

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of the Youngstown Diocese

Personal Experience

O.H. 1561

REVEREND ARTHUR M. NIST

Interviewed

by

Patrick H. Downey

on

October 17, 1992

When Reverend Nist arrived at St. Joseph's in Canton, in 1967, the Parish was preparing for it's 75th anniversary celebration. Part of the celebration involved completely renovating the aged church, which Reverend Nist accomplished. He retired from St. Joseph's in 1979, and purchased a home in Massillon, Ohio. He now devotes much of the year to priestly work, preaching temporarily, filling in when a priest is needed, and visiting the sick. However, he insists that the summers remain his own for leisure.

REVEREND ARTHUR M. NIST

Rev. Arthur M. Nist was born on June 21, 1914, in Canton, Ohio. He was the only child of John A. Nist and Mary Anne Weiband. He paid his own tuition for Canton McKinley High School by working for the Canton Repository, a newspaper. Reverend Nist desired to become a priest while in high school, due to the example set by priests that taught at his school. He attended St. Charles College, in Cantonsville, Maryland, from 1932 to 1934. He was among fifteen of over sixty applicants that were accepted to Our Lady of The Lake Seminary, in Cleveland, Ohio.

After ordination in 1940, Reverend Nist's first five assignments as an assistant priest, involved teaching religion classes in the schools, visiting the sick in hospitals, and participating in athletic activities for boys in the following parishes: St. Boniface, Cleveland, 1940-1944; St. Mary's, Warren, 1944-1945; St. Mary's, Massillon, 1945-1952; Sacred Heart, Youngstown, 1952-1953; and, St. Aloysius, East Liverpool, 1953-1954. He was pastor at the following parishes: St. John's, Summitville, 1954-1956; St. Ann's, East Liverpool, 1956-1959; Blessed Sacrament, Warren, 1959-1967; and, St. Joseph's, Canton, 1967-1979.

Reverend Nist established and built Blessed Sacrament Parish in Warren, Ohio. He "button-holed" the many wealthy parishioners in the area for the construction of the church, school, rectory and convent. Reverend Nist personally staffed the new convent with nuns to teach in the school. In two years, the entire parish was built with the cost totaling \$900,000.00. When he left in 1967, the parish was only in debt \$300,000.00.

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of the Youngstown Diocese

INTERVIEWEE: REVEREND ARTHUR M. NIST  
INTERVIEWER: Patrick H. Downey  
SUBJECT: Blessed sacrament, vocatios, retirement  
DATE: October 17, 1992

D: This is an interview with Reverend Arthur M. Nist for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the history of the Youngstown Diocese, by Pat Downey, on October 17, 1992.

Okay Reverend Nist, where were you born, and what was it like growing up, your childhood, and so forth?

N: I was born in Canton. I was born and raised in St. Peter's, the same Parish that my father and grandfather were born and raised in. I went to St. Peter's School for nine grades, and then, [I went] to McKinley High School. We had some wonderful priests at St. Peter's, and that's the reason I'm in the priesthood, I think. While I was in high school, I was working for the newspaper at home. If it wouldn't have been for that, I would never have been able to go to school, because my father was just an ordinary fellow. [He] worked for Debold Safe and Lock Company. He wasn't making millions like some of these guys. He was just an ordinary man. What else would you like to know?

D: Well, you touched upon the next question I was going to ask. What made you want to become a priest and get involved in the priesthood?

N: Well, we had an assistant that was very popular. He

got in with the kids, and then, I had a pastor that was one of the finest priests I ever knew. He was certainly an example, and if I could ever live up to his example, I would certainly be well satisfied with my life and my priesthood.

D: Where did you go for your seminary schooling?

N: I went to St. Charles College in Baltimore. Cantonsville, Maryland is a suburb of Baltimore. I went there for two years, and then took the entrance exams of the Cleveland Seminary. I don't know how I got in there. (laughter) There were sixty-some guys that took the exam, and only fifteen of us were accepted. That's when they were practicing ecclesiastical birth control. They would like to use those guys now. I spent six years up there. Then, [I] was ordained in Cleveland, for Cleveland. [I was] assigned first in Cleveland, and [I] buried two pastors at my first assignment. Then, I was given an opportunity to come to the Youngstown Diocese, first on a loan basis. And, I figured I'd be given an opportunity to stay here. This is my home Diocese. My close priest friends were in this Diocese, and that's how I ended up in Warren. From Warren, I was moved over here to this parish.

D: So, your first assignment was in. . . .

N: St. Boniface in Cleveland.

D: St. Boniface in Cleveland.

N: Then, St. Mary's in Warren. Do you want me to rattle them all off?

D: Well, let's take a little time out and discuss it. What do you remember about St. Mary's in Cleveland, your first assignment?

N: That was Boniface.

D: Boniface, I'm sorry.

N: Well, it was. . . .

D: The community, and what you remember.

N: It was a Metson-Sifer community, that's a combination of Germans and Hungarians, I think. We had a real tough pastor up there. He was sick when I came, and after some months, he died. Then, we got another very fine pastor. He transferred from Holy Trinity in Cleveland. He was loved and admired by everybody that lived with him. In fact, my pastor in Canton lived with him one time as an associate.

D: What year was that?

N: [In] 1940.

D: [In] 1940.

N: Let's see, the latter part of 1943 I was moved, between Christmas and New Year's, to Warren. They did not want me to come at that time. So, I said, "Great!" I spent my first Christmas at home after I was ordained. I never got home for Christmas. Then, I was there. St. Mary's in Warren was a big parish. It was the only parish in Warren at that time, the only territorial parish. There were several nationalistic parishes in Warren, one Polish, one Slovak, one Greek Catholic. The pastor there was notorious for being tough. But, I was only there a year and a half, and then, I was assigned here. I was here, in Massillon, for seven years.

D: Seven years. What were your assignments in Cleveland and in Warren, and then here? How did they change? What were your responsibilities or roles?

N: Well, in Cleveland, I was pretty much in charge of the youngsters. The CYO was very organized in Cleveland, and we had a lot of athletic activities. There were many times I was out with the kids. It was midnight before I got to my office. They had a high school attached to the parish there. We were involved in that. All the assistants were involved in that. I taught in high school there.

When I went to Warren, I was also assigned to teaching school there. I taught at a grade school and a high school at Warren St. Mary's. When I came here, the same thing followed. I was involved in teaching school. Then, they asked me to teach out at Central. I taught out there for five years, part time. They just asked us to help teach the religion classes there.

From here I went to Sacred Heart in Youngstown, and there was another pastor that had a reputation for being tough on assistants. I was only there thirteen months. [There were] usual parish activities there: [I] taught in school. Almost every place I went, they had a school. We took our turns teaching religion classes in school. When you were here, you had a responsibility for the hospital up here, Massillon City Hospital. The associates here were called upon to cover for the hospital. The same was true in Warren. You not only taught school, but you were responsible for the Trumbull Memorial Hospital, for the coverage of Catholic patients there. They didn't have that in

Youngstown. From Youngstown I went to East Liverpool.

D: What year was that, that you went to East Liverpool?

N: St. Aloysius in East Liverpool.

D: What year was that?

N: Let's see, I was here from 1945 to 1952. Thirteen months in Youngstown, that's 1953 to 1954. [In] 1954, I went to St. Aloysius in East Liverpool, and about five or six months after that, I was assigned my first pastord at St. John's in Summitville, a little country parish. And, there I was, I think, about three years. From there, I was reassigned to St. Ann's in East Liverpool, back to the same town again, and I was at St. Ann's in East Liverpool for a couple of years.

Then, I was assigned to start a new parish in Warren. That was my responsibility, Blessed Sacrament Parish. The Bishop said, "Here's the census cards, and now you go up and start a parish." He didn't say how we were going to get the money to pay for it, but "Get going." We started out there with a combination parish, church, and school. Then, I had to find nuns and build a residence for them. The residence for the nuns was finished before we had a residence for the priests. From Blessed Sacrament, I came to St. Joseph's in Canton and was there eleven years. It was from St. Joseph's in Canton that I retired.

D: Okay, backing up to when you were a young priest in Cleveland--1940, I believe it was, and the Diocese was formed in 1942-1943--what was going on in Cleveland at that time? What were some of the causes, you feel, that helped the Diocese to begin in Youngstown?

N: I think they just wanted better service. Cleveland was so large, you know. They just cut off the seven counties on the east and southern boundary of the Cleveland Diocese to form the Youngstown Diocese. For years, they talked about forming an Akron Diocese, but I don't think the area would have been able to support a Diocese. There were nothing but rubber works in Akron at the time, and outside of Akron, there was nothing but little small towns. Whereas, the Youngstown Diocese, [there were] a lot of steel mills in Youngstown and in Warren, and all the factories over here in Canton.

So, that may have entered into their decision, but they didn't ask us about it. The Holy Seal (Rome), I don't know how they reach those conclusions. But, this is my thought as regard to the choice of that area for a new Diocese. In fact, they're talking again about a Diocese of Akron, but I don't think it will ever happen,

not with the shortage of priests.

D: Yes.

N: Not in our time. Not in my time.

D: Who were some of the major figures in forming a Diocese in Youngstown? And, some of the roles?

N: I have no idea. I suppose they called in the various deans and discussed it with them, but I don't remember any particulars about that era.

D: Do things seem to be working fairly smoothly from its inception on through the first couple of years, or were there some hitches? Was it just a big explosion of growth in the Diocese area?

N: I don't think there were any hitches. I think the growth and all of that stuff that precipitated the establishment of the Youngstown Diocese took place before it was formed, and probably, the Apostolic Delegation in Washington became aware of it. They probably had as much to do with that in consultation with the Bishop of Cleveland. Whether he wanted it, or whether he would allow the establishment of a new Diocese, or whether he wanted a new Diocese, we would be relieved of some of the responsibility they have there.

He just had one auxiliary Bishop at that time. Recently, the Bishop of Cleveland had three auxiliaries. Two of them have become Bishops elsewhere, and they haven't been replaced. I think they still have three auxiliaries up there. One, I think he's down in the South, [in] Charleston. The colored Bishop that was an auxiliary in Cleveland is the Bishop or Arch Bishop now, down I think, in that area--either there or Atlanta. I'm not positive. I'm not one of these guys that chases around Bishops, following them wherever they go or wherever they are assigned.

D: You mentioned that, pretty much, it was a question of administration in Cleveland, that the Diocese was just becoming big, and maybe there were problems of administration, and it would be neat to have a Diocese in Youngstown to solve some of those problems. What kind of improvements did you see once the Diocese was formed as compared to what it was like before hand? Maybe, in the first few years or so?

N: Well, I don't remember any big problems. Just that, we were a smaller unit, and it could be handled better. We knew one another real well. In fact, the first Bishop of Youngstown was a very congenial Bishop.



Then, when he got older, he had help. They brought up Bishop Walsh from the South. Then, when Bishop Walsh wasn't so good any more, he had a helper, Bishop Malone. Bishop Malone knows everybody in the Diocese, even before he came here. He wasn't like a stranger, like Bishop Walsh. [He] came in from the South and knew nobody. Although, I do remember Bishop Walsh visiting St. Boniface, begging for the missions of his Diocese. I remember one of the hottest Sundays of the summer, he came and preached at all the masses. It was so doggone hot that his rotchet was just faded into the--I forget the name of it. The outer garment was faded into the inner garment. The inner one was white, and it was all red from the sweat that he had preaching at all the masses. I don't think we had too much trouble in this Diocese getting organized.

D: How about, perhaps, improvements. Where there different social organizations being formed in the area, Catholic charities that happened after the formation of the Diocese, that weren't around?

N: Not that I can recall. It was probably better handled, because there were fewer to take care of, like the Deanery areas, Catholic charities. I don't know, there might be more social concerns today than there were then. Although, I'm sure they were there then, too. Maybe God wasn't too much concerned about it or involved in it.

D: So, a lot of these organizations even existed before the formation of the Diocese?

N: Yes. Oh, yes. Catholic Service League in Canton, I know, was in operation when I was still in school.

D: During the 1940's were there a lot of new schools being built, improvements that way, perhaps in construction and so forth?

N: I don't recall. Central Catholic was a private school. Then, after the Diocese took over, they made it a coed school. The sisters weren't too happy about it. Now, it's a Diocesan school. Warren St. Mary's was a parochial school and high school, but as I said, there was only one big parish in Warren at that time. All the people could go to St. Mary's if they wanted to. Since the Diocese started, they had another high school started in Ashtabula, but that's, I think, deceased now. I think they're going to close that. St. Thomas Aquinas was a new development, because the enrollment at Central got so big. They couldn't handle it. In fact, they made a lot of people mad. They had a quota system. If you had gone there before, your brother and sister could go there and that sort of thing. That

made a lot of people mad.

Or, they could only have so many kids from one family go to Central. They had a lot of those things that made people perturbed. There was a lot of bickering about the establishment of the Aquinas. They did it to cover the area a lot better. That part of the county could be covered. Kids wouldn't have to travel so far. There was a high school in Canton that was a parochial high school, St. John's, which, when they developed the school system, more and more boys and girls wanted to go to high school. St. John's just wasn't big enough. That's when they got into expanding Central, making it a joint school.

D: What year did that happen, roughly?

N: Well, after the Diocese was established.

D: Okay.

N: That ought to be in the book somewhere.

D: Okay.

N: At first, the boys all went to St. John's, and all the girls went out to Central when the Diocese took it over. Then, that number of boys even outgrew St. John's. Then, they made a boys and girls division. They had the Brothers teaching. The Brothers couldn't teach the girls in those days. So, they had a boys section and a girls section. Then, they had to build on to Central. Then, as the enrollment grew, they established St. Thomas Aquinas.

D: Are there any other changes that happened during the 1940's that you can recall, after the Diocese was formed? I know we already discussed the development and changes in the schools and so forth, and some of the social organizations. How was Catholic education? In fact, maybe we can discuss that. Were there a lot more nuns?

N: There certainly were in our days! There were a lot of nuns. For example, when I first came to St. Joseph's in Canton, I had thirteen nuns and twelve lay-teachers. When I left, they had one nun. All the rest were lay-teachers, and that provokes a financial problem, a financial burden on the parish, on any parish. I think, there for a while, they had quotas. According to your income, your assessment to the Catholic High Schools in the area was based on your income, a percentage.

Now, I think, they got it down. It was just killing

the parishes. For example, the last year I remember at St. Joe's, I had to pick up a thousand dollars a Sunday for my assessment at Central. Better than \$53,000 a year, and it kept getting higher and higher. Now, I don't know, since I'm not in the administration part of that sort of thing, they've gotten down to a percentage of your gross income, is all that you have to pay for the Catholic High Schools. Those are all financial problems that caused all kinds of headaches. Those are the things that you've got to face up to.

D: So, you had a lot more nuns?

N: Oh, yes. In every parish school, too. I don't think they had lay-teachers here.

D: How about with priests? Was there an increase in priesthood as well?

N: No. In our day, there was, as I said, when I took the entrance exam for the Cleveland seminary, sixty some guys took the entrance exam and only fifteen were accepted. They like to get that kind of percentage now. In fact, now they encourage. I'm supposed to preach here next Sunday on vocations.

D: So, it seems like the schooling was pretty rigorous then, too, for priests?

N: Oh, yes. I think a lot more so, than now. The things that I hear go on at the major seminary now, would have never have been tolerated in our time! You would have been ousted . . . just like that. In fact, there might have been too much discipline. It was too rigorous when we were in, but maybe that's what made us the kind of people that we were. [We] developed a little bit of character and stamina, to put up with the stuff that we had to put up with.

D: So, can you think of any other improvements after the Diocese was formed? How was the community? How did the community respond to the new Diocese? Were the finances flowing pretty good? Was a lot of community effort behind it?

N: I think it wasn't much different than before. Each parish shares it's responsibilities, and sometimes, if that wasn't enough, a little more pressure was put on each parish proportionately: appeals, drives, that sort of thing.

D: Do you think there was more community involvement, perhaps, than now, or do you think its about the same?

N: Well, I think there was a little more pride in their

parish. If it was something the parish wanted and it was needed, and if they saw the need for it, they responded.

Now, there's so much pressure put on people. I think you hear a lot of complaints about all the money talks, all the pressure put on people to kick in for this and to kick in for that. Schools are the biggest problem we have now, financially. You can't expect lay-people to teach for what the sisters taught. I have two aunts that were nuns in education, and parishes paid the community twenty-five dollars a month for each nun that taught. That's how we built up the school system. Lay-people can't live on that kind of wage.

Of course, there was a building provided for them and that sort of thing, but they provide for their own food. There were plenty of the nuns in those days, too. I think standard of living has a lot to do with it. I think, in a way, there was more attention drawn . . . children's attention was drawn more to religious life by the suggestion of their parents, the closeness of the kids to the Catholic School and to the sisters and the priest and some places where they had brothers. They had vocations from the personal contact between the students and the brothers. They got a few brothers from this area out of Central Catholic when the brothers were teaching out there.

D: You mentioned an important point about the lay-people entering into the school system in larger numbers and the lack of nuns being a problem financially. When did you see this starting to take shape? Like, maybe in the beginning, you had more and more lay-people coming in to teach.

N: I don't know the exact time, but when there were fewer and fewer nuns and when the appeals were made to these communities to provide more teachers for the schools, they didn't have them. They would like to have provided for them, I'm sure, but I ran into that problem when Bishop Walsh wanted me to start Blessed Sacrament Parish. He said, "You get busy and build a church and school." I said, "School, Bishop!" He said, "Yes." I said, "Where the heck are you going to get the nuns to teach in the school?" He didn't have any suggestion, but he said, "The school will be a central to the parish."

As I look back now, I can verify that in that Blessed Sacrament Parish became a parish and had it's own identity because of the school that we started there. I had up my sleeve a possibility of getting nuns, at that time, even though they were difficult to find. I had taken kids to several different communities, and a

number of them stayed in the community in which my aunts were. When the kids came to me and said that they would like to be nuns, I suggested--there were two kids from here that went to the convent--I suggested Notre Dames. No, they don't want the Notre Dames. I said, "Well, how about the Blue Nuns?" No, they don't want the Blue Nuns. I said, "Well, the only other nuns that I know in the Diocese are the Ursulines." There were a couple of kids from here that were in the Ursulines. That didn't seem to be appealing. I said, "Well, the only other nuns that I know are the Divine Providence Nuns in Pittsburgh, where I have two aunts and a couple of cousins."

So, I took them down there, and I took their parents with them, so they could see what the place was like. Then later on, when I started this parish, I asked the Notre Dames if they could staff the parish. They knew Warren. They had a couple parishes in Warren. Boy, I got a cold shoulder from them. The Blues, I didn't even approach the Blues. The Ursulines, "No." So, I went to the Divine Providence Nuns, because I had brought them postulants. When you went anywhere to get nuns, then said, "Well, bring us postulants, and then we'll serve your parish. We'll provide you with nuns." Well, they couldn't say that to me in Pittsburgh, so the big mama down there, she, the superior, she avoided me whenever I came down to visit with my aunt or these kids.

And finally, I "button-holed" her. She thought that I needed nuns that coming year. I said, "No, no. A year from now, because we don't have the school built," and she gave me four nuns. That's why I had to get busy and build a convent. If they were coming they had to have a place to live.

D: So, what period of time did this take place? You were really driving for the establishment of both, I guess.

N: Gee, I don't have that in the back of my head. [It was during] 1957 or 1958 when they established the parish. Then, I think, in two years we built the church, the combination of church and school. I think, in the following year we had the convent built, and the following year, we had the rectory built. All told, that was over \$900,000.00. I left there in 1967, I think, and we were in debt around \$300,000.00, between 1957 and 1958, and 1967.

So, it was a good area, because we had a lot of "money people" in the parish, and I "button-holed" them. Like the Vanhuffle Pipe and Tool Company in Warren, they were very instrumental, very helpful. In fact, they let us use their executive offices for our meetings,

and they pledged well. But then, a few years later when we got pretty tight, I was having trouble meeting my obligations. I went to them, and said, "Listen, I appreciate what you people have done, and you've been very generous; but proportionately, the ordinary people in our parish are giving a heck of a lot more than you are." So, they kicked in some more. It wasn't a very diplomatic way of doing it, but you have to get after these guys. They all have big homes. They all had winter homes in Florida. They did alright. They weren't hurting.

So then, a couple of them--they were four brothers in the outfit--a couple of them were ornery devils. The one guy, somehow or another, I got on the right side of him. He could twist the arms of his brothers to get it out of them. How, I don't know. Don't ask me how. It just happened that way. Maybe the Lord had something to do with it.

Then, I came to St. Joe's in Canton. There, the reason I got there is when they started the retirement program. The pastor at St. Joe's was the oldest priest in the Diocese at the time, and they insisted on retirement. He was in his upper seventies, I think, close to eighty. I was appointed pastor there. Why, I don't know, but he was pastor emeritus, lived in the house. He wasn't like some of the pastors that they made retire at the time. When they retired, they continued to act as if they were the boss. He didn't give me any problems at all. In fact, I would ask him, "Monsignor, who did you get to do this?" For example, if we had plumbing repairs or roofing repairs. He would say, "I don't remember." Well, after a while, after he told me that a number of times, I said, "This guy isn't going to tell me anything." It's your baby, you take care of it," so I did.

Then, we had to update the church. When we planned on the Diamond Jubilee, the 75th anniversary of the parish, they figured it ought to be updated. The paintings needed repainting. So, we had another \$250,000 project there, just repainting and refreshing the church. We redid the pews. The ceiling had leaf gold in it. You wouldn't believe it. When they put scaffolding up there and started, I figured that would all come down, but it didn't. There was dirt up there that thick, seventy five years, but the gold leaf, we didn't have to replace a bit. When they cleaned the walls, they did a lot of damage to the paintings, but the artists that we had to come in, they did a fine job of restoring all the artwork. If you know St. Joe's in Canton, it's one of the nicest churches in the Diocese.

So, we had that all redone up for the seventy-fifth.

When I hit sixty-five . . . the Bishop always asks you when you get sixty-five, what you plan to do. "Do you want to retire, or not? And, I said, "Yes, I'm retired." Then, he wanted to know if he could depend on me: "Would you like to help here or help there?" I said, "I'll take care of that myself."

In the mean time, my parents died. Through the investment of what I got out of the estate, I was able to build myself a home, and I located it here in Massillon, because I knew Massillon well. I knew Canton well, and it's located on the east end of Massillon. A lot of my priest friends were in the area, and I know if they wanted help, I would be available to them. They've kept me pretty busy.

I don't have all of the administrative headaches any more. I don't have to worry about salaries and assessments and that sort of thing, which was a tremendous relief. Since I retired, all I do is priestly work. [I] help out here, help out there.

Last year--well, longer than that--I had an assistant that was appointed pastor at a Polish parish in Canton, and he had no housekeeper. So, my housekeeper had him coming over almost every Sunday for dinner. Then, he got sick. He called me, and I took care of the parish while he was not well. Then, he died. The Bishop asked me to stay on, to take care of the parish until a new man was appointed. That was six months or so, and the new man came in. A year later, just about on the nose a year later, he died. Again, the Bishop asked me to fill in at All Saints. Then the fellow that succeeded him, he called on me to help whenever he needed help. Finally, he resigned. He didn't want to work in a parish any more.

So, the parish has been closed as a parish. Two nuns are running it and St. Peter's is handling the sacramental problems. So, between the pastor and the assistant at St. Peter's and myself, we cover the parish. I say mass the second and the fourth Sundays of the month, except in the summer time. I tell them, "You guys, you tie me up all winter, and you want to tie me up all summer." I said, "Bologna!" So, in the summer time, I have an RV, and I have it over at Ponderosa Park. If you know where Ponderosa is between Salem and Warren. They have all of these country and western things.

So, I have it parked over there. In fact, I just came back when she called. I just got home. We went over and closed up the place. In fact, we went over last week and picked up a lot of stuff and brought it home and washed it, and then, [we] put it back and stored it

away. So, everything is stored away now until spring. Because, that place is only open from April the 15th until October the 15th. So, I don't let them tie me up in the summer time, although I do help if there are problems. Guys call me and say, "Hey." So, that's my history.

D: Okay, what do you feel, over the years, has aided the Diocese in it's growth? Is there a particular decade that you see, or a particular era? What do you think has really been an aid to the Diocese?

N: Well, I think, now we're running into a problem that was an aid to the Diocese. The smaller the parish, the closer the people to the clergy. I think, the better the people know the clergy and the clergy know the people, the better the spirit of cooperation, and you get things done that way. I think that was helpful in the past. Now, you have a problem. You don't have the clergy. You don't have the religious schools. Now, I think, more is going to be dependent upon the lay-people and their willingness to get involved. They used to pass this off to the parish priest and the sisters. The school would be the responsibility of the sisters, and the parish [was] the responsibility of the priests. They didn't get so involved. I think, in the future, it's going to depend ever so much more upon the lay-people and their involvement in the various aspects of parish life, and Diocesan development, as far as that goes, too.

D: What were the greatest changes in the Diocese in your years of service that might come to mind--some of the most prominent changes?

N: The fewer number of priests. The fewer nuns teaching, and otherwise. Perhaps now, and the way things are, the [reduced] ability of people to support their parishes than they did before when they were all working, and didn't have the high cost of living and cost of everything that's gone up. They're pinched. They're hard-pressed. I think, in the past--and I think it still holds true--if you show the people there was a need for this or that or the other thing, if you really convinced them there was a need of it, they would support you, whatever it would be. Whether it was the school or the church, or this kind of work or that kind of work, they would come forward if they saw the need and if you convinced them that this was a worthwhile endeavor, project, or whatever.

D: What do you think, maybe, are some of the solutions to this problem that you pointed out: that there are just fewer and fewer nuns entering the convent and fewer priests? What do you think that may stem from?



N: I don't know. I don't know. It's been a mystery to me. It's a lot easier for a young man to get into the priesthood today, and the work that they have to do today. . . . And, the nuns kind of pick and choose the work they do. This, too, doesn't draw them. Maybe, I'm talking out of turn, but I think the more sacrifice involved, the more the appeal to the work of the nun or to the work of the priest. This is what makes me wonder why there are more guys not entering the priesthood.

D: Do you feel that this started during Vatican II, or has it been going on before that? Has it been gradual?

N: It's gradual, but when it started, I wouldn't be able to pinpoint that. There's certainly been an awful change from when I left high school and started in the preps end. It was tough in those days. Now, it seems to be duck soup. They pick and choose what they want to do. I think a lot of kids, fellows in the seminary, they wouldn't get away at home with the stuff they're getting away with in the seminary.

From what I know of the nuns, they still have a more rigorous preparatory time, but it's not like it was in the old days. Then, after they make their profession, it seems they can kind of decide whether they're going to go into this or whether they're going to that. I've asked this from the nuns, "What about your vow of obedience?" "We don't have a vow of obedience." I said, "What!" "We have a commitment." Oh, I said, "Does that mean: We'll do it if I want to, and if I don't want to, I won't do it?" That's not a breaking of my vow. That's the difference.

D: So, you see a difference in structure?

N: Oh, yes. Years ago, if you were told to do something by a superior, you did it. When the pastor said, "Do it." If he snapped his fingers you jumped, or you were a rebel. Then, you got that reputation. Then, they sent you around. They reassigned you to parishes that were tough. Maybe that's why I was assigned to some of the tough pastors, I don't know. I never had any trouble with the first guy, and he had a tremendous reputation of being . . . he was so tough that they sent him a new assistant every year. You know, the solution of the problem there, the remedy was that there were three guys together beside the pastor, so we can kind of support one another.

D: At it's best, perhaps you can describe working conditions in the Diocese of Youngstown, and contrast it with the same at it's worst.

N: I don't think I get you. Working conditions in the Diocese of Youngstown. Do you mean for the people, or for the priests?

D: For the priests.

N: I don't think that there's much reason for associates to complain. It's a lot easier today, than it was when I was an assistant. For example, you were . . . well, I told you the first place I was assigned, the pastor was supposed to be so tough. I used to go out with the kids at noon time. The boys played ball, and stuff. I used to out with them. The other assistant says, "Hey, the old mad doesn't like you to go out there." I said, "Well, let him tell me that." So, he would sit on the back porch. He was very ill. Back then, we said mass twice when I was there. I would go out to the porch past him. I would not try to pull it behind his back. So, he put up with it for a while. He said, "Father Nist." I said, "Yes." He said, "I don't want you to be out with those kids at noon." I said, "What?" "I don't want you to play with the kids at noon." I said, "Well, that's the best way to learn these kids, because when you're playing sports with them, they're not thinking about you as a priest. You find out whether they get angry, or whether they cuss and swear if things don't go right. That's the best place to study these kids, but if that's what you want, okay."

Then, another little instance along the line of what you had to put up with in those days: In the real hot summer days, when you left the rectory, you had to go with your coat and collar on. So, on my day off--I remember one Sunday, it was hot as Billy hell, and he was sitting on the porch. I went past, and I said, "Well, I'm going to take the flier home." He said, "When you leave here, you wear your collar and your coat." I said, "Is that your rule?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Okay." So, I drove up around the corner. [I] stopped the car, and took off my coat and collar. I came home in my short sleeves. We didn't have air conditioning in those days. That's the difference. No pastor today would dare to tell associates things like that, [because] they would just ignore you.

D: Personally, what would you like to be remembered for in your years of service in the Diocese?

N: Being available to people when they needed me. In my time, you had a day off, and that was your day off. When you weren't on your day off, you were supposed to be available to the people. It was always my rule wherever I was the boss: there was somebody on call. If you weren't there, you left your phone number where

they could get you. So, any emergency could be covered, and I took my turn with the associates. When it was my Sunday on, I was there. I wasn't running around, and I don't think that's too much to ask. Then, where you have a place like here, Warren and St. Joe's in Canton, where you have a hospital, you've got to have somebody available. Now, they have chaplains. A lot of them have a resident chaplain. Of course, this place doesn't have a resident chaplain. At St. Joe's in Canton, since I left there, they had a precious blood father who was a resident chaplain.

Since then, they don't have anybody, and St. Joe's is responsible now for it. They help at [the] hospital. The public hospital is just a couple blocks away. Timkin Mercy has a couple of resident chaplains. They're covered all of the time. The priests at St. Joseph's have to cover Haltman, which is a big hospital.

D: Well, can you think of anything you would like to add? Or, something that we may have left out about the history of the Diocese, or on any topic that we may have covered?

N: I don't know whether I've covered it to your liking or not.

D: I think you've done a good job.

N: Well, good. Time to leave.

D: Thank you.

N: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW