

**New England Jesuit
Oral History Program**



**Fr. Joseph R. Laughlin, S.J.
Volume 65**

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ISBN 1-60067-058-8

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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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Interview with Fr. Joseph R. Laughlin, S.J.
By Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.
January 23, 2008

PARENTS

RICHARD ROUSSEAU: Welcome to our interview. We will be making a chronological overview of your life. So we will just follow along naturally and see how it goes. OK?

JOSEPH LAUGHLIN: OK.

RR: So why don't we start with the very beginning?

JL: I was born of Mary Ellen Kelly, who came from Ballinasloe, Caltra, East Galway in Ireland. My father's name was Thomas Joseph, and he was born in Hyde Park near Boston of Irish parents in 1896. Interestingly, my mother was born in 1892, but as children we never knew the difference in their ages.

My father was a master boilermaker in the Navy Yard. With nine kids and three jobs we didn't see too much of him. But every night he would come up to our bed and mark a little cross on our forehead. We used to wait for that. You would think he was giving us ice cream. We loved our parents. Great Catholics. Great faith.

RR: What were your father and mother like as persons?

JL: My mom had a very strict father, and she also had extremely bad asthma all her life. Having gotten her mother's permission to go to the crossroads and watch other, healthier teenagers dance, when her father came home, he punished her severely. So she decided, "That's the last time that happens!" She wrote to Aunt Rose in St. Rose's Parish in Chelsea, Mass., asking for a ticket to America. She traveled in steerage, where the air was fetid, and so her asthma kept her sick the whole voyage. She paid back the cost of the ticket by working as a housekeeper.

Some years later she met Thomas Joseph Laughlin. At that time he was a highly skilled boilermaker, working three jobs to help his family survive. He had quit school after the eighth grade. He got his GED from high school. He got three licences—electricity, plumbing, and carpentry. He had certificates from state college in metal analysis skills to check the quality of the steel for the boilers he worked with.

All these skills of his came in handy bringing up their nine children. In addition, my mother was very adept at buying, renovating, and reselling houses, all with my father's help.

Both my parents had fantastic faith, but my father added a practical aspect to that faith. He would hear our catechism answers and then challenge us to solve practical behavioral cases. For example, one evening you are walking down the street with your friends. You see the door of a store is unlocked. They want to go in and steal all they can. What would you do?

He was extremely gentle for a big man—276 pounds, 5'11", just muscle. But he would play games with us, lying on the parlor floor. I remember how all nine of us scrambled to wrest a dime from his clenched fist. But my mother knew how to do it: she just waited for the right moment.

She was very religious without show. She made sure we did our homework and resolved any conflicts during the day. She had a delightful sense of humor, but, whenever she came to the punch line of a joke, she'd laugh so much she could not say it.

DIFFICULT INFANCY

RR: What year were you born?

JL: I was born in 1926 in Hyde Park, Mass. I was very, very ill when I was born.

RR: Oh, really?

JL: Yes, I was extraordinarily ill. I failed to thrive; I couldn't eat. I couldn't take mother's milk, goat's milk, or anything like that. Finally, Dr. Hanlon discovered that I—this is going to sound funny—I could drink Bock beer. It was interesting; it saved my life.

I was scrawny and my body was covered with eczema from head to toe. I had no hair. I was very sick. I had very bad asthma. I think at three months I had double pneumonia. I really failed to thrive.

RR: So how long did it take you to come out of that stage?

JL: It took a long time. I was more or less homebound for several years. My mother had very bad asthma, so she couldn't help too much. My sister Kay was really like my mother in the sense of filling in, but she couldn't do it all on her own.

Mother wasn't always bed-ridden, but the sound of her labored breathing is in all our memories. We all waited at night for her to take the next breath. So we were all nighthawks.

My mother force-fed me. She put towels around my arms, and made me take the formula that the doctor finally came up with after a year or two. It was washed down with the Bock Beer. I really did thrive on that. And after a while I did take to cow's milk—after a few years, so much so that, when I entered the

Society, my mother had to cut down from four quarts to one quart of milk from the dairyman. My life at the beginning was a lot of suffering

SIBLINGS

RR: Tell us a bit about your brothers and sisters.

JL: We were Catherine, Richard, Thomas, Agnes, Mary, me, Helen, Patsy, and Jimmy. We were really two families, and I was the dividing line between the older ones and younger ones. Mary was two years older than I was.

The five who have died are Catherine, Richard, Thomas, Patsy, and Mary. All of my brothers and sisters, except me and Helen, who is a Sister of St. Joseph, married and had children. I have abundant nieces, nephews, and grandnieces and grandnephews.

RR: Were you especially close to any of them?

JL: Yes, Jimmy and Mary. I used to carry Jimmy to and from school, and we became very close. Mary was quite ill. She had undiagnosed nephritis, so she was so weak that my father carried her to table at night, while I carried her around the house during the day.

PARISH

RR: And how about your parish and the priests there?

JL: The pastor, Fr. Crowley, inspired me by his stories to illustrate the Gospel. He's the reason I wanted to be a priest. I admired the other five priests, but especially Fr. Donohue, who could speak Italian as he ministered to the many Italian parishioners. I took part in all the church and school activities that had to do with acting, sports, and the few social gatherings that we had.

SCHOOL

RR: When were you able to start grammar school?

JL: When I was five I tried to go to school. I was bright

enough, but the Sisters had a rule that you had to be six by a certain date. I missed it by one day, so I had to wait a year. Maybe it was a blessing.

RR: Where did you go to school?

JL: St. Catherine's grammar school in Hyde Park. My first day I had a fight, because I had no social skills. I suspect Tony, the guy I fought with, didn't have any either.

There is something I have to say to explain this. When I was three, I approached my sister, Kay, when she was playing on a seesaw. She was sort of acting as my mother. She was a very large girl, probably around twelve. As I was pestering her for something I wanted, I got too close to the seesaw. It came down so hard on both my feet that they were badly crushed. I had to wear cut-out sneakers until I went to school.

Then I had my first pair of shoes. And it was awful trying to walk in them. Tony was sort of a fresh kid, a bully, and he stomped on my foot. I glared at him. I didn't fight with him right away. I didn't know what fighting meant. Then he started boasting, "I can lick you." I didn't know what that meant.

In time I got to know how to handle myself, and even won the prize in first grade as the best student. It was a set of tools—a hammer and a screw driver. I was thrilled, because my father was a master boilermaker. He could do anything.

I particularly remember Sr. Agnes Gertrude. I had heard about her for two or three years from my brothers and sisters. They said, "She is a toughy," but she wasn't. Many years later, I ministered to her when she died. She was a sweet little nun.

HIGH SCHOOL

RR: Let's move on to your high school years.

JL: The nuns prepared us for the exam, so I did well on the exam, but I didn't get a scholarship to Boston College

High School. There was only one full scholarship and four half-scholarships. So my mother went into Boston to see Fr. Archdeacon. He let me go to BC High for the lowly sum of \$9.00 a month. When you think what it costs today! It was supposed to be \$120 a year. Even the \$9.00 was hard to come up with, with nine kids and everything, but my mother was very clever and she was an entrepreneur. By the time the war was over she had thirteen houses. And each of the kids got a house or apartment for a wedding gift. She was very clever with real estate.

INFLUENTIAL TEACHERS

RR: Do any teachers stand out?

JL: At BC High I was scared silly. The math teacher, Mr. Kiley from Norwood—remember him? He had a voice that would blast a wall. I thought he was angry, so I didn't learn much math the first two weeks. My mother taught me algebra on her sixth grade Irish education. Pretty good, eh? Her mother was a teacher. So my mother knew insurance, ratio, proportions, investments—they got a good education over there in Ireland.

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND BASEBALL

JL: In freshman year I met a love, Fr. Sheridan. He liked my voice. So he asked if I would be willing to do special voice training. I said OK. Well, that opened up all kinds of parameters for me, because I was just socializing through sports.

I had been playing three sports with three different teams. My parents never saw much of me. I was always away. I played in a minor league, Malden City Club. A guy named Ralph Wheeler sponsored it; he was a writer for one of the now defunct papers in Boston. So I would get \$10 or \$15 a week in those days—the late

'30s and '40s.

Fr. Sheridan encouraged me in public speaking. It really stood me in good stead. It was only one day a week, but it was so enriching for me. Four other students and I would go with Fr. Sheridan to the other classes to declaim poetry and things like that. Well, that was a great experience for me. I later used my public speaking skills to get elected president of the junior class. I really enjoyed all the oratorical contests and declamations.

RR: What did you earn the \$15.00 for?

JL: Playing baseball. My tuition was \$9.00 a month. It was pretty good. I also worked for Western Union at 31 cents an hour.

MANY VOCATIONS FROM 4B

JL: At BC High I had various teachers whom I liked, but in senior year we had Fr. Larry Herne. More vocations to the Jesuits came out of that 4B class that I was in! I think they loaded up that class. When I graduated, there were twenty-three kids who went into the priesthood out of about thirty-three kids in the class. Seven went to the Jesuits and the rest went to St. John's.

He was a very impressive guy, not prepossessing as far as physical appearance goes, but he knew how to inspire young men. And he did it through the Greek. I will never forget the picture he would paint of Hector, the defender of Troy, being sent by his father Priam to fight. The picture is of this soldier/hero/son with his tufted helmet. In respect for his father he took his helmet off and put it on the floor. And his little son was down there playing with the tufts. This kind of teacher inspired me.

RR: He brought it to life.

DEATH OF HIS SISTER

JL: I remember another very important event when I was a sophomore, because it still affects me. My sister, Mary Christine, died of a kidney ailment, when I was fifteen and she was seventeen.

RR: How did you react?

JL: It just took the stuffing out of me. I was very close to her, because she had a kidney ailment. She was so very weak that my father asked me if I would carry her around the house. She became a bag of bones, but she had been the best athlete in a house full of athletes. She was a champion barrel-jumper—against the men, too. I can still envision how she would jump the barrels on the ice up in Smith's Field.

So I was broken when she died. I was up at the pond playing hockey, which was my first love then. When I saw the kids walking across the ice right into our game, I knew something was up. My sister, Helen, was with them, and she said, "Mary died."

I ran home on my skate tips with my shoes around my neck, and I took off my skates, and I ran upstairs, and I asked my father if I could see Mary. He said, "Joe, you go in that room and pray for her and us." I thought I was in that room for five minutes; my father said I was in there for an hour and a half. And during that time the Lord had dealt with all my grief and anger and hurt and everything. It was just fabulous, when I think about it.

RR: A time of healing prayer. How did you deal with your grief?

JL: I was still grieving, of course, when I went back to school. I had missed the first week of Greek with Fr. Gene Joseph McCarthy—you probably saw him at Holy Cross, too. Fr. McCarthy said, "Joe, I will make a deal with you. If you make Greek your favorite subject (and I did), then I will take you every Saturday,

as long as you need to catch up with the week you missed at the beginning of Greek.” And, I did. I learned Greek so well that a few years later in the course I sailed through my Scripture course in Greek.

RR: Her death and Fr. McCarthy’s kindness had quite an impact on you.

JL: Oh, yes. He was a very silent type of Irishman. I liked that, because my father was the same way. My father was also a great storyteller—fabulous—once he got going. Anyway, Fr. McCarthy was an important teacher. They all were. Though I always wanted to be a priest, I first started thinking of being a Jesuit because of Fr. McCarthy’s kindness to me then.

SEEDS OF HIS VOCATION

RR: Did you go from there to the novitiate?

JL: Yes, I right went to Shadowbrook.

RR: What had brought the issue of your vocation to a head, that you decided to actually go to Shadowbrook?

JL: It does sound strange, but from the time I saw my first Mass I wanted to be a priest. I was seven years old. My father carried me to the church.

Let me back up a bit. When I was in the third grade and about nine years old, I got hit by a car and really smashed. My leg was broken, I had a fractured skull and internal injuries. I spent almost a year in the hospital and five more years on crutches. So I had to become a more reflective person. I had to become whatever would help survive the loneliness I felt as a young child when all my older brothers and sisters were at school.

And what helped bring my vocation to my mind was meeting John O’Connor on his rocking chair. He was an elderly man, who stayed out on the porch rocking his chair back and forth, smoking his pipe. He could see that I was lonely. I wandered around the

neighborhood on my crutches looking for people to talk to.

One day he called me over and had his daughter (I know her even now; she is still alive) bring me a drink of water or something like that. I was very shy, but he gradually drew me out. After a while I started talking about what I liked about the church and all that.

And even before meeting him I had met a Fr. Considine Phillips from the Passionists. He really liked his tea. He was the only priest I ever saw in all that time in the Mary Curley Ward of Boston City Hospital. The only priest.

He played it just right, because he could see I was frightened. He had two crosses on his chest. I never saw a priest like that, so I thought he must be a Protestant! So he came in—I had the covers over me—and he said, “Peekaboo, peekaboo!” I trusted him, because he could play a game.

We talked about the priesthood a bit. He said, “Look, you can’t see it from here, but a block and a half over there is a school [BC High, on Harrison Avenue]. I don’t care whatever else you remember, but you remember this: go to BC High and they will take care of your vocation.” That was a big grace, I thought. It really confirmed me in my vocation.

RR: So you were well on the way, when you went to BC High. You were very interested in pursuing that.

JL: My only objection was they wore a dress when they said Mass.

NOVITIATE

RR: When did you go to Shadowbrook then?

JL: I went August 14, 1944, and I waited all summer to get the OK. That year we had great baseball teams at BC High, and I was going to miss seeing BC High play in the city championship game. But they didn’t call me to

play, so I didn't miss it. That was a marvelous thing for me—the actual championship game.

RR: How did you get to Shadowbrook?

JL: My father drove us up. My mother and my sisters, Helen and Patsy, came up that first day. There I met Ray Powers, also from Hyde Park. He was my angel [a second-year novice chosen to guide incoming novices]. Another novice was Hank [Henry] Jurewich, who lived right behind my back yard, so I felt right at home.

I thought it was going to be impossibly hard, but it wasn't. I took to it right away. I just loved the novitiate. My natural proclivity to silence and shyness led me to prayer. I was very pious, spent all my free time in chapel or at the shrines. I am sure that did not endear me to the other guys, but I became more of a regular person with my piety somewhat more under control by playing ball.

I also got exercise on my own. Every morning I would get up at 5:00 AM; the community got up at 5:30. I would run up the hills behind the novitiate—where we used to pick laurel for the Christmas garlands—down to what we called the bishop's house, and then back onto the property up to Purgatory Hill, and then back in time to get my shower in. I had bundles of energy then.

It was awfully hard to give a body only one hour of exercise a week. People didn't believe in sports and vigorous exercise. I am surprised my novice master, Jack Post, listened to that restriction. The rule came from the provincial—only one hour of sports a week! I got around it that way by running every day.

But if I didn't, my heart would have blown up. I had done a lot of road-racing before entering. But my father would not let me run the marathon, several five- and ten-mile races, though.

JUNIORATE

RR: How about the juniorate?

JL: I loved almost everything I did in the Society. I loved the juniorate. The only thing I didn't like was the unbelievable amount of memorization we had to do. We memorized English, Latin, Greek, and some French. That was a drag for me. But with my love for Greek, I was able to do all right.

RR: I see that the rest of the course of your studies was pretty standard. How about your apostolic years?

OVERVIEW OF HIS MINISTRY

JL: When was teaching at BC High for almost twenty years, I tried to form each class into a community of faith and learning.

RR: How did that go?

JL: They loved the Gospel stories I told to illustrate the textbook, not just for religion, but all the other subjects I taught, such as English. I had a lot of fun teaching. In history, I had the students write a three-minute talk on the face of the person they had chosen to study, such as Plato, Alexander the Great. And they had to make a sculpture of the person's face. They loved it.

I also did a lot of counseling at BC High. Anyone that wanted counseling could come to me, because no one else wanted to do it. They were afraid of it, I think. I had twelve years of psychology on my own. I just studied it all on my own initiative at BC in the summer time.

I remember once the BC Dean, Walter Feeney, asked me sharply, "What are you doing, Joe? You have studied so much that you are beyond doctoral level in psychology. Yet I haven't seen any application for degrees from you." I won't tell you what I told him about what I thought about academia. That was not

for me. I wanted knowledge, not the trimmings.

RR: And your pastoral work?

JL: I did all sorts of things. I was a prison chaplain for three years. I gave retreats in prison. I did the feastday Masses at Walpole prison. What a strange combination there was! For I also said the feastday Masses for the Carmelite Sisters in Roxbury, who were voluntarily cloistered.

HAITI

JL: I went to Haiti frequently, flying down with medicine and clothes, especially for mothers and children. That was a very impressive, soul-moving time for me.

RR: Who would take you down there? Would you go with a group?

JL: I went with the group from St. Boniface Parish in Quincy. I tried to get sponsors to pay for my fare; I didn't ask the Jesuits to pay for it.

It was a remarkable experience to go to Haiti. I could talk for three hours about it. Beautiful, beautiful people. I will give you one short story.

The first group I went with had twenty-three of us. Picture twenty-three people standing on the back of an open truck. They were lay people, nurses, two doctors, a physician's assistant, and five priests. It was quite a thing.

First, they brought us to the House of the Dying. The women in our group just froze, when they saw the condition of the patients. They saw people dying of AIDS and looking very old, although they were only in their twenties.

Ferdy Mahfood, founder of Food for the Poor, asked me, "What can we do with these Americans who came to help? They can't do anything in there."

I said, "Let me bring them over to the chapel." We went over to the chapel, and we prayed. Most of our

group were charismatic, so that kind of prayer really was right down my alley. We prayed and we read a few scriptures. You could see them visibly relaxing.

I told them that being with these dying people—mostly young men—is just the same as if you met Jesus when he was dying. All you want to do is be pleasant to them, look at them kindly, and, if you can, serve them. Put on medical gloves and massage their shoulders—things like that. That was a wonderful experience for them, but also for me.

GREAT INTEREST IN SODALITY

RR: I understand you worked at BC High for a long time.

JL: At BC High I had the Sodality. Out of 1200 students, almost 900 were members of Sodality. It became very powerful. Chris Kenney, the brother of Paul Kenney, was part of this. We put out three newspapers—daily, weekly, and monthly. We had three speaking teams that traveled to different schools around Boston.

The kids had a book, *See How They Run*, by a famous English Jesuit, Bernie Basset, about small-cell Christian groups. Kids thrived on it. They had to do seven minutes of prayer at home, after they did their homework or before. Then two minutes of reflection with their group when they would come to the school. So it is an ongoing thing: the program covers the whole day.

Every Wednesday we would have a big meeting, and then every weekend we would have a major gathering at other schools, and trips to New York. It was really a fabulous thing.

But it got burdensome for me, so the rector gave me twelve Jesuit assistants. Can you imagine having twelve men to assign? I really enjoyed that very, very much.

And while I was there at BC High, I had three

busloads of kids from Roxbury come to BC High to be tutored by high school students. The kids from Roxbury would fill up those empty classrooms when the regular school was out. And the reason that was very successful was because each kid had his own teacher—one on one. It was fabulous.

Did you know Fr. Charlie McCoy? He was famous in Boston; he was a big athlete. His sister was the principal of the Dearborn School in Roxbury that most of the kids came from. She asked me, “What are you doing over there at BC High? When they come back here, they seem to be growing so fast academically that they cover one, two, even three years’ work in a single year!”

I said, “The secret is that each one has his own teacher.” The student teachers came from BC High, Fontbonne Academy, Cardinal Cushing Academy, and other schools that helped us.

RETREAT MINISTRY

RR: The other big area of your life as a Jesuit was in retreat work. So why don’t we move into that a little bit, because I see you have a whole list of different places you worked at?

JL: The work at BC high involved a lot of retreats. The work also involved many of the parents, because they were interested in their kids. I gave a retreat every weekend, for the most part, at the Cenacle in Brighton. In between talks I would correct papers and do other academic things. Even now I have a lot of energy. It takes a second to say it, but all that was a lot of work.

Some of the best retreats I have ever given were also very satisfactory for me personally to do. I even gave one in Brazil, four in Israel, and sixteen in Ireland over twenty years.

RR: Why were these retreats so important a thing in your life?

JL: Because, when the people got through the retreats, they responded by taking the initiative all on their own and then they did things themselves. For example, I had sponsored a group of Christian dancers from Ireland, Scotland, and England to come to the US to retreat houses and outside venues like Boston Common. Where do you put them? They didn't have any money. So the Scituate people and the Quincy group fed and housed them, let them use their laundry machines, and that kind of thing. That led me to get more and more involved in such retreats.

HIS ACTING CAREER

RR: It sounds lively.

JL: It was! I especially remember when St. Joe's Church in Quincy had a dance Mass by itself on a special occasion. After the Gospel and after Communion we would have some liturgical drama and dancing. Well, that time we were putting on the Prodigal Son. But the leader, Andy—who, by the way, became a Catholic and married an Irish girl—frantically shouted, "We don't have a father! We don't have someone to play the father of the Prodigal Son!"

So Andy got me to play the father. He assured me I could do it. He told me, "All you have to do is sit there on the priest's chair and just make appropriate signs with your face."

Well, I got into the spirit of it, and I found out I could actually act. I was a bit familiar with skits from when we scholastics had put them on during our Jesuit training. The Prodigal Son play turned out very well. Then I found myself eagerly going to the various venues and taking part in the little liturgical plays with them.

RR: You were really getting into it!

JL: Yes, but it almost cost me my life once.

RR: What happened?

JL: We were in a Protestant church out in western Massachusetts. I had to change costume, so I needed a place to do it in. I said, "I am going in this room here." I went into the sacristy, opened a door which went to the cellar. No stairs! I held onto the door jamb so I wouldn't fall!

RR: Were you hurt?

JL: Not really, though it shook me up a bit. It was fun to put on these plays, but it was a lot of work, too. Keep in the back of your head that you were teaching the Gospel as you danced.

RR: What would you say was unique about the kind of retreats that you would give?

JL: I don't think they were especially unique. They were just the Gospel. I didn't try to gussy it up. Later on I got the people in the music ministry and others to help me. That made it much more interesting for them and for me, too.

Sometimes it got to be a lot of work: we would have fifty or sixty on a retreat. That's a lot of confessions, and a lot of conferences, and a lot of personal interviews. Where are you going to get time for all that in one weekend?

What I would do is try to get the priests from BC High to come and help me with the confessions. I found it very hard to get them, because they were very often already committed to help out at various parishes on the weekends.

RR: Didn't you leave BC High to go full-time in retreats? Or were most of those retreats from when you were at BC High?

JL: Most of them were while I was at BC High or at the Catholic retreat house in Lakeville, Mass.

RR: Is that still there?

JL: Yes, it is thriving.

RR: So you gave a lot of retreats there, too?

JL: I gave a lot of retreats there before the retreat house was built and after it was built, too. At BC High I gave retreats as well, both during summers before I would start classes and after I finished the school year.

MEMORIES FROM ISRAEL

JL: I recall an interesting thing during a retreat in Israel. Along the shore of the Sea of Galilee the Israelis had just discovered a boat from the time of Jesus. Interesting. The Israelis are very scientific. They didn't try to move it, but just flooded it with highly oxygenated water, and then put little fish in there to eat the worms coming out of the 2000-year-old wood.

I also remember how crowded it was. We had a large group, but not as large as a group of 106 charismatic Japanese Presbyterians. They were in the same hotel plus a lot of cabins they had outside. Every morning they would wade into the Sea of Galilee up to their necks, wearing white caps with a fringe, singing and praising God. Isn't that incredible?

RR: Unusual.

JL: They looked like ducks bobbing in the water. It was very funny. But it wasn't funny when they showed up at all of our other venues. When you came to anything, such as the Garden of Gethsemane, there were the 106 Japanese crowding in there. Or when you go to the tomb of Jesus—it was very tough.

RR: Was all your retreat so difficult?

VISITING JESUS' PRISON

JL: No. I do remember something unusual. We were at the place where Jesus was kept overnight. It was in the carefully excavated basement of the home of Annas,

the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Everything is still kept authentically now as it was then.

We went down, down, down into a prison. Near it was a pit, where they kept the people who were slated to die. That is where Jesus was. They wanted to kill him. In the middle of the night they sent him over to the high priest.

While we were there—now I don't sing—but I was moved to start a song. Every step of the stairs was taken, all the way up and down that stairwell. I started "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?", which is an emotional song to begin with.

Well, the Jews there were amazed at the depth of our feeling, the devotion being manifested. Two of the men later grabbed me and asked me why we were so moved. I said, "That is in your Jewish scripture, in Isaiah 53 and elsewhere: 'By his stripes we are healed.'" We talked for about ten minutes, but that was illegal: we weren't allowed to talk religion with the Jews.

CONCLUSION

RR: As we come towards the end here, do you want to sum up what you would like to say?

JL: It would take six of these sessions! I will talk about one little miracle. When I was about sixty, sickness caught up with me. During the Christmas vacation I went to see Dr. Tyrrell, because I was spitting up blood. He took one look at the sputum, and he said, "I want you today to go to Arizona to get your health back!"

So I went to Arizona. When I got off at the airport in Phoenix, I saw this beautiful ceramic sculpture of a phoenix rising out of the ashes. I was studying it intently, but then realized I had to get moving out to where the city buses would come, because my plan was to go to the Newman Center at the University of

Arizona. I was planning to ask the priest there if I could stay with him for a while. I had moved so fast that the province office hadn't yet sent me any money!

This family grouping saw me studying the phoenix sculpture and starting towards the bus stop. And the father of the family said, "Father!" I said, "How do you know I am a Father?" He said, "I know." The name was Cook—Bob and Barbara Cook.

He was an undercover agent, whose job was to intercept drugs coming over the border. He worked as a bank teller as a cover, because they had to convert the drug money.

So there I am standing with these people and I am turning away—I don't want them to catch my infection. He said, "Don't worry, Father. The time frame for contagion is over." I ended up going with them to their house in Arizona. I can still remember the address.

I was amazed, because the streets were not paved. He said, "Look at this." The soil was all made out of ancient seashell fossils. Anyway, I did stop there overnight, and they called the priest at Arizona State University, and he said, "OK." I could stay there.

We were getting ready to go there in the car, when some Catholic charismatics started arriving for a meeting. Even the Catholic bishop was charismatic and was among them. I had never heard that he was. But just as we were going out to the front door, Bob said, "Why don't we all pray with you?" I said, "Prayer never hurt anyone."

So I sat in the chair and this mountain of hands came down on me. I felt this incredible heat coming down on me. I said, "I don't know what is going on, but I don't like it!" We finished the prayer, and I started to relax. So I decided to stay there with that family, in the son's room.

The next day, before I went down for breakfast, I washed my face, and it looked different. I used to have a big brown growth on my thumb. I used to hide it when I said Mass. And it was gone! Baby-pink skin! I said, "What am I into here?"

I went downstairs and by the time I got my third forkful of scrambled eggs to my lips, I sat back in amazement. At last I could breathe without gagging. I didn't tell them, but they knew something wonderful had happened to me. I was back in class at BC High in eleven days!

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

RR: God's providence has been guiding you all these years?

JL: It is like the Native Americans always said: "Faith is trust in the heart and divine providence." I have been doing that all my life.

My parents had incredible faith. I remember when my father took us camping down in Carver, south of Boston, and we had to walk from Carver all the way to Weymouth to Sacred Heart Church to go to Mass, because we were too late for every Mass we wanted to go to on the way. Those were hearty days. Dad had to carry me most of the way.

Gentlemen, thank you very much!

RR: You have given us all a good insight into who you are and what you have done. We appreciate it.

JL: I appreciate it, too.

Come, Holy Ghost

Come, Holy Ghost, creator blest,
And in our hearts take up thy rest.
Come with thy grace and heavenly aid,
To fill the hearts which thou hast made,
To fill the hearts which thou hast made.

O Comforter, to thee we cry,
Thou heavenly gift of God most high.
Thou font of life and fire of love,
And sweet anointing from above,
And sweet anointing from above.

To ev'ry sense thy light impart
And shed thy love in ev'ry heart.
To our weak flesh, thy strength supply:
Unfailing courage from on high,
Unfailing courage from on high,

O grant that we through thee may come
To know the Father and the Son,
And hold with firm, unchanging faith,
That thou are Spirit of them both,
That thou are Spirit of them both.

Praise we the Father and the Son,
And Holy Spirit, with them one;
And may the Son on us bestow,
The gifts that from the Spirit flow,
The gifts that from the Spirit flow.

Fr. Joseph R. Laughlin, S.J.

Born: August 31, 1926, Hyde Park, Massachusetts
Entered: August 14, 1944, Lenox, Massachusetts, St. Stanislaus Novitiate/ Shadowbrook
Ordained: June 15, 1957, Weston, Massachusetts, Weston College of the Holy Spirit
Final Vows: August 15, 1960, Boston, Massachusetts, Boston College High School

1940 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High School - Student
1944 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate/ Shadowbrook - Novitiate, juniorate
1948 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College of the Holy Spirit - Studied philosophy
1951 Fairfield, Connecticut: Fairfield Preparatory School - Taught freshmen, history
1952 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High School - Taught freshmen
1954 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College of the Holy Spirit - Studied theology
1958 Pomfret, Connecticut: St. Robert Hall - Tertian
1959 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High School -
1959-1963 Taught freshman civics, English, history
1963-1968 Taught religion
1968-1969 Taught English, remedial reading at Lewis Intermediate Public School
1969-1973 Worked with Urban Sisters Task Force in educational apostolate of parochial schools, social work
1973-1975 Family social and education apostolate, Athol, Massachusetts

- 1975-1977 Educational and social apostolate in
Southeast Massachusetts
- 1977 Boston, Massachusetts: St. Andrew House - Local
apostolate; Maine: Native American apostolate
- 1977 Princeton, Maine: St. Ann Mission - Chaplain
- 1982 Lakeville, Massachusetts: Bethany Retreat House
- Prayer ministry with His Land charismatic group
- 1987 Florida, US: Sabbatical
- 1988 Lakeville, Massachusetts: Bethany Retreat House -
Retreat ministry at His Land
- 1989 Miami, Florida: Food for the Poor - Spiritual
director, work on Speakers Bureau,
retreat ministry
- 1990 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High
School - Pastoral ministry
- 1993 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High
School - Retreat ministry (Le Ropos, Maine)
- 2002 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Residence -
Pastoral ministry
- 2006 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Health Center -
Praying for the Church and the Society, pastoral
ministry

Degrees

- 1950 Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-
Boston College
- 1958 Bachelor of Divinity, Theology, Weston College
- 1976 Master of Arts, Educational Psychology, Boston
College
License in Psychological Testing, Boston College
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