to enter religious life?
- C: Basing my answer on the fact that religious life reflects or mirrors what is happening in the world, I think that there is no simple answer to that question. There are many factors that enter into reasons why young people seem less attracted to a religious life today. One factor is our culture. Our culture has moved away from religious doctrine. I use the word doctrine there specifically because I don't think our culture has moved away from religious orientation. I think that today religion becomes evident by interest in the occult. But culture generally has moved away from institutional or doctrinal religion. Naturally, young people are affected by this.

I think a second factor to be considered is what has been happening to the church since the Second Vatican Council. History proves that after each of the major church councils there has always been a period of chaos and turmoil in the church. During that chaos and turmoil there are usually polarities of ideas and practice. That division or polarity becomes very evident in the church itself, but is also seen in the world. Young people look at religious life today and they don't see the single vision of life that seemed to be evident before. Not all sisters think alike. Not all sisters look alike. This polarity has caused young people to question religious life.



A third factor I think, is the family life of these young people. If there is anything that is characteristic of our day, it is a lack of stability. The divorce rate is the highest it has ever been. Fidelity doesn't seem to be important in life. The lack of fidelity is also seen in the fact that sisters and priests have not kept their vows. Twenty percent of the women who were in religious life in 1966 are now no longer sisters. Approximately five percent of the men who were priests in 1966 are no longer priests today. There has been a breakdown in fidelity even in the religious life. Young people seeing that breakdown question the value of fidelity at all. Thus, young people are not attracted to religious life or to marriage, for that matter.

However, if the religious life has any meaning in the world today, what it should mean is that a person who takes vows, and lives out those vows, is giving a witness to the value of fidelity. If there is anything that the world needs today, it is a need to feel that there is a value in being faithful to what one has said she is going to do. When a husband says this to a wife and when a wife says this to a husband, this has a meaning that is forever. So too, with religious vows. The living out of religious vows is a witness to the world that a person really believes it's important that when she says she is going to do something, she does it. While fidelity, or the lack of fidelity, may account for some young people not feeling attracted toward a religious life, it may also be the very thing that is going to attract other young people today to enter religious life. I think that young people are becoming more and more disturbed by the lack of fidelity in life generally. Therefore, I think they will want to live lives of fidelity. I would be willing to wager that in the very near future, young people are going to be becoming aware of the fidelity aspect of religious life. They are going to be attracted to it and they will show by their lives that there is a value in fidelity.

Another one of the reasons why young people are not entering religious life at this time may be related to the many volunteer services there are today. Until the end of the Second World War or maybe until after the Korean War, there were very few agencies in which women especially could volunteer service. If a woman wanted to live a life of service before the mid-1960s, the only kind of service that she could give was in the religious life. In the 1960s there began a great

movement towards service organizations; the Peace Corps, Vista, Action, and so forth. Young women discovered that there were ways in which they could give service to others, in ways other than joining the religious life. The growth of these service organizations was coupled with the fall out from the Second Vatican Council, whereby young people began to feel they should stay involved in the world. Thus, religious life was not so attractive as it once was.

I think I have named four reasons why young people are not coming to religious life. No one of them completely answers your question. Admittedly, I haven't enumerated all of the possible reasons. I do think that young people will become increasingly more interested in religious life, as they begin to see again and anew the authentic value of religious life.

- D: What changes have you noticed in the Ursuline Order and what do you think is the future direction?
- C: The changes are innumerable. They are the result of life which is constantly changing. As a community, the Ursulines have changed from a very monastic structure to a structure which is very much a part of the world. Ursulines have changed professionally. From a single apostolate of teaching, Ursulines have extended their apostolate to the broad area of education. I think that the changes that have already occurred will create the future. I don't think that religious in the future will necessarily be school teachers. That is one sure thing. I don't think that religious of the future will be the stereotypes that we have thought of nuns in the past. We tended to think that nuns were strange people who prayed all day. We thought of nuns as "Dumb Doras" who were ignorant about everything that was going on in the world. We had the picture of the "Going My Way" nun. I don't think that we will see religious in the future as such. As in the past, religious in the future will be very faith-centered people but they will be very much aware of what is happening in the world. They will be dealing with the world with a unique perspective that will come from their faith vision. I think that religious life in the future will have a tremendous vitality. Religious life in the future will be a very meaningful life that will touch the lives of people.

END OF INTERVIEW