

**New England Jesuit  
Oral History Program**



**Rev. William A. Barry, S.J.  
Volume 48**

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ISBN 1-60067-046-6

Distribution:

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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 oral history is all about.

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December 2007

Interview with Fr. William A. Barry, S.J.  
by Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.  
June 21, 2006

**EARLY YEARS**

**ROUSSEAU:** Let's start with when you were born and something about your father and mother,

**BARRY:** I was born in 1930, the oldest of four, with three sisters. My mother and father were Irish immigrants from Kerry, who met in Worcester. They got married in 1929, right after the Depression started. I grew up poor, but everybody around us was poor. So we did not think of ourselves as poor. I had a very pious upbringing. Life revolved around the parish, where I was in the choir and served as an altar boy. We said the rosary together at home. We also went to daily Mass. I can remember, very early on, being attracted to religious things.

**VOCATION**

**RR:** What was your parish church at the time?

**WB:** Sacred Heart in Worcester, right below Holy Cross in the south end of Worcester.

**RR:** Did the parish priests have much of an influence on you?

**WB:** Oh, yes. As an altar boy and choir boy. I was actually thinking about becoming a diocesan priest. It was only when I went to Holy Cross that I became interested in the Jesuits. Bill Hersey and I were altar boys together. He, Jim McDavitt, and I were all in the same class in grammar school. But all three of us went to different high schools. Then Bill Hersey ended up at Holy Cross when I did. We still served Mass together at Sacred Heart every Sunday. However, I had started thinking about the Jesuits, while he was focused on the diocesan priesthood.

Near the end of our sophomore year, we had been studying together for final exams and were driving home, when Bill told me that he had already been interviewed by the Jesuits and seen the provincial. He said he intended to enter the Jesuits that summer, if accepted. I got out of the car and said to myself, "Well, if he can enter, why can't I?" So I always attributed those words from Bill as what got me started in the same direction.

And when the two of us got to Shadowbrook, we found that Jim McDavitt was already there! He was a Brother candidate. As a postulant, he had gone in a few months earlier.

However, almost from the very beginning, Bill Hersey started having such strong migraine headaches that, he told me later, he kept asking to leave. But everybody kept telling him that he had a vocation, until he got to Weston College for philosophy, where Jack McCall, the Jesuit psychologist, wisely said to him, "God doesn't demand this kind of suffering." Bill wrote to me that he had come close to hating God for having made him stay. I was in Pullach, Germany, for philosophy at that time. Bill had suffered for five years before he finally felt free to leave, around 1955.

### HIS PARENTS

RR: Let's go back just a bit. Tell us more about your mother and father.

WB: My mother was a very kind and genuinely holy woman, though somewhat nervous and frightened. She'd sprinkle holy water around if there was a lightning storm or anything like that. But she was the one person in our extended family who welcomed everyone, even the "black sheep." My father was a hard worker, very loyal, a good and caring father, but a man with a temper and at times a hard drinker. He always maintained that my mother was the one that saved him. I always thought that the two of them together made for a well-balanced, good family. Although they had had little more than a grade school education in Ireland, they encouraged us children to study hard and were very proud that all four of us finished college and even got further degrees. My father read a lot, including everything I wrote, into his late nineties.

### GRAMMAR SCHOOL

RR: Did you have nuns in your local grammar school?

WB: Yes. I went to the Sacred Heart School, and the Sisters of Mercy were just wonderful teachers. As it turns out, many of them were probably only in their twenties or thirties at the time, although we thought of them as old. A lot of them, especially those in the earlier grades, hadn't gotten much higher education before being placed in schools. Nonetheless, we learned a lot from them. I certainly did. As a way of recognizing all of them, I dedicated a book to one of them who died the year the book was published.

### HIGH SCHOOL

RR: That's thoughtful of you. I'm sure they appreciated

it. So from there you went to high school?

**WB:** Yes. In 1944 I went to St. John's High School in Worcester, a Xaverian Brothers' high school. It's now in Shrewsbury, but it was then in the City of Worcester. It was a small high school, with about seventy students per class. I was a big fish in a little pond since I was pretty smart. I also worked throughout my high school days.

**RR:** What kind of work was it?

**WB:** I worked in a fruit and vegetable store. I probably worked about forty hours a week during the year and sixty hours in the summer time. And then when I went to college, I did the same thing but on a lesser scale. It was funny that I didn't give much thought to the future except on a couple of occasions. I can remember, when I was in sophomore year, a Brother asking me during recess, "What are you going to do when you grow up?" I blurted out, "I'm going to be a priest." It was something that I don't remember actually thinking about until that moment. I was the valedictorian of my class in senior year, but I had not thought what to do afterwards.

#### **HOLY CROSS**

**WB:** Near the end of senior year, in 1948, another Brother asked me, "What are you going to do next year?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "Well, why don't you go to college?" I said, "OK. But where?" Now the only college I knew anything about was my neighbor, Holy Cross. It became clear to me, however, that I couldn't go unless I got a scholarship. So I applied for entrance and a scholarship. In August I heard that I had been accepted with a scholarship of \$350 of the \$450 tuition. What still amazes me is that I was so lights out or something that I didn't worry all that summer about whether I would go to Holy

Cross or not.

ORR: At that time \$350 was worth a good sum.

WB: Indeed! So, I got the scholarship and entered Holy Cross in 1948. It was at that time that I began thinking about the Jesuits. I had Fr. Luke O'Connor for freshman religion, and it turned out that he was a really good and caring man. He became my spiritual advisor.

I had some other spectacular teachers as well. I also had one Jesuit who turned out to be the worst teacher I ever had, but I'm not going to mention his name. One of the great ones, for example, was Fr. Harry Bean. I had him for sophomore Latin and English. He was, by far, the best teacher I ever had. He taught us how to analyze speeches and to write. I had Fr. Gerry Mears for freshman English, and he also taught us how to appreciate literature and to write. Then there were Fr. Proctor for Greek and Fr. Paul Izzo for Latin in my freshman year.

RR: So you got a lot of help with writing and being articulate.

WB: Exactly. And during that time, I was also reading a lot of books that were spiritual in nature. For example, I read a lot of Fr. Raymond's books. He was a Trappist who wrote novel-like books about monks. When Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain* came out in '49, it had a great influence on me. At that time, I was in love and was wondering about a lay vocation.

## VOCATION

WB: But I was also thinking of the Jesuits and talking with Luke O'Connor about that. But if I entered the Jesuits, I was thinking of doing it after I finished college. But then, as I said earlier, near the end of our sophomore year, my friend Bill Hersey told me

he was entering the Jesuits. He made me think to myself, "If he can become a priest, why can't I?" I thought, "OK, I'll do it." So that's how I ended up in the Jesuits. It was almost a fluke. And I attributed it to Bill. However, as I said, Bill later left and got married, and had a very successful career as a school psychologist in the Philadelphia area. He died some years ago of cancer of the vocal cords.

RR: Oh, my. Did you stay in touch with him over the years?

WB: Over the years, I did, yes. And after Bill died, Jim McDavitt and I celebrated a memorial Mass for him with his wife and children in Worcester at the Mercy Sisters' convent.

RR: So is there anything else about that particular period that you want to add?

WB: I think it was at Holy Cross that I began to trust more in my own intellectual capacities. It was, of course, a "bigger pond." Holy Cross students came from all over the country and they were very smart. I remember actually having fun writing my sophomore paper in French. I amazed myself.

#### NOVITIATE

RR: You got to the old Shadowbrook in 1950. What was your experience there?

WB: I'm afraid it's a bit blurry.

RR: All we need is an overview.

WB: I grew in self-confidence during those years. I hadn't had much chance to play sports growing up, but found that I could hold my own in touch football and basketball. In addition I continued to grow in confidence in my intellectual capacities. However, I felt that I could never do Ignatian prayer because I had the idea that imaginative prayer meant that I had to make some kind of holy pictures in my head.

And that was something I just couldn't do. On the other hand, I clearly remember times in the woods above Shadowbrook when I was just caught up in God's beauty.

RR: Yes, it's a beautiful landscape.

WB: It is. Also, I was carried along by some wonderful friends, whom I still think the world of today.

RR: Who was the master of novices at the time?

WB: John Post was the master of novices. And to his credit, later on he said he regretted some of the things he had done to us. He was a very, very ascetical man.

RR: So how long were you at Shadowbrook?

WB: Besides the noviceship, I had one year in the juniorate, because I had completed two years at Holy Cross. That year in the juniorate was terrific for me. I did the Greek sermon, and read many novels and poems that I had not read before. In 1953 I was sent to Pullach in Germany for philosophy.

RR: Interestingly enough, I was studying theology, at Louvain in Europe, at the same time,

WB: Exactly. I went to your ordination in Belgium in 1954 with Fred O'Brien, who was with me in Pullach.

#### PHILOSOPHY STUDIES IN GERMANY

RR: Could you tell us more about your days in Germany.

WB: The province had been sending men to Europe for philosophy, first to Eegenhoven in Belgium, then to Vals in France. Then, in our year, Fred O'Brien and I were sent to Pullach, just outside Munich, and Bob McMillan was sent to Vals. We asked to go early to Germany and France to do some language study, but Fr. Fitzgerald, the provincial at the time, told us we could learn the language just as well here at home. So we then left by ship for Europe on September 15. We landed in Le Havre on the 21<sup>st</sup> and got to Pullach on the 25<sup>th</sup> in time to start school on October 1.

- RR: That didn't give you much time to get settled and be more comfortable with the language.
- WB: Right. And learning German here in the US is not the same thing as learning it in Germany. So it took us some time to settle down. Fortunately, most of the courses were in Latin, just as they were at home. But in that first semester two of the courses, biology and physics, were quite difficult for us, because they were taught in German. In physics we were taught Einstein's two relativity theories and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle in German by a Jesuit with a doctorate in physics!
- RR: In German? [Laughs]
- WB: Yes. In the long run, however, a lot of good things came out of our being there. For one thing, I learned German to speak, read, and write. I already could read French, and in our second summer Fred O'Brien and I stayed in France and learned enough French to be able to converse fairly easily. Then, at the end of our first year, we had a retreat by Fr. Karl Rahner. He later made that retreat into a book. At that time, I read Rahner's *Geist im Welt*, and I continued reading Rahner when I got back home. And this background in languages and German theological thought was very helpful during my theology years at Weston. I should also mention the good friends I made in Europe. One of my closest friends was Adolph Heuken, now in Indonesia, where he has been for many years since his regency. He wanted to go to Japan, but it was decided that he would go to Indonesia instead to help, since the Dutch Jesuits were having trouble with the Indonesians.
- RR: What did he focus on there?
- WB: On teaching and writing. He has written a lot in Indonesian. He was my best friend in Pullach. He was and is a wonderful Jesuit. And it was wonderful

to have friends from different countries. I met some of them occasionally later on in Germany, Rome, and other countries. This kind of contact was terrific.

RR: Is there anything else along this line that you want to mention?

WB: There is one thing I'd like to add here because I think it is important. I also studied Carl Jung for my licentiate paper. I focused on his typology of personality, and this has a bearing on my later career.

RR: In what sense?

WB: Because James Leo Burke, the Province Prefect of Studies at the time, asked me during my second year of regency to go on for a master's degree in psychology during my third year of regency.

RR: What was it in that experience that really clicked, was it Jung?

WB: Though I couldn't exactly explain it then, I somehow felt that there was a working relationship between Jesuit spirituality and psychology. I saw them as connected. Also, at the time, Jung had a big name among European Catholics. And so I studied Jung there with one of my professors. Later on in graduate school, I concentrated more on Freudian psychology.

#### REGENCY AT FAIRFIELD PREPARATORY SCHOOL

RR: What about your regency?

WB: In 1956 I started teaching at Fairfield Prep. I really enjoyed teaching there and was good at it. I taught three different courses of German, beginners, intermediate, and advanced. I also taught one senior home room Latin and English.

In my second year, I volunteered to take a group of marginal students for home room in their senior year. There was a question as to whether they would

be able to graduate. So I took that group in hand. I realized, from the very beginning, that they had poor English skills, because they couldn't understand the English translation of the Latin. So I asked the principal, [Fr.] Frank Carty, to give me the OK to spend more time on English grammar and spelling than on Latin to help them get into college. I was good at that kind of thing and enjoyed it a lot.

So when Jim Burke, the prefect of studies, asked me about doing a degree in psychology, I said to him, "If everybody who's good at high school teaching goes on for graduate studies, we won't have enough good high school teachers. I'm pretty good at this and I like it." Well, a few months later he came back to me and said that the provincial had sent him to me to ask again. And it was then I realized that there was something more to this than a simple inquiry. To make a long story short, I ended up going to Fordham for one year to get a master's in psychology. I had to catch up in a lot of undergraduate psychology that first summer, which turned out to be quite a lot. [chuckles]

RR: How did you find that experience at Fordham?

WB: It was really wonderful,

RR: What was special about it?

WB: First of all, it was impressive to meet all these Jesuits from around the country. There were a lot of Jesuits studying at Fordham University and staying at Spellman Hall. Among the priests, there were Bob and John Banks from our province, and also scholastics Tom Loughran, Bob McMillan, and myself. Also living there were a number of scholastics teaching at Fordham Prep. The Jesuit university faculty members lived in separate quarters. But it was a wonderful time, a great time for me.

I got a good education in general psychology from

very good professors. And it was during this year that a significant incident occurred. I've mentioned it in some things I've written about my life in the Society. A number of us, priests and scholastics, were sitting around having a drink as we often did and we got to talking about the vow of chastity. As the discussion went on, I got more and more upset with the utilitarian arguments being presented: chastity makes you more available to people, etc. I got to thinking about the availability of my parents and of lay teachers at Fairfield Prep like Tim McGillicuddy, and finally I just blurted out, "I'm a Jesuit because God believes that this is where I'll be the happiest and most fulfilled and productive in my life." I didn't realize I was thinking about this until I said it. But to this day, I believe in what I said. I don't believe I'm in this outfit for utilitarian reasons. I believe that I'm in this outfit because this is where God wants me to be as happy and helpful to others as I can be.

RR: And he has worked for you to bring this about as well?

WB: Where I can be useful, yes.

RR: So you had two years of teaching at Fairfield Prep. And then, after the year at Fordham, you went on to theology.

#### THEOLOGY AT WESTON COLLEGE

WB: Yes, in 1959 I came back here to Weston for my theology. I thought it terrific that the faculty had made the library available to us. All the books that used to be off limits because they were written by Protestants were now available. They were all up in the library now and fully available. Books in German and French and Spanish as well as English. We also had a fine faculty, men like [Frs.] Phil Donnelly, Frank Lawlor, Fred Moriarty, and John Collins who

read everything in their fields. Many were knowledgeable in several languages. And they would lend us whatever books we needed. And, above all, you could actually argue and even disagree with them.

RR: So there was good rapport between students and faculty?

WB: Yes. I can remember Phil Donnelly writing to me about some paper or other that I had written. And though we found ourselves in disagreement on some theological theory or other, it was all taken in good stride. It was a terrific atmosphere to work in. I found it wonderful.

RR: And you were able to deal with all that?

WB: Yes. It was during this time, when I had three courses from Fred Moriarty in the Old Testament, that I wrote a paper on the Spirit for each one. They dealt with the Spirit in the historical books, the prophets, and wisdom literature. Fred then said to me, "Why don't you write an article for *The Bible Today* on this topic?" The first time anybody'd ever asked me to do anything like that! So I did write an article for that journal on "The Spirit in the Old Testament." It was the first article that I ever had accepted for publication.

RR: That must have been thrilling for you, right?

WB: It was really terrific.

RR: Good for you.

WB: Then I wrote a paper for Fr. John Collins, the New Testament professor, called, "Spirit and John's Gospel." And he told me that I should do something with it. So, given my experience with my first article, I decided to make this into another article for *The Bible Today*. And, it too was accepted. It later appeared in a collection of articles on the New Testament. That's how it happened that my article appeared right next to one by Raymond Brown, the

well-known scripture scholar. [laughs] I said to myself, “Are you kidding? What is going on here?” I felt that I did not belong in that league. Fred Moriarty was just wonderful at pushing people to do this kind of thing.

RR: Yes, I always found him very positive and supportive.

WB: Exactly. During this time I read practically everything Rahner wrote and all of Lonergan’s works, as well as all kinds of other theological books. I was very attracted to theology. And, as a matter of fact, some people were asking me to begin thinking about going for a doctorate in theology. But Jack McCall, who was a kind of mentor, reminded me of my work and interest in psychology. I realized that a good many guys were going on for doctorates in theology, but that I was the only one around my time who was prepared to get a doctorate in clinical psychology. I also realized that psychology was closely linked to the spirituality I was so interested in.

RR: A true Ignatian discernment process.

WB: So that’s when I talked to Jim Burke again about approving my getting a doctorate in clinical psychology. So, the summer before tertianship, I took a course at Harvard in statistics with a professor from the University of Iowa. We were almost overwhelmed with statistics. I don’t even remember his name now, but it was one of those key moments in my professional life.

Since I didn’t know too much about possible schools to go to, I thought he would be a good person to ask about the best schools in clinical psychology. And he said, “The best one is Michigan. The clinical psychology program is the best integrated into the whole psychology department.” So, without knowing really much about them except what he had said about

the University of Michigan, during tertianship at Pomfret I applied to four schools, Yale, Harvard, Clark, and Michigan. I was interviewed at Clark University in Worcester, and they said to me, "Where would you go if you were accepted?" I said, "I don't think I should answer that question." And they said, "Oh, no. That's not going to affect us at all. You're going to get into every place you apply to." I replied, "If that were the case, I'd probably go to Harvard or Michigan." Well, I was turned down by Clark and Yale. But then I got accepted by Harvard along with a scholarship.

And I also got a letter from Michigan saying that I looked like a very good candidate, but they still had some questions about me. "Did I know that I had to wear lay clothes? Did I know that their department was psychoanalytic in orientation? And why did I want to come there in the first place?" Now, since I had the Harvard acceptance and fellowship in my hand, I wrote back a rather sharp letter in which I said, "Well, I knew that I was going to have to wear lay clothes, but if I couldn't seek the truth wherever it was to be found, then I couldn't go for any kind of scientific degree, no matter where it was. And as far as your department is concerned, I thought it was a pretty good one." Then, by return air mail, special delivery, I got a letter from them saying that I had been accepted, along with a fellowship. So that's where I went! And that was one of the good decisions of my life, because it was just a spectacular school.

RR: You mentioned tertianship. Do you want to say anything about that year?

WB: As I said, I did it at Pomfret. Many Jesuits of that era disliked tertianship, I think. But our group got along quite well and had some great conversations. Again

I made good friends, one of whom, Tenny Wright of California, remains close.

The most significant spiritual experience of that year occurred during the eight-day retreat at the end. I told Jesus I loved him. I think that kept me centered during the rather heady days at the University of Michigan.

#### DOCTORAL STUDIES

RR: Let's talk about those years.

WB: I was at the University of Michigan from 1964 until 1969 during the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, and in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. There were about fifteen Jesuits studying in Ann Arbor at the time. We all lived in boarding houses my first year and had our meals at the local Catholic hospital. We said Mass individually at that hospital my first year, but during my second year concelebrated Mass was allowed. So we started an afternoon concelebrated Mass at the hospital. We decided to go through the Bible for the readings at this Mass. Until the reform of the lectionary, Mass texts were repeated very often during the week. But now we could reach much further into the scriptures.

RR: Better than repeating the same readings over and over.

WB: It was; the common of martyrs came up often each week. Fittingly, we started with Genesis for the Old Testament reading, and went through each gospel for the second. Whoever was going to be the principal celebrant that day would start where we had left off and take sections for the readings. The next day, the celebrant started where the reading had ended. That didn't mean, however, that every single passage in the Bible was used. The idea was to keep on going through the text until you found something

that was helpful and sounded interesting. We also did the same as we went through the four gospels. As a matter of fact, the Roman lectionary is now set up in much the same way. That was a wonderful time. It helped us to become knowledgeable about the scriptures.

RR: Were there any ideological problems for you at Michigan?

WB: No, there weren't. The professors were interested in me and I was interested in them. It took me some time to learn how to bring together my psychological training with my religious background, however.

For example, one of my professors was a Jewish psychoanalyst who had studied in Europe. He felt that many psychologists were hung up on religion and that this affected their work in therapy. He told me about how, when he first started doing psychoanalysis, he had worked with an orthodox Jew. After about a month or so, the patient said to him, "This is a threat to my religion." My professor told me, "I took it as a resistance to the therapy involved. Later on, when I became more comfortable with my own religious background and less angry about it, I realized that he was right, that I was imposing my ideas unconsciously." Then he said, "And now, my patients and the patients of those I supervise bring up religious topics in therapy without my prompting."

For some reason, however, I never said to myself, "None of my patients ever talk about religion. Why is that?" It never dawned on me that I must have been giving the unconscious signal to my clients that we don't talk about religion in counseling sessions.

RR: That these conversations, rather, were more about generic principles?

WB: No. About psychological matters; about their feelings and fears and thoughts and such, while at the

same time unconsciously excluding religion. When I came to Weston, I was doing psychotherapy with Jesuits in training for the priesthood. But no one ever talked to me about religion in those sessions either. I never questioned why this was so until in the province in 1970 we started to learn how to give the Spiritual Exercises to individuals. I suddenly realized that I could use this clinical training to help people talk about experiences of God. That's when I came to the conclusion that I had been acting in a way similar to the way my professor had acted when he began doing psychoanalysis, unconsciously giving signals that we don't talk about religion in counseling sessions. But let's get back to Michigan, because there's something else I'd like to say about it.

RR: Sure.

#### SMALL COMMUNITY LIFE

WB: In my second year there, we started a small Jesuit community. It may very well have been the first such small community in the country. Four of us rented a house, including Jim Torrens of California, who is still with us, and Paul Becker, who was from the New York Province. The fourth was an Irish Jesuit, who also later left the Society. After a few months or so we started to do our own cooking. This house became sort of a hub for Jesuit celebrations after that. But from the beginning of my time there the Jesuits used to get together for dinner every Friday at a restaurant. We became good companions to one another, I believe.

Once the Jesuits and other religious who were students at the University had begun the daily concelebrated Mass, the religious men and women developed a rather close community. A number of us got together on Saturday evenings at the apart-

ment of a couple of Sisters, and had Mass and a potluck dinner and great conversation.

RR: It was all very community-oriented.

WB: Exactly. It was during this time that I fell deeply in love with a one of the Sisters there. She later left and got married. And I actually did something that I never thought I could do, I performed their wedding ceremony. I had to finally overcome my adolescence. But it was, as I said, a wonderful experience, because the whole thing taught me where my heart really was. It was with the Jesuits and the religious life, even though at the time it was really painful. It was the time when a lot of Jesuits were falling in love and leaving to get married.

#### TEACHING PSYCHOLOGY

WB: I finished the degree in four years. But then I was asked to stay on to teach in place of a full professor. For two semesters I taught his course in theories of personality for both graduate students and undergraduate majors, about 150 students each semester. I also was involved in the research program of my mentor, for whom I wrote a thesis on conflict in marriage. Both of those projects were quarter-time each. The rest of my full-time work was in the Counseling Division run by the Psychology Department to give counseling to students and to supervise graduate students in clinical psychology. [Fr.] Bill Guindon, the Provincial, gave me the OK to do this. [Fr.] Bill Neenan of the Wisconsin Province actually had a tenure track position at the University of Michigan in economics at the time. And there were other Jesuits in secular universities as well at the time.

#### MOVE TO CAMBRIDGE

WB: It was during that year that I said to myself, "This is

not where I belong. The Psych Department isn't my central interest. My center, rather, is the religious community and something to do with Jesuit spirituality." When I was sent to graduate studies, it was with the intent that I be readied to take Jack McCall's place at Weston College. After interviews and an offer of a job as part-time teacher of pastoral theology and part-time counselor, Bill Guindon assigned me to Weston School of Theology, which had just moved into Cambridge.

RR: Yes, around the time I was Dean of Weston.

WB: Exactly. I started in 1969, living at 80 Lexington Ave., and teaching pastoral counseling and other courses, and doing counseling. In 1970, during my second year there, Joe McCormick became the rector.

#### DISCOVERING DIRECTED RETREATS

WB: Also, during that same year, a training program for giving directed retreats was started on four weekends in North Andover. [Fr.] Dom Marucca of the Maryland Province was the facilitator. I believe he had worked with the Jesuits in the Upper Canada Province, who had begun the directed retreat movement in North America. As I recall, I was not at first invited to the first weekend at North Andover, so I asked if I could attend. It turned out to be an eye-opener and life-changing for me. I suddenly realized that I could use all my skills as a psychotherapist to help people talk about their experience of God. That's what I helped them to do, talk about their experience of God. And it turned out to be just marvelous.

#### STARTING CRD

WB: At that first weekend a group of us began talking about a center for Jesuit spirituality: Bill Connolly, Bob Doherty, Dan Lusch, Joe McCormick and Joe

McFarlane from the provincial offices. We decided to begin thinking about the “center” that the province had suggested.

RR: So how did that idea for a center get started?

WB: I believe the province’s original idea was a spirituality research center. However, what we came up with was a training center for spiritual directors, the Center for Religious Development.

Joe McFarlane was involved in the startup; however he quickly realized he was not geared for this kind of work, and he had many other irons in the fire. Bob Lindsay joined us that first year the center for spiritual direction was operational, 1971-72, I believe. Later on, we were joined by [Fr.] Paul Lucey and Sisters Anne Harvey, S.N.D. and Francine Zeller, O.S.F. Anne Harvey was from this area. Francine Zeller was from the Midwest, where she had been provincial of her congregation and the president of Leadership Council for Women Religious. And in 1978, when I became a vice provincial, Sister Madeline Birmingham, S.C. joined the center. So the founding of that center really became one of the biggest things that happened to me, and a big thing, I think, for the province.

RR: What was your position in the center?

WB: I was the first Director. I was also teaching at Weston. So instead of psychotherapy, spiritual direction and training spiritual directors became my other half-time job, and handling the administration tasks of CRD. I was handling two jobs, I suppose.

RR: I was going to say, all that must have kept you busy.

WB: The other members of the Center asked me to be its Director. So we worked together with Weston to create a joint degree program in spiritual direction. You can see why I ended up with more than a full-time job.

## BEGINNING A TWO-SUMMER TERTIANSHIP

**WB:** In the summer of 1972, I believe, we started a two-summer tertianship. Dick Cleary had become vice provincial for formation. The province had not had a tertianship for some time. Dick asked us to start one.

Before Dick came to the Center for Religious Development to ask this, the provincial of the Mercy Sisters of Providence, Sr. Kieran Flynn, had come to CRD and asked us to help her province with renewal. She said that they had tried T-groups and a number of other psychological programs for renewal, but that she believed they needed a spiritual renewal. To that end she had sent two sisters to the Jesuit Center in Guelph, Ontario, for training in giving the full Spiritual Exercises. She wanted us to work with these sisters. Bill Connolly and I had agreed to work with them.

When Dick Cleary asked us about tertianship, we joined the two enterprises. So Bill Connolly and I worked on the first two-summer tertianship program at the Mercy Sisters' place in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. It turned out to be a less than adequate setting for us. So the next year, with Bob Doherty as the director and Bill and I as assistants, we started a two-summer tertianship, using Gloucester as the location for the Spiritual Exercises and CRD in Cambridge for our discussions after the retreat and for the four weekends during the year before the second summer. The idea was that during their second summer, the tertians would go off someplace for an experiment together, a decision they would come to through communal discernment during the four weekends in between the two summers.

**RR:** So it was a kind of rescue mission for tertianships.

**WB:** Exactly.

- RR: In many ways, tertianship came close to disappearing altogether.
- WB: We didn't have one for some time.
- RR: Right. So starting one was an important thing to do?

#### WRITING *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*

- WB: Yes. I had a sabbatical in 1975-1976. That was when Bill Connolly and I started writing *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*. It was finally published in 1982. Since then, it has been translated into six different languages. It has sold around 60,000 copies in English alone.

#### STARTING CENTERS IN THE CARIBBEAN

- WB: Also during that sabbatical, at the request of [Fr.] Larry Burke, at that time regional superior of Jamaica, I helped [Fr.] J. J. Bresnahan, S.J. and Sr. Miriam Cleary, O.S.U., both of whom had graduated from CRD together, to start the Jamaica Center for Religious Development to train spiritual directors and give spiritual direction.

I went with them to start it, and then at Christmas time was there for directed retreats. And I supervised Miriam and J.J. by tape. Two years later, when J.J. became a vice provincial in the province, I gave the same help to Miriam and [Fr.] John Banks in starting a center in Guyana under the auspices of the British Jesuits there. The following year we did the same thing in Trinidad at the invitation of Bishop Pantin. CRD had a big influence in the Caribbean as a result of these foundings.

#### HIS WORK IN CAMBRIDGE

- RR: That's terrific. Could I ask you to tell us a bit about your role with the Jesuits at Cambridge?

- WB: I had my office at CRD at 42 Kirkland Street, but was over at Weston School of Theology a lot, and regularly taught courses in pastoral counseling, confessional practices, and, eventually, spiritual direction. During the nine years I was a member of the faculty I also lived with the scholastics at 80 Lexington Avenue, an experience I treasure.
- RR: That was why you ended up with more than one job?
- WB: Oh, yes. No question. Besides, I was the chair of the search committee that offered the Weston School of Theology presidency to John Padberg from St Louis, to replace Bob White as President.
- RR: Weren't you also involved in another important development?

#### VICE PROVINCIAL FOR FORMATION

- WB: I was a province consultor from about 1972 onwards. Bill Guindon had approached me about different jobs when he was looking for vice provincials. And I was able to convince him that what I was doing at Cambridge was a good idea. That's when he made me a province consultor.
- RR: This is something that I've never been very clear about myself: in general, what was the function of a vice provincial?
- WB: Well, there were over 1,100 Jesuits in the New England province, and beginning with General Congregation 31 we had recovered the importance of a serious account of conscience with the provincial each year. One provincial could not hear the account of conscience as it should be done for that many men. Bill Guindon's original idea was that these vice provincials would be actually in charge of their subdivision in the New England Province. As he saw it, they would be the actual provincial for their area.

- RR: A divided kind of governing?
- WB: Yes, he divided things up, but he remained the provincial to whom men could have recourse. He also wanted to have an international vice provincial, but that didn't work out. There were vice provincials for Communities 1 and Communities 2. Communities 1 dealt mostly with higher education communities as well as a few other apostolates, while Communities 2 focused mostly on secondary education. There was also a vice provincial for formation.
- RR: So how did that overall scheme actually work out in practice?
- WB: Well, with Bill Guindon it seemed to work fine.
- RR: Due to him personally?
- WB: Yes, because he delegated responsibilities.
- RR: When did you become vice provincial for formation?
- WB: In 1978. And I think I was instrumental at the time in working with other vice provincials and assistants for formation in other US provinces in getting a more coherent formation program in the assistancy. Formation had been a bit haphazard for a while, as you are probably aware.
- RR: That's what I heard.
- WB: As a member of the Jesuit Conference Committee for Formation [JCCF] I offered myself to be the writer for the group as we developed the program. Then, after I finished as vice provincial, I wrote up something on Jesuit formation for "Studies in Jesuit Spirituality." The JCCF was reasonably successful in developing a coherent program, I think.

#### SABBATICAL AT BOSTON COLLEGE

- WB: After I finished as vice provincial for formation, I had a sabbatical in 1984-1985. Ed O'Flaherty, the provincial at that time, said to me, "You should be looking for a way to do some writing as well as what-

ever else you do.” In any case, my sabbatical was at Barat House on the Newton campus of Boston College. And that’s where I did a good bit of writing, including *God and You*, a small book on prayer. I made a directed long retreat in California. I facetiously said that I wanted to give God a last shot at me. But I actually wanted to make the Exercises with a director.

#### ASSISTANT NOVICE DIRECTOR

WB: During that year at Barat House I met with Paul Harman, who was then vice provincial for formation. He told me that he was looking for somebody to become assistant novice director. And I replied, “Well, have you ever thought about me?” And he said, “I didn’t think I could ask you.” And I said, “Well, the provincial told me to find a job where I could do some writing. If [Fr.] Jerry Calhoun (who was going to be novice director) wants me, I’d be happy to work with him.” So, in 1985, I became the assistant novice director.

RR: Where was this?

WB: It was set up at 300 Newbury Street.

RR: Newbury Street?

WB: Right. That’s where the novitiate was and where we worked for the first two and a half years of my time as assistant. Then in February 1988 after the long retreat, we moved over to Jamaica Plain.

#### WRITING DESPITE BACK PROBLEMS

WB: My first year as assistant novice director was a nightmare, because a disc in my back went out. I carried on my work with this disability for a whole year seeing people for spiritual direction while lying on my back. Finally, I had an operation sometime in May 1986.

I had been in Brazil in July 1985, just before becoming assistant novice director. The Jesuit press in Brazil had done a Portuguese translation of the book, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*. The Conference of Religious of Brazil [CRB] invited me down to do a five-day workshop on spiritual direction and to give a directed retreat for English-speaking people. I was helped with translation by Sr. Philomena Sheerin, M.M.M., a graduate of CRD in Cambridge, who had been in Brazil for many years. At the end of that summer stay, I was asked to come back in the winter, from February until May, to give workshops on spiritual direction with Philomena in ten different cities, again for the CRB.

RR: Sounds like a very important project.

WB: Yes. But because of my back I wasn't able to go. However, Philomena was asked to conduct the workshops. Only one of the cities cancelled when they heard that I could not come. It was a great breakthrough for a woman to be asked to do this in Brazil. So there was a silver lining to my not being able to go. She was very good at spiritual direction and leading such workshops.

While I was laid up during that first year at the novitiate, a novice gave me one of these space pens so that I was able to do some writing while lying on my back. And it actually turned into a book.

#### RECTOR AT BOSTON COLLEGE

WB: After three years as assistant novice director, I was made rector at Boston College. I don't know which of us was the more scared, me or the community, because I was the first outsider parachuted into BC as rector in over thirty years.

RR: That was quite a while earlier.

WB: That's right. And that rector had not been well liked!

But it worked out. I enjoyed it a lot. Besides getting to know so many Jesuits not only from our province but from around the world in an intimate way, one of the blessings for me was that I found out that I'm not cheap. What I mean is that I grew up very poor. And even when I was vice provincial, the province was low on funds. So I had to run a tight ship. Well, the Jesuit community at BC had money. I realized we could use that money for a number of different things. And that's what we did. I now had the money to do good things with and was not afraid to use it.

RR: A different kind of experience for you?

WB: Yes. I was looking forward to the usual six years as rector. I had that job from 1988 to 1991. But I was appointed provincial in 1991.

#### FACING CHALLENGES AS PROVINCIAL

RR: So tell us in general terms what kind of an experience that was for you.

WB: I enjoyed that job very much. And I also enjoyed the time when it was over. I found that we had to do something about health care in the province. I also learned something about finances. The first thing I did was to look into buying into Medicare, which meant buying into Social Security. We had already done that at BC, because of a catastrophic illness in the Jesuit community the year before I became rector that threatened to send Blue Cross/Blue Shield sky high for everybody in the university. Jesuits over 65 were not in Medicare. Health care costs were affecting everybody negatively. So we were able to get the Jesuits of the province into Social Security in order to qualify for Medicare. To do that, we had to borrow \$2.5 million.

RR: I remember when that was going on. The Maryland Province did much the same thing. And, if I remem-

- ber correctly, it was all quite complex.
- WB:** Yes. It was very complicated. But it was something we just had to do. The way it was explained to us was that eventually, spread out over ten years or so, we would make up for the cost. That was the first main thing I did. The second thing was the fact that our health center at Campion was costing so much that the province was eating into the principal of the arca for elderly for over a million dollars a year.
- RR:** Obviously. Quite a challenge.
- WB:** Yes. If we kept up losing our capital, we could be in real trouble. After much consultation and soul-searching we decided to spend the money to upgrade the Health Center. Through the instrumentality of [Fr.] Michael Pierce, [Bro.] Jim McDavitt, and [Fr.] Bill Russell, and the extraordinary generosity of Frances and Emmet Tracy and other benefactors we were able to do this and get health care reimbursements. I think it was a good decision. Of course, none of these projects could have been done without the yeoman work and wisdom of [Fr.] Tom Gibbons, the province treasurer at the time.
- RR:** It really has made a huge difference in the province.
- WB:** Yes, I think so, too. We also got some very good professionals to help us with our investments, and with the advice of [Fr.] Dennis Yesalonia I set up a development committee chaired by Dennis and hired our first lay director development, Linda Wood-O'Connor with the enthusiastic support of Jim McDavitt and Bill Russell.
- RR:** I have always been very grateful to you for the positive way you responded to my concerns about the unprofessional way the New England province archives were being handled at Weston by moving them to Holy Cross, where they are now marvelously kept.
- WB:** That came about when we realized that the files

needed to be kept much better and with much more security.

RR: Anything else you want to say about those years as provincial?

WB: One other thing that I was very pleased with was the fact that we were able to finally stabilize our new apostolic venture at the University of Connecticut at Storrs. I found it to be a very unstable enterprise when I first came on.

RR: What did it take to stabilize it?

WB: My task was to find the right Jesuit combination for a very complicated parish. With the appointment of [Fr.] Paul Holland as pastor things stabilized. I had been close to saying, "We can't do this." But places and people seemed somehow to fall nicely into place.

#### GRATITUDE TO GOD

RR: Would you like to add anything?

WB: I would like to say something about my gratitude to God, because God's the most important thing in my life. I have come to believe that God wants our friendship, our adult friendship. He also wants our personal cooperation in God's family business, which is the world. I feel that God has given me insights that I have been able to write about, talk about, and even do something about. And that's what I have been trying to do with my writing and retreat-giving and workshops.

Through illness, I've learned to be very grateful just to be alive when my vocal cord cancer could have killed me in 1995. I could have been in continual pain, because that's what I was threatened with by my back pain back in 1985-86. At the time that I was operated on, a neurologist said to me, "You're going to have pain all your life." And that didn't happen. So I live now, as much as I can, for God and grateful

to God. There is nothing else more important in my life.

There is one more thing that I forgot to mention. In August some five years ago, I stopped drinking. And that turned out to be one of the blessings of my life. I was on the province retreat at Holy Cross. Usually, of course, we did not have drinks, but on the feast of the Transfiguration we were invited to the Holy Cross community for social and dinner. I drank too much. I fell asleep after dinner when I was supposed to pray and slurred my speech in a telephone conversation with a close friend, Marika Geoghegan, who confronted me on it. And I'm forever grateful to her for confronting me on it and to God for the fact that I no longer drink. It's been a great blessing for me.

I am also grateful for such things in my life as being allowed to lead the Jesuit tertianship for the past ten years. It keeps me young and allows me to be of help to these important young Jesuits who are the life and future of the Society.

RR: That's terrific! How about a final word?

WB: There are some times when I can't talk because I am so choked up with gratitude for what I've received in my life. God gave me wonderful parents and sisters and a loving extended family. I was given the gift of a great education and wonderful friends all along the course of my life.

The call to the Society of Jesus has been the greatest blessing of my life, showering me with graces and friends and opportunities to be helpful to others. My years as a superior in the New England province were a great blessing for me. Jesuits helped me and gave me the grace of their trust, and I discovered through intimate conversations how genuinely desirous of God my brothers in Christ are and how zealous for

God's people. I have been blessed indeed.

And I have received wonderful care when I needed it. For the longest time, I couldn't talk without choking up with tears about my treatment during the two weeks I was up on the second floor of the Health Center here at Campion after my knee replacement in 2006. Those nurses and nurses aides were absolutely wonderful, showing the heart and hands of God. It is also wonderful to be no longer drinking. When I think of all the good things that have happened to me through God's goodness, I choke up and can't speak. That's why I am grateful for this opportunity to just say to God, "Thank You!"

RR: And we're grateful to you for your openness, kindness, and inspiration.

**Rev. William A. Barry, S.J.**

**Born:** November 22, 1930, Worcester,  
Massachusetts  
**Entered:** August 14, 1950, Lenox, Massachusetts, St.  
Stanislaus Novitiate/ Shadowbrook  
**Ordained:** June 16, 1962, Weston, Massachusetts,  
Weston College  
**Final Vows:** August 15, 1967, Worcester,  
Massachusetts, College of the Holy Cross

- 1944 Worcester, Massachusetts: St. John's High School -  
Student  
1948 Worcester, Massachusetts: College of the Holy  
Cross - Student  
1950 Lenox, Massachusetts: St. Stanislaus Novitiate /  
Shadowbrook - Novitiate, juniorate  
1953 Pullach bei München, Germany: Berchmanskolleg -  
Studied philosophy  
1956 Fairfield, Connecticut: Fairfield College Prepara-  
tory School - Taught senior Latin and English,  
various classes in German  
1958 Bronx, New York: Fordham University - Studied  
psychology  
1959 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied  
theology  
1963 Pomfret, Connecticut: St. Robert Hall - Tertianship  
1964 Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan -  
1964-1968 Studied clinical psychology  
1968-1969 Taught psychology, research, counseling,  
and supervision  
1969 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Weston School of  
Theology - Taught pastoral theology; psychological  
counseling  
1971 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Center for Religious  
Development - Director

- 1975 Seabrook, New Hampshire: Sabbatical
- 1976 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Weston School of Theology - Taught pastoral theology; director of Center for Religious Development
- 1978 Boston, Massachusetts: Provincial Offices of the New England Province - Vice Provincial for Formation
- 1984 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College - Sabbatical
- 1985 Boston, Massachusetts: St. Andrew House - Assistant Director of Novices
- 1988 Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts: Arrupe House - Assistant Director of Novices [moved 2/1988]
- 1988 Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College - Rector of Jesuit community [7/31/1988-6/7/1991], writer, taught theology
- 1991 Boston, Massachusetts: Ignatius House - Provincial
- 1997 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Center - Co-director of Tertianship Program, writer, spiritual director, editor-in-chief of *Human Development* [since 2003]

### Degrees

- 1956 Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-Boston College
- 1956 Licentiate in Philosophy, Philosophy, Berchmanskolleg, Pullach bei München, Germany
- 1960 Master of Arts, Psychology, Fordham University
- 1963 Licentiate in Theology, Weston College-Boston College
- 1968 Doctor of Philosophy, Clinical Psychology, University of Michigan
- 1992 PhD [hon], Theology, Anna Maria College, Paxton, Massachusetts

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- Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God: A Theological Inquiry.* Revised Edition. New York/Mahwah: Paulist, 2004. (Translated into Portuguese.)
- God's Passionate Desire.* Revised Edition. Chicago. Loyola Press, 2008.
- A Friendship Like No Other: Experiencing God's Amazing Embrace.* Chicago. Loyola Press, 2008.

## APPENDIX

*Just before this oral history was to be sent to press, Fr. Barry was asked to give the Campion Lecture to the Jesuit community at Campion Center on the present state of spiritual direction. The editors thought that this presentation fit well with the aim of the oral history project, since it covers the history of the growth of the spiritual direction ministry through the effects of Jesuits in the New England province. The lecture was delivered on December 6, 2007.*

### CAMPION LECTURE THE PRESENT STATE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

#### INTRODUCTION

I am honored to be asked to give this talk on the present state of spiritual direction. In order to see where we are at present with regard to spiritual direction, I need to step back to give a picture of how we got to where we now are. Basically what I shall be talking about is the spreading effects of the recovery of the individually directed Spiritual Exercises in our province on the present state of spiritual direction in the world.

#### TRADITIONAL SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Recall what spiritual direction was like when most of us entered the Society. One personal example: When I was at Pullach for philosophy, the spiritual director would invariably begin each session with the question, "Any problems?", to which I would almost as invariably answer, "No." Clearly my spiritual director felt that what was important was to help a young Jesuit solve problems. It was not clear to me what problems he meant, but it might have been problems with the vows, with sexuality, with prayer, what have you. I was too naïve and intimidated to ask him. If you were lucky, you found a spiritual director who asked you about

your prayer, but usually even such conversations were about problems in prayer, e.g., distractions, times to pray, what books to use, etc. And all our retreats were large group ones, so that you spoke with the retreat director at most once in a week and then usually for confession. We did not speak about what happened when we prayed, that is, about our experience or lack of experience of God's presence and communication. Hardly any lay people had even heard of spiritual direction, and in non-Catholic circles it was practically non-existent. A lot has changed in forty years, and the New England province through its founding of the Center for Religious Development has played a large role in these changes.

#### PSYCHOLOGY AND JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

In 1964, after tertianship, I was sent to get a degree in clinical psychology with at least some idea that this would have a bearing on Jesuit spirituality. I had some intuition that there was a connection, but not much of a clue of how it would work. Jack McCall wanted me to take his place at Weston College for one thing. I became a pretty good psychotherapist and counselor at Michigan, but even though I had some conversations with a Jewish supervisor that should have made me wonder about this reality, none of my clients ever spoke about religious matters, not even when I was doing psychotherapy and counseling with Jesuit scholastics at Weston School of Theology. It was as though I exuded the notion that we don't talk about religious matters in this setting. I was a psychologist who happened to be a Jesuit, as I look back on it now. What changed things for me was the first weekend for training in giving directed retreats, the Spiritual Exercises one on one.

#### REDISCOVERING DIRECTED RETREATS

In Canada, David Asselin, SJ, had begun giving the Exercises to individuals and training scholastics to do the same.

His work led to the development of individually directed retreats at Guelph, Ontario, where John English, John Veltri and other Canadian Jesuits had such a wide influence on the way the Exercises were given throughout North America. Dominic Marucca of the Maryland province, who had gone to Canada to learn, was enlisted by our province to facilitate four weekends at North Andover, beginning in the fall of 1970. At that first meeting the penny dropped for me when I realized that I could use the skills I had acquired to do counseling and psychotherapy to help people talk about their relationship with God. I became a more integrated Jesuit as a result, no longer a psychologist who happened to be a Jesuit, but a Jesuit with psychological training.

#### PLANNING A SPIRITUAL DIRECTION CENTER

At that same meeting there were some like-minded Jesuits who showed interest in developing a spirituality center in the province, Bill Connolly (history of spirituality), Bob Doherty (spirituality and the New Testament), Dan Lusch (Clinical Pastoral Education supervisor), Joe McCormick (rector at Weston Jesuit Community) and Joe McFarlane (Assistant to the provincial, Bill Guindon). Joe McFarlane told us that the provincial had been given the advice by the province assembly to develop a spirituality center. The six of us got together immediately after this weekend and began to talk out and plan for a center. We came to the conclusion that what was needed was a center to train spiritual directors in the Ignatian tradition, not a center for spirituality that would be for study and lectures, etc. Through Joe McFarlane we convinced Bill Guindon to let us start the Center for Religious Development in Cambridge. Since the Cambridge Center for Social Issues was leaving for Georgetown, Bill let us have 42 Kirkland Street as our Center which opened for business in the fall of 1971.

### THREE GOALS OF CRD

We stated our purpose as threefold: to do writing and study on spiritual direction in the Ignatian tradition, to train spiritual directors, and to give spiritual direction. In the first year we only did the first and third, but in the following year we began the training part with something like six or so associates in training. In the years that followed we increased the number of associates to between 10 and 12 each year, and also began a joint degree program with Weston Jesuit School of Theology.

### STAFF AT CRD

Joe McFarlane did not stay with the staff after we began, and Joe McCormack had his hands full as rector. So Bill Connolly, Bob Doherty, Dan Lusch and I were joined by Bob Lindsay for a year. Bob left for Gloucester and Dan Lusch left after a year or two to be full-time at Boston College. Then Paul Lucey joined the staff for a number of years. After a couple of years Srs. Anne Harvey, SND and Francine Zeller, OSF joined the staff, followed by Madeline Birmingham, SC in 1978. In later years other Jesuits and religious joined the staff of CRD, which continues to this day.

### CHOOSING A MODEL FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Let me say something about the kind of spiritual direction we fostered. It was based on the premise of the 15<sup>th</sup> Annotation of the Spiritual Exercises, namely that the Creator communicates directly with the creature. The Spiritual Exercises presumes that God wants a personal relationship with people. The one who gives the Exercises is there to help the person with this relationship, to be a facilitator for this relationship. So we modeled our way of doing spiritual direction on the way the one who gives the Exercises helps, namely by giving help with this relationship.

One could define spiritual direction as help given by one Christian to another to attain what God wants of them.

Then the kind of direction would depend on what you thought God wants of us. If God wants us to live moral lives, then spiritual direction would focus on the moral choices a person makes. If God wants people to have healthier interactions with others, then the help would focus on developing healthier interactions. If God wants people to be psychologically whole, then the focus would be on helping people to psychic wholeness. If God wants people to make choices in life in accordance with God's plan, then spiritual direction would focus on such choices. If God wants people to pray better, then the focus would be on different methods of prayer to try to help the person get the right one for him or her. If God wants a personal relationship of intimacy with each person, then the focus would be on what happens when the directee engages in that relationship with God. This latter is what we came to believe back in 1970 when we started the Center for Religious Development, and the kind of spiritual direction we developed has become a paradigm for many training programs for spiritual directors throughout the world.

#### FOCUS ON DIRECTEE'S RELATION WITH GOD

Thus the focus of spiritual direction practiced at CRD became what happens when the directee relates to God. Early on we talked about religious experience as what happens in this relationship. Later I came to prefer the term, "the religious dimension of experience," as the focus, because the term, "religious experience," can so easily be used for something esoteric, even odd, or something only experienced by holy people. I believe that any human experience can have a religious dimension, since God is present and active in our world at all times. We can find God in all things; hence there can be a religious dimension in our experience of all things. All that is needed is to pay attention to our experience and then to discern in the welter of dimensions of any experience what is of God.

## PAYING ATTENTION TO EXPERIENCE

Thus paying attention to experience became a key function not only in our advice to directees but also in our work as spiritual directors. We encouraged directees and spiritual directors to pay attention to their experience, especially to any experience that seemed to hint at the presence of God. Thus we encouraged people to take a contemplative stance toward the world and toward God's presence in the world. We meant contemplative in its Ignatian and etymological sense, not in its mystical sense. To be contemplative in the Ignatian sense means to pay attention to what one encounters and to what one experiences in the encounter. We tried to help those who came for direction to pay attention to their experience: to notice what happens when they smell a rose, see a sunset, listen to a gospel story, watch a baby crawl, hear of a tragedy, etc., and to reflect on what they noticed and to talk about what they noticed with us in direction. The contemplative stance is something like what the examen of consciousness fosters, a way of noticing what has happened during the day in order to discover God's presence in our day and our own way of dealing with God's presence.

## THE CHALLENGE OF CONTEMPLATION

It is not easy to pay attention to something outside the self, really to see, feel, smell and touch a tree, for example. "Oh, it's just a maple." Or to pay attention to a gospel text. "Oh, yeah, the prodigal son." Or to pay attention to the text of Ignatius' Autobiography, as our associates found out when Bill Connolly took them through that text. We have so many preconceived notions, so many cares and concerns that we don't really pay attention to the other, whether the other is a person, a thing, an event, or a text of Scripture. Just think of what happens when someone tells you about his knee operation. Most likely the first thing you think of is your own knee operation or your mother's and you talk

about that. The other person has no time to tell about his experience. So helping people to a contemplative stance toward life was one of the tasks we found difficult.

The former poet laureate Billy Collins' humorous poem, "Introduction to Poetry," gives an idea of the problem of taking a contemplative stance toward anything:

I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a color slide  
or press an ear against its hive.  
I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,  
or walk inside the poem's room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.  
I want them to water-ski  
across the surface of a poem  
waving at the author's name on the shore.  
But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.  
They begin beating it with a hose  
to find out what it really means.

#### OBSTACLES TO CONTEMPLATION IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

Well, we found that many people want to beat understanding out of their experience before really paying attention to what exactly happened. So we had to be patient in helping them to learn to pay attention and to believe that we really wanted to hear about their experience. Of course, as spiritual directors and supervisors of those in training we also had to be patient with ourselves, since we are like most people. Spiritual directors and directors of the Exercises can get so caught up in worries about the structure of the Exercises and about what they are going to say in response to

the directee that they don't really pay attention to what the person is saying. Almost as soon as a person begins talking and we get an idea of what they are talking about, we begin to figure out what we should say to be of help. As a result we don't really hear what their experience really was in all its uniqueness. A bishop once told his priests, in my hearing, "I'm not a good listener, because almost as soon as you begin telling me something, I begin thinking of how to solve the problem." I thought that a remarkable admission from the bishop, but I fear that it is true of more of us than want to admit it.

#### HELPING BY LISTENING

In workshops on spiritual direction I tell the audience, only half jokingly, "You should run away from a spiritual director who wants to help you. If the director is interested in God, he or she may help you because then the director will at least try to pay attention to your unique experience." In the beginning of any training program we have to spend a great deal of time helping directors to be contemplative when they welcome a directee and to jettison any agenda that can get in the way of paying attention. Fledging spiritual directors want to be helpful; but most of them (and us) think that the way to be helpful is to give advice or to help someone to understand themselves. It's hard work to get new directors to believe that they are most helpful when they really listen to the directees and help them to describe their experiences in some detail. Very few people have the experience of meeting someone who really wants to know what they are experiencing, and especially their experience of God.

Example: In our early years at CRD a married woman wept with relief and joy when she found out that she could talk about her experience of God with someone who really was interested in her experience.

### GOD'S PRESENCE IN DIRECTION

When new directors get it, they are amazed at how alive conversations with directees get. It's never boring when a person is describing an encounter with God. God is never boring, nor is what happens between God and someone ever boring. (In fact when a directee is boring, one can bet that he or she is avoiding contact with God.)

When directees speak of their experiences of God, the room becomes a holy place. Often enough the directee experiences God's presence again in remembering what happened earlier in the month, and the director feels that presence also.

### ROLE OF DISCERNMENT

Once the directee has described his experience in some detail, the work of discernment can begin, of trying to make sense of the experience. What is of God in this experience? What not? Here the rules for discernment of the Spiritual Exercises come in very handy because they are very practical. With these rules spiritual directors help directees to see where the relationship with God is leading them, to see how God wants to make them more alive human beings, more like the images of God they are. Spiritual direction does not foster a "me and Jesus" type of spirituality, because God does have standards, and those who relate personally with God are drawn to live up to these standards.

### VALUE OF SUPERVISION

The most important way we helped new spiritual directors to become good spiritual directors was through supervision, a practice developed in the field of psychotherapy. Supervision is different from consultation. In consultation you ask a more experienced therapist or spiritual director what he or she would do in a certain case. Your focus is on the person who came for therapy or for spiritual direction. In supervision you tell a more experienced therapist or spiritual

director what happened to you as you were doing therapy or spiritual direction with another. The focus is on you and what your experience was when you were doing spiritual direction. This is very important. The only way you can become a good therapist or spiritual director is by personal transformation, transformation from a neophyte to a professional or artist in the field. You don't become a professional or an artist by book learning or by consultation alone. They help, but the most important way is by giving spiritual direction and by being very honest about what is happening in you as you give spiritual direction. In supervision you face your own demons, your own insecurities, your own lack of faith in God, your own resistance to getting into a more intimate friendship with God. I believe that the introduction of supervision into the training of spiritual directors and directors of the Spiritual Exercises, after the stress on the experienced relationship with God and the contemplative stance, was the most innovative and far-reaching effect of our program at CRD. I'm not sure that this kind of supervision is what actually happens everywhere the word supervision is used, but I do know that this kind of supervision has been truly grace-filled where it has been practiced.

#### VARIETY OF DIRECTEES AT CRD

Almost as soon as we opened our doors for spiritual direction, we began to see a variety of people, at first a preponderance of priests, religious and those in formation, but gradually more and more lay people such as the married woman I mentioned. And then non-Catholics and even non-Christians. At the beginning of each academic year we would need 100 or more directees for our associates to direct since rather quickly they began to see up to ten directees each. So we had a lot of people coming through those doors at 42 Kirkland Street and later at 2240 Mass. Ave.

### LAY ASSOCIATES AT CRD

At first the spiritual directors in training, the associates, were mostly religious or priests, but that also began to change as Catholic lay people came for training and then non-Catholic ministers and lay people. The first non-Catholic associate was Ruth Barnhouse, an Episcopalian psychiatrist in Cambridge, who later entered seminary and became an Episcopal priest. Gradually, too, associates began to come from other countries like Ireland, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, even from other European countries. These associates, when they graduated, often began training programs back in their own areas and countries.

### CRD FOSTERS US CENTERS

Training programs begun the US from CRD:

- The Springfield Center for Religious Development
- Detroit (the Dominican Center for Religious Development)
- Mercy Center at Burlingame, CA
- The Upper Room in New Jersey, Chicago
- Centers in Bloomfield, CT, Franklin Square, Long Island, the Bronx and New Rochelle, NY (where Miriam Cleary, OSU has for years led a program in training spiritual directors)
- Narragansett, RI
- Louisville, KY (where Jim Keegan, SJ developed a center),
- The Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley (with Jane Ferdon, OP, a graduate of CRD and George Murphy, SJ)
- Many other places.

Graduates of CRD have been instrumental in the summer training program in spiritual direction at Creighton University in Omaha, now about 30 years old and going strong.

### CRD CENTERS SPRING UP WORLDWIDE

CRD staff helped in developing training programs in other countries, often with graduates of the practicum in Cambridge. For example,

- In Ottawa, Canada with Bill Connolly supplying supervision
- The Jamaica CRD (J.J. Bresnahan, SJ and Miriam Cleary, OSU)
- The Guyana Institute for Religious Development (John Banks, SJ and Miriam Cleary, OSU)
- The Trinidad and Tobago Center for Religious Development (idem). In these three places I supplied the supervision.
- In Ireland Bill Connolly, SJ and Madeline Birmingham, RC worked with graduates of CRD to develop training programs.

### CRD AFFILIATES IN AUSTRALIA

Bill and Madeline went to Australia and New Zealand for many summers in a row to start programs in different cities. As a result there are CRD affiliate groups in various Australian cities which meet regularly for supervision, and each year in July there has been a three-day conference of the Australia CRD in one of the cities.

In 2005 I was invited to give the talks at this conference in Melbourne. Bill and Madeline are still held in high esteem for what they did. The following year, 2006, a new group, the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction, held its first conference.

While in Australia in 2005, I gave the keynote address for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Siloam, a center in Melbourne for training spiritual directors founded by Fr. Brian Gallagher, MSC, an early graduate of the Center for Religious Development. There were over 200 people at that celebration.

Over a seven-year period Bob Doherty worked in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines to train directors of the Spiritual Exercises and spiritual directors. In Japan and the Philippines Bob worked with Ed Naughton, a Columban who had graduated from CRD. Bob also worked with the Methodists in Indiana and other parts of the country to train spiritual directors and directors of the Spiritual Exercises.

#### CRD PUBLICATIONS

The staff of CRD published two books, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* by Bill Connolly and me, and *Witnessing to the Fire* by Madeline Birmingham and Bill Connolly, that have been influential in training programs throughout the world. *Witnessing to the Fire* describes in detail the training program at CRD. *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* has become the most used book in training programs in spiritual direction and has sold over 60,000 copies in English. It has been translated into six languages: Portuguese, French, Italian, German, Polish, and Chinese.

#### PROMOTING SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN BRAZIL

When, in 1985, it was translated into Portuguese by Edições Loyola, the Jesuit press in Brazil, I was asked by the Conference of Religious of Brazil (CRB) to conduct a 5-day workshop training spiritual directors for religious men and woman in Belo Horizonte. Sr. Philomena Sheerin, MMM, a graduate of CRD who had been working in Brazil for years, translated for me and helped lead the practical experiences.

The next year I was supposed to go to ten cities between February and May with Philomena to conduct workshops sponsored by local chapters of CRB. But that was when a disc problem in my back put me on my bed for six months, so Philomena went to nine of the ten cities, a breakthrough to have a woman lead workshops that included men reli-

gious. Skipp Conlan, SJ and Pat Leonard, an Irish Holy Spirit priest, did the CRD program and continued the training programs for the CRB, sometimes together with me.

Jim Malley, SJ and I also went to Brazil one summer while I was rector at B.C. to do training workshops in Porto Alegre in the south and Bahia in the north with Skipp Conlan. Edições Loyola has translated almost all of my other books as well as *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*.

#### OUTREACH TO CHINA

Last year Stephen Tong, former tertian at Campion Center, and Johanna Rau, a widow and graduate of CRD, began going into mainland China from Hong Kong to give week-long training programs in spiritual direction to priests and nuns in various cities. It is a rather amazing program that Stephen told me about when he was here in the spring. They were planning to move into the Shanghai area this year. Stephen said that the nuns grasp the sharing concept readily, but it takes more time for the men. However, the fact that the priests and the nuns are doing this together is a wonderful breakthrough in the Chinese context. They use the Chinese translation of *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*.

#### SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS INTERNATIONAL

The beginning of Spiritual Directors International took place this way. A conference for spiritual directors was organized by Sr. Mary Ann Scofield, RSM, a graduate of CRD, at the Mercy Center in Burlingame, CA in 1991, at which I was one of the keynoters. In attendance were many graduates of CRD and affiliated programs and members of the staff of Shalem Center in Washington, DC, including Gerald May, the author of many books including *Addiction and Grace*.

At this conference it was decided to start Spiritual Directors International, which has grown into a world-wide network of spiritual directors from various religious tradi-

tions, including Jewish and Buddhist and other non-Christian traditions. Jim Keegan of our province, a graduate of CRD and former member of the staff of CRD, was a longtime member of the governing board of SDI, which has an annual conference for spiritual directors and for training programs that attracts many people from around the world.

I have here the latest listing of membership, a sizable book. The organization also now publishes a quarterly journal, *Presence*, a copy of which I have here. In addition SDI published this booklet, *Seek and Find Guide: Find a Spiritual Director Anywhere in the World!*, 160 pages.

#### GROWTH AND PROFESSIONALIZATION

From an almost unknown entity 40 years ago spiritual direction has grown immensely as a ministry in the various Christian churches and in other religions. It has become a profession with questions arising about licensing, fees for service, insurance, boundaries, etc. The field has become quite eclectic. I sense that the focus on the relationship with God gets lost in the welter of interest in psychological theories, massage techniques, some new age ideas, etc. I find this eclecticism at times in the articles in *Presence*. But perhaps I am just too narrow in my perspective. At any rate spiritual direction at the present time is a burgeoning ministry that for some is the main source of their income.

#### NEW ENGLAND AND IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

What I most want to emphasize is the influence of Ignatian spirituality emanating from our own province on the spread of a contemplative spiritual direction in the Ignatian tradition around the world. As a province we have much to be proud of in what we have contributed to this tradition. Thank you for listening.