

William Gold

April 29, 2012

History 650

Dr. Barbara C. Allen

Oral History Interview of Father James F. Dever

By William Gold

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Thursday March 16' 2012

Note: The Interviewer limited the number of extraneous words i.e., "And" or "Okay" have been removed from the transcript to improve the flow of the dialogue. A dash, "-", has been used to indicate an incomplete sentence. The Interviewer used a word in parenthesis () to finish an incomplete sentence. The Interviewer chose the most preferable version of a question and edited out any incomplete statements or questions when transcribing the content of the interview. Finally, the Interviewer conducted this oral history interview on a number of different dates. The information gathered during each session is indicated within in the text of the oral history interview transcript.

Audio File 1:

Gold: Hi. My name is William Gold. I am interviewing Father James Dever on March 16, 2010; 2012, at LaSalle University Library; LaSalle University. I guess this is a good audio test.

Audio File 2:

Gold: My name is William Gold. I am interviewing Father Jim Dever on Thursday March

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16th, 2012 at LaSalle University at the University (and Service).¹ I am interviewing Father Dever to find out about his experiences since he has come to LaSalle and his life before the University.

Father Dever; I would like to thank you for taking the time to talk with me. Do I have your permission to interview you and to record this interview?

Dever: Yes

Gold: When and where were you born, Father Dever?

Dever: I was born in Philadelphia .2 in December nineteen forty five.

Gold: How many years have you lived there?

Dever: I have lived in Philadelphia on and off for most of the years. I have studied in

1. The University Ministry and Service is a campus organization at LaSalle University that provides students with the opportunity to explore and develop their faith, to volunteer within the greater society to provide acts of service and charity, and to celebrate the Catholic Mass.

www.lasalle.edu/~nielsen/umas/about_us.htm

2. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is the largest city in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the county seat of Philadelphia County. It is the fifth most populous city in the United States with a population of 1,526,006 as the 2010 U.S. census. Philadelphia is also the cultural, commercial, and educational center of the Delaware Valley.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphia>

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Washington (D.C.) 3. I have lived in Wilmington, Delaware 4. I have lived in New Jersey 5, Virginia 6, and Michigan 7. Generally, I have lived in Philadelphia.

3. Washington D.C. contains all three branches of the federal government as well as many of the nation's monuments. Residents of Washington D.C. could not vote in Presidential Elections until the ratification of the 23rd amendment.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_DC

4. Wilmington, Delaware was named by the Proprietor of the Delaware colony after Spenser Compton; Earl of Wilmington. The city of Wilmington is the largest city in the state of Delaware and is the county of New Castle County and one of the major cities in the Delaware Valley metropolitan area.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilmington,_Delaware.

5. New Jersey was the third state to ratify the constitution and join the United States. New Jersey is the fourth smallest state, but has the eleventh highest population and the most densely populated of the fifty United States. New Jersey is commonly referred to as the Garden State.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Jersey

6. Virginia is one of four U.S. states that is officially designated as a Commonwealth with the city of Richmond as it's' capital. Virginia was one of the thirteen Colonies in the American Revolution.

The state of West Virginia was formed when northwestern counties separated during the civil war.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia>

7. Michigan is a U.S. state located in the Great Lakes Region of the United States of America. The name Michigan is a French version of the Ojibwa Indian word mishigamaa, meaning "large water" or "large lake". Michigan is the eleventh most extensive and the eighth highest population of the 50 United States.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michigan>

Father James Dever, interviewed by William Gold

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1:07

Gold: So you have traveled around a lot?

Dever: (It was) just because of the assignments of my congregation.

Gold: What neighborhood (in Philadelphia) were you born in?

Dever: Kensington ⁸.

Gold: Kensington. Wow, I have worked in Kensington.

Dever: It was, and is; a great area. Yes. But I haven't been back for a long time.

Gold: Do you have any fond memories of Kensington?

Dever: It was wonderful. (When I was) growing up there, It was an Irish Catholic ghetto

⁹. so everyone was the same. People seemed to enjoy each other's company and presence. It was a great neighborhood with lots of kids. It was very pleasant.

Gold: Did you have any games that you played or specific activities that you did in the neighborhood.

8. Kensington is a neighborhood in the United States city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It has a large population of Irish, Italian, Polish, Hispanic and African Americans. The neighborhood had a large number of textile industries especially carpet makers.

9. ghet-to noun \ˈge-(,)tō\ a quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ghetto>

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1:57

Dever: Just regular street games (like) half ball and pimple ball ¹⁰. (I played) whatever kids were playing in the street. (As well as playing) stick ball ¹².

Gold: Little before my time. I have heard it is fun. Were you good at stick ball?

Dever: I was not bad. (I was) not great, but not bad.

Gold: Was it an organized league or was just a pick-up game?

Dever: No. (It was) just neighborhood pickup stuff.

¹⁰. Half or pimple ball was a game developed by kids in the inner city in the fifties and sixties who were playing stickball. When the white pimple ball broke in half, not having enough money to buy a new ball then children invented a game where the ball was thrown against the wall

www.halfball.com

¹¹.Stickball is a street game related to baseball, usually formed as a pick-up game, played in large cities in the Northeastern United States, especially New York City and Philadelphia. The equipment consists of a broom handle and a rubber ball. The game is a variation of a stick and ball game from the 1750's.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stickball>

2:28

Gold: (Now I'd like to ask you about your grandparents). Do you remember your grandparents at all?

Dever: Only my maternal grandmother. Actually, I remember my father's mother a bit. I was ten when she (my maternal grandmother) died. I knew her only in passing as a child as my grandmother. My mother's grandmother¹² lived until I was 27 or 28 so I knew her much more.

Gold: Did either of them work?

Dever: My father's mother did not. My mother's mother did not. So, neither of them worked.

Gold: Did you know what your father's father or father's mother did for a living?

Dever: My father's fathers worked for what was then call PTC, which is now SEPTA ¹³. He was a Trolley Car driver.

Gold: Do you remember? Well, you probably do remember your grandparents name on your father's side.

Dever: On my father's side? (Do you mean) their first names?

Gold: Their first and last names

12. Father Dever was referring to his maternal grandmother who passed away when he was 27 or 28.

13. Philadelphia Transportation Corporation, the public transportation system in Philadelphia, was acquired by SEPTA in September of 1968 which included trollies, elevated trains, buses, and a subway.

3:33

Dever: John and Margaret

Gold: And their last names?

Dever: Dever.

Gold: Dever. Oh I'm sorry. (laughter). Yeah, (their names were) John and Margaret

Dever.

Dever: Right.

Gold: (Do you know) your mother's parents name?

Dever: William and Florence Whitaker.

Gold: Did you spend any time as a child with your grandparents?

(Both Narrator and Interviewer speaking at once so content inaudible).

Dever: A little bit with my father's mother but not too too much. I knew who she was and she knew me; obviously, but I was ten. So, I knew her only as a visiting person who was my grandmother. My other grandmother I said I knew more because she was a little closer to us and she lived a little longer.

Gold: And on your mother's side, you said, your mother's mother lived longer.

Dever: Right.

Gold: Did she have any influence on you?

Dever: They were both nice women so I suspect they both had an influence on me.

4:42

Both of my grandmothers were wonderful people. I wouldn't say she gave me any life lessons but they certainly were lovely women.

Gold: Besides your grandparents, did you have any older relatives that you were in contact with when you were younger like any uncles or aunts?

Dever: My father was one of five sons so I knew all of that family. My mother is one of five children as well so I knew all of that family.

Gold: So, you had a big extended family.

Dever: Right.

Gold: Did they have any influence on you at all?

Dever: Again, they were all good people but I don't think any of them were life lessons kind of people. They were just decent people who tried to live a good life.

Gold: Did they live in your neighborhood? Did they live (farther away)?

Dever: Not really. They lived in Philadelphia or in the suburbs so they lived around this area. But (no one lived) no more than an hour away so it was never a great burden to go see them.

Gold: That's nice. Could we take a little bit of time now to talk about your parents?

I'd like to ask you about your father. When and where was he born?

Dever: He was born in Philadelphia in April of nineteen sixteen.

6:23

Gold: Way back. Was he born in Kensington? Or what neighborhood (was he born in)?

Dever: No. He was born in West Philadelphia ¹⁴. Actually, (I think) he was born in Gray's Ferry ¹⁵.

Gold: Where is that in relation to - ?

Dever: Gray's Ferry is an extension of South Philadelphia ¹⁶.

14. West Philadelphia consists mostly of residential area homes. The neighborhood represented the western boundary of William Penn's original plan for the colonial city. Some notable characteristics is that it is home to three major universities, including the University of Pennsylvania and Saint Joseph's, and to the largest municipal park in the country which is Fairmount Park.

http://wikitravel.org/en/Philadelphia/West_Phillly

15. Gray's Ferry was named after George Gray, who maintained a floating bridge across the Schuylkill in the mid-18th century. The neighborhood started out as an areas of gardens which were fed by the Schuylkill River, but soon developed into a more industrial area. Beginning in the 1900's, Gray's Ferry developed into a working class community with mainly Irish immigrants as its predominant residents.

<http://www.phillyhistory.org/blog/index.php/2010/06/an-irish-village-in-philadelphia-grays-ferry/>

16. South Philadelphia was originally an extension of the city of Philadelphia. The area has seen large amounts of immigrant migration over the years, including Irish, Italian, and Poland during the 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as Blacks from the southern United States. These Irish immigrants built Catholic churches, and parochial schools and Catholic High Schools for their children, to maintain their Irish Catholic heritage. They came to dominate the Catholic priesthood within in the city of Philadelphia.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Philadelphia

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6:49

Gold: Did he work?

Dever: He did. He was a manager of an industrial restaurant. So if a company had their own cafeteria in their building, he would manage the building; the restaurant part of it.

Gold: So he would manage the cafeteria part of it.

Dever: right.

Gold: I forgot to ask you what his name was.

Dever: Walter

Gold: Walter Dever

Dever: Correct.

Gold: Did he always do that job?

Dever: Yes

Gold: He did it his whole life?

Dever: He started out as a counter manager meaning at a restaurant counter in a Five and Ten ¹⁷. He stayed in that industry, and just kept moving up as the restaurants kept

¹⁷. Five and ten, or dime, was a store that carried inexpensive merchandise such as necessities for the home, candy, toys, etc. The name was derived from the fact that most items cost a nickel or dime.

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/five-and-ten>

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7:23

Dever: getting bigger and bigger.

Gold: Was it a Woolworth's ¹⁸. Was it a Horn and Hardart ¹⁹. that he worked at?

Dever: No. It was a Kresge's ²⁰. They've been out of existence for a long time.

¹⁸. The F. W. Woolworth Company was one of the original America five-and-dime stores. The first successful store to carry the Woolworth's name was opened on July 18, 1879 by Frank Winfield Woolworth in Lancaster, Pennsylvania as "Woolworth's Great Five Cent Store".

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F. W. Woolworth Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F._W._Woolworth_Company)

¹⁹. Horn and Hardart was a food services company that was known for operating the first automated machine for food delivery, which was called the Automat. The restaurant was founded Joseph Horn and Frank Hardart in Philadelphia on December 21, 1888. The restaurant had a counter with fifteen stools.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horn %26 Hardarth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horn_%26_Hardarth)

²⁰. Kresge's was a five and dime founded by Sebastian S. Kresge. Kresge founded the company that would become Kmart. When Kresge was working as a traveling salesman, he met Frank Woolworth while working as a traveling salesman for the Woolworth's stores. In 1897 Kresge and his friend John McCrory started the first S.S. Kresge stores. By 1907 Kresge bought his partner out, and two years later founded Kresge's five and dimes with Charles J. Wilson.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S. S. Kresge Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S._S._Kresge_Company)

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7:37

Dever: They don't exist anymore.

Gold: Was it like a department store?

Dever: No. It was just an all-around neighborhood store. But they called them five and ten because their goods were usually five cents or ten cents when they first started, But not when I was a child.

Gold: When you were older did you notice a price increase at the five and ten store? Was it still around when you were a child?

Dever: There was no other five and ten (prices) when I was a child (at the five and dime). It was what it was but it wasn't that anymore.

Gold: But the name still stuck?

Dever: Five and ten. Five and dime. Five and ten or five and dime.

Gold: When your dad wasn't working, did you have any favorite activities that you would do with him? Any bonding?

Dever: Not really. We were just a typical family. So we watched television.

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8:38

Dever: We sat on the porch together. He wasn't a fisherman or a golfer. We didn't grow up with any money so it wasn't as if there were a lot of hobbies that he had. I just think being together as a family was the only thing that we really did together.

Gold: Did you take any family trips or vacations?

Dever: A little to the beach, but my father often times would work through his vacation so he would get his salary. I would more often go to the beach with my mother's family or my father's brothers.

Gold: How long would you stay at the beach?

Dever: A week maybe.

Gold: That was when you were out of school?

Dever: During the summer.

Gold: I would like to ask you about your mother now. What was your mother's name?

Dever: Ruth.

Gold: Ruth Whitaker. And when and where was she born?

9:36

Dever: She was born in Philadelphia in April of nineteen fifteen

Gold: Okay. So they were both April babies. My father and mother were both October babies. And I am assuming that she didn't work.

Dever: She didn't work when we were little children. But I have one sister. When she and I were a little bit older my mother became a crossing guard. Then she worked in a factory after that (job) was over.

Gold: What did they make in the factory?

Dever: They made drugs.

Gold: Did she have a specific job in the factory related to drugs?

Dever: Some line item. I don't know what she did.

Gold: Okay. You said you had a sister? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Dever: Just one sister.

Gold: I have one sister too. And what was her name?

Dever: Ruth.

Gold: Were you the oldest or youngest?

Dever: Youngest.

Gold: So you had an older sister. I am reversed. I am the oldest and my sister is the youngest. Are you still close with your sister?

11:00

Dever: Very.

Gold: Do you see her often?

Dever: She lives in Chicago ²¹. so I see her twice a year.

Gold: Do you talk on the phone?

Dever: Mm mm.

Gold: Do you internet her?

Dever: Email.

Gold: Yep, (laugh). I am old, but not that old but (yes) email her. Did your parents have a good relationship do you feel?

Dever: I do. The only fights that they would have been typical of that community were over money because we did not have much of it so that was always a bit of a burden.

21. Chicago is the third largest city in the United States with an estimated population of 2,853,114 within the city limits in 2008. It is located in the state of Illinois, on the shores of Lake Michigan.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Chicago,_Illinois

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11:42

Gold: Were you aware when you were young that you did not have a lot of money?

Dever: We knew we were poorer but so was everybody in the neighborhood. So it wasn't as if it was in the middle of a rich community that you happened to be the poorest person.

Everybody was in the same boat.

Gold: So it was sort of like an equalizer.

Dever: Yes. That's' right.

Gold: Are your parents still living?

Dever: No. They are both deceased.

Gold: I am sorry to hear that.

Dever: They had great lives so ----.

Gold: How old were they when they passed.

Dever: My father was fifty four. My mother was seventy five.

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12:25

Gold: I am sorry for that. Do you have fond memories of your parents?

Dever: Yes. (They were) both wonderful people.

Gold: Were there any times when your whole family got together (with all the members) on your father's side or on your mother's side?

Dever: Mother's side (got together) for holiday dinner; so Thanksgiving and Christmas. My father's side (got together) more for wedding and funerals.

Gold: It was just the four of you growing up?

Dever: Yes.

Gold: So there were no uncles and aunts living with you?

Dever: No.

Gold: At any time?

Dever: Not in my lifetime; No. My parents lived with one of my grandmothers' before I was born. But never in my lifetime.

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13:27

Gold: I am sorry. Could you say that again? So your parents lived with your grandparents?

Dever: (It happened) before I was born.

Gold: Before you were born. Is this when they first got married?

Dever: Exactly.

Gold: What was the reason for that?

Dever: No money.

Gold: Were they saving up for a house?

Dever: I suspect. I mean I wasn't there so. They were saving enough money to go out on their own.

Gold: Did you have any chores around the house when you were younger?

Dever. Just the usual (chores such as) taking out the trash and cleaning up after yourself but not a whole lot. No. We did not have a grass so I was not required to cut the grass or things like that. We had a small row house. There was not that much to do actually.

Gold: When she could, did your mom spend time with you?

13:26

Dever: Yes.

Gold: What types of activities did you do when you were with your mom?

Dever: I would say just the regular. (We would) sit on the porch. (We would) watch television. Nothing (special).

Gold: Did you go shopping? Did you go food shopping with her?

Dever: Not usually. No.

Gold: No.

Dever: Occasionally I would maybe carry things or something but not a whole lot.

Gold: As you got older, did she send you to the store for errands?

Dever: Yes. We had a little store across the street so then I went on my own.

Gold: What did you usually get when you got sent to the store?

Dever: Well it was a butcher shop so it was usually meat for dinner.

Gold: That is interesting.

Dever: Well, they do not have butcher shops anymore like they did when I was a child.

A butcher shop then was a corner store that was just a full butcher shop. People would actually go and buy their meat for the day.

Gold: What types of meat did you usually have?

Dever: Pork chops, ground beef, slice of ham or hams. Things like that. Pretty simple.

15:43

Dever: Typical meats.

Gold: What did you do; since you brought it up, during lent? I know you could not have meat.

Dever: When I was a child, we could not have meat at all on any Friday of the year; not just during Lent, but any Friday. So we always had fish on Friday.

Gold: Wow. Was there a fish store near you?

Dever: I do not know where my mother got them. I am not sure. I guess in the supermarket ²². Not really sure.

Gold: That is good. So you went to the supermarket for other groceries?

Dever: Yeah. Supermarkets were. They were not as super as we know them. They were smaller just little markets. Not the super-sized markets that you find today like

²². Early grocers focused on selling one aspect of food retailing such as dry groceries, and the stores were usually less than a thousand square feet in area. The supermarket didn't come into being until the 20's and 30's with the addition of self service, and introduction of more specialized departments.

<http://www.groceteria.com/about/a-quick-history-of-the-supermarket/>

16:38

Dever: Acme ²³. or Pathmark ²⁴.

Gold: So it was a Mom and Pop type supermarket?

Dever: It was the beginning of the Acme chain. (That store) was the supermarket near us, but it was not called the supermarket. It was just the market. Supermarket was a phrase that came into being later.

Gold: Was it called Acme at the time?

Dever: It was called Acme at the time. Well, it was called the American Store. The American Store was the parent company of Acme.

²³ ACME Markets Inc. was opened in 1891 as the American store by two friends, Samuel Robinson and Robert Crawford. It began as a small neighborhood grocery store at Second and Fernon Streets in South Philadelphia. Robinson and Crawford believed in providing customers with low price, high quality food and friendly service. The chain has continued as a top grocery store for 120 years.

²⁴. The Pathmark chain was born from Wakefern Food Corporation, which was a group of independent New Jersey grocers who form an association in 1947 in order to compete with the larger food chains. Two members of the Wakefern group, Supermarkets Operating Co. and General Super Markets, merged in 1966 to become Supermarkets General Corporation. In 1968, Supermarkets General left the Wakefern cooperative and renamed its Shop Rite stores Pathmark.

17:08

Gold: So it was the American Store. I worked for Acme as my first job (laughter). That is interesting. Even though it was a store brand, did your mom and dad know the store owners?

Dever: No. The one for the butcher shop we did because it was the corner store.

Gold: Did they know the people that work there? I mean like were (their regulars)?

Dever: I do not think so. It was just a store.

Gold: Did you go to church as a child?

Dever: Yes. I went to a catholic grade school so in the same catholic church.

Gold: And do you remember anything of the curriculum?

Dever: No. Not really. (It was) just a regular elementary school curriculum.

Gold: I mean did you have a favorite subject? Did you have a least favorite subject?

Dever: Not really. I think I did well in school so it was never a major burden for me to go to school. And people were pretty well behaved in those days so it was not as if there was a lot of discipline trouble.

Gold: What do you mean by well behaved?

Dever: Well, you stayed in your seat and did not move unless you got permission to move. It was a different world.

Gold: Is there any reason do you think it was different at the time with how students acted?

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18:52

Dever: Expectations were different about discipline. There were large classes so teachers had no choice but to keep everybody seated and safe.

Gold: By large class, about how many students (were in each class)?

Dever: Probably fifty.

Gold: Was it mixed grades? Was it fifty in the first grade? Second grade?

Dever: Fifty. There were probably two first grades and two second grades. Each one with fifty people.

Gold: So they were divided grades. It was not whole.

Dever: Divided grades. Right.

Gold: What was the name of the school you went to?

Dever: Visitation ²⁵.

Gold: Visitation School. Did you go from K to what grade?

Dever: We did not have kindergarten. It went from first to eighth grade. They did not have Kindergarten then.

Gold: And I know you attended West Catholic from doing my research.

Dever: North Catholic. ²⁶.

25. Visitation is a school in the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia in the Kensington section of the city.

26. North Catholic was founded in 1929 and educates young men in the tradition of the Silesian order which promotes providing acts of charity for others, patience with your fellow man, and compassion.

Father James Dever, interviewed by William Gold

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19:57

Gold: Sorry. North Catholic for High School.

Dever: Right.

Gold: Okay. I am glad I cleared that up (laughter). Did you have a favorite subject in High School?

Dever: I do not think so. I think I liked. I said I was generally a good student so I liked most subjects. I am not a great science person so science is probably a bit of a stretch for me. But generally other than that; everything was fine.

Gold: Did you participate in clubs or any sports when you were in High School?

Dever: Not. My school was pretty; this all male school; three thousand people. Sports were pretty refined and had to be really good. More is neighborhood related than it was school related. I was active in a few different organizations in school so nothing dramatic. I was involved in the school choir. That was pretty much about it. I did have a lot of friends in school so it was easy to be active.

Gold: Are you still in touch with any of your friends from High School?

Dever: I am.

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21:09

Gold: Do you see them at all?

Dever: Well, some of them entered the seminary ²⁷. with me so I do see them.

Gold: That is a good Segway.

Dever: What?

Gold: Where did you attend college?

Dever: I started at Catholic University ²⁸. In Washington, and then graduated from what was then called Allentown college ²⁹. Which is now called Desales University.

Gold: How long were you at Catholic University?

Dever: Two years.

Gold: Two years. And you did your last two years at Allentown?

Dever: Allentown, right.

27. A seminary is a school, especially a theological school for the training of priests, ministers, or rabbis.

28. Catholic University of America in 1887 by U.S. Bishops with the support of Pope Leo XIII, and is the only University in the country founded by Bishops. It is the national university of the Catholic Church.

29. Allentown College was founded by the Diocese of Allentown in September of 1965, and offered bachelors of Arts, and bachelors in science. In 1998, Allentown College began offering a degree in Elementary education, and minor in special education. It also became the first Catholic college in the country to offer a degree in marriage and family studies. In fall 2000, Allentown College was granted The status of a University by the state, and changed its' name to Desayles University.

<http://www.desales.edu/home/about/our-heritage/desales-history>

21:51

Gold: Allentown, right. When did you make the decision to enter the Seminary?

Dever: I entered right out of High School so I was already in (Seminary) in High School when I went to college.

Gold: Okay.

Dever: I was in the Seminary when I went to college.

Gold: You were in Seminary when you went to college. So you went right out of High School.

Dever: And into a college Seminary.

Gold: And into a college Seminary. When I was researching that (topic) I was not really sure about that. Can you explain how a seminary is different from a regular college?

Dever: It isn't actually; at least our setup. It isn't except that you lived in the seminary as opposed to living in a dorm. You went to classes with everyone else. There was no separation of classes. If you go to a place like St. Charles Seminary ³⁰. You just to class with other Seminarians. You live there (St. Charles) and go to school there. Ours was a more open process.

Gold: What do you mean by open process?

30. Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary was chartered in Wynnewood PA in 1838 to grant academic degrees. It is named for San Carlo Borromeo was the cardinal archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Milan from 1564 to 1584. The school consists of three divisions, Theology, College, and Religious Studies.

22:48

Dever: We went to school with everybody else. There was no separation between you and the other students.

Gold: So in a regular seminary, it is just (seminarians)?

Dever: In Diocesan ³¹. Seminaries, it is often times just for the Seminarians. So I said if you go to St. Charles here in Philadelphia, it is just for Seminarians there. I went to regular college and went to regular classes with everyone else.

Gold: What influences do you think in your life lead you to the priesthood?

Dever: I think the High School (which I attended). I joined the order of Oblates of St. Francis de Sales. ³². In High School so I think the people that taught there had a sense of brotherhood about them and a sense of service about them.

Gold: Say that again? The order ---?

³¹. Diocesan: A member of the church, namely a Bishop, who has jurisdiction over a specific group of churches or religious authority in an area known as a district.

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/diocesan>

³². The Oblates of St. Francis de Sales is a religious order that promoted brotherhood and utilize their personal talents for the good of the church. The Oblates first came to America in 1875, and have two headquarters, one in Wilmington Delaware. The other in Toledo, Ohio.

http://www.oblates.org/the_oblates/

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23:36

Dever: The Oblates of St. Francis de Sales. They tend to be supportive of each other.

They tended to really like what they did. So I felt inspired to do what they did.

Gold: To back track a little bit, how did you first find out about the order of the Oblates?

Dever: They taught in the High School I went to (as a student).

Gold: Oh they did. So they were the teachers?

Dever: Yes.

Gold: Is there any path that an Oblate can follow besides teaching?

Dever: Yes. A lot of them do parish work. They do pretty much whatever a priest does (within the church) they can do (as well). So we have priests working in Africa. We have priests in Haiti. priests (working) in Ecuador. priests in Brazil. We have people who teach at our college which is now called Desales University people who teach in colleges. Someone like myself who is a college chaplain. You can pretty much do whatever you are called to do.

24:38

Gold: Did you ever want to be anything else besides a priest?

Dever: Well, some days, you have a bad day; you want to be something else. But generally, no. I like what I do (laugh).

Gold: On the bad days, what would you want to be besides a priest?

Dever: Somebody rich with a lot of money.

Gold: (laugh) how long did it take you to become a priest?

Dever: I entered the seminary and I was ordained ³³. ten years later so for us it was a ten year process that included undergraduate school.

Gold: Can you break down the different aspects (of the process?) You said you started in undergraduate school and then you went to (where?)

Dever: Two years of college. Then, we taught for two years. Then, a year of Novitiate ³³. this was the spiritual training year. Then two more years of college. And then four year of Theology; Graduate Theology.

Gold: What did you do during Novitiate?

Dever: Novitiate.

³³. Novitiate is the period of training and preparation that a novice (or prospective) member of a religious order undergoes prior to taking vows in order to discern whether he is called to the religious life

www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/novitiate.

25:59

Gold: Novitiate.

Dever: Just studied spiritual themes so it was a year of academics. Academic study but just about spiritual topics so different spiritual writers. (I studied) the traditions of my own congregation and the teachings of St. Francis De Sales, things that are more; that are not disciplinary related to English or History. It was all about spiritual topics.

Gold: Did you find that challenging? Just focusing on one thing for a whole year?

Dever: Not really. I found that it was fine. I do not want to do it again but it was fine.

Gold: Okay. (laughter).

Dever: I mean once was enough. It is like spiritual boot camp.

Gold: Spiritual boot camp. Okay. Did you have to get up at five in the morning like boot camp?

Dever: At five fifteen (laughter).

Gold: At five fifteen in the morning.

Dever: Yep

Gold: And what time did you go to sleep then?

Dever: Between nine and nine thirty.

Gold: The whole day was studying?

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27:05

Dever: Studying and then we had a work period where we had to go to work. We lived on a farm.

Gold: Where was the farm at?

Dever: The whole process was in Elkton, Maryland ³⁴.

Gold: Were you isolated?

Dever: Very isolated.

Gold: What jobs did you do on the farm? What farm jobs did you do?

Dever: Pretty much everything; Hay, killed chickens, fed the pigs, collected eggs from the chicken house. Anything you can imagine on a farm to do, we had to do.

Gold: How often did you go to Mass ³⁵ during Novitiate. Did you go to Mass at all?

Dever: Every day.

Gold: Every day. Did people take turns leading Mass as practice?

Dever: No. Not at that point and time because we were too young. That did not happen until after Graduate Theology.

34. Elkton Maryland sits halfway between Washington D.C. and New York City. The town played a significant role in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812.

<http://www.elkton.org/about/index.cfm>

35. Mass is the Central Act of Worship in the Catholic Church.

http://catholicism.about.com/od/worship/p/The_Mass.htm

28:12

Gold: Besides farm work and going to Mass, were there any other things you did during the Novitiate.

Dever: Novitiate

Gold: Novitiate?

Dever: N-O-V-I-T-I-A-T-E, Novitiate. Just studied. It was basically going to school but only during spiritual topics.

Gold: You said after the Novitiate; after that year. After the Novitiate and thank you for spelling it (laugh). What was your next step after that?

Dever: Teaching for a while for two years. We taught as student teachers. I was in the last class to teach without a college degree. So we used to go out for an internship. The class after mine finished college first then went for their internship. We did our senior internship between (our) sophomore and junior year of college.

Gold: Where did you do your internship?

Dever: At North Catholic.

Gold: At North Catholic. So you went back to your old High School. You said earlier that when you were in school that the kids were well behaved. How was it on the other side of the desk?

29:32

Dever: I still found them pretty well behaved. It was a little different because drugs had just started infiltrating society so that was a bit more of a difficulty. But other than that I found the students to be quiet pliable ³⁶.

Gold: What year did you do your student teaching?

Dever: What years, you mean?

Gold: What year was it?

Dever: Nineteen sixty six to nineteen sixty eight.

Gold: Do you have any students that stick out in your mind that you remember from that time? Any young people that made an impression on you?

Dever: They did. And occasionally I will hear from them every now and then. The soccer coach here (at LaSalle), I taught him then at Farrell.

Gold: At Farrell?

Dever: So I sometimes bump into people that I taught a long time ago.

Gold: Is it a little bit strange? (laugh).

Dever: Well not really. They just remind you how old you are when you meet people who you taught who are now adults because I still think of them as students in my mind.

30:44

Gold: I do too. Some of the students that I teach they are still children to me.

Sometimes when I see them (it is a shock).

Dever: It is just a different feeling.

Gold: What was the most rewarding aspect of that teaching experience for you?

Dever: I think I gained self-confidence as a person because of being able to stand in front of a group and speak. And secondly, I found out that I was doing what I was meant to do because I enjoyed teaching. So I found it rewarding.

Gold: And what was the biggest challenge?

Dever: I was young so I did not really know what I was doing.

Gold: What was your next step after teaching?

Dever: Going back and finishing college and then went to graduate school.

Gold: What year did you go to graduate school?

Dever: I started right out of college (so ... 19 -). Well for Theology so nineteen seventy to nineteen seventy three; nineteen seventy four. Actually, graduate school from Nineteen seventy one. Theology graduate school was seventy to seventy four. I have an MA from Villanova in English that was seventy one to seventy five.

Gold: You said you had a graduate degree in English?

32:36

Dever: Well, my undergraduate degree is in English.

Gold: Oh! Your undergraduate degree is in English.

Dever: Then I did graduate work in English as well because I was going to be an English teacher. I needed the graduate degree for the teacher I wanted to be.

Gold: That's interesting.

Dever: Yeah, it worked out fine.

Gold: Did you utilize your English degree at all?

Dever: I did. I taught again after that was over.

Gold: Okay. You went back to North Catholic to teach?

Dever: I did. After finishing that degree, I went back there.

Gold: When you went back there to teach there, were you a full-fledged priest?

Dever: I was. That is correct.

Gold: You know how you have a graduation; did they have a special ceremony when you actually became a priest?

Dever: They had an ordination ceremony.

Gold: okay.

Dever: So yes, they did.

33:31

Gold: What is entailed in an Ordination ceremony?

Dever: The Bishop comes and they bring families together and they affirm that you have made this choice. The Bishop opposes hands on your head and anoints your hands with oil and you are on your way.

Gold: And that was in nineteen seventy?

Dever: Nineteen seventy three, I was ordained

Gold: In nineteen seventy three, you were ordained. How long did you teach English?

Dever: When I went back that next time, three years.

(Interviewer picks up recorder to check time).

Gold: What made you decide to change? Where did you work next after you were done teaching?

Dever: I was offered a job at a youth ministry at a parish in New Jersey. So I wanted to try something different so I took that job and moved to a parish in New Jersey.

Gold: How did you hear about the job?

Dever: I was already doing weekend work there so I was celebrating Mass in that same parish on weekends so when the time came for the job opening they asked me if I would come and be the Youth Minister.

Gold: How long did you do that?

35:07

Dever: I did that for seven years.

Gold: Do you have any fond memories of that time?

Dever: It was a wonderful position. I got the chance to witness the marriage of a lot of those people. And I still see some of them. I was a wonderful time.

Gold: What was the biggest adjustment between teaching school and going to work in a church?

Dever: Well there are more finding people for the youth ministry. In a school the students are there. They are enrolled in school. They come and have class every day. In the youth ministry program you have to figure out a way to attract them because it is not their school; it is their church. You have to keep doing things to bring in new members to the youth ministry.

(Interviewer ask Narrator if can close door. Narrator replies "Sure. Go ahead.

Interviewer shuts office door.)

Gold: So in school you have a captive audience?

Dever: How did you figure out ways to bring them in when working at the youth ministry?

36:33

Dever: We created a youth board. And therefore the youth board had control over what topics we covered so therefore they could set their pace and their own direction.

Gold: So you were kind of guiding them towards where they wanted them to be?

Dever: I was guiding them and they were guiding me as to what High School students liked. So I mean I was not a High School student so I needed to pick the brains of people who were younger but then set the pace for what we did.

Gold: So there were High School students on the advisory board?

Dever: That's right.

Gold: How successful was the advisory board do you feel?

Dever: Very successful because they were honest. They would say, "This is a good idea. That's not a good idea." They tend to be pretty forthright.

Gold: They speak their mind.

Dever: They did. Right.

Gold: Did any of the students you remember choose the priesthood as their path?

Dever: Not that I know of. No. (laugh).

Gold: What types of careers did they choose?

37: 58

Dever: Everything. Doctors, lawyers, Indian chiefs. Pretty much across the board. Some are Attorneys. Some are Scientists. It was a pleasant suburban community so basically the same things that a lot of other people did at that time period.

Gold: You said it was a pleasant suburban community. What was the neighborhood again?

Dever: It was Cinnaminson, New Jersey ³⁶.

Gold: Cinnaminson, New Jersey. My mother is actually from Cinnaminson. It is a small world. Did you find a lot of support within the community?

Dever: Yes. Parents were excited about having a good youth program so they were very supportive of what we did. They were happy that their children were happy about coming to church.

Gold: That is good. Everybody is happy.

Dever: Exactly.

Gold: Do you remember if there were any times when a young person would come to you and you said that is not a good choice for your career. Or you tried to discourage them from going into a particular career?

36. Cinnaminson was formed by a resolution in 1860 from a section of Chester Township. It was founded because Chester Township had become too over populated for one township. Its' name means sweet water. It is home to a number of private schools and several public schools.

39: 10

Dever: Not really. More I tried to help them make good decisions about their own High School journey. The way they related to the parents. The way they relate to each other. Typical Youth Ministry questions. These were all high school students so it was all with the typical adolescent concerns.

Gold: Did you help them with any personal concerns?

Dever: Often. I think if they trust you they will share with you some of the secrets of their lives.

Gold: How did you find that experience of counseling children?

Dever: Well, I think it is always a matter of being honored that people would trust you enough to share with you some of their internal reflections. So I find it inspiring that they are willing to share themselves with you.

Gold: You said you did that for seven years.

Dever: Seven years.

Gold: Where did you move onto from there?

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Dever: I became a hospital chaplain at a place called Lourdes Medical Center ³⁷. this is in Camden New Jersey ³⁸. And I lived in the hospital as a Chaplain.

Gold: What were your responsibilities there?

Dever: Everything and anything. So my official responsibility was to be the Catholic presence of the priesthood in the hospital. But in reality I worked with families. I worked with patients. I worked with physicians. I worked with nurses. It was pretty much open season for everybody.

37. Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center in Camden is a 410-bed medical center that offers many specialty services, including an institute specializing in heart disease, a center for pre-mature and at risk infants; a rehabilitation center; and the Center for Organ Transplantation.

www.lourdesnet.org/

38. Camden, New Jersey is Camden originally founded as a city on February 13, 1828, from portions of the former Newton Township, while the area was still part of Gloucester County. On March 13, 1844, Camden became part of the newly formed Camden County. The city used to be a center for industry but is more commonly known for its' high crime rate, and urban plight in recent years.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camden,_New_Jersey

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41:09

Gold: Did any of the staff ever come to you for advice?

Dever: Yes. That was part of my job really was to minister to the people who worked there every day because the patients come and go but the staff is generally there every day.

Gold: Did you do any baptisms at all? Did you do last rites?

Dever: I did not do any baptisms because not really (suited for baptisms). I did new born infants who might have been terminal. I did a lot of last rites because it is a hospital so people were dying on a regular basis.

Gold: Sorry about that. So you ministered and administered last rites. Did you do anything else?

Dever: I visited all the new patients. So every time someone was admitted to the hospital I would go to see them just to welcome them to the hospital and let them know what services we had and what we could do. I did Mass every day in the hospital. I did Mass on Sundays in the hospital. So it was a very active schedule.

Gold: You said it was a Catholic hospital. Were there any patients that were other denominations?

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42:27

Dever: Oh sure. Yeah. (There was) every denomination. Jewish. Other Christian denominations. People with no faith at all. They did not come there because it was a Catholic hospital. They came because their physician admitted them to that hospital.

Gold: Did you find yourself acting differently with people of other denominations?

Dever: Not really. People are pretty receptive to anyone who wants to help them.

Gold: What time do you have?

Dever: We got about another two minutes unless you want to stop here

Gold: I think this a good place to stop.

Dever: That is fine.

Gold: We are stopping at approximately 4:58. Our last topic was ...

Dever: Lourdes Medical Center.

Gold: When was that?

Dever: Nineteen Seven. Nineteen eighty four to nineteen eight six.

Father James Dever, interviewed by William Gold

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Gold: Thank you Father Dever for your time and I look forward to speaking with you again.

This ends part one of the Father Dever interview for History 650.

***** End Father Dever Interview One*****

Oral History Interview of Father James F. Dever by William Gold

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Friday March 30, 2012

Gold: My name is William Gold. I am interviewing Father Jim Dever on Friday March 30th 2012 at his office at University Ministry and Service at LaSalle University in Philadelphia Pennsylvania. This is a continuation of an Interview with Father Jim Dever about his life and experiences as a priest since he has come to LaSalle, and his life before the university. Father Dever, I want to thank you once again for taking the time to speak with me.

Dever: My pleasure to do it.

Gold: Do I have your permission to record this interview?

Dever: You do.

Gold: And your permission to interview you?

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Dever: Yes

Gold: Alright. Father Dever, you said in your previous interview that you had an older sister and that she lived in Chicago. Is she married?

Dever: She is widowed. Her husband died about ten years ago from Leukemia.

Gold: I am sorry to hear that. Do they have any children?

Dever: Two adopted children and they are both grown. They are in their thirties and they have children.

Gold: Did she ever work at any point?

Dever: She still does. She is a church secretary in Chicago.

Gold: That is interesting.

Dever: It is.

Gold: How long has she done that?

Dever: Thirty years

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1:38

Gold: Wow. That is a long time.

Dever: She has been with the church she is in now for twenty five years at least and the other church maybe three or four years.

Gold: You said that your mother was named Ruth ¹. And your sister was named Ruth.

Dever: That is correct.

Gold: Was there some significance for that?

Dever: I do not think so. I think my mother just named my sister after her. Just a mother-daughter type thing.

Gold: Were there any other family members with the name Ruth?

Dever: No. No, it was unusual. Then it was not as much because Ruth was a common name.

Today you do not hear Ruth very often as a name.

1. The etymology of the name Ruth comes from the Hebrew word for friend.

www.babynamesworld.parentsconnect.com

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2:28

Gold: We spoke about your early career as a priest which we will return to momentarily. However, I want to ask you about your jobs a little bit earlier in your life. Did you have an after school job or a job during High School?

Dever: I worked in a store just doing stock work. And then I worked at the local parish answering phones.

Gold: How old were you when you did that?

Dever: Fifteen or sixteen. Something in that range. Seventeen.

Gold: How long did you do that?

Dever: I did the store for about a year. I did the rectory for about two years.

Gold: Was there any particular item that they sold in the store?

Dever: No, I just stocked the shelves. I did not really ---. It was an automotive store; a tire store. So I probably just stocked odds and ends. I did not do anything significant. I was just a kid doing a kid's job.

Gold: We finished last time talking about you being a hospital chaplain at Lourdes Medical Center in Camden New Jersey.

Dever: Right.

Gold: What was the most difficulty experience that you had during your time at Lourdes?

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Dever: The most difficult experience was an experience that was not so much one but when patients were at the end of life and could not die. Either they were older and wanted to die but were not dying or they were suffering from a terminal disease and just did not die. And it was hard to be with them because they had just given up all hope and just wanted to end it all.

Gold: That must have been hard.

Dever: It is hard because usually patients go home. (They) got better and go home. Or they do die which in the Catholic faith of course is also going home. But the people who lived in limbo where they were not well enough to go home but weren't sick enough to die were the people who were hard to work with.

Gold: Did you bring anything away from your time at Lourdes that you feel made you a better priest?

Dever: I think more sensitivity to sickness and illness. I did not have that before because I never worked in a hospital before so I did not understand that. And the second thing is I became much more conscious of how hard nurses and doctors work.

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5:05

Gold: How long did you stay at Lourdes?

Dever: Two years.

Gold: When and where did you go next after your assignment at Lourdes?

Dever: I went to a church called Holy Child ². this is right down here on Broad Street. And I was just an associate there for one year.

Dever: Just general parish work. We covered Einstein Hospital so you would do the duty days at Einstein Hospital. Weddings, funerals, Masses, counseling; the typical life of a parish priest.

Gold: How did that differ from your previous assignment at Lourdes?

Dever: At Lourdes, I was constantly twenty four – seven involved in the hospital. At the parish, I was really more involved in the parish than the hospital but I covered the hospital just on the duty days that I was assigned to do that.

2. Holy child was founded in 1909 and is located at 5200 Broad Street. The parish closed in 1993. It was renamed Lady of Hope in 1993 when several other parishes were closed and consolidated into this current location.

<http://www.phillychurchproject.com/ourladyofhope.htm>

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Gold: What was your fondest memory from that assignment?

Dever: Again I really liked the people in the parish. It was a multi-ethnic parish. It was nice to be in a place where people of different nationalities came together to form one community.

Gold: That is so nice. What was the most challenging aspect of this assignment?

Dever: It was a multi-cultural parish with people of a lot of different ethnic backgrounds, and trying to find a common bond between them.

Gold: And how did you achieve that? Or did you achieve that?

Dever: We tried to open the door to as many groups as we could. It was hard sometimes because some of the different ethnicities wanted to remain in only within their own ethnicity. We had for instance a fair number of Hmong³ people and they really wanted to

3. The Hmong are an Asian ethnic group from the mountainous regions of China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. This ethnicity was singled out for retribution because they supported the losing side in the Laotian Civil War of 1975. Thousands fled their homeland and immigrated to western countries, including the United States, in the early 1970s

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hmong_people

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7:20

Dever: associate with other Hmong.

Gold: Monks?

Dever: H-M-O-N-G. We also had a fair number of Koreans. Koreans also wanted to be together. They really did not want to associate (with any other group). We had a fair number of Filipinos for instance. The Koreans and Filipinos did not necessarily want to be at the same event. But you would try to find something in common to bring everyone together.

Gold: You said you stayed there a year.

Dever: I stayed there a year.

Gold: How did you feel about leaving?

Dever: Well, I was called to take an administrative post in my province. So I was. This not really the correct word because it is church work but I was (inaudible) promoted so I got

4. The Filipino people or Filipinos are an ethnic group native to the islands of the Philippines. There are about 94 million Filipinos in the Philippines, and about 11 million living outside the Philippines.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filipino_people

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Dever: a different kind of job. I became vocation director for my order. I was in charge of recruiting for the seminary.

Gold: When and where was that job?

Dever: It was headquartered in Wilmington Delaware. And the job involved a lot of traveling so I was on the road a lot.

Gold: How did you feel about you feel about your new assignment working for the order?

Dever: I enjoyed it very much. It was a great job. I like the house in which I lived in Wilmington. It was nice people to live with. I was rewarding work to work with young people who were thinking about joining the church as a full-time job.

Gold: And this was the Order of the Oblates (of St. Francis de Sales)?

Dever: Yes. Exactly right.

Gold: And how did this differ from your previous assignment as an associate minister?

Dever: Well again, this job had nothing to do with the parish. I helped out at the parish on the weekends. But my full time job was involved in both marketing and recruiting for the

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9:31

Dever: Seminary so I had very little parish experience there.

Gold: What did you bring away from that assignment that you feel made you a better priest?

Dever: Again, I really enjoyed the opportunity to work with young people who were thinking about joining a full time ministry and the church. (I was) inspired by their goodness and their openness to pursue that type of lifestyle.

Gold: How long were you at that assignment?

Dever: I lived in that house for seven years. But I did the first assignment for three years as Vocation Director. The next four years I was Personnel Director. So I just changed jobs but at the same level. Personnel Director is the person who is in charge of both assignments of priests so I assigned priests within the order, and also creating policy.

Gold: What types of policies did you create?

Dever: Policies on transfers. So how long people stayed in positions before they got transferred. (We developed) policies on evaluation. We started a program to evaluate people who were in positions. If it was a pastor, we will start to evaluate that pastor's

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10:55

Dever: leadership. These were new policies that we created.

Gold: Did you have to reprimand anybody at all?

Dever: I think reprimand is too strong a word. I had to encourage people on occasion to do different things.

Gold: What types of things?

Dever: Becoming more involved in the parish. Or I also evaluated people who taught in our schools to become more professional in their positions in the school. Things like that. More reminders than reprimands.

Gold: Okay. Where did you go next after that assignment?

Dever: After that I became pastor of a parish in Wilmington called St Anthony de Padua 5.

5. St Anthony of Padua Church is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1924, the Bishop of Wilmington appointed Father J. Francis Tucker to establish a parish for the city's rapidly growing Italian community who were coming to Wilmington to take advantage of rapidly growing job opportunities. March 8, 1925, ground was broken for the present place of worship. One year later, on Palm Sunday, the first Mass was celebrated in the new building.

http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM9F8M_St_Anthony_of_Padua_Wilmington_DE

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11:49

Dever: which is an Italian national parish in downtown Wilmington. I was there for two years.

Gold: Was there a large Italian population in Wilmington?

Dever: Yes. Mm Hmm. Very large. So enough to support a national Italian parish.

Gold: Like the parish in Philadelphia, did you find yourself having to gear activities towards the Italians?

Dever: Yes. It was expected to be an Italian parish so we certainly tried to maintain the Italian culture and do the Italian traditions.

Gold: What differences did you find between the multicultural parish and ---?

Dever: Two differences for me. The one is you are just dealing with one nationality so it made it a bit more manageable to bring them together. Secondly, I was pastor of the one in Wilmington. So in addition to just doing parish work, I was in charge of the administrative responsibilities and the running of the parish.

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13:00

Gold: So you really did not answer to anyone when you were at the parish in Wilmington?

Dever: Well, you answer to the Bishop, but he never called so I did not answer to anyone.

Gold: Was he the Bishop of just Delaware?

Dever: He was the Bishop of Wilmington which takes in what is called the Delmarva Peninsula which is Delaware, a little bit of Maryland, and a little bit of Virginia.

Gold: I am trying to understand the hierarchy of the church, I guess. I am not really familiar with it.

Dever: A Bishop is someone who is a general manger of a diocese so (the Bishop of Delaware) was the general manager of that diocese. He does not necessarily (interface with the management). He certainly does not interfere with the management unless there is a problem.

Let's say the parish was having major financial issues then he would intervene.

Gold: The Bishop answers to whom?

Dever: Each bishop answers to what is called a Metropolitan which is a Bishop who is higher than them, who oversees a number of different dioceses. And ultimately answers to the Pope.

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Dever: because the Pope appointed them so he really controls both their appointment and the removal of a Bishop.

Gold: And are they Bishops for life?

Dever: They are Bishops for life but they do not necessarily have that same job for life so they can be transferred to a different diocese or they can be given an office job somewhere.

Gold: Are they required to take a vow of poverty like you had mentioned before?

Dever: Most of the Bishops are Diocesan clergy. So Diocesan clergy do not take a vow of poverty. So they would live as typical Diocesan. They are supposed to live a life of simplicity but are not required to live a life of poverty. Poverty for us, as I mentioned before, just means that we share things in common. I do not really own anything. It is owned by my Order. The Diocesan and Diocesan clergy can actually own things in their own names.

Gold: But you have to share?

Dever: The Diocesan clergy don't. They can, for instance, own a home at the beach. But I really cannot do that.

Gold: So you are not able to own something?

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15:39

Dever: I do not own anything of my own for my own individual name except my clothes.

Gold: Except your clothes. Yeah, you don't want to share clothes (laugh).

Dever: No. I don't

Gold: Getting back to your assignment at Wilmington Delaware at the church. What was the name of the church with the Italians?

Dever: Saint Anthony de Padua.

Gold: Saint Anthony a Padwa

Dever: Saint Anthony de Padua. P-A-D-U-A.

Gold: What do you feel you brought away from that assignment that made you a better priest?

Dever: Again, it was a congregation of wonderful people. Open hearted, generous, and thoughtful. They cared about the church so it was good to work with them.

Gold: When and where did you go for your next assignment?

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16:39

Dever: From there I went to the College of New Jersey which is in Ewing New Jersey and I became the Chaplain there.

Gold: And what year was that?

Dever: Nineteen ninety six.

Gold: What were your responsibilities?

Dever: When you are a college chaplain, you are akin to be(ing) pastor of the college parish. So I was responsible for the students, counseling them, saying daily Mass for them. Trying to create programs that would keep the students interested. And then doing weekend Mass on campus for the students.

Gold: What types of programs did you develop to keep their interest?

6. The College of New Jersey was established in 1855, and was the state's first teacher training institute. Fifteen students were enrolled in the college in the first year and attended class at the college's single building on the Trenton campus. Today, nearly 7,000 graduate and undergraduate students take a wide range of classes offered on the college's 289-acre campus.

http://www.stateuniversity.com/universities/NJ/The_College_of_New_Jersey.

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Dever: We created a board of students that planned the activities. Most college students prefer nighttime activities; not daytime activities. We would do pasta dinners or a night of Twilight, what they call a Twilight retreat, which is a night of spirituality. Generally on college campuses if you are going to do something like that it has to include food. It is what draws college students in.

Gold: I noticed you like working with young people a lot. How did you find the college students different from say the High School students that you taught early on in your career?

Dever: I think you get a sort of adulthood out of college students. They are away from home. They are living on their own. They recognize it is them now. They can't blame anyone else anymore. If they did not go to class it is not because their mother did not wake them up; it is just that they did not go to class. They realize that the responsibility falls on their shoulders.

Gold: Did you have any involvement with the larger community when we were at the College of New Jersey?

Dever: A little bit (with) the larger college community around the college. I did not have a whole lot of extra time.

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Gold: Okay. How long did you stay at that assignment?

Dever: Three years.

Gold: Three years. What did you bring away from that assignment?

Dever: Again a sense of joy about working with people who were twenty. The opportunity to influence people at any early time in their life. To have some impact upon the development of their thinking and spirituality is a really good thing.

Gold: And you mentioned you worked at the College of New Jersey. Can you compare and contrast College of New Jersey with LaSalle (University).

Dever: A little bit. College of New Jersey is a state school and there I was not employed by the College. I was employed by the Diocese. And I would be considered a professional volunteer by the College. They did not employ any religious figures at all because it was a state school.

Here I am actually employed by the University because it is a Catholic college. And

I have different responsibilities on Campus because I am a full time member of the LaSalle community. So I sit on committees here for instance which I did not (at College of New Jersey).

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Dever: I only sat on one committee at the College of New Jersey. Here I think I am more intricately involved in the running, not the management, of the University, but the functioning of the University.

Gold: In what ways are you involved in the functioning of the University?

Dever: The functioning of the University means keeping everything running smoothly. And my area (my function) is to work with the Catholic identity of the college and the celebration of the Eucharist and sacraments.

Gold: And what is Eucharist?

Dever: Eucharist is the Mass which is the Catholic service. We call Mass.

Gold: How long did you stay at the College of New Jersey?

Dever: Three years.

Gold: Where did you go next after that?

Dever: I became the Pastor of the parish called Our Mother of Consolation which is in the Chestnut Hill section of Philadelphia. If you go up Germantown avenue to the top of the hill,

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Dever: it is right there.

Gold: How did you find the Chestnut Hill Community? Did they accept you?

Dever: Seemingly quiet quickly and easily. Yes. I loved the church. It was a wonderful place to be. I served there for one full term which was six years. But I went there on the condition that when my time there was over that I could return to working at a college which is how I wound up here at LaSalle.

Gold: What were the circumstances that lead you to LaSalle?

Dever: I was leaving my parish where I was Pastor. My term was over. And I was just checking different colleges to see what was available. And I know Brother Michael McGuinness who was the president of LaSalle. So I contacted him by email and just said, "If you ever wind up with an opening, let me know." And there happened to be an opening that coming fall so I applied to the job and got it.

Gold: So you heard about it through the university president. What adjustments did you make between working at Mother of Consolation and working at LaSalle?

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Dever: There is not a whole lot of difference. Two major differences. One here the congregation is just twenty (years old). The majority of people I work with are between eighteen and twenty two so you have more of a focused audience, if you will. And the other technical difference is that a lot of my work at the college is done during the night time because that is when college students are most awake. Not during the day.

Gold: I did not know that (laugh). I have been out of school for a couple of years.

Dever: That's exactly right.

Gold: What do you know of the man you replaced? His name was Dave Beebe and he turned seventy. And he retired. He felt at the age of seventy he was ready to say, "Thank you. This is enough is enough." He retired.

Gold: What are your responsibilities at LaSalle besides holding Mass?

Dever: I would say the bulk of my responsibilities are centered on counseling students. So I am available all the hours that I am here. I generally stay in my office and the students come to me. They have told me that they like to know where I am. So rather than my being out walking

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Dever: around the campus, they want to be able to find me. If they want me for something, they can come right here and know where I am.

Gold: How many students do you typically see during the day?

Dever: It could be five. It could be eight. It varies day to day. I stayed last night for instance. We had Greek god and goddess which is ---. I advise a fraternity on campus.

Gold: Greek god and goddess?

Dever: Greek god and goddess last night. I saw all my fraternity brothers last night. I see a lot of my fraternity brothers during the week. They just come in and update me on what is going on. I see a lot of students who are just having the run of the mill difficulties of life. (They) just want somebody to talk to.

Gold: What types of topics do you talk about when you talk about run of the mill (topics)?

Dever: Family issues, romance, relationship with their boyfriend or girlfriend, choosing careers.

If they make any serious mistakes and they feel guilty about it. Things like that.

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Gold: Do you have an obligation to keep this confidential whatever you talk about with them?

Dever: I have a sign on my door that says, "Under the seal." In the Catholic Church, we believe that there is a confidentiality requirement associated with the sacrament of penance which is when a person speaks to a priest about their own personal needs. And that is a confidentiality helped up by law. So, there is a legal situation called priest penitent privilege. So a priest or pastoral person in any professional setting, much like a doctor or a psychologist is not required. Is not enough (to say) required to but not allowed repeat what they hear.

Gold: So if a student does something wrong like cheat on a test then what do you do?

Dever: I would encourage them to reconsider how they approach that academic concern. But I cannot tell anybody else about that. It is confidential and private.

Gold: I see. You just encourage them ---

Dever: Think about how they want to pursue their academic study.

Gold: How do you personally deal with hearing about the romances? Does it ever make you comfortable?

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Dever: No: I have been doing it for so long that it is second nature to me. So I just try to help people feel fulfilled in their relational experiences.

Gold: So you do not blush at all?

Dever: No. I have not blushed in a long time (laugh).

Gold: What is the main goal do you think of the University Ministry and Service?

Dever: Well, I think there are two sides to it. There is the ministry side and the service side. The main goal of the service side is to create opportunities for students to give back. So either to do local service, here in our own community. Or to travel within the United States and do Habitat for Humanity or other opportunities to help people within the domestic U.S. We also have trips to Guatemala or Kenya and try to do other service work supports. The ministry side is to help people deal with their own spiritual journey. Where they fall on the scale of believing god (or) not believing in god. Where they fall on the scale of belonging to a church or not belonging to a church. What we try to do is help create an environment where the students feel comfortable in addressing whatever concerns they might happen to have.

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Gold: I am probably saying this wrong. Have you brought a flavor of the Oblates (of St. Francis De Sales) to the University Ministry and Service?

Dever: My congregation tends to be. We were founded by a priest in the style of Saint Francis de Sales. Saint Francis de Sales was known as the Gentleman Saint. And his main charisme ^{7.} If you will, is his optimism. You try to see the most productive side of everyone and everything.

And hopefully in looking at people even if they have made mistakes you try to find the best spin on that mistake so they can feel more affirmed.

Gold: How old is the order?

Dever: My order was founded in 1872 so about one hundred and forty years.

Gold: What were the circumstances of the order being founded?

Dever: St Francis De Sales when he was alive, he died in 1622, had always wanted to found a group. He had found a religious group for women, and died before he found one for men. So that lingered in the history. He was in France. Lingered in the history of the French spiritual

7. Charisme is a French term for prestige or power of seduction that one person has on another.

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culture. This priest came along and wanted to fill that goal finally so he founded a group of men in the spirit of St. Francis De Sales.

Gold: What differences are there between the Christian Brothers and the Oblates (of St. Francis De Sales?).

Dever: Spiritually we are a lot alike actually. I think we address concerns in styles in similar fashions. The main difference between the Brothers and myself is that the Brothers are not ordained so they cannot celebrate the sacraments of the Catholic Church. That is why they need me here. They need a priest. So I am ordained and I can be the public face of the Catholic Church and celebrate the sacraments.

Gold: So do you feel like that the Oblates (of St. Francis De Sales) and the Christian Brothers have the same goal in mind?

Dever: They have many similar ways of dealing with the technicalities of life.

Gold: What do you mean technicalities?

Dever: Well, the various journeys people are in or how do we approach people in their time of need. Both sides believe in trying to deal with the whole person. Not just the academic person.

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Dever: But the moral person, the spiritual person. Brothers have the same outlook that my own Order has so I think there are a lot of similarities.

Gold: You said the ministry does missionary work and goes on retreats. Have you participated in either of these?

Dever: I participated in the retreats when I first arrived here. But now Frank Klose, our other Campus Minister, he does the retreats. I am glad about that only because I do not have any more time on my plate so it is nice to have someone pick up some of that effort.

Gold: Where did you go on the retreats?

Dever: I have gone on a couple. One to the beach. Another to the mountains for a ski retreat.

Gold: Which beach?

Dever: Ocean City, New Jersey.

Gold: So you have never gone out of the country for a retreat?

Dever: I have not for a retreat. The service work; I have not done those trips.

Gold: Would that be more a missionary. I am trying to understand the missionary vs the retreat.

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Dever: We have the ministry side and the service side. The service side is the one that does the trips to Kenya and Guatemala. For Bob, who is the director of this program, he has been to Tanzania on one of the trips.

Gold: So you have never gone to Tanzania or any place. Just on the retreats. What kinds of things do you do on the retreats?

Dever: Because they are conducted by college students, they are general self-motivated so the students who go wanted to be there. And therefore, there are talks given by students, small group discussion held by students. The attendance of adults, adults like myself, are more as moral support rather than leaders of the retreats. The students do their own retreats.

Gold: How long do the retreats usually?

Dever: Usually go from Friday to Sunday. Just usually two nights. We leave on Friday about four o' clock and come home on Sunday about four o' clock.

Gold: When you arrived at the University Ministry and Service, was there anything, any improvements you made? Any changes you made in how it was run?

Dever: I think we have just created an optimistic, caring environment so we want students to

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Dever: feel at home here when they come in. We have added a second Mass on Sunday. When I first got here they only had one at six o' clock. Now we have added one at eight o' clock in Basil in the lounge of Basil. So we are trying to expand our approach to students.

Gold: Can you describe a typical Ministry Mass to me?

Dever: A typical --?

Gold: Ministry Mass

Dever: Ministry Mass? Like a Sunday Mass here?

Gold: Like a Sunday Mass. What is involved?

Dever: We have an opening hymn. The scripture readings for the day. Then I preach. Students do the scripture readings. Students lead the prayer. Students lead the singing and do the singing. Then we all gather around the Euchring table for the celebration of Eucharist. Then we have communion and announcements and then we depart.

Gold: You said you do a sermon. Do you try to relate that sermon to something that is happening in University life?

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Dever: I do. The nice thing about a University. They are all going to the same school; having the same experience. So, it is easier to relate to that group than to a parish where you have crying babies and hundred year old people at the same time in the same church. It is a focused environment.

Gold: Do the kids ever pray for good grades or the basketball team? (laugh)

Dever: Neither. Now, they pray for the basketball team and all sports team that they be healthy but not that they win. Not sure it is a good idea but they do pray that they be healthy.

Gold: That is very nice. So that goes along with being more philanthropic to people. Thinking about other people.

Dever: I think that is part of what Catholic Christian life is about. It is not just about you. You and your relationship with the world. And God's world. And God's people.

Gold: Could you tell me anything about the history of College Hall?

Dever: No. Not really. It has been here a long time. That is all I really know. I do not know much about the history of it.

Gold: Okay. Has the Ministry always been in College Hall?

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Dever: I don't the answer to that question. I am not sure. For a long time it has been here.

Gold: Is there a reason why you usually photographed blessing things. I talked to ---.

Dever: Brother Joe Grabenstein.

Gold: Brother Joe. And he said ---.

Dever: Only because they are public events so whenever there is a public event. I am not photographed doing my normal day because I generally am interviewing students or counseling students. You do not photograph any of that. So the public events that I am at usually involve blessing a building or a room or something akin to that. And also I am photographed a lot at Mass for family weekend or something that is large like baccalaureate Mass. But my day to day life is confidential so I can't let it be photographed.

Gold: So you are fine with being photographed mostly doing blessings.

Dever: I am perfectly fine with that. I prefer not being photographed at all. Yeah, that is perfectly fine.

Gold: Are you camera shy at all?

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Dever: No. No, I just. I don't need to appear anywhere. I don't need to be anywhere in a major fashion.

Gold: I mean. Do you look at a picture and think "Oh, jeez, I look like that?"

Dever: I look older in photographs than I think I look in my head so that is a bit of culture shock. But other than that, it is fine. I am not camera shy.

Gold: What is your affiliation with Alpha Chi Rho fraternity?

Dever: I am the advisor and I am also a fraternity member. So as the advisor, I am the liaison between the school and the fraternity. As a member of the fraternity, and also as the advisor, I do a lot of counseling with the Alpha Chi Rho brothers.

Gold: How did it come about that you were an honorary fraternity brother?

Dever: I was already the advisor for a couple of years and then finally they asked me if I would become a brother which I did.

Gold: When you were in college, did you ever think you would belong to a fraternity?

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Dever: No. The college I went to didn't have fraternities. So I never thought I was going to be in a fraternity at certainly this age of life.

Gold: The college that you went to (for your degree), did they have any social groups that you belonged to?

Dever: They did. They had a group called CRABS which is the committee for the renewal of alcoholic beverages. It was just a college drinking group.

Gold: Okay.

Dever: They did not have fraternities or sororities as we know them today.

Gold: How did the University feel about CRABS?

Dever: They were unhappy. They did not like that.

Gold: How older were you when you belonged to CRABS?

Dever: Twenty one. Twenty two. Something like that.

Gold: Did they do anything besides ----. What was the goal of CRABS?

Dever: Having parties.

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Gold: Okay.

Dever: That's all they did.

Gold: Okay. Have you participated in any events with the fraternity besides advisory?

Dever: I attend all their meetings and all activities but I don't partake in any of the ---. What should be done by twenty year olds, I let twenty year olds do. I am present at all meetings or where I can be present at.

Gold: They have a good role model though.

Dever: I hope so. That is my goal.

Gold: Do you feel that they behave themselves?

Dever: I do. They are wonderful people.

Gold: Are there any goals that you have for UMAS that you have not accomplished yet?

Dever: I think we are always trying to find way to reach new students. So, each year we try to evaluate what we have done the year before in hopes that we will find another opportunity

To approach other students and find a way to at least invite them to be a part of what we do.

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Gold: A little birdy told me that your time at LaSalle will be ending soon.

Dever: I don't think so. No, it is certainly a possibility because we get transferred. But I suspect I will be here for a few more years. This is my seventh year so I imagine I will be here for a little bit longer. I will probably here a while. I think we are all set. I have to stop by (inaudible) for something else.

Gold: This concludes part two of three for Father Dever interview. We are finishing with talking about his time at LaSalle. And we will conclude with what you see as your future. If you ever feel that you are going to retire.

*****End of Father Dever Interview Part Two*****

Oral History Interview of Father James F. Dever by William Gold

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Friday April 13, 2012

Gold: My name is William Gold. I am interviewing Father Jim Dever on Friday April 13, 2012 at his office at University Ministry and Service at LaSalle University in Philadelphia Pennsylvania. This is the conclusion of an Interview with Father Jim Dever about his life and experiences as a priest since he has come to LaSalle, and his life before the university. Father Dever, I want to

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Gold: thank you once again for your time.

Dever: Glad to do it.

Gold: Do I have your permission to record this interview?

Dever: You do.

Gold: And do I have your permission to interview you?

Dever: You do.

Gold: Okay. Father Dever, we will be returning to finishing up talking about your time at LaSalle in a moment. You had mentioned in a previous session that you lived or worked in Michigan? When and where did you do that?

Dever: I did that as a camp counselor in the summer of (pause) 1966. My order that I belonged to ran a camp in Michigan and I was assigned there to be a camp counselor.

Gold: And what was the name of the camp?

Dever: Camp De Sales in the Irish Hills of Michigan.

Gold: Wow. How did you feel about that experience?

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Dever: I hated it. My ideal age level to work with is college students. Working with little kids was not my calling. I was fine, but I didn't; I wouldn't want to ever do it again. And then it would be a few more years before I ever did again.

Gold: I want to return for a moment to ask about your aunts and uncles. Could you tell me your father's sibling's names?

Dever: My father was one of five sons. In order is Raymond, John, my father's name was Walter, then Joseph and Tom. They were the five boys.

Gold: Are any of them still living?

Dever: No. They are all deceased.

Gold: Your mother's siblings. You said she was one of five again.

Dever: She is one of five. (There were) four daughters and a son. It is Lois, Lawrence, Ruth was my mother, and Jessie; a female, and then Bill was the boy.

Gold: Good name.

Dever: Exactly. Right.

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Gold: And are any of them still living?

Dever: No. They are all deceased as well.

Gold: You said that your sister was a church secretary.

Dever: Yes.

Gold: Were there any other members of your family that were involved with the Church as a profession or went into the priesthood?

Dever: I have actually a great uncle who we called an uncle who was a priest.

Gold: And his name was?

Dever: Joseph Cavanaugh ¹.

1. SS. Simon and Jude Parish was founded on May 31, 1961 with 360 families and Father Joseph A. Cavanaugh as Pastor on 13 acres of land, including the stone house that is now used as the rectory. On Sunday, September 2, 1962, the first Mass in the church was celebrated by Fr. Cavanaugh. Two days later our parish school opened with 260 students. After 22 years as Pastor of SS. Simon and Jude parish, Fr. Cavanaugh died suddenly on Palm Sunday, 1983.

<http://www.simonandjude.org/index.cfm?load=page&page=165>

3:24

Gold: Where was he a priest?

Dever: In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. He died when he was pastor of the church called St. Simon Jude ¹. which is in West Chester.

Gold: For how many years was he a priest?

Dever: He was ordained in a (Pause) Good question. He was seventy five when he died. He died in 1980 so he was ordained in 1935.

Gold: Okay. I would like to ask you briefly about your assignment as a recruiter of the Oblates of Francis de Sales. Did you have a procedure you would go through to accomplish that task?

Dever: Yes. It was similar to an application process for a position. So we would do collecting of data about the individual person. We would do letters of recommendation from other persons who were involved in their lives. But, also because of the nature of church work, we would require the candidate to go through a psychological test. The psychological test was not for the purpose of screening in or out. I was for the purpose of goals to set with that

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Dever: person to achieve the most that they could achieve.

Gold: Would you approach them or would they approach you?

Dever: Generally at my level they would approach me. Sometimes, someone else would funnel them to me. So if there was a priest, for instance, teaching at one of our colleges, he would say this person is interested and funnel him to me.

Gold: Were you a good recruiter? Did you recruit a lot of people to the priesthood?

Dever: I think I was a good recruiter. But I was recruiting at a time that people were not jumping for joy to do this job. So the 'High Days', if you will were back in the fifties and sixties that some people were joining seminaries in great numbers. But as soon as the late sixties and early seventies came about, which with the shift to a more freewheeling society not as many people have chosen to choose church ministry as a career.

Gold: Did that ever swing back at all? Was there a period when people were? I know you were not a recruiter then but, was there a period after the sixties and seventies that people started coming back to the seminaries?

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Dever: (It has) never gone back to the level that it was before. It might again at some point and time. But, currently it has not. No. There were the 'High Days'. Part of the complexity, for the Catholic Clergy, is we require people not to marry. And more and more people today don't appreciate the reason why that would exist. They choose not to think about full-time Church ministry.

Gold: Is there a specific reason why they do not want priest to marry?

Dever: Well, I think that there are probably as many reasons as there are people you ask the question for. But if you choose the most positive reason it was the concept that a priest could not be tied down with family obligations that would keep him from being available on a more extended basis to his congregation. But in a sense, his congregation becomes his spouse. So he devotes his time and effort to taking care of his congregation.

Gold: Sounds like a positive reason. So you are basically really devoted to your profession when you choose to be a priest.

Gold: Exactly right.

Gold: I am going to move on. You said that you were at churches with a lot of mixed

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Gold: nationalities and single nationalities. You said you with several nationalities at various parishes including Italian and Asian nationalities. Is there a particular nationality that you have not worked with that you would like to work with before the end of your career?

Dever: That is interesting. (pause). Not really. No. In this country, I think I covered the gamut of Of most of the arriving immigrants in one form or (another). And then I worked with every variation or another. One reason that I would not want to work with other cultures yet is that I don't speak another language. So I feel inadequate often times to jump into a culture. For instance, the church I did work in, we had Mass in the parish, but Mass was generally in English. The Korean Community would bring in their own priest to do Mass because they want to have Mass in Korean. So as an Anglo- American sometimes I don't feel competent often to be a minister to people who don't speak English. I wish I spoke another language but it is too late in life.

Gold: So you have ministered to Italians, Irish and Polish.

Dever: Yes, those in the regular parishes. But the parish I worked here that was Holy Child and now our Lady of Hope. Was a mixture of a lot of Asian cultures, Vietnamese, Hmong, Laotian as

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Dever: well as Filipinos, Latinos, and Blacks.

Gold: Is there a nationality that you wouldn't feel comfortable working with?

Dever: Not in terms of the people. No. The only complication , I said, would be the language and not knowing language. I would feel out of place.

Gold: I would like to conclude (our interview by) talking about your day to day working at LaSalle. I saw (on the website) there is an Affirmation that was established. What is the Affirmation, first of all?

Dever: The Affirmation actually belongs to the Division of Student Affairs, not just the University Ministry and Service. And it was a series of positive statements meant to encourage students to consider themselves connected to other students on campus. So it ends with the words, "I am LaSalle. We are LaSalle." So it is a statement of trying to get everybody to raise their visions and hopes to the highest they can be while they are here. And during the 'Day One' process which is the orientation process during the summer, we actually use the Affirmation as part of a training tool to help students and their families appreciate what LaSalle is about. And the Affirmation has a lot of 'I Respect' statements. Though it is really about creating a sense that when you live in a community like this you have respect for each other.

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Gold: What was the motivation for coming up with the Affirmation?

Dever: I think it was a decision on the part of (the Division of Student Affairs). It happened before I got here. It was a decision on the part of Student Affairs to keep the focus on a more positive plane. So rather than say things that you can't do as a college student. These are the things we encourage you to do. Respect each other. Be part of the community. Be part of the LaSalle family.

Gold: So you are in support of the Affirmation.

Dever: Yes.

Gold: Do you think it has helped to bring the LaSalle Community together at all?

Dever: That is a good question. There is no data to support that but I think that anecdotally most people think the answer is 'yes'.

Gold: Have you seen any evidence of it?

Dever: I think that student behavior is getting better with each passing year. So you hope that the Affirmation had something to do with that. But it might not. That is why I am saying that they have never done any real data to find out whether or not it has or has not. But it seems

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Dever: that the student behavior towards each other with (regard to) the respect question has been pretty thorough.

Gold: I would like to turn now to talking about (the fact that) next year is the one hundred fiftieth anniversary; sesquicentennial of the University. What events, if any, does the University Ministry have planned for that event?

Dever: Well actually the plans are being done by a larger committee. But the one thing that the University is involved in because we are the University Ministry and Service is a one day service commitment for everybody on campus. And that is going to be held on Saturday September 29th next year. And people will actually leave campus and go to work sites and do as much positive service as they can in a one day time period. If you want, I can make a copy of this if you want to take it with you. (Holds up a flyer about the day of service.)

Gold: I am good but thank you for the offer. Does anyone in the University have any vision of what the next one hundred and fifty years might bring for LaSalle. Will we still be here?

Dever: I think there is a strategic plan in place. But plans generally have a five year window to them . I think that the plan currently is for five years. That is more in terms of dollars and cents

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Dever: than brick and mortar. So it is about where the money is going to come from. And what projects do we have to engage in to build new buildings or redevelop the ones that we already have. The goal, of course, is to keep the University here for another one hundred and fifty years but that is an incremental step of five years at a time.

Gold: Do you foresee it (the University) relocating at any point? I know it has relocated a number of times.

Dever: I don't think so. I think that the extensive amount of property that they know have would almost preclude any potential relocation. I think this is it. I think the neighborhood around here might change a bit. Just by the very fact that, for instance, that Germantown Hospital closed and pretty much merged with Einstein. So other things might change but I think that La Salle has more good years.

Gold: So you said what hospital closed?

Dever: Germantown hospital which is up here. Because they were almost closed but they still had an emergency room that has since closed. And now all the emergency care is funneled down to Einstein.

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Gold: And do you know the reason they closed?

Dever: Einstein owned that hospital. It was a multiplication of services. They did not need two emergency rooms that close to each other because they were only five blocks apart. I suspect it was cost effective. That would be my guess.

Gold: Being a native Philadelphian, have you seen any other changes over the years that have struck you?

Dever: In Philadelphia?

Gold: In Philadelphia. Yes.

Dever: Well, I think that Philadelphia has become more diverse culturally. And I think that is because it is a city of neighborhoods. So you see a lot of different cultures occupy a neighborhood. Neighborhoods begin to overlap almost. On another side I think you see each culture expanding a bit more into what would have been someone else's culture before. So if you take the Black and Latino community for instance, now you see more and more intermarriage between people who are Black and people who are Latino which you have not seen before.

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(Interviewer gets up and closes office door.)

Dever: I think it is because the neighborhoods are starting to overlap with themselves. It is a definite plus.

Gold: I know you said you see yourself at LaSalle for the foreseeable future. However, where do you see yourself five years from now?

Dever: (pause) I would suspect if I have not retired (that) I would be just working at a parish somewhere. I don't think I would still be here (LaSalle) in the sense that I think there is an age limit to how long you can stay in college work. So I am not far off from that limit. You are not forced out by the University. But just by your own sense of that I am not really energized enough to work with eighteen year olds everyday.

Gold: So you think that you would go to a parish as your next assignment rather than a college.

Dever: I definitely would not go to another college. This is the end of my college journey only because I think that I would be at the point where I would be too old to do college work. I think in order to do college work with college students you have to have a young mind. And I still have that but I am not so sure I will have it forever. So I would like to get out for me while my

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Dever: mind is still young.

Gold: what would be your dream assignment as a priest?

Dever: I think that everything I have done has been a dream assignment. I love all my jobs except for that summer at the camp. I like working here at LaSalle. I like the parishes I've worked in. I have been fortunate to be able to do those jobs at different points in my life so I think I was in the right place at the right time.

Gold: What would be your feelings if you were ever offered a position at the Vatican?

Dever: Well, two things. I would think they were insane. It would never happen. I am not at that level

Gold: But hypothetically if it would.

Dever: I love Rome so I would not mind living in Rome. I would be very happy to take the job.

But believe me it would not happen.

Gold: What would be your feelings be about the job?

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Dever: It would not know what the job was. But living in Rome I would be very happy to do that. I like the city of Rome.

Gold: How many more years do you see yourself working for the Order?

Dever: Well, I am in my Order till I die so I hope for a few more years before I die.

Gold: But you had mentioned before (about) retirement.

Dever: Retirement though is not out of the Order. It is actually still in the Order. And even in retirement, I would like to still do some part time work there and never completely retire. Unless I was incapacitated then I would retire.

Gold: What would you do in part-time work?

Dever: Still work in the church somewhere. Maybe just two or three days a week and then something on the weekend just as a part-time person.

Gold: Have you ever considered ... I don't know if you have any family there or from there (Ireland). But have you ever considered going to Ireland to explore your roots.

Dever: I have been to Ireland several times. I suspect there are some old roots there. I just don't know what they are. I'm not first generation Irish so I wouldn't know where to begin to look .

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Gold: When did you go to Ireland?

Dever: I had been there in nineteen ... The mid eighties and the mid nineties. I have been there twice.

Gold: How long did you go for?

Dever: A week each time. Yeah. Mid eighties and mid nineties. I was there.

Gold: What did you do when you were.

Dever: Just toured around. Saw Ireland. One time I visited the Dublin side and on the other time on the Galway side which is the sides of the island. So it was a wonderful place to visit.

Gold: When you were there either time, did any attractions stick out in your mind?

Dever: When you visit Ireland, you visit for the people. They can't cook so you don't visit for the food. The people are a treasure unto themselves so it is a fascinating place to visit.

Gold: My sister is going next week so I will give her a heads up about the food.

Dever: The food is not great.

Gold: What differences did you see between Ireland and America?

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Dever: I actually see more things in common than different because Irish people like America and they like Americans so (there is) a high imitation of cultures there. They speak English so it makes it a little bit easier. They are a bit more. Maybe this is not the right word, but a bit more old-fashioned than people in America would be. But, they are wonderful people.

Gold: What do you feel is the greatest benefit in your life that you have gained from choosing the priesthood?

Dever: I have met wonderful people who have allowed me to become a better person. They have helped me grow, develop and mature. Both people within the church and people that I have been able to serve in person or students for that matter.

Gold: You are definitely a people person?

Dever: I like people. I like not being with people, too. I mean I like being alone. But I am with people all day . So yes I definitely enjoy people.

Gold: Who counsels you? You counsel everyone else. Who counsels you?

Dever: I have some priest friends that I trust. If I have an issue, I will call them. Either call them or see them, and converse with them about I think the concerns are. I have some good friends

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Dever: who are priests. So if it is basically a church related issue, I would talk to them. If it was an issue related to business or about a Pastor of a parish and I needed financial advice, I would call someone in the parish who is an accountant or a banker. Someone who can answer the question.

Gold: Do you have any regrets about your career or your life?

Dever: My only regret has nothing to do with me directly. But I wish my parents were richer. I wish I was born a person with rich parents. Other than that I have no regrets. Little regrets.

As I said to you, one of my regrets is that I do not speak another language. I wish I could. But I wish I had studied another language more carefully when I was younger.

Gold: Is there a language in particular that you wish you had mastered?

Dever: earlier in High School and college, I had studied French which I enjoyed because I enjoyed reading French authors. But if I had my druthers, I would have preferred to speak Italian.

Gold: How long did you study French?

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Dever: I studied French for two years in High School and two years in college.

Gold: Was your teacher a native French speaker?

Dever: In High School, It was an American who had studied in France. In college, the first teacher was an American who had studied in France. And the second teacher was French. She was a native French speaker.

Gold: Have you known an Italian speakers in your time?

Dever: Yes. I was the pastor at the National Italian parish so I know a lot of Italian speakers.

Gold: I remember that you mentioned that. Is there anything that attracts you to the Italian language in particular.

Dever: No. I think the Italian Language has benefits because the people who speak Italian have an easier time understanding Spanish, understanding Portuguese. So I think it opens more doors to language. That is why I would like to speak Italian.

Gold: So it is all the Romance languages

Dever: Which French is included in. But I just think that those that speak Italian seem to be

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Dever: able to understand Spanish easier than people who do not.

Gold: Now that you are getting older, have you ever been sick?

Dever: I have never had a serious illness. No.

Gold: I know you had mentioned that your sister had grown children with children of their own. What are your feelings about being a great uncle?

Dever: I do not see them as often as I would like because they live in Chicago. So when they are that young, they do not really know who I am. I am Uncle Jim to them. But I don't see them very often. So when they are older, I think I will have a better relationship with them.

Gold: You have a relationship. But personally, how do you feel about being a great uncle.

Dever: I am fine with it. It is a wonderful thing.

Gold: In any way, does it make up for not having children of your own?

Dever: Not really because they are not local. I have a godson. He is more of a son to me than a godson so that gives it a little bit of worth. But to be honest with you, working at the University gives you thousands of children.

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Gold: You don't see them that often but how old are they?

Dever: The children I think are probably eleven and eight and two and four on my niece's side.

My nephew has two children under the age of three so they are little.

Gold: They are little ones. They are still in elementary school.

Dever: Oh, yes, and even not in school at all.

Gold: Do the ones under three attend preschool?

Dever: Their mother works in a daycare center so they go to daycare with them.

Gold: That's nice.

Dever: It is.

Gold: She gets to see them all day. She probably gets a discount on daycare.

Dever: Exactly. You got it.

Gold: I wanted to conclude by asking you how your identity has changed, you feel personally, since your childhood?

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Dever: I think we are who we are. I think what happens is with each passing season of life, we try to better people. I think I am smarter, wiser, more mature now than I was twenty. Not that I was bad at twenty but I did not know everything I ought should know at twenty. I am still trying to grow. I don't think I have reached any level of perfection. So I will wait a little bit longer to get better. I think it is a journey all the time.

Gold: Do you think you will ever reach perfection?

Dever: I do not. No. I think it is all process, not perfection. I think you reach perfection the day after you are dead. Then that is when you are perfect as you are going to get.

Gold: I know you are not there yet, but how would you like to be remembered?

Dever: As a thoughtful and a wise person. If they put the words thoughtful and wise person on my tombstone, I will be happy.

Gold: What has been the best thing in your life?

Dever: Being a priest. That has been the best thing that ever happened to me so I am thrilled.

Gold: That you love what you do.

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Dever: I do.

Gold: What would you say to future generations who wanted to be a priest?

Dever: I think if that is what you are called to do. And certainly I think it is a calling, much like being a physician or a politician: I think they are callings. If that is what you are called to do, it is a wonderful life. I would give it a shot.

Gold: I feel like I have learned a lot from you Father Dever.

Dever: It has been wonderful doing this, Bill. Thank you.

Gold: I appreciate you taking the time. I know you are busy.

Dever: It is an honor to do. Good luck with you.

Gold: Thanks so much for all your time.

***** End of Father Dever Interview Part 3*****

