

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of the Youngstown Diocese

Personal Experience

O.H. 1560

REVEREND JOHN FRANCIS LYONS

Interviewed

by

Patrick H. Downey

on

November 11, 1992

REVEREND JOHN F. LYONS

Reverend Lyons was born on June 4, 1921, in a small rural town in County Mayo, Ireland. His mother, Catherine, died when he was only five years old. His only memory of her was the funeral. When he was seventeen, his father, John, died. His two brothers and two of his three sisters are deceased. Molly still lives in Ireland. Reverend Lyons graduated from St. Jarlath College, which was similar to high school in the U.S., in 1940. By 1946, he completed his studies at St. Patrick's seminary in Carlow, Ireland, the oldest English speaking seminary in Ireland. His first cousin who lived in America, Father Thomas Higgins, was a relative of Bishop McFadden of Youngstown. Father Higgins wrote Father Lyons about the new Youngstown Diocese and told him to come to the U.S. However, he could not receive a visa until 1947, because of the rush after World War II. He arrived in New York by boat and was forced to take a train to Cleveland to meet his cousin, because the flight was already full. Once in Cleveland, he found out that the plane crashed.

His first assignment was at St. Anne's in Youngstown. Although it no longer exists, it remains his first love. He really enjoyed the second and third generation Italians and Irish and playing sports with the kids. From January 1954 to June 1956, he was an associate priest at St. Aloysius in East Liverpool and spent the following three years at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Austintown. He then became pastor of the "delightful" parish of Immaculate Conception in Wellsville near the Ohio River. In 1961, he was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in McDonald. [The parish] was "not a desirable parish

because of its debt. There were only 300 families in that parish, and a school was just completed, adding to the total debt of \$400,000. By 1966, he was asked by bishop to build and become the first pastor of St. Joseph's in Austintown. The Youngstown Diocese purchased the property for \$90,000, and Father Lyons managed to pay for construction costs without pledges from the parishioners. Each person was asked to give \$5, the rest of the money was loaned from a bank in Chicago. All of the debt was paid when Father Lyons left.

Father Lyons taught religion classes at Ursuline and Rayen High School in Youngstown and in Girard High School, from 1947 to 1954, when religious education was prohibited in public schools. Over his years of service as a priest, he has worked with the altar boys, youth clubs, guilds, and the St. Vincent DePaul Society. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus and was elected to the Austintown Hall of Fame for his work. He retired in 1990 to a house on Northquest Blvd., in Austintown, with his classmate from Ireland, Father Kelly. Father Lyon's favorite hobby is golf.

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INTERVIEWEE: REVEREND JOHN FRANCIS LYONS

INTERVIEWER: Patrick H. Downey

SUBJECT: Ireland, Bishops, St. Joseph's, St. Anne's

DATE: November 11, 1992

D: This is Pat Downey interviewing Father Lyons for the Youngstown State University Oral History Department on the History of the Youngstown Diocese. The date is November 11, 1992.

Okay, Father Lyons, where were you born? Maybe you can tell us a little bit about your life growing up.

L: Okay, I was born in a little village called Skeghard, Ballyhaunis, County Mayo, Ireland. I was very young when my mother died. The only thing that I remember about my mom is her funeral. I was about five, or five and a half. I had two brothers and three sisters, four of whom are deceased. I've just a sister living in Ireland. Her name is Molly. My deceased brothers were Patrick and Richard. Noreen and Nellie were my sisters who are deceased. My father died when I was seventeen, so I've a very fond memory of him. He was a disciplinarian. I was born on a farm, by the way. In those days, you didn't go to the hospital for birth. The doctor came to the house and generally had a midwife with him. Naturally, I don't remember that, but that's the way it was in those days. I went to the local school, The Sisters of Mercy, in Ballyhaunis. Then, that was . . . boys and girls were mixed up 'til the second grade. Then, there was a separation, and I went to the boys school. The schools there are all parochial schools under the

leadership of the pastor. So, naturally, in the town . . . in the parish where I was, there wasn't one Protestant family. After finishing grade school, I went to St. Jarlath's College. That's in Tuam, County Galway.

D: Okay. About what year was that?

L: I went to St. Jarlath's College in . . . What year am I talking about? My dad died in 1938, so it would be 1935, I think. We had five years of college, because I graduated in 1940. Then went to St. Patrick's Seminary in Carlow, which is the name of the town. It's in County Carlow, Ireland. As a matter of fact, this seminary is going to be celebrating it's two hundredth anniversary next year. It's the oldest English speaking seminary in Ireland. There were no seminaries allowed before this, because Ireland was controlled by England. They were persecuted for their faith. I spent six happy years at St. Patrick's seminary. Two of them were post-college and the four were theology and philosophy.

D: What were the two post-college years all about? What kind of courses would you take?

L: We were taking introduction to philosophy. We did a little extra in history and English. In 1943, when the diocese was established, I had a first cousin who was active in the ministry then, who was related to Bishop McFadden, on the McFadden side of the family . . . his name was Father Higgins. He was in the active ministry then, as I said. He became a chaplain in the air force later on. But, anyway, he had written to me, and told me about the new diocese being established, and if I was interested in going to the Youngstown Diocese, which was brand new, [I should] let him know, and he'd tell Bishop McFadden about me.

Incidentally, the Carlow Seminary was for the English speaking world. So, the young men ordained in Carlow can go to any English speaking country. In those days, bishops were looking for them. They still are, but the vocations aren't there as they were in my time. I was ordained in June of 1946. Well, incidentally, Bishop McFadden accepted me, and I was ordained for the Youngstown Diocese in 1946. Now, that was immediately after the war. It was very difficult to get a Visa, so I did not arrive in Youngstown until 1947. It took that long to get a Visa. I came by boat, incidentally. Flying wasn't very popular in those days. I arrived in New York, and I felt like a real immigrant. Coming into New York were millions of Irish people who had come in those days, or years before that. I was met at the boat by friends, and I spent a few days in New

York. Then they were going to fly me to Cleveland to meet my cousin there. There was no room on the plane, so they put me on a train. I arrived in Cleveland at the sixty-some street station--I don't know what it was--and there was my cousin to meet me with a paper in his hand. The headlines on the paper were that the plane crashed.

I was assigned to St. Anne's in Brier Hill, 1466 West Federal Street. I remember it very well. It's no longer in existence because of the highway road that was put there. To locate St. Anne's for you . . . it would be at the corner of Superior and West Federal [Streets]. I think the Board of Education has some building up there now. I don't know what it is. But, that would be roughly the location of St. Anne's Parish. It was a real experience for me because it was my first assignment.

The people were wonderful. They were great. It was a parish that was mixture of . . . I would say . . . second and third generation Italians, and second and third generation Irish. We had a ball. We had a great time. I enjoyed it immensely. It was my first love, and still is. There was a school there. Naturally, being young, I was very involved with the kids. I was out doing all kinds of activities with them. Then in January of 1954, I was transferred to St. Aloysius in East Liverpool. I was there in East Liverpool until June of 1956. Then I was assigned to Immaculate Heart of Mary with Monsignor Prokop. I was there for three years.

Then, I was appointed to Immaculate Conception of Wellsville--my first parish. I was thrilled to death. It was right on the Ohio River. It was a delightful parish. I would say, 90 percent of Italian extraction. They were delightful people. Some of them were from the old country. The men were not known for their church attendance. But, you'd meet them downtown, some nice old Italian man, and he didn't even know what my name was. He'd say, "Hello, Priest." It was funny. I got a great charge out of that. Then in 1961, I was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in MacDonald. It wasn't a very desired parish. I recall, saying to Bishop Walsh when he called on the phone . . . I said to him, "Bishop, I hear there is a tremendous debt there." "Yes," he says, "It's quite substantial." There were about three hundred families in the parish, and they had just built a new school. I said to him, "What's the exact figure?" He said, "Around \$400,000." In those days, \$400,000 was immense. So, anyhow, we hacked away at it. I was there for five years. In the five years, now with running the school, we knocked off about a \$100,000 of the

debt.

In 1966, Bishop Malone was Auxiliary of Youngstown. Bishop Walsh was not well. I was at a confirmation in St. Patrick's in Leetonia. It was about the month of March. I rode down with another priest. His name was Father Humphrey. After the confirmation, we were upstairs having beverage. The pastor came up--Father Tom McNally. He said, "The bishop wants to see you." I'm not going to use the words I said to him. He said, "Honestly, the bishop wants to see you." So, I went down, and then Bishop Malone told me about the Westside, and how they were thinking about putting another parish in it. The Westside between Immaculate Heart and St. Christine's, and would I take it? I said, "Would you give me some time to think?" He said, "Sure. I'll see you in my office at ten o'clock a week from tomorrow." I says, "Okay."

To start a new parish on my own! I figured I wouldn't know how to build an outhouse, and here he was asking me to start a parish! So, I went to a priest for whom I had the greatest admiration in those days, and still do, although he's feeble now, Monsignor Halter. He was the pastor of St. James in Warren at the time. I figured, I need some help in this. Now, I was not supposed to mention this to anyone. But, in confidence, I went to Monsignor Halter and I told him about what the bishop had offered me. [I asked], "What should I do?" He said a few words to me that always stuck in my mind ever since. He says, "What were you ordained for?" I said, "Okay, I'll take it." I was happy. He made me make up my mind.

So, at the time, Father Tim Kenney was my assistant in MacDonald. He was having terrible back problems, the poor guy. He had many operations on his back. So I went up after coming from Monsignor Halter's on a Wednesday. I went up to the hospital and told him that I was being transferred to a new parish that was going to be called St. Joseph's, on the Westside. I said, "I told Bishop Malone that I wanted you to come with me, because I knew your physical condition. The bishop said, 'Yes. Okay, you can have him.'" We started St. Joseph's parish. The diocese bought the property. They used the money from old St. Joseph's--that's how it got it's name from the old Saint Joseph's--and bought the property for ninety or one hundred thousand dollars. This was a steal in those days. We started building, and we got the school up. We built eight classrooms. The upper grades went to St. Christine's or Immaculate Heart, depending on which parish they were living in before the split. Then in a few years, we built other classrooms, and then, we had all eight grades. We had the first graduation probably nine or

ten years ago from St. Joe's parish. Our hall was too large for meetings, so we built a nice hall that will seat about ninety or one hundred people. We built a big storage room and we built a kindergarten room. That was about eight or ten years ago. Anyhow, everything was paid off long before I left there.

D: Okay, let's go back to when you came over here from Ireland. Why did it take so long to get a Visa to come to the United States?

L: Because the war . . . a lot of people were migrating. They had probably applied long before I was ordained. You know, dumb me, didn't know this was necessary, so I had to wait my turn.

D: So, you came to the United States in 19 . . .

L: [In] 1947. May of 1947. I was the precursor to Father Kelley. You know who John the Baptist was. I was the John Baptist. You know who followed John the Baptist. . . ? Kelley thinks he's him.

D: So, what did you think when you first came to the United States?

L: I was scared to death. I really was. But, I was amazed at the organization of the church. The rapport that was between the people, the priest, and the school. I enjoy that. I enjoy that very much. As I said, I enjoyed the school, and I enjoyed being with the kids, because I was young enough at the time to enjoy them. The housekeeper used to say that she couldn't tell me from the kids out in the yard, because of my size.

D: What were some of the other differences that you noticed between the church in Ireland and the United States?

L: The church in Ireland. . . .

D: Maybe administratively, or. . . .

L: The church in Ireland . . . well of course in Dublin. We're very active. It's very active also in towns like Galway, Westport, Athlone and Mullingar--bigger towns. But, it's mostly rural parishes or parishes in the small towns. The priest knew everyone, and everyone knew the priest. There was a good rapport between them. I would say this, that to me, in retrospect, the Irish had a tremendous devotion to the Mass, and naturally to the Holy Eucharist, and the Rosary. Around Corpus Christi--the feast of Corpus Christi, each year, which would be fall, depending on

the liturgical calendar, in May or sometimes early June--you would have a procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the town or the village. You'd have three benedictions: one at what they call the square, one on the convent grounds, and one back in the church. Now, here you couldn't do that unless it was a Catholic area, because of perhaps, disrespect to the Blessed Sacrament.

But, over there it was a time for the people to really clean up their homes, do the spring cleaning, the windows, get out sacred pictures or statues, or whatever it might be, all along the route. It was very uplifting. That was one of the things that I missed at the beginning. But, naturally, being kind of Americanized now, I don't miss it. But, they still have those processions.

The attendance at morning mass over there was very good. I know that in cities like Dublin, they would have, for the noon hour . . . for the lunch hour, they'd have jam-packed churches every noon. Standing room only. It was amazing. That might answer your question.

D: How about the . . . did you notice a great economic difference between support from the public . . . from the parish in Ireland as compared to the United States?

L: The parochial schools were all financed by the government. The pastor was called the manager. He had the hiring of the teachers, but the government picked up the tab. That was the big difference between there and here as I can see it today.

D: How did you go about adjusting to this new environment? What were some of your responsibilities when you first came over?

L: My first responsibilities were altar boys--the youth club, teaching some classes in the grade school. Along with that, we attended the Men's Club meetings, the Ladies' Guild meetings and all of the other organizations such as Vincent DePaul, etcetera. Then, we taught in high schools. In those days, you could teach religion in the public high school. I taught at Ursuline. I also taught at Rayen an hour a week, and Girard High School an hour a week. We even graded the kids, and the grades were sent into the office and put on their report cards.

D: What years did you teach?

L: Madeline Haire all Religion out of the school. I taught from 1947 to 1954. There was no such thing as

teaching religion in the public school after that. Then after that, I came back from East Liverpool to Immaculate Heart for three years. I also taught Religion at Ursuline. Two days a week.

D: How did you like Ursuline High School?

L: I loved it. The kids were great. When you compare them with the roughies, they were disciplined. It was very obvious, you could recognize it as soon as you walked in the door. I'm not trying to down the other schools at all. Because I know they are good educational centers, but, there wasn't the discipline there. The kids didn't seem to have that self-control. They'd always be giggling and laughing, making noises and throwing spitballs.

(laughter)

D: So, you came over four years after the diocese was formed.

L: Yes.

D: From what you could tell, from maybe talking to other priests and so forth, what were some of the changes with the split from Cleveland?

L: Well, of course, they had to establish their own Chancery, sever themselves from Cleveland, and become a diocese. I'm sure they did a great job on it. They became very self-supporting, and they had the old Chancery offices in those days above a flower shop. The Rayen Flower Shop was there, and the diocesan offices were up above it. But, they didn't have the operation that they have today. I mean it has grown, grown, grown tremendously.

D: How has it, do you think?

L: Pardon me?

D: How has it changed in your opinion?

L: How has it? Well, you have all various departments. Because, so many things have happened since Vatican II, that you have a department for liturgy and a department for evangelization. You have the department for religion, and a department for education. You have all kinds of . . . the tribunal has gotten much larger. There were more people working in the tribunal because of the many cases that were being sent there. Then, of course, they have a separate office down there for annulments. So, it's a totally different ballgame. Totally.

- D: So, from what you know, Vatican II brought more changes in the diocese perhaps than were present before the split from Cleveland.
- L: Oh, yes.
- D: That was basically administrative changes right? A new Chancery is there now . . . very beautiful.
- L: Yes. Well, I would say that Bishop Malone enlarged the education department. Really enlarged it. That was before, during, and after Vatican II. So, that would be--probably, the largest department down there right now would be the education department.
- D: Education.
- L: Yes. In those days, the chancellor was also the superintendent of schools. Then, Bishop Malone went away to school. When he came back, he became the superintendent of schools. Then, things began to happen.
- D: So, Bishop Malone was definitely a major figure. What other reasons can you see for the growth in the education in the diocese and some other aspects?
- L: I would say it's happening not only in the diocese but it's happening in all education, both parochial schools and public schools. There are all kinds of people there today, let's say out at Fitch [High School], that they didn't have twenty years ago. All kinds of new programs . . . you have to get the personnel for that. The principal can't do all that by himself. So, I would say that's probably the reason. Because it's a change of times, and times have been changing, and there will be more changes as various things develop. I think it's good, in a sense that we can't be static, or sit down and let everything pass us by. We got to jump on the wagon and become a part of it, become a part of what's happening.
- D: Perhaps you can tell us a little more about some of the changes that were brought by Vatican II and elaborate on them, whatever you feel is important.
- L: Oh, there were numerous changes that were brought on by Vatican II. I would say, the best thing that Vatican II did was to allow the vernacular at Mass. That's one of the finest things that they've ever done. I was totally against facing the people to say Mass. But, now I see the wisdom in it. I wouldn't go back to saying Mass with my back faced to the people anymore.

You feel that you're part of the people offering up the body and blood of Christ.

So, then, I would say, having lay people become more involved in the sacramental life of the church. I would say that having lay people become Eucharistic ministers. Also, lectors--who do the scripture readings. These would be the major things, as I see, that have happened since Vatican II, as far as the average Catholic out in the pew sees them. To me, the changes are great. I wouldn't have said that twenty years ago, twenty-five years ago.

D: Why?

L: Because, we don't like change. I was one of the old school, and I just couldn't see myself saying Mass in English. But it was great, as I see it. It's the way to go.

D: So, basically, you see a greater . . . you saw a greater participation with the church leaders.

L: By the laity, and there's going to be more of it because, I can see . . . well, we know that vocations are minimal. So, the people are going to have to be trained to take over. You saw in the paper where they were going to be closing parishes, and parishes were being joined. People will have to be trained if there's no priest there to be of some kind of service. There is scripture reading, and maybe a homily, and then distribution of the Eucharist. So, there will be more and more people involved as time goes on unless we get a real avalanche of vocations.

D: Do you see that happening?

L: Eventually, yes. The years bring their changes. I see it happening, yes.

D: Why do you think vocations have dropped off so drastically? I know it's a difficult question.

L: I'm not God, but from my own point of view, I would say, first of all, that the world is very appealing to the kids. High salaries are very appealing to the kids. These, I think, are two of the reasons. The kids today . . . the great majority of them do not have a sense of giving themselves. It's, "Give me." It's a whole different outlook, which will change eventually. It will change. The cycle comes around. I do believe that with the interest of people, parents especially, encouragement of parents, prayer by the lay people to encourage their children. . . . I say a rosary every day for vocations. It's going to happen, but we've got

to pray for them and give the example.

D: Are there any, in your opinion, hindrances to the growth of the diocese over your years?

L: To the growth of the diocese?

D: In respect to the diocese. Changes or hindrances, in your opinion that you would have liked to have seen, perhaps, done differently.

L: I don't know. I'm going to say this, and I'm not quite sure of it yet. I've been mulling over it. I think, maybe, the vow of celibacy. We could change that. But, then again, we've got to look at the fact that a priest is supposed to devote his full time to people. I don't see how he can devote full time to people if he has a wife and family. The kids would never see him if he devoted full time to people. So, maybe, that's on the horizon.

D: In the future?

L: Yes.

D: Is there anything else that you can think of?

L: No, I can't. I'll be very honest with you. I can't. The thing is . . . I think that people themselves, the laity, will have to pray for vocations, and let the church decide what the conditions are for priesthood. I can't decide. The church would have to decide.

D: How is the church coping with the shortage now? I know you mentioned the lay people perhaps helping out with the Mass, lectors and Eucharistic Ministries. But, maybe you can elaborate on how . . . are there programs in force now to correct the problem? I understand some retired priests are being called back. If you could elaborate on that.

L: Oh, yes . . . on a pro tem basis. First of all, retirement has caused a shortage in man power. Not that great deal. But nevertheless, it has caused it. I think that if a bishop can stay in his diocese and run a bigger operation than a pastor in a parish, and retire at seventy-five, I cannot see why a pastor cannot stay until he is seventy-five.

D: What is it presently?

L: Seventy and with a year option at a time then to renew it with the approval of the bishop.

- D: What are some of the churches that are now in danger of a serious shortage of priests? Is this something that's a major problem throughout the whole diocese, or is it in certain sections. . . ?
- L: Oh, yes. What they're trying to do, is that there are parishes like West Point, that might have, maybe, a hundred people at mass on a Sunday. With the shortage of priests, I don't see how it would be justified to send a priest to West Point, for example. I have nothing against West Point, I'm just taking it as an example.
- D: Right, an example.
- L: And why they couldn't drive in to where the nearest Catholic Church is. We don't have a horse and buggy today, so jump in . . . five miles, or whatever it is, is nothing. You know, you could drive sixty miles to a ballgame. That's the only recourse we have is the real small places join with parishes that are larger than they are. Of course, the real large parishes will stay as they are, but they will probably accept smaller parishes into the congregation. Of course, the diocese decides all that. This program of Walking Together . . . a lot of people had a say in that. It was the people who came up with this plan along with priests, of course. The people and the priests came up with this plan as regards various parishes, and what should be done with them. This is a ten year plan.
- D: Okay, when did you notice . . . it was perhaps a particular decade, that the diocese was really booming and growing, and a lot of church building, and schools . . . ?
- L: I came to the U.S. after the war. People moved to suburbia. And then, of course, you had all the men coming back from the service. For example, a great example of that would be St. Christine's. You'll find that all of the development that took place at St. Christine's . . . they're all G.I.'s. That's right. They're all G.I.'s all around that area. Then, people, I would say, because of racial problems, they moved out to suburbia. Before the mills closed, you would have . . . Austintown would be a big city, because the diocese had other property in Austintown to build a church. But, then the mills closed, and that was the end of that. There are areas developing, but I don't think anyone would get a new parish today because the areas aren't that large. Number two, even if they are huge, they could go to St. Joe's, or if it's Austintown or Immaculate Heart or whatever. They have their cars, so it's easy for them.

D: So, basically there was a little more, prosperity in the community after the war with the steel mills. . . .

L: Well, proportionately, the amount of money wasn't the same, but it's value was greater. For example, the homes that were built . . . the homes at St. Christine's would be cheaper. The homes that were built on the streets off the property of St. Joseph's were built for seventeen to nineteen thousand. You would build them today for sixty thousand. So, people were rich for that time in that particular era, because things were not as expensive as they are today. So, a man today, making sixty thousand, he has to put thirteen to fifteen to eighteen in a new car. I remember the first car that I bought was nine hundred dollars. So there's a big difference there. The people are proportionately every bit as generous as they were in those days. As a matter of fact, maybe in those days, the people were very generous. I know this. Speaking from experience, people who gave five dollars in 1947, many of them are still giving five dollars. People who gave the dollar in 1947, many of them are still giving the dollar.

D: Let's talk about your involvement with St. Joseph's because you became a pastor, and there was no church before you arrived, no school?

L: No. Nothing. Okay, why don't we start at the beginning?

D: Right.

L: As far as my memory . . . it's pretty bad.

D: Take lots of time and lots of elaboration.

L: The parish was established in June of 1966. We had made arrangements with Mr. Shutrump--Fred Shutrump, Sr. He owned the Wedgewood Plaza, and the Wedgewood Theater was there. He gave us the Wedgewood Theater. He donated it to us for Masses on Sundays and Holy Days.

During that time when Masses were held in the theater, we hired an architect by the name of Leonard Freidman, who was a parishioner of St. Christine's, to draw plans. Plans were drawn for a rectory, a school, and a social hall. The contract was awarded to the lowest bidder, which was the Nespecca Construction. The rectory was built by DeChellis Construction. We moved into the rectory in November of 1967. The church, school, and hall was under construction. We moved into the church in June of 1968. The school opened in September of 1968. In the meantime, we had to organize a Men's Club, Ladies' Guild, St. Vincent DePaul . . .

all of the various organizations. Monsignor Gutman, who was the pastor of St. Christine's at the time, was very gracious to us in letting us use his facilities for those meetings.

Then, naturally, when we had our own hall and facilities, we started at St. Joe's operating as a normal parish would operate. It was the first parish that I know of that was built without pledges. The reason for that was that the people at St. Christine's, I think, had another year to go to pay on their pledges. Immaculate Heart were paying off their pledges, too. The financial committee that was established at St. Joe's figured that, if we started going door to door on a campaign drive, these people would never make another pledge.

So, what we did was . . . or, they did, was to ask for five dollars from every wage earner. There was no pledge. It was a good habit to give them in those days so that they know that five bucks really isn't that much. Naturally, we had to borrow money. We borrowed money from the diocese, who got it from some bank in Chicago. Then we had to pay back . . . make our big payments twice a year.

L: So, they got accustomed to giving \$5.00. Of course, I had retired there when they came out with this drive each year. So, I don't know how that's doing, because, I figure that the new pastor, Father Lukehart, a very fine man, is the boss. I go back there to help for Masses.

D: You keep your hands out of it.

L: Yes.

D: I see. How did you go about staffing the school with nuns or lay teachers?

L: Well, the Notre Dame sisters, who were teaching at Immaculate Heart and still are, staff the school, three or four of them. They lived here at Immaculate Heart. They had a car. St. Joseph's bought them a car, so they had their own transportation. Then we paid Immaculate Heart--I forget what it was--every month for their keep--room and board. Then the Notre Dames--and you can put this in the record if you want, but I wouldn't because I wouldn't want to hurt my neighbor--they wanted a convent. Well, I could see the handwriting on the wall that the sisters were diminishing in numbers. I could foresee the day that there would be no nuns at St. Joseph's. What would you do then, with a convent? Anyhow, they left after that.

D: How many did you have roughly, originally when you first opened the school?

L: How many?

D: Nuns.

L: Four.

D: Four?

L: Four. Yes. It dwindled down to three. Then they wanted the convent, and then they pulled out. Then, I got two nuns from the Ursuline Mother House. I was eternally grateful to Sister Mary Conroy, who was the superior at the time. She took care of us. Then, when I retired, Sister Helen Shea was there as principal, and then the year after I retired, the Ursulines could no longer staff the school. So, now they have a Mr. James Smith who is the principal.

D: Okay. Is there anything that you could think of that we might have missed that you might want to add about the diocese, the changes over the years, positive or negative?

L: I think the diocese is in good hands. Each bishop is different like each pastor is different. Each human being is different. So, the first bishop of Youngstown was a very simple saintly man--Bishop McFadden. Now, I am not saying that the others were not saintly, but that was predominant in him. [He was] a very pious man. Then Bishop Walsh comes in from Charleston, South Carolina and you would call Bishop Walsh just a southern gentleman. He was kind and very understanding. He was just nice to his priests. Then, we have Bishop Malone, who is an educator. [He is a] great organizer. There's no question about it.

But, I do believe that in the church today, the American church, that any man should have a few years experience as a pastor before becoming a bishop. Then, he would be able to understand the plight of pastors, and the various things that they are involved in, and their worries, their heartbreaks, worries and finances. But, I would think that it would be a necessary ingredient to the qualifications to becoming a bishop.

D: Just one question came to mind from what you just said--how do you feel about remaining in a certain parish? They seem to be content and doing well . . . do you think it's a . . . ?

L: I see where you're coming from. I would say that that would depend on the work that he's doing there.

If he's static and permanently parked, then I don't think that's good for a parish.

But, if he's an eager beaver and doing what is to be done, keeping up with the church and programs, I'm all for it. I believe also . . . getting back to the vocations, I believe also, and I should have said it at that time, but it just came to my mind . . . I firmly believe that men who are ordained deacons, especially older men, even if the wife is alive, they should be allowed to be ordained. Especially if the wife dies, they should be ordained. If you can get seven or eight or ten years out of these great guys, it would help. It would give you forty priests right away. Again, I'm only giving my opinion.

D: That's what we want.

L: This is not the church's opinion--far from it. If some people heard me talk like this, they'd kill me. But that's the way I feel.

D: Thank you.

L: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW