

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of the Youngstown Diocese Project

Personal Experience

O.H. 1559

SISTER MARY CONROY

Interviewed

by

Stephanie Fisher

on

October 23, 1992

SISTER MARY CONROY

Sister Mary was born September 4, 1931 in Youngstown, Ohio. Her parents, Michael and Bridget, reared her in a strong Irish Catholic environment. She was educated totally in Catholic schools: St. Dominic's and Ursuline High School. In the fourth grade, Sister Mary knew she was destined to become a nun; however, she was not sure she wanted to. By high school, she felt confident in her decision to enter the Ursuline Sisters' Convent.

The influence on Sister Mary's decision to become an Ursuline Sister were her experiences with the Sisters in high school. The Ursuline Sisters had such camaraderie amongst themselves. They seemed so in touch with their students. The fondest memories Sister Mary had of the Sisters were: playing baseball with them, helping her get a date, and helping her make a dress for the prom.

After her religious training, Sister Mary taught at St. Nicholas School in Struthers for six years. Her first class of fourth graders consisted of sixty-two children. Subsequent assignments were: Cardinal Mooney, Ursuline High School, teaching English at Y.S.U., General Superior of the Ursuline Sisters of Youngstown, and working in the Marriage Tribunal--Youngstown Diocese.

Sister Mary received her B.A. from Y.S.U. in 1956, her M.A. from Marquette University in 1964, a Ph.D. from Notre Dame in 1968, and a degree in Canon Law from Catholic University in 1987. She is proud of her degree in Canon Law. Her duties as a Canon Lawyer are to apply the laws of the Church to various situations in the Marriage Tribunal. Presently, Sister Mary serves in the Marriage Tribunal and is a member of the Canon Law Society of America.

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INTERVIEWEE: SISTER MARY CONROY

INTERVIEWER: Stephanie Fisher

SUBJECT: St. Dominicos, Canon Law, Cardinal Mooney, and
World War II

DATE: October 23, 1992

F: This is an interview with Sister Mary Conroy, for the History of the Youngstown Diocese project, by Stephanie Fisher, on October 23, 1992.

Sister, first I need to know when you were born and where, if you could tell me.

C: I was born in Youngstown, Ohio, September 4, 1931.

F: What school systems were you in?

C: I'm one of those people who have been educated almost totally in the Catholic school system. I went to St. Dominic's Elementary School. I graduated from Ursuline High School in 1949. I entered the convent. All of my training was in Catholic institutions, except, I earned my Bachelor's degree at Youngstown State. Then, I earned a Master's degree in English at Marquette. I completed the Doctorate in American Literature at the University of Notre Dame. Since I am a recycled person, in 1987 I was recycled again. I earned a licentiate in Canon Law in 1987 at the Catholic University of America. So, my education has been almost totally within the Catholic school system.

F: Was your family very strict Catholics?

C: They were Irish Catholics, church going people. My mother probably would be classified as a very devout Catholic. My father was an ordinary male Catholic. But, we certainly grew up in the atmosphere of Catholicism.

F: Do you feel that your family influenced you into becoming a nun?

C: My family never really said too much about it. In fact, both my mother and father were very surprised when I wanted to enter the convent. I didn't show any early signs of holiness or piety. So, they were supportive, but neither my mother or my father encouraged me to enter. They had great fears that it wouldn't be the right thing for me. After about four years in the convent, I'd have to say they agreed it was the right thing for me. It has been a very fulfilling life. I don't regret any part of it.

F: What do you think influenced you then?

C: I think basically it was that I grew up in a religious home. We were Catholic people. I grew up during the Second World War. I had four brothers who were in the service all at the same time. I remember that my mother and my father said the rosary daily for my brothers. I would go to church with my mother. Praying for my brothers' safety was a large part of my growing up. I also was influenced by the sisters who taught me. I liked the fact that when I was in grade school, the nuns would play baseball with us. I liked the fact that they seemed like human beings.

When I went to Ursuline High School, I was just impressed with the fact that the nuns seemed to be touch with us. I can remember they worried about whether we would get a date to the prom. They were very concerned that we had ordinary kinds of experience. I remember when I was a junior in high school, my home room teacher, a sister, made my dress for the prom. So, I think that I had a lot of good Catholic experience in my home, but I had a lot of good experience with sisters that was healthy.

I can remember when I was probably in fourth grade, I somehow knew I was supposed to be a nun. But, I never wanted to be one. I had the feeling that that's what God wanted me to do. I kept thinking, "Not me. I'm just making that up." But, eventually, it did seem to be what God wanted me to do.

F: What year did you join a particular order?

C: I entered the Ursuline Order in 1948. The Ursuline

Sisters were here in the Youngstown area and so my novitiate or my training was in the Youngstown area. Then, I became a teacher in the elementary school. I taught for six years at St. Nicholas School in Struthers. Those were the years when the schools were getting larger. I remember my first class had sixty-two children in it. Catholic schools were getting bigger and bigger.

F: Why do you think they were?

C: Well, It was after the Second World War, and the veterans had come home and had married. Their children were being born and being educated. It was the boom.

F: Why do you think they chose to send their children to Catholic schools instead of the other school systems?

C: At that time, it was a very strong part of Catholic thought that a Catholic child should go to a Catholic school. Because the sisters were teaching in the schools, it was a very affordable system. So, it really wasn't a money drag at all. In fact, it was probably as cheap or cheaper to go to a Catholic school than to go to a public school. I think it was just part of the Catholic "thing" that you went to a Catholic school. When I finished teaching at St. Nicholas, I began to teach at Cardinal Mooney High School. During my time at Cardinal Mooney, the school increased to the size of almost two thousand kids. So, Catholic education was a big, big thing.

F: Was St. Nick's your second assignment?

C: St. Nicholas was my first.

F: Then, Cardinal Mooney?

C: Yes, then Cardinal Mooney.

F: Where did you go from there?

C: I went away to school for awhile. Then, when I came back, I taught at Ursuline High School. Then, I taught at Youngstown State University. I was in the English Department there. After four years at Youngstown State, I was elected to the administration of my community. So, I served my community for eight years. Then, I began working at various jobs within the diocesan system here. I was asked if I would go away to school and study Canon Law. The diocese educated me. So, I went to Catholic University and got a degree in Canon Law. Now, I work in the Marriage Tribunal. I'm a Canon Lawyer, which is to say I am a person who knows the law of the church and applies the law of the church

to various situations.

F: Did you have to go anywhere else to become a Canon Lawyer?

C: Just Catholic University. I went three years at Catholic University.

F: What can you remember [about] being told that the Cleveland Diocese no longer was composed of Youngstown and the other counties?

C: It wasn't anything that made a great impression on me. I think I was in grade school when it happened. What I remember is there was a contest for naming the newspaper. The Catholic Exponent was unnamed at that time. There was going to be a diocesan paper. The diocesan paper for the Cleveland Diocese was the Universe Bulletin. So, there was going to be a new newspaper in Youngstown. There was a contest for naming it. That's what I remember. The whole notion of the diocese was a mystery to me. I'm sure.

F: What about when you chose to go into the order? Did you talk about this?

C: I chose the order basically because of the sisters who had taught me. The order, although, is a local order in a sense that it has served this area for over one hundred years. In fact, the first Ursuline Sisters who came to Youngstown to teach came to St. Columba parish. There were five sisters who came, out of that group of five, and developed the Ursuline Order of Youngstown. So, when I was entering the convent, I really wasn't thinking of diocese or anything like that. But, in fact, all my teaching, all my ministry has been in the diocese of Youngstown. That's a very good thing, because some of the children that I've taught in grade school I now meet as adults and they introduce me to their children. So, there is a very strong family spirit that develops when you are in one place for a long time.

F: You went in the order in 1948. What year did you start at St. Nick's?

C: Probably about 1951.

F: Since you really were with the Catholic school systems your whole life, what changes did you see since we became a diocese?

C: I really was not aware of any changes. I don't think becoming a diocese had any effect on people living. I suppose one of the things I remember when I was in high

school is that the first bishop of the diocese, Bishop McFadden, lived on the Ursuline High School property. I can remember as a high school student meeting him and being impressed with how kind he was. He seemed to me a very old man, although I'm sure he wasn't that old. I think that because Youngstown has always been a smaller place, I had the opportunities of knowing the bishops. People can meet the bishop and talk to the bishop. They know the bishop. In very large dioceses that would [not] happen at all.

F: As far as expansion of the churches and the schools, did that really take place in the 1960's?

C: Definitely.

F: Not the 1950's. That was too soon?

C: Yes. It probably began in the 1950's in the elementary schools. In the 1960's then, the high schools got very large. I suppose over the forty years, if you look at it in terms of Catholic education, you see a definite growth and peaking and a decline. The decline matches the population demographics. Because even in the public school system, there aren't that many students to teach these days.

F: Was that in the 1970's do you believe, that started the curve downward?

C: Yes. I would think. Definitely in the 1970's was the down-swing. There was a big change that came about in the Catholic school system after the Second Vatican Council. There was a significant exodus of priests and sisters. So, the so called "cheapness" of the Catholic schools changed because the sisters taught in the schools for practically no salary.

Then, as sisters were being replaced by lay persons, there was the need for a salary, which made the cost of the school go up. The 1970's were certainly hard years for religious women, because we weren't able to fill all the slots in all the schools. Catholic people resented the fact that we weren't there. The Catholic people had always associated sisters with teaching in the elementary schools. When there weren't sisters to teach in the elementary schools, they felt the sisters had done something wrong. It was really a cultural change that was occurring all over the world.

F: You've got the Vatican II in 1963. Do you think it happened right after that?

C: We always talk about the Second Vatican Council as a changing point; but really, society and culture had

changed significantly. The council was really trying to deal with the social and cultural changes that had already occurred. So, the council was not what brought about the change. The council was the reaction to the change. Although many Catholics would look and say, "That's when everything went wrong," with the Second Vatican Council. Things would have been worse if there weren't a council. The Council was trying to update the church to meet the society and the culture that had already changed.

F: So, even if there wasn't the Vatican II, do you still think there still would have been this surge of priests and nuns leaving anyway?

C: Absolutely.

F: This had nothing to do with it?

C: It had something to do with it because the Second Vatican Council affirmed the value of a person. Much of Catholic thought officially had not been so personalistic before the council. The whole notion of religious liberty, the notion that a holiness is not a matter for priests and sisters. Holiness was a matter for all persons. So, those ideas certainly affected the priesthood and religious life, but the council didn't cause the exodus. I think the exodus would have occurred regardless, because I think it was the cultural and the social changes that were really being dealt with. Not the council.

F: It would have happened no matter what. As far as what's going on now, trying to get recruitments, you could say that for the priests and the nuns there. . . ?

C: Yes. You looked pretty good. We could use your history degree.

F: The solution seems to be now, what is it called? Walking Together?

C: Yes. Walking Together is a diocesan program alerting Catholic people to the shortage of priests in particular, and trying to plan for the future by combining parishes and other methods of taking care of the shortage. I don't think that Walking Together is going to do anything about recruitment.

F: So, Walking Together is a solution for priests, but what about the solution for the nuns? Are your roles being down played now since you've already figured there maybe is one nun, if any, in the Catholic school system--that this is a dead issue so we're not going to

think about this?

C: I think that it's clearly a fact that over half of the sisters in the United States are sixty-five years of age or older. I'm happy to say I'm not sixty-five, but I'm getting close to it. So, you have an aging population, and that aging population probably wouldn't be teaching anyway. Certainly a smaller proportion of sisters are in the schools today. Most Catholic elementary schools are staffed by lay persons today. Most Catholic high schools are staffed by lay persons. Catholic colleges and universities have a very small percentage of priests or sisters actually teaching in the college. So, the educational aspect of vocation has changed considerably just by the fact that there are so few nuns in the world today. It would seem as if the vocation in the future will not be focused on schools. It would seem that the needs of society today are not the needs that were there in the 1950's. In the 1950's there was a great need for education. That doesn't seem to be the need today.

So, if sisters function in today's world, they would have to look at what the needs are. Probably the needs would be social needs. The needs would be service to the inner city, or service to women. The ministry of religious women is very different and will be very different in the future.

The fact remains that not too many young women are looking to a vocation in religious life. I don't know why that is, but it is obviously the fact. I don't know that if I were a young woman today, the influences that I had or the teachers who were teaching me when I was growing up--that whole scene has changed. Maybe even the kind of wholly Catholic atmosphere of my home, maybe that's changed in today's society too. I'd like to be real optimistic and think that things are going to change tomorrow and there are going to be many women who want to become religious. But, I don't think that's the reality.

F: Do you think maybe it's due to that there are so many more opportunities for women now? What was back then?

C: Teaching and Nursing.

F: Really, a lot of them didn't even get that option. It was basically marriage.

C: That's right. See, the opportunities for women are greater today. The view of the church is broader today. In an earlier day, it seemed--and "seemed" is the big word there--it seemed as if religious life was a special route to sanctify us. It was almost like a

special delivery. Other ways of life, marriage, being single, whatever, were kind of the "low" road. There was the "high" road and the "low" road. Well, obviously we have a better, healthier view of holiness today, that holiness is all across the board. A young woman leads a holy life as a single person. A young woman leads a holy life as a married person. A young woman leads a holy life as a religious person. So, it's the fact that women have more opportunities and that we see holiness in a different way than we saw it at an earlier time. It's a mystery to me. If you find anybody who can answer that question, get back in touch with me.

F: That's right. It's good that you're saying that especially the diocese and the dioceses all over have had to develop programs to the needs of society.

C: That's right.

F: What programs have they developed?

C: I'll take my own ministry. I work in the Marriage Tribunal, which basically focuses on helping people to remarry in the church. Certainly, all people, but certainly Christians have viewed marriage as indissoluble, that marriage is something that is forever. Even in teenage [years]; the teenager draws a heart which says, "Herbie & me," because it's forever. We know that some marriages are not forever, and we know some marriages are not made in heaven. We know that some people are in a marriage situation that is in fact a living hell.

When persons are in such situations and they need to civilly divorce, the church is concerned about those people and wishes that these people continue their life in the church. Well, most people who have been married--this is specially true of women who have children--may not have the means of caring for those children. Most women may think of a second marriage. The Marriage Tribunal tries to look at those first marriages to see what went wrong, to see the reasons or the grounds upon which an annulment could be granted. I find that persons who have been married and have had the unhappiness of a divorce, and then get their lives turned around and meet somebody else and wish to marry that person in the church, welcome the opportunity of having the church evaluate that first marriage and say, "No that really wasn't a marriage in Christ. That was a marriage, but it wasn't a marriage in Christ."

So, the ministry that I'm involved in is helping people to put their lives together after they have gone through the fragmentation of a divorce, and helping

them to continue their life as Catholics and to continue their lives in the church. We use church law to help those people.

F: So, in effect, the church is more accepting of divorce than in the past?

C: No.

F: No?

C: No. The church is not more accepting of divorce, but the church is more understanding of relationships, and the church's understanding of its own theology of marriage has grown. One of the things that is always important in marriage is the ability to decide that this is the person I wish to marry. This is the person with whom I wish to live my whole entire life. I have to make a judgment when I decide to marry. It's only recently that we've come to understand that, when we make those decisions, they are affected by society. They are affected by culture. They are affecting our own psychology. Sometimes people move into marriage because there is an unconscious motivation that they want to get away from the house they are living in. Sometimes there are pressured situations where maybe somebody has lived with someone. Well, what do you do after you live with someone? The next step is you get married. Well, the decision to marry in circumstances like that is not a solid decision.

So, what the church has come to understand, just as all society has come to understand, is that decision-making is a much more complex task than just deciding, "I do." So, the church looks into the psychological grounds around marriage. The church still teaches and believes that marriage in Christ is forever. That marriage is a covenant. That it is a partnership for the whole of life. That marriage brings about a situation in which new life can be formed. But, marriage is also a very important relationship between the persons. So, it isn't just the children that are important. It's the relationship between the spouses. So, the church does not have a lighter view of divorce. But, the church is dealing with the culture where divorce is pretty much a way of life.

F: At least 50 percent.

C: That's right. Fifty percent of the people who get married this Saturday will divorce. Isn't that awful?

F: That is terrible.

C: The percentage for Catholics is not any bit signifi-

cantly lower. So, Catholics, who believe and are committed to a fidelity in marriage and a unity in marriage, seem to know that, but they can't live it out. I don't mean to say that in a judgmental way, that they don't live it out. I think it's very difficult for persons to live out a commitment in a society that bombards them with reasons why they shouldn't have to stay together if it's unpleasant.

F: So, it seems like the church has become counseling, really, and also, a daycare. Aren't they setting up latch-key programs?

C: Oh, yes. Certainly.

F: That's started this year. Have they started before this? I know in Massillon they started this year.

C: I'm not too good on when they started, but they do exist. Certainly an extension of a lot of Catholic schools and Catholic parishes are daycare centers, which are really helping women, especially. Women, by and large, are the ones who are the nurturers, the carers of the children, yet, women are called upon in almost every marriage today to work. Because a single salary doesn't seem to be large enough to support a family. So, the woman takes on additional roles. That would be interesting in the future for a religious community to focus on--care for women.

F: What do you think is the next step. You've started more in detailed counseling with marriages, latch-key programs. As far as economically, do you have any programs to help a person get back on their feet? Is there a demand for that?

C: Oh, definitely there is a demand for it. Probably persons who work in Catholic Charities would be better able to address that than I would. But, I think the church is desperately trying to deal with the situation in which its members are placed. The church is not only a place to pray. The church is a place where people care about each other. So, there are countless programs that are concerned with the needs of other people. Yet, in all of this, there is a need for a grounding scripture, a grounding in an understanding of our faith. So, there is always going to be an educational dimension to the church.

F: So, what other changes have you seen since your starting in 1954?

C: We lived through tremendous changes that came about after the Second Vatican Council and tremendous changes in religious life, but tremendous changes in diocesan

life that we mentioned in the schools. Changes in attitudes within the church. Certainly the whole issue of women, and the ministry of women in the church. . . . Women have always been a very significant part of the Catholic Church. We have all these women saints. Women populate the churches. I think this is probably true in the Protestant Churches too. I don't know. But, women seem to be the pious ones of the church. So, they are the churchgoers. I think since the Second Vatican Council, because of the changes in culture that were reflected in the council, the church is attempting--and not making great strides--but attempting to deal with women and to provide an equality for women in the church. I wouldn't be able to say that that has been perfectly met, but there has certainly been an attempt.

F: Would you say that this has been the most positive aspect for you with the diocese is that you've finally seen that they are recognizing women, that they are allowing us to do more things?

C: That is certainly a gratifying thing that there are more roles open to women. Yes, but I don't know that it is the most significant thing.

F: What do you think is?

C: I was as afraid you were going to ask that. I think the most significant changes that have occurred in the church have to do with the understanding of holiness; what holiness means. I think that's a tremendous change. I think that it should be a very appealing change that whatever a person does that's done for the Lord is a good and holy thing. There isn't one thing that's better to do than another thing. So, I don't really know what the most significant changes are, but it seems to me that it certainly wouldn't be the new liberation that has come to women, because I don't think it has come.

F: No? It's just beginning?

C: It's just beginning.

F: If it's just beginning, and if 50 percent of the nuns today are sixty-five or older, in twenty years time, how can they even progress than just beginning unless you get a lot of new blood?

C: I think women in the church are not necessarily those who belong to religious orders. I think that religious orders of women have contributed significantly to the development of women's rights in the church, but I think that what is going to happen is not just going to

happen to religious women. So, the age factor is not really important. I think the changes that will affect women will affect all women in the church. Whether they are married or single or in the religious life. I think that it will be a very healthy development for women across the board. But, it will take awhile.

F: Okay, that's mostly lay people, but you had mentioned that it's really important that they are able to be more involved and get different positions in the church which you really didn't have, maybe due to the lack of fathers?

C: No.

F: No?

C: No. I don't think the shortage of priests is going to result in the ordination of women. I don't have any strong opinion on the ordination of women. I can see where it would be a very good thing, but certainly not now. Something that's going to kind of happen. . . .

F: Not in your lifetime?

C: Not in my lifetime. I don't even think it's going to happen in your lifetime. So, I don't think the shortage of priests has anything to do with the opening of priestly roles for women.

F: Has anything happened yet in your lifetime that you might have said thirty years ago, "Not in my lifetime," and it has happened?

C: Oh, definitely.

F: What?

C: When I entered the convent, we wore long black habits. We wore guimpes, bandeaux. We taught school. That's changed significantly.

F: Did you like that strict structure?

C: No. It was just part of the piece of pie.

F: You didn't lose people because of it?

C: Oh, I don't think so. You mean people wanted that strict structure. . . ?

F: Well, that you lost nuns because maybe they really did want to devote themselves to God and helping people, but getting in the order was so strict. . . . Were you allowed a phone call once a week? You weren't allowed

to go home. You had to have this strict habit. You'd go to school, and you'd come home. You'd eat, and be told when to eat, told when to pray, do your assignments; and then, lights out.

C: It didn't seem to keep people from entering, because when the structures were that strict is when the growth of religious communities happened.

F: See, I asked other people. It just does not seem plausible in my mind where you have in 1963 such changes, you're finally allowed. . . . You don't have to wear your habit. "We're not going to tell you that you have to pray this time." You can eat when you want. You can do what you want, go to bed when you want. Then, people just went crazy.

C: I'm not sure that people went crazy. I think that a lot of other things were happening and people were seeing a lot of other possibilities for themselves. I think that some sisters realized that this life was not for them. That living a single life of celibacy was not for them. That marriage was a more appealing route. I think many people left the convent because of that which was good. They were recognizing what was better for them. So, I don't think the structure so much kept people out of the convent. If that were so, we'd be overrun now, because the structures are not there. I think all of this is historically conditioned. We'll have to wait for historians like you to tell us what happened.

But, I think the most rigorous structure in religious life remains, that is, that a person is willing to live alone. A person is willing to vow her life in chastity, which means there are not going to be any men in my life. I am not going to have any intimate relationships. It means that I'm never going to have a child. But, I want to do that with my life, because I see that as a way that God has asked me with my life. So, that structure is the same.

F: That's the one structure that's the same.

C: That's the one structure. . . .

F: Is that the only?

C: That's the biggy.

F: Like you said, you're not going to see a woman conducting mass and becoming ordained.

C: No. I don't see that as that important for me. I see the issue of women as very important in the church. I

would like women to have every possible role in the church. But, I look at things, and my common sense tells me that it's not going to happen for awhile, at least.

F: Do you wish you were involved in the administration of the diocese like you are now, previously?

C: No. I never thought of it. Certainly when I entered the convent, I never even thought of teaching school. I just entered the convent because I wanted to be holy. I remember my mother asking me why I wanted to be a nun. I said, "I wanted to be holy." Then I thought of some of the nuns I knew who were positively saccharin, too sweet, and too holy. My mother said to me, "You don't have to worry. You're never going to be too holy." She was right.

F: You still have your habit on to some degree. Don't you think?

C: Oh, yes.

F: It seems like you really are devoted to God and that's why you did this, and every person is in that statement. But, what would be the difference between. . . . Would a holier person keep her habit on?

C: No. That has nothing to do with it. Just as being a nun doesn't have anything to do with being a holier person than being a mother or being a single person. I think that in the past we thought that way, but that was really incorrect thinking. I think that every person is called to holiness. We all are holy in the way that we're called to be.

F: Okay. I'll give you an example of something. Now, to say what the one thing that has really hindered the diocese? The Vatican II stated, "You will not speak Latin during the mass." That really outraged. . . .

C: Some people.

F: I don't know if you could say some or thousands. Different people say different things.

C: I wouldn't see that as significant at all. I grew up with a Latin mass. I studied Latin. I can read Latin with some difficulty. But I love the mass in the vernacular because it's beautiful. I can understand the words. I don't find that as hindering. I think you have a stereotype in your mind. The stereotype is that the older church, the church of forty years ago was somehow better, holier, more wonderful than the church today.

F: It's funny. But with twenty people to interview and with the opposite sex, you get a completely different answer. That's why I was asking.

C: No.

F: You do.

C: You do?

F: Yes.

C: That's part of your research and you know it, but I can only give you my point of view. I just don't even see that as significant.

F: I have seen to the extremes, nothing in the middle. It's due to whether you are male or female. I can say.

C: I'd love to know that.

F: That is really it. Some people say Vatican II was disastrous. Then, people say it was great. We really needed it, and it would have happened no matter what. Then, if you say because of the Vatican all these changes, people leaving, brothers and sisters not taking their work as seriously, maybe partying, I've heard that too, having wine and bread during prayer. . . . Different things like that. That's why I say this.

C: Oh, well you have a better grasp on it. I don't see the language as that important.

F: Even--I was told--women taking the pill is what has hurt the church in some way because the education. . . . It seems like expanding the Catholic schools within the diocese has really helped its growth and just skyrocketed, early on from 1943 to 1960. Then, in 1963, boom, it stopped with the Vietnam War. Everything just went to a down curve.

C: As a history major, you can probably express this better than I can, but things that happen at the same time or about the same time are not always causal. So, the Second Vatican Council, in my mind, did not cause certain things. It happened at the same time that culture and society was bringing about change.

F: It could be probably that a lot of people are sad in that you never thought these things would be happening like they are. So, you have to blame. . . . Either you say, "God meant it to be this way, or this is what happened. . . ."

- C: I'd say God certainly was a part of all the preceded council. He was a part of all that was in the council, and He is a part of all that is going on now. I think that God is very much a part of what is happening. Even though as we look at the fact, there are fewer priests and fewer sisters, and there are people that are unhappy about the changes. We look at that. It doesn't look so hot. I think that God is part of all of this, and good will come out of it. I don't mean to be Pollyanna, but good will come out of all of this. What is supposed to happen is happening. You mentioned vocations to religious life. I wish there were a lot of vocations to religious life.
- F: I'm sure there are a lot of sisters that would like to become a doctor or other vocations.
- C: Yes. You can't. So, somehow, what happened during the 1950's, the growth that we saw in the church in the 1950's was supposed to be part of the 1950's.
- F: That's what the 1950's was. Even the 1960's. You did have a lot of turmoil, but that's what it was. Even though Vatican II, you've got people. . . .
- C: At different ends. . . .
- R: Right because it was such a crazy time.
- C: It was such a crazy time, and the council was trying to deal with the crazy times. Nothing could deal with the crazy times. Yet, somehow, we go to bed at night. We get up in the morning, and we start all over again. My faith in the church and my faith in God tells me that what is is okay. What's going to be is okay, too. I have a special, special blessing in my life that most of what has been in my life has been good. Certainly, life hasn't been just marvelous. But, I've had some very, very wonderful things happen. I've enjoyed my teaching. I've enjoyed being a part of the administration of my community. I've enjoyed my work here at the diocese. I like being a Catholic. I like being a woman. I like being a religious.
- F: You're completely happy?
- C: Not completely happy. No. I hate mornings.
- F: What do you think has really aided the diocese in its growth? Certainly the education really boomed. What was going on at the time, economically, was people were spending and business was booming. What else do you believe, or maybe getting passed that, has anything aided the diocese maybe in the 1970's and 1980's in its

growth?

C: I think what's happening to the church right now is aiding the diocese.

F: What do you mean by that?

C: By that I mean the fact that we're seeing a crisis of limits. We're seeing the fact that we don't have priests enough for all the parishes.

F: Do you think that's revealing? Is that opening your eyes?

C: Yes. I think it's opening my eyes. I think it is opening other people's eyes. I think it's saying that somehow we have to believe that God is present in the church. What is happening will come about to be good. Maybe the fact that there are fewer priests will bring about looking at the priesthood in a different way. Maybe the fact that society is helping us to see the plight of women will encourage the church to look more seriously at a concern for women. Maybe, the social ills of our times will help the church to look at social needs of our times more seriously. I just don't think there is any golden age.

F: So, you believe this is going to help the diocese become even stronger?

C: Yes. Stronger in faith. Maybe it won't look so good. Maybe we won't be able to get all the big numbers of all the kids in schools and all the parishes. And, maybe it won't look so good, but maybe it will be a strengthening of faith. People see that it doesn't have to look good to be good. We've certainly been fooled enough at what looks good is not so good.

F: So what do you think has really hurt the diocese? Has it been a specific year, a time period?

C: I guess you would have to look at that. . . . Let's see. Are we talking about the physical aspects of the diocese where you'd say, "what's hurt the diocese is that we have fewer children in our schools."

F: To become larger, and, maybe to become a Cleveland Diocese, what is stopping Youngstown from doing that?

C: A diocese is simply a portion of the people of God. In this particular area, these are the people we deal with. I don't think Youngstown ought to be a bigger diocese. I don't think Youngstown ought to be like Cleveland. I think Youngstown ought to look at the people in this area, whether there are a whole lot of

them or a few, and say, "What is this? What is there that as a church we can help provide these people with in terms of their life of faith?" Then, hopefully, you certainly can't talk about faith and prayer, things like that when people are needing food or shelter. So, I guess I am convinced that the church doesn't have to be a great big church.

F: So, nothing is hindering its growth?

C: The only thing that is hindering its growth is those of us who are members of the church.

F: What do you mean by that?

C: You know, a diocese is defined as a portion, a number of people. I think all persons in that church contribute to the church by their life, their faith, by their living, by their service. So, if you had a little tiny group of people and every person in that group was really living a life of faith in Christ and was really trying to be concerned about other persons, who is really trying to live a good and decent life, even if that would be a little tiny portion of the people of God, that would be a great diocese. If you had a great big crowd of people and all persons were doing that, that would be fine. I think growth in a diocese can't be measured by numbers or churches or priests or sisters or people. I think growth in the diocese is something that. . . . We're going to get up to heaven and find out the big numbers didn't mean all that much.

F: Yes. Size means nothing. Do you believe there is going to be an Akron Diocese?

C: No. I think it was thought of that there would be an Akron Diocese. But, I think to form the diocese in Akron, certain parts of the church of Youngstown would be taken to form that diocese. I think that Youngstown would be impaired. So, I think the decision that was probably made by the bishops, or by representatives of the bishops to decide against it.

F: There doesn't seem like there has been a very negative part of being. . . . Nothing has been negative in your view of being part of the Youngstown Diocese?

C: No.

F: You never questioned. . . . Well, this is not fair, maybe back then I wanted to have a choice of what assignments I could be in.

C: Oh sure. I can't say that there is nothing negative in my life. I can't say that there's nothing negative

even today as I work in the diocese.

F: Are they too many to mention, or are they too insignificant.

C: No. They are too insignificant in the larger picture. My experience in life has been pretty good, which is not to say that I think everything is wonderful. But, I really have not had great disappointments in my life, and I haven't had great disappointments in relation to the diocese. I think it's great we are celebrating. . . .

F: Fifty years in 1993. Who would have thought?

C: But, I don't think that it's anything unusual because it's just an accumulation of time.

F: Do you like administrative work better than teaching?

C: No, I'm a good teacher.

F: You'd rather be teaching.

C: No. I like teaching very much. I loved teaching at the university. But, I would not see myself now as a teacher at the university.

F: One question that just puzzles me. Now, since this Walking Together, it has caused a lot of commotion. It doesn't seem smart that Bishop Malone would force priests to retire at seventy when they are more than capable and experienced to continue on. Does it?

C: Probably not. Law is the least progressive of the sciences. Law is reflecting the past.

F: That it's written in stone that you must retire at seventy?

C: I'm not sure that it's written in stone, because I don't think it's going to happen that way. But, it was written, and it was written before the reality hit.

That's a diocesan rule. It could be changed. But, I think that when the rule was made or enacted, the priests were a lot younger, and seventy seemed old then. Seventy today is not old. After all, Reagan was over seventy when he became president.

F: Is there a retirement age for the sisters?

C: No.

F: Is there going to be an age when you hit seventy that

you cannot come in this office and work?

C: I'm not sure. I haven't read that law yet. They've got plenty of time to enact that. There isn't a similar law for me as there is for priests.

F: Could it be that the sisters were not doing the work when it was done?

C: That's right. That law was, in terms of pastors of parishes, they had to resign at seventy. It seems as if many of the pastors who have retired have been called back into service.

F: Temporarily, though. Sometimes for just a year.

C: Yes. I don't know all the ins and outs of that. I know that certainly there must be some priests who would be very unhappy if they were strong and well.

F: I just talked to Monsignor Lettau. He is very unhappy. Two years ago he was asked to leave his parish.

C: Yes. Yet, he is working at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, and he's doing a marvelous job.

F: He loves it. He's so happy.

C: Yes.

F: It did work out for him, but it hurt him.

C: That's the human reality. People do get hurt. Those hurt feelings then, affect everything else. You mentioned about language in the church. The use of Latin. Sometimes I've met people who think that if we can go back and have the Latin mass, if all sisters would get in habits, if priests would wear their cassocks, if everything would be real tight again and we'd be very worried about sinning, that we somehow would have a better world.

Sometimes when people's lives are falling apart, they try to get into a very rigid structure. The cults have shown us that people in crisis look for structures, so, I think some of the feelings about the need for tighter structures, those feelings are really connected with trying to create a world that's safe. In Casablanca, Humphrey Bogart said, "Play it again, Sam." The reality is, you can't play it again. There are many things about the structured life of the old church that I liked and were very good. They don't seem appropriate for now. Sometimes I wish that I had the nice safety of those structures. But, that's not where you live your life. You live your life where it is.

F: I think I've asked you everything I could think of. Is there anything that you feel is important to discuss.

C: I don't think I've talked very much about the diocese. I think that what I may have reflected is that in some ways diocesan structures are very important. In other ways they are very unimportant. I would simply say that, in many ways, what has happened in my life is a reflection of the growth of the diocese and the changes that have occurred after the Second Vatican Council. I think the fact that I'm the only woman in the diocese of Youngstown with a degree in Canon Law says that this is different.

F: Right. Well, thank you very much for the interview.

C: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW