

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Romanian Americans

Personal Experience

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JOHN MARMUREANU

Interviewed

by

John Muntean

on

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Oral
History
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MU: This is an interview with Reverend Father John Marmureanu for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Romanian culture in Mahoning County, by John Muntean, on May 10, 1975.

Father John, what part of Romania did you come from?

MA: In the eastern part of Romania there is a province called Moldavia. As you know, half of it was seized by the Russians after the Second World War. It is called Bessarabia, about five minutes from the Soviet Union.

MU: What was a typical day like in Romania when you were a child?

MA: A typical day?

MU: Yes, sir.

MA: Well, I was with my father and mother, and we had a little farm. My childhood was rough.

MU: Did you have a lot of chores to do at home to help out?

MA: Yes, yes. I worked in the field. Although I was the only child, I worked and helped my father tend the crops.

MU: What kind of crops did he grow?

MA: Well, corn and wheat and barley and oats and everything that farmers grow. He had some cattle. We kept working all the time. I was a child of six. I accompanied my father because he was kind of bored going by himself on the field. There I was with him.

MU: Can you tell us also about schooling in Romania during the time when you were a child? How was the schooling set up at that time?

MA: As you know, the school system in Romania followed the pattern of the European system of education, precisely the French type. In my village, Mocau, from the county of Vaslvi, we had an elementary school. As a matter of fact, it was the only elementary school in the village, although the village was a big one, a commune of independent peasants. They have never been slaves, or Udatch. I was at the elementary school until seventh grade. The elementary school was organized into levels. The first was the first four grades, and the next three grades had not been compulsory or mandatory. The next three were kind of a complimentary elementary school education. So you could go, for instance, after you graduated the fourth grade, to Les, in the city, or you could stay in the village. If you did not have any other ambitions of education, you complete the

seventh grade in elementary education.

MU: In regards to the schools themselves, did they teach you much about Romanian culture, or did you pick it up from your parents, more or less?

MA: In the elementary school?

MU: Yes, sir.

MA: Yes, they started. Of course, from A, B, C, or three R's as you call it, they followed the Romanian culture.

MU: What did they say about the United States at this time? This is before the Communists took over.

MA: Oh, at that time we had little relations with the United States, and we did not know too much about the United States. It was too far away from us. We lived in Europe. As you know, it is a crowded continent, with a lot of nations and clans and everything. So we have been limited to the neighbors, and what was the paramount of the cultural system in Europe was France and Germany. So we did not know too much any way. There have been some clouds about American and Romanian relationships at that time, but it did not reach us.

MU: In regards to schools, you mentioned the different subjects a little bit. Were the buildings themselves more or less one-room schools, or were they as comparable to the United States in which you have many classrooms, like they have them in elementary schools here?

MA: In that village, Mocau, we had this schools, and we had many classrooms. In each classroom was an age group.

MU: Were most of the teachers men or women at that time?

MA: It happened I had only men, yes, but afterwards the women got involved in teaching. But at that time, my teachers were men. It happened to be that way.

MU: During that time, did most of the children in Romania have a lot of respect for the schooling and for the teachers in general?

MA: Yes, but discipline was very strict. The punishments also were very severe. For instance, I remember my teacher had a rod. He would hold my hand, and he hit me twice or thrice. It depended on how bad it was. For instance, if you did not know the lesson or did not prepare the lesson properly. It was tough. The teacher got tired of hitting the children and he entrusted the head, the monitor. Here in the United States, I do not know what they call them.

MU: They call them monitors.

MA: Monitors, too. The monitor had this task to hit you twice or thrice or tenth, to everybody, and you should obey. It went well; it worked.

MU: It did?

MA: It worked, believe it or not. At that age, this kind of punishment kept us in shape.

MU: What about in high school, the children in the high school? Did they have a lot of discipline problems in high school?

MA: In high school, yes. There was a kind of military discipline in high school. I have never been to Great Britain, but I have heard that they had sometime this kind of discipline. The tutor, we call it paragog in Romania, but here this word has another connotation. He was watching outside how we played, and when we went into the meditation or study rooms. He watched us and came over and vented himself and asked questions. "Do you understand this and that?" It was pretty good. Now at this age, I can realize it was not a bad system of teaching.

MU: Basically, what did they teach you about the culture of Romania in the schools, other than the three R's? Did they teach you a lot about the history of Romania?

MA: Yes, a little bit of history and a lot of it as reading, you know, and math.

MU: What about the arts, like music?

MA: No, no. We had just the teacher. Once a week we had a music class. We were not taught by notes. We started to learn notes in high school. But they taught us some folk songs and something like that.

MU: Did you learn to sing them?

MA: I sang and danced outside when it was a nice day. You know, the kids with the Romanian folk dance, and some were plays. It depended what age group you were in at that time.

MU: A lot of times in the United States, the children play games like baseball, football, like that during recess. What did you play during that time?

MA: We had gymnastics, as a Swedish system. For instance, before we went to class, every teacher -- this was mandatory -- with the class, made ten or fifteen minutes of gymnastics. This was mandatory now. It was good to develop the body at that age. That was the thing.

MU: Father John, what do you remember about your parents? You mentioned your father was a farmer. What about the schooling? Did they have much schooling? Did your parents go to high school?

MA: Not my mother; my father. My father was an accountant, too. After he graduated the elementary school in his village, he went for accounting school.

MU: That would be like a trade college?

MA: Accounting school, yes. He graduated. He started two years. He had very beautiful handwriting. In the village was a bank, a small bank. We called it a popular bank. The peasants put the small capital they had in the bank and so forth if they did something. My father used to keep the bookkeeping, the records of this bank. But he combined this with his farming, as many people in the United States do. You know, they are farmers, and they have a job, too. In their spare time they come from the bank and they do their job on the farm. So my father did this, too. But my father was pretty much inclined for literature. He had a library, a small library, with popular books. There were a lot of books. In Romania, there was a popular edition of the pocket book, and cheap. He liked to read.

MU: Could you describe your village a little bit? What did it look like? Did it compare to the pictures you have seen of some early, oh, maybe 19th century United States villages?

MA: The main comparison between the villages was there were townships in the United States.

MU: In other words, many of the buildings were old?

MA: Old, and many of the ideas are old. As you know, we started in the 15th and 16th century and came over. People did not care too much about that. They got sick of the tradition and the things in Europe, the religious persecution and political by so and so forth. The population of Europe is still there. They still hold on to their habits and ideas in this tradition. This had a kind of negative impact on the development.

MU: Were the roads paved, or were they still dirt roads?

MA: In my village the main road was still not paved. It is something called gravel.

MU: Gravel?

MA: Yes, gravel, still. But maybe now they paved it.

MU: Did they have running water?

MA: No, they do not have running water. They have well water.

MU: Electricity?

MA: Electricity, they have now, but when I was a child it had not been. This was not far away.

MU: Were most of the houses stone or wooden?

MA: No, because it is a plain village. It is a plain and hills. The houses are made of dirt mixed with straws.

MU: Oh, mud brick then.

MA: Yes, mud brick, yes. The majority of them were that way. Some of them now are brick.

MU: Were they one-story or two-story mostly?

MA: One.

MU: Was the floor a wooden floor?

MA: Sometimes wooden, sometimes dirt.

MU: Dirt, oh?

MA: Dirt, yes.

MU: Inside the house were there many rooms?

MA: Usually they have two bedrooms and one, let us say, a living room, and they have a kitchen which was larger than everything. The habits of the peasants of that village during the winter time, they retired in the kitchen. They slept there, all of them, on account of it being winter. They did not want to spend too much wood to burn in the stove.

MU: Did people use horses for transportation, or did they walk?

MA: At that time they used horses or oxen, for farm work.

MU: Did they keep those in the barn?

MA: In a barn.

MU: Now, this was all before the communists came to Romania?

MA: That is right.

MU: What changes occurred in the culture of Romania when the communists came and took over? Can you tell us something about that?

MA: Everything came to pieces. As you know, after the big three -- Britain, Russia and the United States -- sold us to the Russians, they put in action a whole machinery. They used everything to grasp the power, the political power, everything that was possible: lie, deceit, force killing-- everything. Of course, this was underground activity. You, I am sure, believed what they said, but underneath was a whole machinery of crime and lies. Finally, I do not know the intelligence of this country, if they knew of all that I am sure, but they closed their eyes and did not inform public opinion about it. Finally, by all this time now the end excuses the means. They did, and grasped the power after they took it. They did more things. They were cruel.

MU: What was a typical day underneath the communist control at that time when they came into power? Were the people frightened, or were the people led around like sheep?

MA: There was a lot of confusion. As you know, Romania is a buffer country between two empires, between two nations who aspired to power in Europe, Germany and Russia. There are some states between them. One of them is Poland; the other one in the middle is Romania and on the bottom is Bulgaria and Greece. These are a chain of buffer states between two big powers, especially Germany and, once upon a time, France and Russia. As you can now understand, the external and even the internal pulse of a country of this type is not up to the people. It is at the mercy or dictated from the interest outside people's interest. You know, major outside interest which does not have anything in common with the people.

MU: If you rejected the communist philosophy, what was usually the outcome?

MA: Just you had to die. If you rejected them, first of all, you cannot do it. And you cannot express publicly something that is no good that they did. It is not possible for somebody to do everything good, even if you are well intentioned, and you want to do something good.

MU: Regarding the question again about the communist system in Romania, what did they do to the young people in the sense of culture?

MA: To destroy it. Well, Russia's tactics are to destroy whatever is Romanian, because we are a drop of Latin people in an ocean of Slavs. We have on the south Bulgarians, who are Slavs; Polish people are Slavs in the north; the Russians in the east are massive Slavs; the Czechoslovakians in the west are some of them Slavs, and the Yugoslavs are Slavs in the south. The Russian politics for centuries is just to destroy and kill any national feeling of Romania and to do what they can to assimilate and to break to pieces any national pride, or something like that. So they started to use these communist ideas under communist deals and slogans, and they hid it. They were very much afraid of the young people because they had the will power then. They started by trying to intimidate them and accusing them and putting them to shame and arresting them.

When I was nineteen, I was arrested and tortured and beaten and so on and so forth. They divided the silent classes, and they started to divide the rule. They applied this old saying from thousand and thousand of years ago. They tried and succeeded with the help of Russia because the people did not exist with their individuality. This is a natural feeling of a person: to be free and not to care of any other's mind but just to live according to your own mind and do what you want to. You are entitled by birth. God gave you this: to do what you want to do with your life. They started telling us that we should live by the bible of Karl Marx and Lenin. We resisted as much as we could, but finally they broke the will and reduced the people to a mass of animal instincts. They took everything. They robbed everything from the people and confiscated.

MU: Did they use secret police to do this, or did they use the military?

MA: No, they divided us. They would say, "Look, John, you are a very nice man. You suffered under the bourgeoisie." They would put you to work. Then maybe you had some rough time. All my life I have seen many systems and there are good and bad things, but this does not mean we are bad because I am not perfect, you know. You believed and you encouraged the people. It gave you power and kept you strong if you do it. From behind the scene, they help him and started a whole terror for the village. They held the same pattern all over. They conquered the south. They crushed the people, step by step, by force. It is a diabolic and devilish system nobody can understand.

MU: Did some of you people in the underground meet and get together to try to find ways of eliminating the Russians?

MA: Yes, but they have so many agents. I was a member of that organization.

MU: You mean you were one of the agents?

MA: No, not the agents. I was in the resistance, an organization, and they caught us. I was young. I was reared to be free, and I could not understand what they were

talking about. I was young, and my father was a little mature. He held his tongue. But we, the young people, the young students of the university center, we organized ourselves. We tried to resist, and they arrested us and beat us and tortured us.

MU: What did they do? Did they put you in prison, too?

MA: In prison. I have examples all over my body from bruises. Marks here and here. They broke my arm one day.

MU: Was it to convince you that the Russians were better?

MA: Just to crush, to crush. One day they set you free. You had to sign a declaration that said you would never tell anybody whatever you went through. If you did, you would go back again. They started, in a diabolic and devilish way, to crush the human being, a free human being.

MU: Like in some of the movies that they have showing the secret police breaking into houses at any time of the day. Did they do that?

MA: That is right. Yes, that is right.

MU: For no reason at all, they would drag people out?

MA: That is right; that is right. They would shout at you and call you names and spit on you.

MU: Would they make a public disgrace of you if they could?

MA: They tried. They had this radio system in the village. On the air the propaganda -- they were very good in propaganda.

MU: Did the Russians also take away some of the Romanian dances and music and try to put their music and dances in there?

MA: Even the bread. Our bread, we made our bread for centuries, and finally they decided that Romanian bread was no good. We started to make bread in some pans and pots, Russian style, and people did not like bread. After one year, nobody wanted to buy. He made his own bread.

MU: What about traditional meals? They had mamiliga, which is corn mush.

MA: They did not care too much about this because mamiliga was not sold in the store. Mamiliga was made in everybody's house. I am talking about bread. Bakeries are something. You can impose something and do something to the

people.

MU: What were you told about the United States during the communist rule then?

MA: Boy, you do not talk about that. If you even mentioned the United States, you were a terrible enemy. You cannot believe what kind of propaganda or what kind of dirty words they used in the propaganda among the people about this duty.

MU: What if people in Romania had relatives living in the United States?

MA: They were arrested. They suffered. They were tortured. Now I cannot believe my eyes. They try to play friendly now because of the money. They like the dollars. This is the problem. We, Americans, go over and we leave a lot of money there at the time. This is just a way to get at us in our own means. This is the problem.

MU: When you came to the United States, how did you view the Romanian community in the United States in regards to their heritage and culture? Did you see any similarities or any differences?

MA: I was disappointed. I lived there in Romania with a hope, and my hope was freedom. The champion of freedom was the United States. I dreamed and finally got through with my prayer. I did, and I left back my wife and my two children hostage to the communist. I did that because I did not want to miss the chance. When I came here, I was disappointed because I knew what I went through and how much we suffered. I expected a kind of moral obligation to millions of people from that part of the world who were enslaved in bondage, even though I knew I did not have a chance to feel the way as I did. To be better organized and to help us here because I changed one world to another one that was completely different. I was told here, "Look, the communist promised you everything. We do not promise you anything, but we give you everything." So in other words, the communist promised you everything, but they did not give you anything. We do not give you anything, but we let you take everything.

I was handicapped by language, culture, psychological adaptation and everything. This is when I needed help, and I did not get it. But I looked around helplessly and, of course, I looked to my own kind, to the Romanian community. But we did not get too much understanding in the Romanian community because they more or less immigrated long before and for other reasons than political ones, maybe political ones, too. They have been well-established now. They did not want to be bothered too much, to be shaken in their positions by this new problem. They had their own problem of this life here. We have been on the top of all the troubles. So we have been left, and the States have not been organized very well. At least I expected that the States would have some help for us to put in the school, to explain to us about the life and the ways of this country. We just do that at large and do not hear the knocking at the doors and

looking for jobs by ourselves and making signs to be understood by the people that are left. Many of us developed psychological complexes and others went to hospitals with mental disturbances or psychological problems. It was pretty rough.

MU: The culture itself, the language and some of the arts like music and dances; did the Romanian culture in the United States surprise you?

MA: Yes, they still keep it, although the language was lost in some instances by the young.

MU: What about the youngsters themselves in the United States, the Romanian youngsters or youngsters in general? How would you compare them to those in Romania? For instance, how are their manners?

MA: Manners?

MU: Manners and respect.

MA: You cannot talk in terms of Romanians here. They are Americans now. You cannot talk about the first and second generation; they are Americans of Romanian heritage, and this is another thing. Of course, the pioneers, let us say the first generation, still had a hold on Romanian habits and manners, but the second and third generations here lost it and adopted the manners of the English.

MU: In other words, the English language.

MA: Not only language, but manners and behavior and everything. So this Britain or English type -- or Saxon, I would say so; I do not know how to label it -- is far away from European or French type of mannerism or etiquette. For instance, in Romania, when you go in a house and there is a lady, you take off your hat or what you have. You go into this house, and you used to kiss the hand of the woman or lady. If you go into a public place in a bank or an office or something, you take your hat off. You are more polite in respect and that. Here in the United states, I did not see this as often. This is a European trend, not something belonging to the culture in this country. They look upon this like something not to be cheap. It is not something worthy for a man or a grown-up.

MU: Now, Father John, one question going back to Romania, what was your occupation in Romania before or after the communists took over?

MA: I was a student. But after I finished, my dream was to be a doctor, a physician. But in 1947 when I graduated from high school, it just happened at that time that the communist took over and seized power. The communists divided the

peasants and people classes. They started to fight and to destroy, in turn, everyone. I was on the top. My father was categorized as Cuac. Cuac is a peasant. I, as a son of a Cuac, did not have political or civil rights in their eyes, in the official communist eyes.

So I applied for medical school in Clu. I was admitted because I studied hard, but after six months I was arrested and, as I told you, I was in that organization. The tops of the organization were sentenced to 15, 20 years in jail. Some of us, the rest of us, who attended once or twice, after six months of torturing and beating and everything, we were set free, but we finished medical school. I applied to law school where it was easier to go and there had not been too many students, and I could hide myself and be unnoticed there. Going from city to city, finally, I managed in ten years to graduate from law school.

MU: When were you fortunate enough to come to the United States? Was it through people in the United States?

MA: No, no. I applied for a trip outside of Romania. As you know, these are government-controlled passports. I applied six times, and they denied me. They did not want to give me a passport. Finally, I went to the FBI or security of whatever they called that. I said, "What is this? Why do you not want me to go outside and see? I am at the age, you know, with kids and a family. Are you afraid I am leaving the country or what?" They laughed. They said, "You are not so worthy for us." I said, "So what? If I am not, why do you not let me go?" I argued with them, and finally they denied me. I did something for somebody for somebody who was trusted in this, and they gave me a passport for Hungary and Czechoslovakia. It just happened that at that time, the Russians invaded. There was a kind of political confusion in that area, and I refused to come back to Romania from Hungary.

MU: What year was that?

MA: In 1969, in 1969. So I went to the Austrian embassy and told them I did not want to go because Hungary was in the same bag and pot with Russia.

MU: Okay, Father John, can you continue about how you got to come to the United States?

MA: So, I was in Vienna. I got a transit visa. I went to the police there. I said, "I do not want to go back." Okay, so I went to a campus. I stayed six months. I applied to come to the United States because I knew that here there are Soviet communities. After six months I got a visa from the United States government, and I came over.

MU: During this time that your family remained in Romania, did they have any reaction by the communist in regards to you?

MA: Yes, my wife was watched step by step, and after one year and a half, she was arrested. For some reasons she was sentenced to four years. My children, one of nine and one of eight, remained homeless and helpless.

MU: How were you finally successful in bringing your wife and your two children to the United States?

MA: I tried everything that was conceivable. I applied first to the United States department for help. They have been very courteous and nice in words, but they did not do too much. I applied to the International Red Cross, and they deferred my case to the American Red Cross, and they did not do much. I applied in New York to the International United Nations -- to the American Nations. As you know, the nations are kind of nothing. By the time we sat playing through them and we feed them, and they did not do anything. So I graduated from Semvira Seminary and was ordained. I went into the parish.

MU: Was that where you learned how to speak your English?

MA: Yes, yes.

MU: You speak very well.

MA: I got a temporary assignment for a parish in Vienna. As I talk to you, I talk to some of my parishioners, and they have been moved in times by my story. They heard about my father was killed, shot to death in a communist prison.

MU: Was he arrested, too, then?

MA: Many times. They beat him to death and finally they shot him. It is a long story and a devastating experience. All of a sudden, without my asking, my parishioners started a crusade for me in my behalf. Before long, my situation was understood and American officials started to arrive. They contacted local politicians, congressmen and senators, and talked to them. Because they did it, their constituents, the politicians, Congressman John Myers and Senator Butch Brye and Vince Hopkey from Indiana, wrote personal letters to the President of the Romanian Town Task Group. They said, "Look, I just happen to be a senator, but I am not writing to you in any official capacity but other than an American citizen's." I turned in very few words. "Please, if you did this as a private American, would it not be so kind to give the proof of this poor priest who has been trying for five years to bring over his kids and wife and join him in the United States, looking for financial and economical help, he denied my family out of the country on account of the pressure because he expected to be asked by this man, what happened with the priest. I even talked with the senator from Washington.

MU: Jackson.

MA: Jackson. He was in Indiana. He was a democrat, and I talked to him. He is a candidate for presidency now. I even talked to him, and he wrote a letter. In Massachusetts there is a congressman that just happens to be a priest, Robert Dryman. He wrote a letter. The media started a campaign. They were asked by the people from my parish and started a whole campaign crusade. They have been scared. If something scared the communist, it is the press, the media. They scare them about the truth. In many instances the media is doing the job.

MU: Did your wife or anybody have to sign letters over there stating that they would never tell anything about that?

MA: Yes, that is right, the same system.

MU: How long have you been in the United States now?

MA: Me?

MU: Yes, sir.

MA: About six years.

MU: In a couple more years you will become an American citizen?

MA: I am an American citizen.

MU: Oh, you are?

MA: Yes.

MU: Now, as an American citizen, would you have the right to go back to Romania and visit there without being arrested?

MA: Yes, I have the right, but I do not want to take the chance.

MU: In other words, you are worried that they would arrest you if you would return?

MA: Yes, it is not advisable to go as in my situation, because they do not like people like me because we know them too well, and they do not like this. They just like to have people to them as clean as they talk, and they publish it in the press and in their media, but they do not know that the people from the United States and the people from the west know how they do their job there.

MU: You mentioned that in Romania you were studying to be a lawyer, too, and you

were a lawyer. Why, when you came to the United States, did you not become a lawyer over here?

MA: I am telling you something, as a lawyer, if you want me to give you a reason, you cannot do for a person too much. He is coming to you after he did a bad thing, and what you are trying to do is just to get him out of jail, using different tricks or technicalities or trying to put the court in the context to try to understand the circumstances in that he did that thing. There is not too much satisfaction, although there is a lot of money in that job.

I became a priest because in my childhood, my mother's father was a priest. My mother's brother is a priest now in Romania. I was reared in a kind of family, pious as the fear of God and so on and so forth. When I came here, I decided not to go further with my law degree. I said, "I want to start a new life in a new world, and what I want to do with my life for the rest of my days is just to be a priest." As a priest we have a chance to teach good things to people and to watch them and to advise and give a piece of advice here and there. You have more satisfaction then.

MU: In Romania were the priests under the communists permitted to give advice as you are in the United States, or are you more or less to do just you service and that is it?

MA: In Romania, the church is an appendix of the government. As you know from the Lenin Doctrine in socialist or communist society, nothing is a private business. Everything is a public business. Through the priests the government is trying to do their job. The priests are good in as much as they fit this pattern. They try, some of them, in their silent attitude, which is a message. But what they do, they are doing for the government.

MU: Is there anything else you would like to add in regards to what we were talking about today, say, for instance, in culture or American heritage or Romanian heritage? Is there anything else you can think of?

MA: Yes, in America here there have been several theories about what these people or nation is. It is something. The scholars and educated people try to give an explanation of what this great nation is. One was the melting pot.

MU: Yes.

MA: In my judgement, the melting pot is a failure. It is not the truth, the reality. That great strength and brilliance now is fading because this nation was built with ethnic groups from all over the world. You have an advantage here. You have a whole world at home, and you cannot find this thing anywhere. This is great. This mosaic of ethnical group gave the will power, the strength of the pioneers, and they built this beautiful country. But when this melting pot was pushed too

much and the brain of the people was messed with it, the roots started to lose, and the people started a kind of spiritual decline. There are symptoms that I really do not like.

MU: Do you have any advice what might be done to rectify that?

MA: What I think is just this: what could be simpler and clearer than to teach somebody a language, a foreign language, because the United States will be great and strong in as much as the penetration of American culture will be all over the world. Our presence will be all over, and this is possible only if we have the right men in the right places. We need all kind of men, Americans, doing their job all over the world. Now you need millions of dollars to educate men to serve you overseas and to do the job. Now what you have great here, you know, people with ethnic background and languages giving to the state for nothing. You offer a job to a man who knows the Romanian language from his family, and he is an American second generation, and he does not know any other country but this. This land is his land, and this country is his country, and he is dying and fighting for this country, and he is living in this country. But he knows the language from his family. So when you go and work for the state, you offer as a grant a million dollars because the state did not give you a penny to teach foreign languages. This is a jewel; this is something that you have to take a hold of. Not only the language but some of the culture is good. I do not want to say it to get me wrong, but you know America does not have good things from British background. That is right. But in the context of this mosaic is something much greater, much better.

MU: In other words, they tend to overplay the British system rather than permitting the cultures from other groups to persist and flourish as they should.

MA: Yes, yes. Now the time is, for instance, nobody came over here to impose Romanian or Chinese or Japanese or Spanish as the official language. As far as I know, the United States is one language. In England, if you go in Scotland or Wales, one can understand a person from London. There are many slangs and dialects, but this is not the case. There are some differences here and there in the United States, too. It is unique in that it is one language. I am telling you that this ethnic heritage, in a kind of reasonable downgrade, should be kept.

MU: In other words, a lot of this ethnic heritage is from other groups, like mentioned Romanian, or maybe even Russian.

MA: Either Russian or Polish.

MU: It is a decline because of the English system being over emphasized.

MA: Emphasized, emphasized, yes. It is declining, and this is awfully bad.

MU: So, it is more or less due to the English system that this is taking place.

MA: For instance, let us take American Russian. There are millions of Russians who became political. Now the third generation, boy or girl, do not know Russian anymore. So if you need to send an official mission to Russia or something, he is American; he was born here, but if he knows from his family Russian, then you may figure out how much money the state should invest in these people to teach him Russian to send him. Besides, for instance, emotionally wanted or not, you are tied up with Romanian background and heritage -- wanted or not. So you have more pleasure and inclination to learn Romanian, and you are receptive to Romanian habits as spiritual things. You are receptive, and you learn much easier than somebody from other backgrounds.

MU: Yes.

MA: You stand in a reasonable boundary just to take hold, because it is useful.

MU: Would you say then that maybe it is the Romanian families that are keeping the Romanian culture and heritage going then in the United States?

MA: If there are some?

MU: Well, I mean the Romanian culture and heritage right now that is still persisting and continuing, it is due to the family and the church itself for helping it?

MA: Yes, that is right. You know the church here is doing, some people say, up-to-date or back work job. But in my opinion, the church is doing a positive job for the people holding some of our spiritual cultural heritage and trying to keep alive the faith we got from our parents. John, this even what an individual is. It would be boring for everybody to be alike. To be like Joe and Joe to be like Mike. Every group has its own personality. They are the strength. If you put everything in a melting pot, it would be a monster. If you put gold with silver and iron, you get something indefinite with no personality and no purity in it, no anything. So when this thing comes together, it make something stronger. Look at the mosaic; different pieces of stones makes something stronger. The concrete is among it, but that concrete is American heritage that which is among those stones keeping it together. See, the rhythm about things. I do not want you to get me wrong to say that everything is bad; no, it is just to keep up a balance. If you push too much to one side, suffer and weakens the other side. Balance and make people be happy and strong.

MU: Do you have anything else that you would like to add before we stop?

MA: No, no, I will think, but we cannot finish today.

MU: Thank you very much.

MA: I thank you very much for listening.

MU: Thank you. One concluding comment: Father John became minister at the Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church at 626 Wick Avenue during the month of December, 1974. He replaced the retired Father Eugene Lazar, who was the previous minister at the church.

End of Interview

MU: This is an interview with Father John Marmureanu for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Romanian culture in Mahoning County, by John Muntean, on August 11, 1975, at 626 Wick Avenue, at 4:00 p.m.

This is the second taping interview with Father John. This one pertains to the Romanian Orthodox church at 626 Wick Avenue, its services and different items that are found in our church regarding usage and the service. Father John, could you tell us a little bit, very briefly, about when you came to the United States and basically what motivated you to come to the United States?

MA: In 1969, in March, I got the United states government to allow me to immigrate to the United States. The World Council of Churches paid the ticket for me. The motivation was because here in the United States, I have heard and read that there are some Romanian communities. I felt this situation for about 40 years, to live in your country and go somewhere else to a different culture and different country. It is pretty tough if you do not have anybody to understand that they can help you to send somebody to cope with the problems you are facing. So here I am now.

MU: Did you know any English when you came to the United States?

MA: As a matter of fact, I studied some English in Romania. But as I told you before, I studied with Daniel Jones. This is the famous linguist from Britain. As you know, there are differences in phonetics and even vocabulary and grammar between American language and British. I realized that, and I had to start all over again.

MU: Now when you came to this country in 1969, did you enter the ministry profession right away?

MA: Yes. As we talked before, my father and my family, my grandfather, as a church man, my father was very biased and a very faithful person. My mother's brother is a priest, and I was raised up in this way in that kind of family. My father decided and told me that one day he wanted me to be a priest. The events, political events, developed in a way I could not even dare to go to theological school because, as you know, the priests have been persecuted. The communists did not like the ideas, you know.

MU: That is in Romania?

MA: Romania, yes.

MU: What can you tell us about your training to become a priest in the United States?

MA: I had basic training in Romania and Europe. I studied in high school. It is kind of different than here, we call it liceu. And then the European system and the school of law for four years. Here when I came and after, I asked the bishop and expressed my desire to study theology. I got equivalence of my religious studies here, and I was enrolled and graduated from the division of theology in a New York college.

MA: New York City?

MA: City, yes. As a matter of fact, it was Tuckahoe, New York. It is pretty close to Yonkers. It is about six or ten miles.

MU: How many years do you have to attend such a school?

MA: Three years.

MU: Three years?

MA: Right.

MU: Can you tell us a little bit about some of the studies that are involved?

MA: Yes, it was like any other theological division, Old Testament, New Testament, pluralism.

MU: Was it pertaining to the Orthodoxy, or was it just overall?

MA: We had the history, our church history, and the comparative religion. But this,

this Old Testament and New testament, this is part of the thematics. So I studied Old Testament, New Testament, pluralism and church history. We had the pastoral theology and other courses in liturgy and music, of course. Byzantine music.

MU: When you were done with all of your studies, did you have to go someplace like they do here, for student teaching or some training? Did you ever put any training in some place?

MA: Yes.

MU: Did you do it in New York?

MA: No. After I graduated I had to go. The bishop recommended to go to St. Joseph's Cathedral. This is an all bishop cathedral. I went there for liturgical training.

MU: Could you tell us where that is located at?

MA: Yes, it is in Detroit. It is just in Detroit, Ninth and Mile Road in Detroit, in Southfield, Detroit. Here is a priest, and the bishop once in a while is serving because all this is a cathedral. This cathedral has a priest, and this priest is one of the best in our diocese. Under his supervision I took part in all Orthodox services pertaining to a priest's job.

MU: But this is Romanian Orthodox?

MA: Romanian Orthodox.

MU: Do the Romanians sometimes work together in training other priests?

MA: As a matter of fact, this college was an interfaith Orthodox. We had Armenians, we had Europeans, we had Russians, Ukrainians. We had, you know, people even from Greece who came over to study in New York. As you know, Europeans are Orthodox, but they are like Armenians; they are different. They split it after the Council of Nicea upon the Council of Constantinople. They split it in the fifth century upon the controversy of Christ's divinity.

MU: How long did you have to serve at the church in Detroit?

MA: Six months.

MU: six months?

MA: Yes.

MU: Did you help assist?

MA: I assisted the priest in all services. He kept reminding me. Where I made a mistake he tried to give me an opportunity in the practical way to help.

MU: When you were assisting the priest, did you stay off a little bit one week and do a little bit more the next, or did you do everything from one week to the next the same, or did you lead up into more a part of the services?

MA: In all this liturgical practice consists of many parts. For instance, you usually take part actively in a service. In the afternoon you have to go back to the priest, and the priest is telling you what you did right and what you did not do right. This is from a typical service's point of view. So the next day we had vocal musical exercise in Byzantine music. You had to learn the tones. As you know, we have eight tones. Each tone has two or three different kinds of singing. There is a lot of music here; it is not so easy. I went successfully through this period of training. At the end of it, I was ordained as a deacon.

MU: Before you become a deacon, what are you classified as, since you are just an apprentice?

MA: Just a seminarian, or a candidate for holy episcopal.

MU: After you become a deacon, then you get more involved in the services?

MA: Yes, after that. I became a deacon, you know. I took part officially in the services, helping the priest. But that period of my diaconate, having not been too long because the bishop decided to ordain me as a priest and send somebody over here immediately.

MU: Well, looking at the Romanian church itself, the Romanian Orthodox church, what can you tell us about the Romanian culture aspects that you might find common to the church? I know the language would be one, but can you think of anything else that might?

MA: As you know, religion is part of individual spiritual life. This includes the spiritual life of a nation. This is also history. So you can easily realize that our religion, Romanian religion, we have our specifics in our religion. Our religion carries with us, our church, the whole history of our people. For instance, and this is not only my point of view, but I also have read of the Orthodox of the Russians that are Orthodox. You know, in the history, when they were Christianized in the eleventh century. As you know, the Romanian people have been born Christian people. The basic concepts of the Orthodox religion, the Russians put them at work in their political ends, Christ and imperialism. They reached even Alaska onto this broad principle of Orthodox religion. History does happen that we are

neighbors, and we have a kind of devastating and painful experience, both of our brothers in Orthodox Russians and our new Russian communists. They changed only the words but, as you know, they impaled the nations around them. They subjugated them; on the various principles they did their job.

Religion, for any individual, is his intimate feelings, his heart. Our people felt a shelter in the church. In very few words, if you understand what I mean, our religion is tears and sorrows and joys of our people. They differ. Although we have the general principles of Orthodoxy basically the same, but when you get close to the heart of the people you find out a surprising difference.

MU: Do the Romanian people in Romania have any specific patron saints that they honor?

MA: Yes, yes.

MU: Could you tell us a few?

MA: Well, we can look over the count. I can tell you we have St. DeMarcu. As a matter of fact, one of the first great doctors of the church, Casian -- you will find it in a British encyclopedia, and we call him in Romanian Casian -- he was a bishop. He was involved in a huge controversy of the church of Christianity. He is recognized by the Catholics. He was Romanian, and he was born on our own soil. As you know, we Romanians, we have been born Christian. Besides that, we have a lot of saints patronized by our church and recognized in large by the Orthodox church.

MU: When I was a little boy, my grandparents used to always mention about Alea, and they used to tell that when it would be lightening and thundering outside that he was supposed to be up in heavens carrying his wagon or something causing it to thunder and lightening and everything. Do they have such stories in Romania, too?

MA: John, this is not a story. This sararigi was a kind of tough guy. He killed some priest because they led the people astray. That was the history. I assumed you had a general idea. They started to worship idols again. As Christ did that in that get the people from the temples and get them out and drove them out. Galyga did the same thing. This is our tradition. And, as you know, the histories of being born and pagan customs and stories have been preserved by the Christians in their framework, but filling them with Christian content. Do you know what I mean?

MU: Yes.

MA: Semilear, as I said, is Sararigi, the prophet. This time he is going over the clouds with his chariot and thunderstorm and lightening and killing and banging.

I do not know here, but in Romania, as you know, Sararigi or Semilear is the biggest feast of the year. On July 20 every year we have this, and we observe this feast.

MU: Oh, so you have like a festival.

MA: yes, it is a festival. On that day, every time, it rains. The people preserve this, and every time it must pour. It is raining. So I do not know as other stories for you that people carry whether you show in our plants, which are grown in soil, should be the hidden one, but for the plants, which are grown out above the soil you have to have full moon. For some mysterious reason, this is true. If you put radish on a full moon, my goodness, you will not have any crop or harvest. There are some things that are always beyond.

MU: The Americans who cause the superstitions.

MA: Yes, it is not superstition. It has been by centuries of experience and observing things and handed down to generations. People know, they take it and they tell it to their kids. This is how you find out about that.

MU: At Christmas time around over here the church sponsors different groups to go singing Christmas carols. Was that found in Romania, too? Did they go around?

MA: Yes, we have, as a matter of fact, a very, very rich Christmas caroling custom, more than any other Orthodox people in the world. This is because our ethnic background. As you know, our ancestors have been Dacians and Romans. From this marriage resulted a Romanian. Some words from old Dacian language is not preserved in any book. We do not find them in other languages, and we find them in some other related tribes of Dacians. As you know, Dacians have been in our traditions, and you have mentioned them in Homer's great poems. This is beautiful and a unique piece of poetry. I think you know that. You have tribes of Thracians in the Balkan Peninsula, and they used them, the warriors. They never had powerful political states. They had our dances and our national costumes, which come from them and that background. They are very, very colorful and very, very nice. They had a very funny -- let us say interesting - - religion very close to our Christian religion as some people say, that Plato had been a Christian 400 years before Christ. The Thracians and our people, the Dacians, had been Christians 500 years before Christ. They believe in immortality of themselves. When somebody was born, they wept, and when somebody died, they enjoyed because by dying, people went for higher level of life. You know, something to escape from this awful, painful life and go to something special. It is very interesting. So what I am trying to say is this, our religion, our culture, our individuality of a person, you can have the individuality of the people of the nation, which is very complicated and intricate, but is not

impossible to comprehend to have some general ideas and see what is the bulk they care for.

MU: Talking about the cultural spirits, were you surprised that in the United States, Christmas time has become very much commercialized and they have Santa Claus and everything? Do they do anything like that in Romania before the communists came over?

MA: No, no, no, we did not have this. I lived until 1945, for 17 years, in a free society. After that, the communists took over, and we cannot talk about something normally as a society. Until then, I do not recall, and nobody tried to take events like this. More or less, it was the people as individuals and groups who understood and expressed themselves and put themselves in relation to something which they considered high and superior in the spiritual thought.

MU: Did they exchange gifts or anything at Christmas time?

MA: In our country?

MU: Yes.

MA: Yes, we do. When the people in our town are caroling, we do not give money; we give nuts or colacs -- which is homemade bread or eggs -- or something of this kind to the people. Lately, they give money, too.

MU: That colac, is that not bread with nuts in it?

MA: Yes.

MU: During Christmas time, also, was it custom in Romania, as it is in this country, that the priest would go to different homes of the village and baptize people?

MA: Yes, that is right. Yes, that is another fact.

MU: Is that found in any other Orthodox groups?

MA: Yes, yes, it is all over. This is coming from the Middle East. Yes, that is the tradition. As you know, in Christianity we have the Bible, which is the dome of the church; we also have the holy tradition. We have the doctrines of the church interpreted with the Bible and the tradition and so on and so forth. As a matter of fact, you asked in Romania. In the old country, the priest used to go not only during the Christmas time but at Easter time, too. The priest made the feasts of the year, at least he went in every Christian Orthodox home, and he said a prayer at Easter time, which was associated with the baptism of Christ and the Jordan River.

MU: And the water?

MA: They were blessed with the holy water, yes. The people, for instance, the priest did not have time to go into the barns and around. The work yard was something a person had; so he poured holy water in something, and that person put some away. He went back himself and did that.

MU: In regards to what we are talking about Christmas and Easter, could you tell us a little bit about confession and communion in the Romanian Orthodox a little bit?

MA: Yes, confession and communion, as you know, there are sacraments of the church, which are mysteries. We have them and so do Orthodox Catholics.

MU: So, in other words, we are like a very close branch with the Catholic?

MA: We are not a branch of Catholics.

MU: No, but I mean you are close to it in some things.

MA: We are close because in dogmatics, we have only three points which are differed on. In liturgics, we have more things because here it is more complicated in the spiritual and cultural tradition also of the west. But, as you know, we claim that we are the true church, the church of Jesus, the church from where Jesus came from. Jesus had not been in Rome, never ever. We are the church, and we claim that we carry the holy tradition and the true tradition. We hate, or rather we are very slow in changing things in church starting from the idea that the divine and spiritual things do not change. What is perfect cannot be changed. This is the idea.

MU: What about Confessions and communion?

MA: Confessions and communion are two sacraments. We have seven. The Catholics have seven, too. What is confession? It is a whole thing involved. But what I can tell you from what I learned and from what I studied and learned thinking is that God knows what you are doing. There is no question about it. But confession is a gift for every individual to face himself, to have -- let us say -- courage, probably were rather in the presence of the witness of God, which is to priest, to face himself and tell of the sins he has and honestly to try to correct; to try to be better tomorrow than he was yesterday. In a very short but not technical way, this confession, any way we can discuss at length a lot of sin.

MU: I understand that the Catholics have theirs in a room in which the person sits by himself.

MA: Separate, just not to see the priest.

MU: Now, could you tell us a little bit about how the Orthodox have theirs, that is a little bit different?

MA: Yes, these are innovations because of the people -- they feel ashamed or they do not feel easy in the presence of the priest. In our church, we have the first part of confession in front of the altar. The second part after the priest is telling the person what confession is, all about in that Christ is looking spiritually and invisibly at us and hearing us. In front of the icon of Christ, that person is confessing, closing his eyes, and the priest goes in his eyes and indented of the icon on the stand where the icon of Christ is talking about various problems.

MU: Now communion itself. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

MA: Communion is another sacrament of the church. It has different ways of approaches historically or let us say strictly from a religious point of view. So we relate to Christ. When I think of history, I am thinking of the Jews and their customs. But the Last Supper, as you know, Christ instituted this sacrament, which is nothing else but an integration. Through this sacrament of communion, this piece of bread and wine sanctified and the whole liturgy integrated physically and spiritually in Christ. It is an integration. It is a communion; it is a sense of unity in faith, in spirit with something. It is a sense of belonging. This is it roughly, of course, not using the logical and technical terms of discussion.

MU: Now, regarding the church itself, you mentioned about the icons. Could you tell us a little bit about the icons of the church, not all of them but just a little bit of their significance and what some of them are and et cetera?

MA: John, the icons were a huge controversy under Moslem pressure about the icons. As you know, the Moslem religion, they have God as a unique spiritual being. I studied this, and an icon is nothing else but a return to idolatry because he is made out of wood and paint and worshiping those things. People sometimes exaggerate it. They scratched a painting, and they felt miraculous and so on and so forth. We, Orthodox, we the council, in the eighth century, decided that icons should be kept in the church to worship. For instance, we do not worship the wood or the paint; we worship Christ, which is spiritually depicted in that. There is nothing else. It is just a little thought of the whole which a man is approaching to something, his senses. It is a part of the whole, you know, with an ear you will hear something with eyes and something and with all your senses it is giving the other things as a whole.

MU: In regards to the icons themselves, is there any difference between the amount or what the icons look like from one Orthodox church to another, or are they basically the same?

MA: Yes, they are basically the same. The trend is the Byzantine painting. As you know, the Byzantine empire and the whole culture which it carried, we present it, and it is quite different from the west. Gothic or Baroque, I do not know what it is in construction or in painting.

MU: So the icons you have in this church right here would be the same as the icons they would have in Romania?

MA: Basically, yes. For instance, you will be surprised that the holy mother of God will look in play clothes as a young and very nice Romanian girl in the racial characters because of the model that the painters used. They had to use something.

MU: Is the resemblance of Jesus universal or is he even painted differently, too?

MA: Painted, yes, here. Now if you go in Romania, for instance, in Gucevita or Humar, or in famous churches and monasteries, we have famous paintings there. You would be surprised in the style. It is something from people's heart and from people's ethnic traces and characteristics.

MU: Okay, the church over here -- I have known since I was a little child -- always had candles by the altar that many times are lit. Could you tell us the significance of burning candles?

MA: We do not burn candles not only by the altar, but all over the church in visual lights and candles. That time of the year when the light is different, I mean, it is a white visual light and could be a blue one or a white one, it depends on what season it is. As in the question asked, we relate in our Christian faith everything to Christ, although the words are deeper than the present history that Christ lived. As you know, Christ had light of himself and the light of the world. In lighting a candle, and if somebody asked me what the meaning of it was, I would say that you are looking at it and you do not know what it is. If you made a little effort to understanding burning a candle, there is a symbol of the whole life. Life is burning like a candle. It is another approach. It is a mystical thing. People like to look at the fire, and they have fire words and everything. All of these things are involved, and we give them a spiritual meaning: the light of mind, the light of spirit, something which is superior, something which is watching for you. You know, the silent watches of the night while the candle is burning. You have something in mind, concentrating on something, some thing in faith and so on and so forth. Burning the candles in our Orthodox church is very important. As a matter of fact, we do not have as many candles as you might see in the old country, where at the entrance they have a box of sand for our prose and -- I am not exaggerating -- hundreds of candles. Everybody comes to church and puts his own candle in that box before he enters and says a prayer for himself. Maybe he is remembering some people who have died and so on and so forth.

MU: The church in Romania, quickly, were they wooden churches or brick or straw or what?

MA: It depends. We have wooden churches still from the old 1400's. We have stone churches and brick churches. It depends.

MU: Were there seats for the people to sit down, or did they stand up during the service?

MA: No, we do not have pews. The pews is a Protestant trend. I do not know about the Catholics. I think they accepted it and have it, too. But in Romania, even the women are separated from the men. This is from old history, you know, how it comes, again history. For instance, the older people stood in the front. The right side is the man's side. If you are too young, then you are in the very back. The same thing with the women. [For] The older ones, we have pews in the old country, but they are against the walls all around.

MU: Is the floor wooden, or is it dirt?

MA: No, wooden.

MU: Wooden.

MA: Wooden or stone, that depends, too. Mosaic or something. They tried to do something better then. In these pews sat only aged or sick, or mothers with babies. Nobody else sat there. If, for instance, you felt that you could stand, you give it to somebody else, the seat, by politeness and understanding. We have other customs. For instance, at Easter time, everybody is kissing everybody's hand. It is a sign of humility and is something very, very -- I do not know what to say. It does not matter who you go to if you go to an old man and you kiss his hand and he is kissing your hand. The priest is kissing the hand of everybody and giving blessings. But the people among themselves, I feel this custom is a nice way and sign of Christian humility in the church. You go to him and say, "Forgive me, brother. Maybe I did something wrong." You ask forgiveness from anybody. Imagine a full church of people going silently with candles in their hands and asking for forgiveness.

MU: Why, at Christmas time, was it customary for many Romanian people, after having confession, to go up and get communion and light candles and go up in the aisles of the altar?

MA: Yes, this is a custom in the old country. When you take communion, you take a candle in your hand to light your way and where you go. It is representing in another way that Christ is there and he is everywhere. You got with Christ.

MU: What is the significance of anointing somebody on the head with oil?

MA: Anointment?

MU: Yes.

MA: Well, John, yes, we have anointment as a sacrament for the sick. We call it Moslu. It is a Slavonic, which is a whole bunch of tribes that Russia is a part of. Holy Moslu is a sacrament, like confession or communion or baptism. We have cruzmation, which is another. Cruzmation -- the confirmation -- is that cruzmation of a baby when it is baptized. So when we baptize a baby, we apply two sacraments in our Orthodox church. It is the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of cruzmation. The Catholics separated these two, and they call it confirmation. This is the seal of the Holy Spirit when you anoint. Speaking of all the sacraments of the sick, a long time before Christ and during Christ's time, the would was associated with something which heals. The apostles even in Christ's time, they practiced this. If you have a wound, you would anoint it. You heal faster. Little by little, by tradition, you know, this was a sacrament, and we applied this with the belief and spiritual understanding that it has spiritual and miraculous power, sacramental power for that person who believes in it.

MU: One question I want to ask with you talking about Catholic and Orthodox differences. During the services, we cross from our head to our belly, to our right arm, to our left arm. Why do the Catholics go from their head to their belly to their left arm and then to their right arm? Why do they do it from their left to their right? Why is there a difference between both religions? We go from head to belly, to right and then to left. They go from head to belly to left to right. Do you know any significance in that? Why do we make it like that? Do you know? Is there any reason?

MA: That is another difference, also. As you noticed, maybe they keep their fingers straight. We bend the fingers. The thumb and the two first fingers, we bend together at the same level. Here there is a whole theology where our differences are in dogmatics. We uphold the Father, Son, the Holy Spirit, which are one and equal. The Catholics, under various controversies, think the Father is the biggest finger, the Son is the second, and the Holy Spirit is the third. How the Holy Spirit is working and the theological interpretation through the Son and from the Son is another thing. The significance is that the uniqueness of the divine person, three persons, if you understand what a person in the Greek would see it , as is three persons in one.

It is hard to understand, but if you understand that we are millions and billions of people in one universe, and we are not separated by the other; so we are millions in a unity and so are the terrestrial bodies and everything. We cannot talk about the universe as being two or three as one, but where you go to realize the three. You, John, and my and everybody else, are made up by

oxygen in the scientific world's explanation. These elements you find everywhere in Mars, Venus, or in Jupiter in various combinations and in various things. We are organically inter-related; we are not separated. When we talk theologically about the uniqueness of that and the integration of that in the individual through the soul and mind and body and everything beyond this. It is the same thing.

And now, coming back, why do they have the sign of the cross? We say, "Amen," and then, "so be it." So it is a confirmation of all you said, and that confirmation is upon your heart, which is the center of your body and a vital point. So we say, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen." And Amen is everything here. They travel the other way, see. "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." They give the interpretation of the Holy Spirit through everything.

MU: And being the heart.

MA: The heart of everything. It is a way of thinking. If you do not have the Holy Spirit in you, you have no life. They point out to the Holy Spirit everything. Amen. You understand now.

MU: Getting back to the holy services a little bit, and some of the items that we find in a church. We have bells that ring at the top of the church steeple here outside, but also I noticed that in parts of the services you ring bells, too. Are bells a very important part of the service, or is it a custom of the service?

MA: John, it is everything. As I have talked before it depends on what kind of a point you take. The bells simply are the marking of the chime. The bells is a calling to something. The bells is a reminder of something. You know, you can give a lot - - associate with the bells a lot -- but any way, in our service the bells are very important, a climax during the hymn when we sing. When we sing, the choir is singing and the priest is praying, and we say that we are in heaven at that time. It is a lifter of the people, and it is something beyond physical existence. At that time, the bell is ringing and marking the coming of Christ, marking the birth of Christ, marking the dying of something. At the beginning and at the end, you associate a thing in the church which you are doing ritually with many, many other things. In that complex, it produces a certain way of praying.

MU: I understand. Also, for the benefit of those who are listening -- these are some of the reasons I asked you some of these questions -- could you tell them and tell me the significance of the altar curtains, of opening them and closing them, and why they are that certain color that they are?

MA: John, yes, this is history, architecture, theology and everything involved in it. But any way, I am telling you that the altar represents the kingdom of heaven.

MU: Right.

MA: Once in a while the curtain opens. It depends at what moment you are in the service. When the gates or the door of the kingdom of heaven is opened, there is direct communication between the mass of the faithful and the divine, the relation between the material and the divine. We have, for instance, in the Romanian church, they only have a bodily level among the people. This you find if you want an explanation in history. The curtains we call royal doors, as I told you, or pearl doors or heavenly doors -- you may name it. For instance, when we have services during the great Lent of Easter, they have a dark color. Even the gates and the doors of the kingdom of heaven are blue, are darkened by heaven for human sins and human decay.

MU: Now, getting to the next item on my list over here. You have a sensor in which it is supposed to emit holy smoke in which is the burning of incense in a sense, holy incense, in which you walk up and down the aisle. Could you tell us what part that plays in the services?

MA: John, again, this is history. You know the old idols and the gods of the pagans when you burned a piece of grains or something, that meant that you worshiped that god or something. We took many things from the pagans and the fame of some, but we gave them a new content -- a Christian content. Maybe in the beginning, in a too crowded church, through the purification of the air or something, you know, this incense was a nice fragrance and so on and so forth. It is not just involved in this meaning. It has, as we have for the candles, some spiritual meaning. You look at the smoke when it is emanating from the sensor. It is going up. This is giving you a kind of contemplative thoughts and even life is nothing else but a dream through the smoke, which is vanishing away. It is giving you that complex and that sense of spiritual height in the understanding of what you are.

MU: Could you describe for us, basically, what it looks like, just in case there is somebody, maybe from a Protestant church or something who does not have any idea of what it looks like?

MA: John, a scentor does not have a particular design or a certain way of construction of doing it. A scentor is nothing else but something used for a particular service. For instance, we do not say that the top of it represents the holy temple and the chains represent the ties of faith or the depth. We say that the bells -- and we have 12 bells of our scentor -- and we say that these are our 12 apostles. We have some materially constructed things attached to symbolism or spiritual meaning. This along over the centuries has been adopted to a specific thing, to a specific service, and this service is the incense, the scensing of the church and the sanctification of the church and of the people by the scensing.

MU: Well, we have holy bread at our church. Could you tell us a little bit about how you go about selecting who bakes it? I know what it is supposed to signify, too. Could you tell us a little bit about the holy bread?

MA: Well, holy bread -- that is unleavened bread -- is the bread we use for the communion of the people. We usually have five loaves of bread. We use it in the first part of the liturgy, which we call it prosta madia, before the liturgy as such starts at 10:00 at the church. The priest is before in the altar. He is performing the prosta in Greek or prosta madia in Slovanic. This prosta madia consists of prayers and taking of wine and water and mixing them. After we are through, you scent the whole church and we are ready to start the holy liturgy as such.

MU: Now going back to the Romanian church in Romania, did the Romanian church in Romania have any Sunday school classes or anything like that?

MA: John, as you know, in Romania was, and still is unfortunately, of the church tied to the department of the state. So before the communist took over Romania, the church and the school had been one. The religion had been taught in the school. As a matter of fact, I had religion for eight years in high school. In high school, I learned the legalities and the basics of religion. In church you went just to see what you learned in the church. The church and the school, in a free society, go hand in hand and complement each other. When I was a child -- and this way was not reason to have a Sunday school because the priest from my church was in the school, and fortunately here now, in the United States, Marxism is allowed to be taught to the students but not religion. This is known.

MU: That is due to the Supreme Court.

MA: That is basically right. I do not know what kind of free society this is if a priest cannot go into a school and accept it as a different point of view of life, philosophy, or life understanding. But, my goodness, do not give a free hand to Marxists or an atheist to go in the school and twist the mind of the young people in doing a lot of crazy things afterwards and just keep our doors of Christ. I cannot understand that; my mind cannot understand this.

MU: What can you tell us about vesper services?

MA: Vespers are our other services, you know. They are just religious services in preparation for a specific or a certain feast, or Sunday.

MU: When are they usually held?

MA: About 6:00, I have it. Any way, after the sunset, because we go from sunset to sunrise, you know, with the days. It is not the Roman system of midnight and so

on. It is Jewish times there.

MU: In regards to the Jewish trend, what influence does it have upon us, talking about myself and you and other Orthodoxies in picking -- not picking that is the wrong use of words -- but in knowing when to celebrate Easter?

MA: We are not allowed to have the Easter on the same day as the Jews. We have to have either before or after. The time is a very intricate notion, a very intricate concept of relating our planet in space and making up the idea of time. Any way, you know of all the Egyptians and Babylonians and so on and so forth, and the astronomical studies and the Christians took over. And any way, we have a big controversy now and the Roman Catholics have Easter some other day. It could be even a month or a month and a half. For instance, this year there was a difference.

MU: Yes, well, see, there are a lot of people who are Catholics or who are Protestants, and they do not quite understand why the Orthodoxy celebrate theirs almost

MA: Yes, because they are working -- now there is an article in our Orthodox newspaper -- they are working on it. They want us to have it the same day.

MU: With the Catholics, then?

MA: I do not know. The Catholics with us or just to find a way in between; I do not know. The arguments, the reasons, are strong on both sides.

MU: Now the Orthodoxy itself celebrates -- the Greek Orthodoxy, that is -- celebrates Christmas in January, and they still hold to it. What about the Romanian Orthodox church in Romania? Do they celebrate it still in January, or is it on December 25?

MA: No, no, we changed. As you know, in 1925 we had the first patriarch, and that time he accepted that we go ahead with that calendar for Christmas. Odd as it seemed to be, we still keep the reckoning of history according to old calendar. Here in the United States, we have the Russian church and the Ukrainian church, which still cling to the old calendar.

MU: What can you tell us about marriage ceremonies themselves? In other words, in Romanian Orthodox church, are people, when they get married of different nationalities -- say Romanian and maybe a Greek and Romanian, or a Polish, or someone like that -- do they have to sign specific papers as the Catholics have to, or had to, regarding childbirth? Do they have to do anything like that?

MA: You mean interfaith marriage? Yes, they have to. For instance, let us say the

groom is an Episcopalian, and the bridegroom is an Orthodox. No problem for her, but for him we have to get a dispensation from the bishop just to be able to perform the marriage in our church. The Catholics asked -- but they dropped lately -- to sign a statement if children result from their marriage, to be baptized in our church. But we have dropped it, too. So now it is up to the people. If they want, they can be married in our church and baptize their children in an Episcopalian church in that case, or whatever.

MU: In our church, does our church perform services for people who might have been divorced?

MA: Yes, for the first time, but not more than that. We base this on scriptural text. We accept the second marriage, and we have the service of the second marriage, but we do not accept more than that. We do not go more than that.

MU: In baptism itself, how many weeks after your child is born is usually baptism called? About how many weeks after a child is born do you baptize a child? Is there any specific time?

MA: Yes, within two weeks.

MU: Two weeks?

MA: Yes, provided that there is not an emergency or something, or just sick or something. And the priest is going and is just baptizing by the way to die, in case for Christian.

MU: What can you tell us about baptism of people who are older and from a different faith, and they want to come into the Romanian Orthodoxy? Do they have to go through a procedure?

MA: It depends on from what church they are coming. If they have been baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in their church, they have only to be accepted. There is a special prayer. For instance, the Catholics, if they want to come -- and we have some services of this kind here -- they only have to say prayers and something and they take knowledge of the traditions and the customs of our church, and that is all. We cannot baptize twice. You know, this is for life.

MU: Now, getting towards the end with death services. Before a person dies, you usually try to give them last rites. I understand that. The services for burying a person I do not want to get into. But afterwards, we have something called protostas. Can you tell us basically what that special type of the service is afterwards?

MA: Protostas is nothing else but a memorial service for requiem. This is a memorial service. We have it one month after he died, two months, six months, and one year, of the family to remember their departed.

MU: And you have a holy bread to signify what?

MA: The holy bread, which signifies life and a candle there, and that light is broken and caught by the cript and sanctified, you know, with wine and so on. They break the bread and offer it to the people in the church, and so on.

MU: Going back to the marriage ceremony, is there any specific Romanian culture that is involved in the Romanian marriage ceremony or reception, that is uniquely Romanian? Can you think of anything maybe that is not even in the service, but in that reception, that might be?

MA: John, I do not know. In Romania, the marriage service according to the book is the same like here. There is no difference, ritually speaking, but a lot of customs, your parents knew about them. They dropped here because, as we talked before, here is the interference and interrelation with American culture. Some of them dropped, and some of them kept. In fact, this is the American people involved. They came from everywhere, from any part of the world. Here is a nation with new people.

MU: Thank you.

End of Interview