

**New England Jesuit  
Oral History Program**



**Fr. Robert G. Doherty, S.J.  
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## THE IMPORTANCE OF ORAL HISTORY

Oral histories are the taped recordings of interviews with interesting and often important persons. They are not folklore, gossip, hearsay, or rumor. They are the voice of the person interviewed. These oral records are, in many instances, transcribed into printed documentary form. Though only so much can be done, of course, in an hour or some times two, they are an important historical record whose value increases with the inevitable march of time.

For whatever reason, New England Jesuits, among others around the world, have not made any significant number of oral histories of their members. Given the range of their achievements and their impact on the Church and society, this seems to many to be an important opportunity missed. They have all worked as best they could for the greater glory of God. Some have done extraordinary things. Some have done important things. All have made valuable contributions to spirituality, education, art, science, discovery, and many other fields. But living memories quickly fade. Valuable and inspiring stories slip away.

This need not be. Their stories can be retold, their achievements can be remembered, their adventures saved. Their inspiration can provide future generations with attractive models. That is what Jesuit oral history is all about.

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May 2008

Interview of Fr. Robert G. Doherty, S.J.  
by Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.  
June 23, 2006

**EARLY YEARS**

**ROUSSEAU:** Welcome. Let's begin with your early years.

**DOHERTY:** I'm one of three sons. We were all born and brought up in Dorchester. We attended St. Peter's Church and we all went to St. Peter's School for eight years. That was part of the grammar school structure in those days. My brother Jack went to BC High and I followed him. Paul went there, as well as to Quincy High School.

**RR:** Could you tell us something about your mother and father.

**RD:** My mother and father were both Americans. They were from diverse backgrounds. My mother came from a family that was both English and Canadian. My father was of Irish descent. He grew up in St. Patrick's Parish in Roxbury. And they formed us according to the typical religious patterns of the day. So we obviously went to the Catholic grammar school staffed by the good Sisters of Charity of Halifax. My parents were very devout people.

**RR:** So St. Peter's Church in Dorchester had its own school.

Did you like it there?

RD: Yes, of course. In those days the grammar school nuns were gentle but firm. They would often take us to their feasts, celebrations of the Eucharist, and confessions. The Sisters also taught us their own devotions.

#### CONFIRMATION NAME

RR: What about your pastor?

RD: The pastor was Monsignor Haberlin and had four curates. We young people were very devoted to them. As a matter of fact, at my confirmation, I was given the name of one of the most popular priests, Fr. Leo O'Day. So my third name is Robert Grant Leo Doherty. [Laughter] And I wasn't at all sure whether it was our devotion to him or his devotion to us.

RR: Maybe it was both.

RD: Maybe.

#### JESUIT COUSIN

RR: So you lived in a strong Catholic atmosphere.

RD: Oh, yes. My brother Jack was geared toward some form of priesthood, because a cousin, Fr Edward Douglas, SJ, who was at BC, took a great interest in him. I believe that he was oriented towards the priesthood early on, though I don't have much first-hand information about that. But when he went to BC High, I know that he was thinking of joining the Jesuits after graduation.

RR: So is that what he did?

RD: No, he went into the service. And when I finished BC High, I went to BC. I was thinking of going to medical school. But when Jack returned from the service, he was no longer intent on joining the Jesuits. Rather he went into the medical profession. He did his pre-med course at BC.

I had a very strong conflict, because my father was

paying for my education at BC, whereas Jack had his education paid for by the GI Bill. So he went into pre-med, while I had to make up my mind in my second year as to what I was going to do.

#### DONE IN THREE YEARS

RR: Let's go back a bit. Could you tell us about your high school days?

RD: Well, for one thing, St. Peter's had a reputation for winning scholarships to BC High. And Jack had won a full scholarship. So I was competing with him, but I got only a two-year scholarship. It was part of my ongoing competitive relationship with my brother.

RR: I gather, however, that it was a positive relationship?

RD: Oh, yes, I certainly hope so. He was a senior at the time. We didn't have much contact there at BC High. He was much more talented and sophisticated than I. I had to work much harder in school. I was motivated by the fact that BC High was offering a summer program for third year. The point was to try to get students to finish their high school before they were drafted.

RR: That was quite an incentive.

RD: So I signed up for the summer program. As it turned out, there were about fifteen of us in it. We started in June and went through to the very end of August. We worked through mornings and long afternoons. I think we worked even on Saturdays. When summer was over, we went right into fourth year.

RR: So you did four years of high school in three? There must have been a lot of pressure involved.

RD: But I was doing well enough to be able to handle it. And most of the others also went on into fourth year.

#### BOSTON COLLEGE YEARS

RR: Did you go to Boston College from there?

RD: Yes, as I said earlier, I was thinking of becoming a doctor. And since I had the idea at the time that Jack was going to join the priesthood or the Jesuits, I was more focused on going to BC to study with my friends from third year. One of my friends went to Holy Cross.

RR: During those two years you were at BC, were there any Jesuits who were particularly influential for you?

RD: I think I was strongly resistant to my cousin, Fr. Ed Douglas. He used to drive me absolutely “bananas.” I was specially annoyed in the theology class held in a big classroom in the tower building. There was a massive number of first-year students in that classroom. He’d say, “Doherty, where are you?” [Laughter] So I got to dislike the whole phenomenon.

RR: That’s understandable.

RD: But T. J. C. Kelly, SJ, at BC High—God rest him—had the strongest influence on me. He was a great teacher. T. J. C. Kelly was a wonderful, wonderful scholastic, who taught me in my first year. He became a kind of model for me when I started thinking about the priesthood. I very much wanted to be like him. When I went to Shadowbrook, it was a wonderful surprise to find he was already a teacher there. It was a joyful reunion.

#### INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

RR: What motivated you to enter the Jesuits when you did?

RD: I always felt like doing the surprising thing. In a way, the situation gave me freedom and an independent streak.

RR: You have a good sense of self-analysis.

RD: I kept asking myself, “Why do I do things differently?”

RR: You haven’t said much about your third brother.

RD: Paul is very quiet, a gentle type of person. He became an electrician like my dad. He was a kind of companion for me, and we got along just fine. He was only a year and a half younger than I, whereas I had a two-

year gap with my older brother.

RR: Let's hear more of your entrance into the Jesuits at Shadowbrook. Who was master of novices at that time?

#### NOVICE LIFE

RD: Fr. John Post. As a novice, I saluted every flag under the sun and did everything I was asked to do.

RR: Did you find that your BC High experience, especially with Latin, helped you in accommodating to Shadowbrook?

RD: Yes, I didn't have any academic problems.

RR: Was there anything that stood out in your mind during those years at Shadowbrook or even later on?

RD: Well, I did become the assistant to the novice chap in charge of us other novices. He was like the president of a class and was called a *manuductor*. His name was John, and I was his assistant. He was from Worcester and was a very gentle, quiet guy. He would call me and say, "Tell so and so to do such and such," which made me a kind of disciplinarian. Though it wasn't a job I liked, I found it interesting to have information about what was going on.

RR: It doesn't sound like an easy job.

RD: It wasn't. And Fr. John Post was a very strong-minded disciplinarian himself.

RR: I assume that your two years as a novice and one year as a junior were made easier by the fact that you had been in college for two years?

RD: Yes, as far as I can remember.

#### TEACHING AT CRANWELL

RR: Let's move on to your next move, three years of philosophy at Weston. Is there anything that stands out in your mind from those days?

RD: Well, I was drawn towards studying biology and chemistry. So that's what I concentrated on during my phi-

losophy years at Weston. I survived all the ups and downs there.

RR: At the end of those three years, you went out to your regency. I noticed that you started out at Cranwell Prep.

RD: Yes, since I had been studying both biology and chemistry and had even taken two summer courses in them at Holy Cross, I assumed that was what I would be teaching. At that time, July 31 was the day we would go to our bulletin board to find out what our regency teaching assignments would be.

RR: Yes, it was called the “status day.”

RD: Well, I was very surprised to find on the board that instead of teaching biology and chemistry, I was assigned to Cranwell Preparatory School to teach algebra and English! To teach my regular subjects I would have gone to either Fairfield or Cheverus. But apparently there was a need for teachers in those other subjects at Cranwell. So I found an algebra book and spent most of that summer teaching myself.

RR: That must have been quite a challenge?

RD: It was an interesting challenge, I’ll tell you! To top it off, Fr. Gus [D. Augustine] Keane, the headmaster, said to me, “We want you to also teach the first-year students how to ride horseback!” And I said, “I don’t know anything about horses.” He said, “Oh, it’ll be easy, because the students don’t know anything about horses either!” So on all my break time, I went over to a stable to learn how to ride horseback! [Laughter] Interestingly enough, those horseback riding experiences are my main memories of Cranwell. And believe it or not, I got to love teaching algebra and English.

RR: Would you say that there was something providential about it?

RD: Yes. The students responded well to my teaching of those subjects, and I loved Cranwell. I had Bro. Ed

Niziolek in my second year and you can ask him about that. [Chuckles]

RR: I will.

#### TEACHING IN BAGHDAD

RD: Then in mid-May Gus Keane called me in and asked me how things were going. I said, "Fine. I've finally gotten used to the horses." He said, "Well, things are going to change. Have you ever volunteered for the missions?" And I said, "No, I never did." He said, "You'll have to be taking some shots, because you've been assigned to teach biology in Baghdad, Iraq."

RR: That must have been quite a surprise?

BD: Yes. So I started taking all the shots including tetanus, and was in pain most of that time. And then I went to Weston to get ready to go with the crew to Baghdad. I was there for two years.

RR: Tell us more about it.

RD: I have to say that despite that confusing beginning, I had really enjoyed Cranwell, its students, its personal freedom, to say nothing of the horses. I really hadn't been that interested in being a missionary in Baghdad, and I actually ran into some problems when I got there.

RR: What do you mean?

RD: Somehow the rector and I got off on the wrong foot from the very beginning. He said to me a number of times, "Don't mention Cranwell here anymore. I don't want to hear anything about Cranwell." I had been saying things like, "Well, they were successful at Cranwell doing such and such." He didn't appreciate the implied criticism.

RR: It sounds like you had two very challenging years there?

RD: Very challenging! And teaching in that biology department didn't make it easier.

RR: How about the students? Did you like them?

RD: I liked them. They were very good, very responsive

students. I taught third-year biology and first-year algebra. Jim Walsh was the home room teacher, and I worked with him in 1F.

RR: Did you learn much Arabic?

RD: No, somehow I didn't get much training in Arabic.

#### BACK TO WESTON AND THEOLOGY

RR: So after those two years in Baghdad you returned to Weston for your theology. Could you give us an overview of those theology years? Were there significant things that come to mind?

RD: I was made the prefect of the Weston theologians during my second year. It turned out that I liked being in command. That was something about myself that I hadn't been fully aware of. For a change, no one was telling me what to do. Also, we had a wonderful rector, Fr. JV O'Connor. He really trusted me and we got along very well. And my theology classes were good. I have positive memories of them.

RR: Was it because you felt more independent?

RD: Yes, and I can say that most of my theology years were pleasant. I enjoyed them.

RR: It's good to hear that the professors did their jobs.

RD: And I was very happy about the fact that I wasn't going back to Baghdad. After I had gotten back to the US, I had written a letter to the provincial, which we talked about when he came on his yearly visitation. The net result was that I felt fairly certain that I would not be going back.

#### ORDINATION

RR: At the end of three years you were ordained. Who ordained you?

RD: Cardinal Cushing did so in 1960.

RR: That was, of course, a very happy occasion for you and your whole family?

RD: Yes, it was a great moment. All of us being ordained were responsive to the Cardinal. He was very gracious with us Jesuits. He was always appreciative of all that we contributed to the archdiocese here. We have a picture of him with my whole family.

RR: What about your brothers?

RD: Both of them had married while I was in Iraq.

RR: Now for your tertianship. I understand that you went to Pomfret?

RD: Yes.

RR: What about your first assignment after tertianship?

#### ASSISTANT TO MASTER OF NOVICES

RD: I was told by the tertian director that, when tertianship finished, I was going to Shadowbrook to be the *socius* [assistant] to the novice master, TG O'Callaghan.

RR: What kind of position was it?

RD: The main responsibility for that position, in those days, was to be the novices' disciplinarian, for example, seeing to it that everyone was in bed on time and up with the morning bell. I also had to teach Latin.

T G would phone me and say, "Do this. Do that." He never told me anything about his personal contacts with the novices. I think it was due mainly to respect their confidentiality. But he would tell me things like, "Keep your eyes on so and so. He has a tendency to walk in his sleep."

RR: So you had to always be alert?

RD: Yes, and I also had some other odd duties that I can't remember now.

RR: But did you enjoy that position?

RD: I felt that I had to be too much of a disciplinarian, so I didn't like it all that much. But I wanted to please Gerry O'Callaghan by doing what he asked me to do. And I didn't want him to feel disappointed in or about me. But, at the same time, at times I found it challeng-

ing to work with him.

RR: You did the best you could under the circumstances. You can't ask for more than that.

RD: That's right.

RR: How long were you there at Shadowbrook?

RD: I was there two years. Then, during one of my interviews with the provincial, or maybe it was the prefect of studies, he said, "Why don't you go to Rome and do some studies in ascetical theology?" So that's what I did. I left Shadowbrook and went to study at the Gregorian University in Rome.

RR: Isn't what you studied there now often called spirituality?

RD: That's right. That's what it's called today.

#### STUDYING IN ROME

RR: Please tell us more about Rome and the studies involved there.

RD: Well, the basic course was on the history of spirituality, focusing on individual saints and other persons. We studied Ignatian spirituality and other schools of spirituality, such as Dominican spirituality. As you can see, we were looking into a variety of spiritual traditions. And we studied a variety of episodes in the history of spirituality.

RR: And what did the term "ascetical" mean?

RD: I think it referred to the practical side of a spiritual life. Actions are important and need to be encouraged, studied, and followed. It was basically what you could call "following the practical." Today I think the same thing is referred to more often as "pastoral" or concern for the "spiritual well-being" of others.

RR: That's interesting.

RD: In other words, it meant that spirituality was something more focused on the loving of others rather than study or routine, action rather than theory. It's what

you do, rather than what you say. You choose a certain spiritual outlook and then carry it out in your own life by helping the lives of others. You have to manifest what you've learned. You pick a certain spirituality and live it, you carry it out, especially the daily examination of consciousness, which Ignatius insisted on. Since I practice Jesuit spirituality, I attempted to read all the Ignatian books and material.

RR: Quite a vision!

RD: I got very involved with working in Ignatian spirituality, because that was what I was geared to bring to Shadowbrook. James Leo Burke, a wonderful guy, who was province prefect of studies, seemed to be directing me toward doing my doctoral studies over there, so I could come back with a doctorate.

#### STUDIES INTERRUPTED

RD: So I was scheduled to do two years and had completed one year when I got a call from the provincial through the Jesuit general's office in Rome, that I was to become secretary to Fr. John Ford and the Vatican commission he was working with. They were rewriting something important for the guidance of the pope. So to help him, I stopped my studies and started helping John Ford.

RR: So this appointment prevented you from doing any more of your own research then?

RD: Yes, though John Ford hinted that it was only temporary. He moved into the Collegio Bellarmino. And he didn't quite seem to know how long this was going to take. I did all his biblical research work for him, going to libraries with certain reference points to follow up on. It was focused on meetings and talks about developments in Christian morality and spirituality.

RR: Did you have some interesting meetings and discussions?

RD: I did, because John Ford needed the latest information on these matters for his meetings. But he never said whether he liked my input or not. So I lost interest in the project itself. Besides, he was having a hard time with his peers about the program. And, in the long run, his positions were, for the most part, rejected. And his positions were not reflected in the final decree.

RR: Were you involved in all this for a year or so?

RD: That's right. About a year.

#### SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR IN THE JUNIORATE

RR: Then what did you do?

RD: I went back to the US and was appointed spiritual director of the juniorate. However they were in the process of closing down the juniorate by the end of that year.

RR: You must have felt a bit disoriented by all this?

RD: That's a good way to put it. I was a knowledgeable man. I knew something about Jesuit history and was familiar with the juniorate, but I hadn't done much writing of my own. Dick Lawlor, the man I replaced in the juniorate, came here to Weston. And he said, "I'll support your going back and finishing your doctorate in spirituality when your year is over."

#### THESIS ON NOTED JESUIT SPIRITUAL WRITER

RD: He was right. I was sent back to Rome. It was suggested that I should do an historically-oriented dissertation about some outstanding Jesuit spiritual writer. I followed that advice and studied Fr. Jean-Nicolas Grou [1731-1803]. You may never have heard of him, but he deserves to be studied more thoroughly. So that's how I spent my second year in Rome.

RR: Could you tell us a bit more about him?

RD: Well, I studied his background by visiting the places

in Europe where he was active. Actually, I spent a good deal of time in England, where he did his training. At that time, Jesuits were banned from the continent, and he went to England to study and work. Eventually, he became a chaplain in England and lived in a community that understood his French. All his writings were in French.

And it happened that the person in charge of the spiritual direction center in England while I was there was French, and was very happy to help me in my research about Grou. He spoke English and assisted me with the older French texts. He was an ideal person to work with, because he was also knowledgeable in spirituality.

RR: Did you ever try to get your thesis published?

RD: Well, when I finished my research in England, I went back to Rome and then to Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass. After that, however, I never did anything more on Grou.

RR: You didn't follow up on your work?

RD: Well, yes. I spent my first year back in Cambridge teaching a course on the implications of pastoral and spiritual theology. By that time, Weston School of Theology was up and running in Cambridge.

#### CHANGES AT HOME

RR: Were you involved at all in the move to Cambridge?

RD: No, I was in Rome at the time. What I discovered from some of the remarks of some professors was that they were not happy with the move to Cambridge. This was especially true of those who were traveling every day back and forth between Weston and Cambridge. But that happened in the year that I was in England and Rome. So by the time I got there, things had stabilized somewhat.

RR: Were you aware of the meetings here among groups

of Jesuits from around the province about the move to Cambridge?

RD: I heard about them, of course, but I was in England and Rome finishing my degree. When I finally got to Cambridge, I was part of the theologians' community at 39 Kirkland Street on the fourth-floor. There were about twelve of us. It was quite interesting to live with scholastics and share the cooking. It was a whole new ball game in community life.

#### LIVING WITH THE POOR

RR: Everything was new and different?

RD: We had few problems with the basic academics, but there was a lot of adjusting needed in dealing with these new living arrangements. So that's where I lived for a couple of years.

RR: We're talking about the early '70s, right? I was there in Cambridge in the mid-70s as dean of the Weston School of Theology.

RD: I was there from 1970 to 1976. I later moved from Kirkland Street to Franklin Street. And that was a quite different dynamic situation.

RR: Why? Was it a different kind of community?

RD: Yes, in the sense the house was an old store on a back street in an impoverished area of Cambridge.

RR: Yes, I'm familiar with it. It had a big glass windows, if I remember correctly.

RD: And there was also a large statue of St. Patrick in the front window.

#### CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

RD: I was there about three years until I was involved with the start-up of the Center for Religious Development at 42 Kirkland Street.

RR: Interestingly enough, Bill Barry gave a very interesting talk about this Center for Religious Development

very recently. What was your experience there like?

RD: Both Bill and myself were in the pastoral department at the Weston School of Theology. So we were formally involved in a spiritual formation program. He was also doing some counseling. And we gradually began to consider training people in this area of spirituality. This led to our starting a master's program in spiritual direction at the school. And that's how the Center for Religious Development started up.

We were fortunate to get 42 Kirkland Street when the Cambridge Center for Social Studies moved to Georgetown University. And it was a wonderful change. We began restructuring the place and then moved in.

RR: Providential, perhaps?

RD: And our program continued to develop. Bill Barry, Bill Connolly, and I were joined in formation work over the years by others. Students at the Weston School of Theology program could choose a course in spiritual direction as an elective.

#### SPREAD OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

RR: And this vision of direction began to be known around the country?

RD: Dom Marucca, a Jesuit in the Maryland Province, was the first in the US to come start retreats in one-on-one spiritual exercises. The older system was the preached retreat. He was using this approach mainly down in Maryland. And, eventually, he became the master of novices in the Maryland Province. He was the one who got all of us interested in this approach to retreats. And we became more and more convinced that this was the way to go with training spiritual directors and retreat directors. That's how we got started with the one-on-one approach.

RR: So it then gathered influence here in New England?

RD: Good enough for people to begin signing up for the program. So much so, that we had to hire Sr. Ann Harvey, SND, and later others. We had a wonderful team of colleagues on the staff developing our formation plan.

#### RETREATS AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

RR: Why do you think the directed retreat has almost eclipsed the preached one?

RD: Because many people soon became fascinated by the clear form of Ignatian spirituality expressed in the one-on-one format. Also, it was seen as oriented toward mission. In the spirit of Ignatius, it was a fresh way of leading people to the core of the Exercises, namely the “election” [decision]. It has a kind of apostolic thrust.

In any case, we found that it began to interest people, especially seminarians. And some of them are now directors themselves around the country. We taught our program in some courses, and some Jesuit provinces were sending their theologians to Weston to learn it. They came from other parts of the world as well.

#### TEACHING AT A QUAKER SEMINARY

RR: It sounds exciting. How long were you involved with this?

RD: Let’s see. About four years. I stayed with the Center for Religious Development until 1976, when I had a sabbatical. And, interestingly enough, this led me into a whole new world.

RR: What was that?

RD: It was my contact with Dr. Miriam Burke, who had a doctorate in psychology. Her husband, who had been a pastor, had died when they were in their forties. She came to Harvard for a sabbatical, and one day heard about the spiritual direction being taught at Weston School of Theology. So she just walked over to see us

at Weston and in time we got to know each other well. We talked about spiritual direction, and she made a thirty-day retreat with me. She then invited me to go to Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana, which was a Quaker school where she taught.

RR: Tell us more about Earlham.

RD: I became an adjunct professor of theology and biblical studies there in 1981.

RR: That must have been different for you?

RD: It was very different. I lived in a separate house across the street from the school, which was owned by Dr. Burke, who was an absolutely delightful person. The school had a good reputation, but still, I had quite a difficult time getting accepted there.

She had told the school officials about the excellence of the retreat she had made at Weston. She then asked me to help her offer a spiritual formation program there. I accepted and went there as a professor of theology and spirituality. We did a course together. She did one area and I did the other. We were very successful, even though the Quaker administration wasn't all that keen on having a Roman Catholic as a teacher.

RR: You mean they didn't support you?

RD: They had some difficulty with a Roman Catholic teaching theology in their Quaker school with its Quaker students.

RR: If so, why did they accept you at all?

RD: It was because Miriam convinced them of my biblical background.

RR: I see.

RD: Also, I went to their prayer meetings. I went to all sorts of events and meetings to help my being accepted. But some still resisted me. Yet I still remained. I was there a whole year, and at the end of it I was given a going-away party during lunch, at which I got up and gave a brief going-away speech.

## TEACHING METHODISTS

RD: And it turned out that there were two guests at the lunch. They were both Methodist professors; one them was an assistant to the Methodist bishop of the Northern Conference in Indiana. After my talk, Miriam explained to them how we had worked together in a spirituality formation program and discernment. So the two of them spoke to me and said, "Would you be willing to work with our Methodist Conference?"

RR: An interesting invitation.

RD: I agreed, and over several months gave some fifteen talks in the parishes in their northern conference.

RR: Tell us more about these talks.

RD: I spoke mainly about John and Charles Wesley, two very powerful English clergymen who founded Methodism in England with their spirituality expressed in their hymnal. I recalled how they inspired the factory workers. They preached on their own on Wednesday night outside the Anglican churches.

And their powerful preaching of spirituality through their hymnal became very popular, especially for those individuals not able to get to the high church Sunday services. John gave the homilies and passed them on to his brother Charles, who would turn the words into song. The people would then sing these songs in their own services in the fields. And, over a number of years the two of them produced some 6,500 liturgically-oriented hymns.

## RETREAT TEAM AT CAMPION CENTER

RR: That's a good summary of the origins of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. What did you do next?

RD: I joined the retreat team in '86 here at Campion Renewal Center. There were ten of us here at the time. It was a wonderful group.

RR: Was it like the present retreat center here now at

Weston?

RD: Somewhat. They did spiritual formation and retreat work. The team doing spiritual formation was half women and half men. They included Jim Bowler, SJ from Fairfield; Ann Harvey, SND, who is now in Worcester; Debbie Conley, LCM, who's in Chicago; Harry Cain, SJ; myself; and a varied mix of others.

RR: That sounds like a high-powered team. Could you tell us a bit more about what they did?

RD: We had a summer course and a thirty-day retreat. It went from June to mid-August, and was always filled. People would get input in short workshops, and then wind up with a thirty-day retreat given by directors who were a part of the formation team for that group.

RR: That gives us a good picture.

RD: Then, after the main presentations, there was a review in which they talked about their experience.

RR: It sounds like a major project that had a lot of wonderful things going on. So what happened to it? Is it still going?

RD: No, it ended. Internal tensions within the team. Bill Barry, the provincial at the time, met with us, and we had a dialog with him about the group. So he sent Bill Devine as the coordinator and decision-maker. Not long afterwards, however, we folded as a team.

RR: I guess it's human nature at work.

#### TEACHING OLDER SEMINARIANS

RD: I then became interested in teaching at nearby Blessed Pope John XXIII National Seminary [for delayed vocations], also here in Weston.

RR: I gather that it offered a good alternative for you? You've been there quite a while. Tell us about that.

RD: I started teaching there in 1987 and am still at it now in 2006.

RR: Fr. Frank Devine, a classmate of mine, and George

Drury, were there for a while, if I remember correctly?

RD: That's right.

RR: How has that worked out for you?

RD: I've taught different parts of scripture.

RR: How do you like working with these older students?

RD: I love it. They keep me going and respond to me very well. You could also describe them as very, very inviting. When Bill Barry asked me to co-direct the New England tertianship, I became part-time at Pope John XXIII for those five years.

RR: But that at least kept the connection going.

RD: Yes, it did. Even when we were at Gloucester for the tertian's thirty-day retreat, I would go back and forth to keep up my teaching. I just couldn't say no to the students there. And they respected the fact that I was doing a thirty-day retreat and living in a different place.

As soon as classes were over, I'd get in the buggy and drive back to Gloucester. Over the years, I found out that they had a deep spiritual interest in the gospel tradition. Then I also began to teach the psalms, and their role in prayer and spirituality. And I had a semester course in the psalms. There was a very wonderful group of eighteen taking my elective.

RR: And today Blessed John's is a booming place, whereas many regular seminaries a lot fewer students.

RD: That's right. But it's a very different dynamic when you're dealing with older men, who come out of a family background and life. Also, many of them have been married, and have children and grandchildren of their own. They are also interested in the pastoral approach of homilies and the scripture rather than in the dogmatic or exegetical.

RR: It's probably due to their life experiences.

RD: Their basic question is, "How are we going to use this?" I focus my whole approach on that, and have a question of my own, "What are we going to do with this in

a normal situation? How do we go about this?” And I arranged that, after September, they would all have the opportunity of giving a homily. We go into the chapel to hear these homilies during our Monday class.

RR: Is it followed by some criticism?

RD: Yes, people can make comments. And they can choose what to preach on. I give them a whole list of possibilities, but the idea is that it would be what they could preach on in church.

RR: Have you found, at least in some small way, that this training you have given the students there provides an approach to homilies that improves the quality and impact on their parishioners?

RD: Yes, when they visit the seminary as alums, they say that the feedback on their homilies has been good.

#### WIDE CONTACT IN THE FAR EAST

RR: Could you tell us something about your time in the Orient?

RD: Yes, I'd like to mention the wonderful and enriching experience of giving retreats and workshops on spiritual formation in Japan, the Philippines, and Korea. I had the privilege of working with the Religious of the Sacred Heart in Susono, Japan, as well as with the Jesuits in Nagasaki. On another occasion, the Columban Fathers offered me several graced opportunities to work with them in the Philippines and Taiwan. These varied experiences did a great deal to convince me that God works wonders in such diverse and dynamic places. Korea was, for me, a very challenging and supportive experience: Ad Majorem Gloriam !

#### IN CONCLUSION

RR: Would you like to add anything further about how God's providence has supported and guided your priestly life as a Jesuit?

**RD:** As I said this morning to someone in spiritual direction, when I review my own life experiences, I ask myself questions like the following: What did I find interpersonally? What was it that moved me and touched me in my life? How was I able to bring about an immense difference in my life and help to transform the lives of others? How have my Jesuit formation and spirituality helped me to help others?

I also ask what good have I done through the influence of my Jesuit formation and spirituality. The answer, of course, is what has happened through the goodness and greatness of God in my life, including mystical moments. I am grateful for the transcendent, even mystical, moments of my life.

**RR:** Thank you for sharing so much with us about your life, as well as increasing our own gratitude to God for his providential blessings.

### Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.  
Body of Christ, save me.  
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.  
O good Jesus, hear me.  
Within Thy wounds hide me.  
Permit me not to be separated from Thee.  
From the wicked foe defend me.  
At the hour of my death call me.  
And bid me come to Thee.  
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee  
For ever and ever. Amen.

Fr. Robert G. Doherty, S.J.

- Born:** September 22, 1929, Dorchester,  
Massachusetts
- Entered:** July 30, 1948, Lenox, Massachusetts, St.  
Stanislaus Novitiate/ Shadowbrook
- Ordained:** June 18, 1960, Weston, Massachusetts,  
Weston College
- Final Vows:** August 15, 1965, Rome, Italy, Church of  
the Gesú, Altar of St. Ignatius
- 1943 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High School  
- Student
- 1946 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College -  
Student
- 1948 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate/  
Shadowbrook - Novitiate, juniorate
- 1951 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied  
philosophy
- 1954 Lenox, Massachusetts: Cranwell School - Taught  
math, English, horseback riding
- 1955 Baghdad, Iraq: Baghdad College - Instructor in  
biology, math
- 1957 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied  
theology
- 1961 Pomfret, Connecticut: St. Robert Hall - Tertianship

- 1962 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate/  
Shadowbrook - Assistant director of novices, taught  
Latin to novices
- 1964 Rome, Italy: Collegio Bellarmino - Studied ascetical  
theology at Gregorian University; research assistant  
to Fr. John Ford, SJ
- 1966 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate/  
Shadowbrook - Spiritual director in juniorate,  
taught novices spirituality of the Gospels
- 1968 Rome, Italy: Collegio Bellarmino - Studied ascetical  
theology and scripture at Gregorian University for  
doctorate in theology and spiritual formation
- 1969 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Weston School of  
Theology/ 39 Kirkland Street
- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1969-1976 | Taught scripture, pastoral and<br>ascetical theology                                      |
| 1972-1976 | Center for Religious Development,<br>Cambridge - Retreat ministry,<br>spiritual direction |
| 1974-1976 | Director of New England Province<br>Tertiariats, Weston, Massachusetts                    |
- 1976 Sabbatical: Japan (Nagasaki, Susono)
- 1977 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Center for Religious  
Development/ 42 Kirkland Street - Retreat ministry,  
spiritual direction

- 1981 Richmond, Indiana: Earlham School of Religion -  
Adjunct Professor of Theology and Spiritual Formation,  
retreat ministry; taught spirituality and pastoral  
ministry throughout Northern Indiana Methodist  
Conference
- 1985 Chicago, Illinois: McCormick Theological Seminary -  
Adjunct Professor of Spirituality (fall)  
Boerne, Texas: Hill Country Pastoral Center - Director  
of Spiritual Formation (spring)
- 1986 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Renewal Center -  
1986-1990 Spiritual director, retreat team member  
1990-1991 Sabbatical - Philippines  
1991-1997 Blessed John XXIII National Seminary -  
Weston, Massachusetts Taught scripture,  
spiritual director  
1997-2002 Also co-director of tertianship program  
2002- Blessed John XXIII National Seminary -  
Teaching theology part-time, spiritual  
director; pastoral ministry

### Degrees

- 1953 Bachelor of Arts, Weston College-Boston College
- 1954 Master of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-Boston  
College
- 1961 Licentiate in Sacred Theology, Weston College
- 1969 Doctor of Philosophy, Theology, Gregorian  
University, Rome, Italy

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*Contemplatives in Action: The Jesuit Way.* New  
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lated into Chinese, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish.

AMDG