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**Fr. John V. Borgo, S. J.
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Interview with Fr. John V. Borgo, S. J.
by Fr. Paul Kenney, S. J.
October 4, 2005

PAUL KENNEY: Good morning, John.

JOHN BORGO: Good morning, Paul.

PK: How are you today?

JB: A little bit under the weather. But again, the weather has not been very kind to us.

PK: Now, being from Pittsfield, Mass., where...

JB: Pittsfield, Massachusetts, yes. In the Berkshires.

PK: Rather mountainous weather, and storms and rain.

JB: True, but it is still the Berkshires, and the Berkshires are beautiful. And this is the season of changing leaves and beautiful colors.

PK: I remember the Berkshires from my time at Shadowbrook, where you entered in 1944. But before that, you were a student at Cranwell?

JB: Very true. And it was what I might call a prime event in my life.

PK: Can you speak of that time?

JB: Sure. I was born in Pittsfield, of two lovely Italian

people. My father, who was a baker, had actually been born in Pittsfield, but as still a young child of two or three years, returned to Italy with his parents, grew up there, and then came back to Pittsfield as a seventeen- or eighteen-year-old. He had evidently done some work in bakery as an assistant while he was in Piea D'Asti in northern Italy, part of the Piedmont area.

PK: I see.

JB: So when he returned to America and to Pittsfield, he looked around for bakeries to work at. But he could not find work at a wage he wanted in order eventually to buy his own bakery. So he went to work at General Electric, which was a big plant, doing piecework. It certainly must have taught him great patience, because that is very demanding work. But it produced a better pay check. At the same time he was investigating possibilities for himself. And in the process, he met my mother, born in northern Italy, in Piea D'Asti, as he was. But she came over very early, and grew up in Pittsfield; her name was Margaret Mary Carossoli.

PK: I see.

JB: She came over with her parents and her sister, who was my Aunt Sara. Anyway, as my Dad, John Baptist Borgo, was looking around for a bakery and raising money, he ran into Margaret Carossoli. They got to know one another, and she was interested in what he was about, and interested in him as a person, with a definite goal in life. She had been a very good student, so she was quite capable herself. Eventually they got married, and were looking for a place to settle down. She was living with her parents on

Tyler Street.

PK: In Pittsfield.

JB: He was able to settle on a price with a baker on East Street, the same street that the General Electric is on. He bought the bakery with the house on the upper floor. So their life began there, and it was not too long before mine did—a baker's son. I was fortunate to work in the bakery, helping out. My sister is Virginia, born a year before I was, plus three days. So I was born on January 6th, 1927 and she was born on January 3rd, 1926. We both went to Hibbard School, a public grammar school.

PK: OK.

JB: That was a good school. We had a good beginning, and I was kind of a shy person, and my sister was anything but. So being a year older than I was, she took care of me, so to speak. And we both graduated from Hibbard, and then went to a parochial school, St. Joseph's, for junior high school. In those days they did not have middle school, they had junior high school. Well, as it happens, I was working in the bakery and going to Hibbard School, later to St. Joseph's Junior High. My mother, very alert about what was going on around her as well as in her home, heard about Cranwell School. And so she said, "You know, I think you would do well to go to Cranwell." And I said, "What's that?" And so she explained it. She said, "It's a private school for boys, and it's a boarding school, but you're only nine miles from it, so you can"—she had already phoned the Cranwell registrar. "You can be a day student, and just..."

PK: Commute.

JB: Yes. "But we're thinking ahead, and the principal,

said, ‘Well, it might be well for him to get some boarding school experience here, too. So why don’t we plan on his boarding as a senior? Particularly in preparation for college, since we are a prep school.’” So she agreed with that. And she had also told the principal, who was Fr. Charles E. Burke, that my grades were good, and that she was confident that I could matriculate there and do well. I did enter Cranwell as a sophomore in 1942, and I did board as a senior. And my grades were good. I graduated with honors. At the same time, I became familiar with the Jesuits, and so did my parents, especially my mother, who, particularly when I was a senior, but even before that, would invite them to visit and have dinner. And the Dean of Discipline would also come, who was Fr. Cunniff.

PK: Oh, Hubie Cunniff?

JB: Yes. So it became a regular family gathering. I mentioned earlier that I was a rather reserved and quiet guy. I remember distinctly once when the priests from Cranwell were visiting with the family in my grandparents’ and aunt’s house. They had a spacious living room and dining room. My grandmother was an outstanding cook, as you would expect from an Italian lady. She was in the kitchen preparing the meal, and mother was in the living room visiting with us. As the conversation went on, too much of it, in my estimation, was about me. My mother was praising me for my grades and for how well I was doing at Cranwell, and so forth. And I said, sitting there rather sheepishly—I was surprised that I would even say it, even though I regretted it afterwards—“Mother, would you please change the subject?”

PK: I see.

JB: And so she made some kind of comment, and the people laughed. I think I might have said, "I'm going in to see if Grandma needs some help." Well, that unfortunate statement was something that I remembered through the years, and continually regret, because it was childish and hurtful to my mother. Yet Cranwell in a positive sense was helpful to me in getting to know the Jesuits. When I graduated in January 1944, because those were the war years, I went to Holy Cross College, because that was also Jesuit. While I was growing up, I was thinking frequently of becoming either a doctor or a priest. And so at Holy Cross I was taking a pre-med course, but I was having difficulty, because I was not that adept in the high sciences, like chemistry, math, and physics. So I was saying, "Well maybe I'm going to have difficulty getting all the way to becoming a doctor, so I better think more seriously about perhaps becoming a priest." And the result of that was during the first semester at Holy Cross, I decided to make a retreat of election at Shadowbrook, the Jesuit novitiate. The only thing I remember about that was—well, the main thing, actually, was a boat ride on Lake Mackinac with Joseph McCormick, then a novice, at the oars.

PK: Yes, Joe McCormick.

JB: I remember that distinctly. And Joe, as he was when he became a Jesuit himself and through the years, was a wonderful person, and a special gift and grace from God. And so I made the decision that I wanted to join the Jesuits. The previous experience at Cranwell with Jesuits, but particularly this, during

a time of pondering and decision making, discerning, being with Joe McCormick on a boat ride, and, of course, my mother were all part of it. She knew that I was doing this, and thought it was a very good idea. And so I terminated my stay at Holy Cross in the first semester, which ended in July, and entered the Jesuits in August 1944.

PK: There you were at Shadowbrook.

JB: There I was at Shadowbrook, nine miles from home in Pittsfield. I had had some dental work done before I entered, as we were expected to, but it was not finished. So my mother arranged— through the socius, then Fr. John Post—to continue with the dentist until he finished the work. And I guess that was agreed to, but I would have to go with a companion. So, it is interesting that my mother had her finger in the pie. And I did manage to converse with her on those occasions, because she knew what times the appointments with the dentist were.

PK: So she just happened to there, too?

JB: She also knew the dentist very well. So that is kind of interesting, and that brought me into the Society.

PK: How did you find the novitiate and the juniorate?

JB: The novitiate was a trying time for me, but I did not really realize it, until I reflected on it. But I was well-behaved, perhaps even too well-behaved. I had problems with scrupulosity, beating a path to the master of novices' room to tell him frankly about myself. And two things happened. One was that, as a second-year novice—I am sure upon reflection, in order to help me break out of that self-preoccupation—I was appointed the sub-manuductor. That

meant that I could ring bells, and especially since I was tardy at times, it was kind of comical when the bell would ring a little late on occasion. But it was done, I am sure, to kind of energize me, and get me busy, by doing that and serving baked beans on Thursday down at the picnic grounds at Shadowbrook.

PK: Sub-manuductor's work.

JB: Yes. It gave me an opportunity to get out of myself more, and be the bell-ringer, and be prefect of the second ascetory, the study hall.

PK: So the manuductor I understood was a kind of beadle for the novice master?

JB: Right. And then the sub-manuductor was in charge of incidentals, sort of a provider.

PK: OK.

JB: And also on Thursdays, when we had our weekly holiday.

PK: Called a villa.

JB: Sort of, yes, a villa—picnics, walks, et cetera. We went down to our property on Lake Mackinac, and we had some...

PK: Cottages?

JB: Cottages, that is what you might call them. Yes, cottages where we could have picnics and so forth. So I was in charge of bringing the food down for those picnics and dishing out beans.

PK: Literally, Boston beans?

JB: Boston beans! And that got me the nickname Beans Borgo.

PK: Beans Borgo! You also mentioned you were prefect of the second ascetory. From ascetic?

JB: Ascetic, yes. It is place where the novices have a desk

and a chair.

PK: A study hall?

JB: Yes, like a study hall.

PK: What did you have to do as prefect?

JB: I was sitting in the back like a proctor, although there were no exams in there as such.

PK: Did you enjoy that work?

JB: My work included the examination of conscience.

PK: Please describe a bit.

JB: That was twice a day, to recollect what had happened during the day, and how well we had related to the invitation of the Holy Spirit in conducting ourselves. In the course of my time in the Jesuits, that later became known as the examen of consciousness, rather than conscience.

PK: Consciousness, rather than conscience?

JB: Yes, being conscious of God's presence, of the element of prayer, and following the leads of the Holy Spirit, in terms of performing our duties, and in searching for greater closeness to the Lord.

PK: You did that twice a day?

JB: Twice a day, at noontime and before retiring.

PK: And what would the rest of the novice day consist of?

JB: Well, in the ascetory, we had times of spiritual reading. We had times to study Fr. Chapman's Rules of Prosody and things like that. That aspect of it is not sharp in my memory.

PK: I know you had Mass and meditation.

JB: Yes, we had Mass, and afterwards we would go to the ascetory. Next to our desk there was a kneeler. And we would have meditation or contemplation.

PK: And then breakfast, and then working, cleaning up

things?

JB: Yes, manualia it was called. By the way, that reminds us that in those days we were speaking Latin.

PK: So that encouraged people to keep quiet?

JB: Well, it was helpful.

PK: Do you remember any of the Latin phrases?

JB: “Ordo regularis hodie.” Regular order today.

PK: Right.

JB: And “Magister te vult,” which was a request, or a command, from the master of novices to stop by and see him.

PK: OK.

JB: And you were notorious in terms of how often you got *Te vults*.

PK: I see. How about you?

JB: I saw him, as I indicated before, to a small extent. I then saw the master of novices rather often, but it was not for *Te vults*.

PK: Oh, because of your work as the sub-manuductor?

JB: Well, that was actually with the socius, who was an assistant to the master of novices.

PK: So the socius was the support to the novice master, as you, the sub-manuductor, were the support to the manuductor?

JB: Ah, very well put.

PK: OK.

JB: I think the socius had a little more power than I had, even though I could ring the bells, which was a hand bell. I enjoyed that, and I enjoyed the picnics on Thursday. It did help to get me out of myself more. Apropos of that, another particular blessing that I received during the novitiate was to become acquainted with our house spiritual father.

PK: Who was he?

JB: He was Fr. John Creeden. I think he was in his late sixties, and maybe early seventies. And it was the custom in the Society in various houses to have a house confessor, also called a spiritual father, OK, in addition to the master of novices, and the other priests that were there. But it was a special assignment. And the wisdom of it was proved to me by my becoming acquainted with Fr. Creeden, and his presence, and his availability, because I used to run to see the master of novices to unburden my soul, because we were supposed to visit the master of novices regularly—I forget just what the custom was, but we were not restricted—we were also free to see Fr. Creeden or other priests. So my trips to the master were lessened by trips to Fr. Creeden, who was quite busy, because he was such a fatherly person.

PK: Oh, right. Who was your novice master?

JB: Our novice master to begin with was Fr. Bill Keleher, who came to us from Boston College, and he was tall and stately, and went about his business with great aplomb. But he was only there for a year—he was called to be rector of B.C.; he was replaced by Fr. John Post.

PK: What do you remember of the thirty-day long retreat?

JB: I liked the break days!

PK: Oh, yes.

JB: Thirty days was a long time, but the break days were quite welcome opportunities to catch our breath, and so forth.

PK: The break days were welcome to you.

- JB: The retreat afforded the opportunity to become more familiar and comfortable in the area of prayer, in cleansing the soul, and growing in spirit of service.
- PK: How about the juniorate? It was in the same building, two years later, after you has taken your first vows?
- JB: Yes, it was in the same building.
- PK: What do you remember of that?
- JB: Several classes. Classes in Latin, Greek, and in modern languages. I studied some German with Fr. Tom Lannon, who later became rector of Cranwell School.
- PK: And then...?
- JB: I just wanted to make one further point of my experience at Shadowbrook, and with Fr. Creeden. He was instrumental in increasing within me a greater intimacy with the Lord as merciful and loving. He was an example of that himself. But in dealing with my scrupulosity, he began by being patient, and he would listen, and say, "I think you're over-concerned, you know, especially about your past, and you should not feel obliged to be rehearsing that all the time," which was being very kind about it. But he exercised patience and wisdom. At one point—I do not recall just how long into our association that he waited before he challenged me—but he did. And he said, "I've encouraged you a number of times, Br. Borgo, not to insist on dealing with the past, and to pray more about—and with—the Lord—about mercy, and love, and to make your confessions more brief and less introspective, OK? You've shown some little progress, but I think you are being persistent about self-examination, so I want you to take special care to avoid that as much as you can. I enjoy having

you come here, and I want to help you. So, please don't hesitate to come, and please don't hesitate to be honest, to let me know what's going on. And I will likewise be honest with you." And actually he said, "If you refrain from certain aspects of confessing your past sins, and your worry about whether or not they have been forgiven, I want you to know that I will take responsibility for your not mentioning that. In fact, I might ask you if you're making progress there." And he did that! And he made it easy to do what I needed to do, and refrain from doing what I was prone to do. And he changed the scope of my approach to confession, spirituality, prayer, and so forth.

PK: Did he model for you the kind of pastoral minister that you would want to be in your later life, and in fact when you were working at Fairfield and other places, to have in the back of your mind?

JB: Yes, that was there. And that was instrumental in my approach to spirituality in general. I spent some time, when I became a priest, in dealing with people. I was a chaplain in a hospital in Bridgeport for thirteen years, and my approach was one of mercy and love, with patience and penitence. So his helping me allowed me and encouraged me to be that way with others, since it had been a blessing for me—which is kind of jumping ahead a bit. After the novitiate and the juniorate, I went to Weston College, which is where I am right now, but under different auspices. But we will get to that. During studies, I was trying to be less picayune than I had been about things, because that seemed to be slowing me down, because I did not score well on tests. I worked on trying to

improve there, but I think as a result of that tendency, I did not pass the important final exam, which concluded the major course in philosophy. I became a minor course student. And although that was a come-down, for me it was a blessing, because I was able to approach the studies more comfortably and with less anxiety than I had in the major course. I also met some teachers who were very kind, friendly, and helpful.

PK: After studying philosophy here at Weston College from 1948 to 1951, you were at B.C. High '51 to '52. Did your philosophy teachers' style influence yours?

JB: Yes, it did.

PK: Do you recall any times when you showed compassion and patience?

JB: Well, yes. One thing that became obvious was that I tended to spend more time with the students who were struggling than with the students who were very bright. And so that was noted, OK?

PK: By whom? The students?

JB: No, I think it was noted by reports that the faculty got, the principal and so forth.

PK: OK. Did you enjoy your teaching years?

JB: I did. And I was not a strict disciplinarian, but I managed enough discipline by being, striving to be fair, just, and principled.

PK: So after a year at B.C. High...

JB: I did not often jug people, although jug was a common punishment in those days, detention after school.

PK: So after one year at B.C. High, you went to Fairfield?

JB: I went to Fairfield, and it was a switch, one for one.

PK: OK.

- JB: Joe Laughlin, I believe, was the person at Fairfield that they wanted to come to B.C. High. And that was OK by me, so I went to Fairfield.
- PK: What difference did you note between the two places, in your self, in your style? Did you maintain the same teaching style? Fairfield was a new school; it did not have that many traditions, whereas B.C. High was a hundred years old.
- JB: Right. There was, I think, at least in my experience—and I think others indicated it, too—you were closer to the students; the rapport was greater at Fairfield.
- PK: And after regency at B.C. High and Fairfield, back to Weston?
- JB: Yes, Weston and theology, which I enjoyed. After the third year of theology, I was ordained with a class of over thirty. And that was an important event in my life, something that I was looking forward to. After theology I went to Pomfret for tertianship, and then I was pleased to be assigned back to my alma mater, Cranwell School. That provided a really new point of view for me, since it was a boarding school. Contact with the students was constant, as opposed to a day school, which was all I had been familiar with before. And I enjoyed that. I could deal with the students, first of all, teaching home room. That meant you were with your home room for three or four subjects a day: Latin, English, religion, and public speaking. Since that was a lot of contact with the same students, I got to know them rather well. After about five years at Cranwell, the principal, who was Fr. Burke, said that he was encouraging the teachers to get degrees, a master's, if they did not have one yet. So I then concentrated

on Latin, and during the summers, got a master's in Latin literature at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. I think it was four summers. There were three of us Jesuits at Trinity living in a frat house. And so that was really a new kind of experience, but also afforded the ability and the opportunity to get to know each other pretty well.

PK: Camaraderie?

JB: Yes. And it also developed in me a desire and a preference, really, for living in small communities.

PK: Then back to Cranwell and teaching Latin, '63 to '69.

JB: Yes, overall I was there for ten years [1959-69], so about the last five were teaching Latin full-time in freshman and junior years.

PK: Do you remember any anecdotes from then?

JB: Well, as I said before, that kind of teaching encouraged getting to know the students better, and being more at home with them, and they with me. One of the things I recall, that was regularly mentioned when we had class reunions, was the fact that I was a devotee of the Peanuts cartoons.

PK: Oh, yes, Shultz's...

JB: Shultz's work, yes. I would make a comment on Shultz' cartoons. I would have it up on the bulletin board. Initially they were not really fans of Peanuts, but they developed into being fans. And they said, I was told at reunions, that we started with a prayer, and then we did something on the homework, and then I would take a break, and ask, "Did you read the Peanuts cartoon today?" And some would say, Yes, and some would say, No. Then I would have a comment on it, on his knowledge of human nature,

his sense of humor, and the contrast in characters like Charlie Brown and Lucy, and Schroeder.

PK: And Snoopy.

JB: And Beethoven, and of course the element of humor, yes.

PK: So in a class on Latin, you helped them go deeper into values and relationships?

JB: Hopefully, yes. And at reunions they said they did not understand why, but doing that relaxed them a bit, and widened the scope of their appreciation of studies.

PK: But also in terms of your subject.

JB: Particularly Latin.

PK: Then, in terms of your own life history, you moved into counseling after teaching at Cheverus for a year. So it seems that the Peanuts cartoon showed a side of you.

JB: Well, that is true! And I was encouraged. After being at Cranwell for ten years, I was thinking about a break. I was also encouraged to think about one by other Jesuits.

PK: A break from studying one thing only, or take a sabbatical?

JB: Well, no, a break from the boarding school routine.

PK: OK. And was Cranwell not closing about that time?

JB: No, not yet. This was still in the sixties. It closed, I think, in '75. Yes, but that was another thing that happened, but hopefully I will get to that. But what happened was, as I was thinking of this, and being encouraged by other Jesuits, at least one other Jesuit, Fr. Frank Mackin, who was the rector at that time, sent me a *Te vult*.

PK: Oh, he wanted to see you?

JB: Yes, but it was not exactly a *Te Vult*, but he did tell me that he would like to see me. He said, "John, I want to ask a favor of you." I replied, "Go ahead. I'll do what I can." And he said, "We enjoy the work you're doing here, and we think that you're enjoying it, but we have a need for a full-time Latin teacher to go to Cheverus to replace a Jesuit there whom we would like to come here." And I said, "Oh, OK." And he said, "Now, it's not a secret. It's John Fenton Foley, and we want him to come and assist Fr. Cunniff as Dean of Men. So, would that be an onus on you, or too quick? Would you want some time to think about it?" And I said, "No. You know, I've been thinking of taking a break, some kind of sabbatical. If I were to do this, would it be for just one year?" And he said, "Yes, that's what I said, for just one year, and then we would supply whatever Cheverus needed after that. But we only expect you to go up there for one year." And I said, "Well, could I apply for a sabbatical upon completing that year?" And he said, "Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure that would be considered, especially under the circumstances. I'll check on that just to make sure, but I'm sure that can be arranged." And it was. So that to me was an instance of intervention on the part of the Spirit. My willingness to make the change led to going to Cheverus, having another experience in one of our schools, teaching Latin, with which I was familiar. Then after that, being able to take a sabbatical, and do a sixth year certificate after my master's at Fairfield in school counseling. It is thirty credits in addition to a master's.

PK: So you got a master's in counseling at Fairfield in

1973, and you had been at Cheverus in '69-'70. So you were working at Fairfield Prep as a student counselor, but also taking a degree at the university?

JB: Right, the sixth year certificate, yes. And Fr. Tom McGrath was one of the professors in that program. And I admired him as a person, as well as a counselor himself, for his talks, and then his class, about the making of a full person. That was part of his psychology— a kind of Rogerian approach. So I was able to take the course, and at the same time do my internship for the course at Fairfield Prep. After completing the course and getting my sixth year certificate, I was able to apply to the various schools, visit them. Fairfield Prep was one of them; Fr. [Robert] Jerry Starratt was the principal there. He encouraged me to pursue this, and he said, “You know, I have a job here for you if you decide to come here.” But I had to visit all the schools, and then discuss it with the provincial.

PK: So you did go to Fairfield as a student counselor. And then you were involved in something called the Capsule Program?

JB: Right. That was the job that he had for me.

PK: What did that mean?

JB: It meant four years of high school completed in three years and three summers.

PK: Fast.

JB: Yes. Students moving at their own pace, that was the dynamic.

PK: And your involvement in it as a counselor was important because you wanted to make sure their emotional maturity kept pace with their intellectually maturity?

JB: Yes, very good. That was one of the elements. And again, it was a smaller program, you see, so that there were fewer students to give my attention to. The regular prep had larger classes. So it was a blessing for me. It seemed made to order for me, but I did not know that this was going to happen. But I was led up to Cheverus and then got my sabbatical, and went to Fairfield to—which was also something that was suggested to me, because I was told, “You have some ability in the counseling area. We encourage you to follow up on it.” So this was God’s Spirit leading me from one thing to another. And Capsule eventually was closed after six years.

PK: Why?

JB: By the principal of prep, who was Harold Powers, nick-named Ray Powers. But the decision was made in conjunction with the Prep and the University—the finances in Capsule were higher than in the regular Prep.

PK: Oh, right.

JB: Especially proportionately to the number of students.

PK: Because they required teachers all the year, and you had to pay the teachers more?

JB: Right. But the experience was marvelous, and the summers, instead of being highly academic, were in the fine arts—drama and music.

PK: That’s great!

JB: Mike Wolfer was a lay teacher, but he actually had been a principal at Cheverus High. He had an interest in this particular program, and so he was allowed to initiate one at Fairfield Prep. I think Jerry Starratt was still the principal when he did that, and then Fr. Powers took over, because Jerry left the Society

- to get married. We are still friends.
- PK: So you mentioned earlier that Fr. Creeden, and then the teachers at B.C. High, helped you develop a model of teaching that was approachable, wise, compassionate, and understanding?
- JB: And so that led to the counseling, and spending more time with individual students.
- PK: As you particularly dealt with...
- JB: In the Capsule program, and then I went into regular Prep, likewise, as a counselor. And then after some time, I was special counselor for juniors. And that came to a total of thirteen years at Fairfield Prep. So it was suggested, again by a friend, that a break would be good. Let me see if I can get this out. So actually through my involvement in—as an extracurricular—in the charismatic renewal, it was suggested to me that I would be good working on a spiritual level with adults. And so I was given the opportunity to take a break and study Clinical Pastoral Education in preparation for being a hospital chaplain.
- PK: Did you do that at Mercy Hospital under Fr. David Boulton, S.J. in Springfield?
- JB: Yes. And then a second unit—four hundred hours a unit—at Rhode Island State College, and Roger Williams Hospital.
- PK: In Providence.
- JB: That is what I was assigned to for my internship, yes. And so I got a Clinical Pastoral Education certificate for hospital chaplaincy. And then I had to find out where I could be a hospital chaplain. So I had to make the rounds of the hospitals, and be interviewed. And I interviewed at St. Vincent's Medi-

cal Center in Bridgeport, and eventually that was the hospital that I was assigned to, and mainly because, in the meanwhile, my Dad became seriously ill, and was in the care of my sister in Long Island for a number of years. Then he was hospitalized, and she was told that he needed twenty-four hour...

PK: Care?

JB: Yes, and supervision. Before being hospitalized, dad was living with my sister and her husband and their five children in their home in Long Island. They had fashioned an apartment out of the garage. And dad was blind. So he had to have a cane to feel his way, and a rope from his apartment to her dining room. So I was able to arrange for him to come to a convalescent home in Fairfield, the Carolton Convalescent Home. While I was a chaplain at St. Vincent's Hospital in Bridgeport and in residence with the Fairfield Jesuit Community, I was able to get to the convalescent home on a regular basis, so I saw him often.

PK: You worked in Fairfield and helped care for your Dad, visiting him.

JB: Right. And that was a wonderful blessing, to be that close to him. And he was totally blind, he was confined to bed, and he was having hallucinations. They turned out to be a kind of blessing—it gave him something to do, because he was hallucinating about the bakery.

PK: Oh, back in Pittsfield?

JB: Back in Pittsfield, where he had spent so much of his time and energy. Yes, and he would say, "Oh, we got to get going on this dough over here; it's getting overripe." And then he would be at the oven,

putting bread in and taking bread out, and making comments. The nurses and the aides were just enthralled by his doing this. When the hallucinations would calm down, they would say, "Oh, John Borgo, you are so interesting when you talk about your bakery!" And he would say, "Oh, that was many years ago!" They said, "Oh, we know." But it was as if was still going on, because you are getting these pictures. And he would say, "That's the way it goes when you become blind."

PK: So you were very close to him. And your mother had died already?

JB: My mother had died early. She died while I was at Cranwell.

PK: Oh, really.

JB: She died in '61, sixty-two years old. And my Dad died at ninety. So he had been a rather lonesome person from '62 to '90.

PK: Yes.

JB: But before the blindness and the diabetes really set in, he was busy doing landscaping on his own, but also for other people. Oh, he was great in fixing up their yards and their gardens.

PK: He loved to work with his hands.

JB: He did.

PK: So there you were at St. Vincent's Hospital Medical Center in Bridgeport, Connecticut, as a chaplain, starting in 1984, for thirteen years.

JB: Another thirteen years.

PK: That seems to be the operative number.

JB: It is! Upon reflection, especially during retreats, what becomes so obvious to me, is that John Borgo was being led from one thing to another by the Spirit

of God—by God, through other Jesuits, and through friends, with their suggestions and their encouragement.

PK: Led.

JB: I know that I would never have been so involved totally on my own, OK? So it is the Society and its members. It is a process, and the Lord working through it all. And the final one, after thirteen years in the hospital, during one of which years was my a triple bypass that I had at St. V.'s—my first major surgery, and I came through it pretty well. But after it, I was able to take another sabbatical. I ended up, at the advice of a classmate of mine, Fr. Bill Devine, S.J., who was then the retreat director and superior at Eastern Point, that I make the 3M program in Wales, at St. Beuno's in Wales.

PK: What was that 3M program?

JB: It was a Jesuit school of apostolic spirituality. It was three months long—March, April, May. The first month was devoted to becoming more familiar with the thirty-day Spiritual Exercises, the second to making them, and the third to applying that retreat experience by leading and directing retreats.

PK: So you studied them, you made them, and you gave them?

JB: Yes.

PK: Was that good?

JB: Oh, yes! That was the finest program I ever made.

PK: The finest program?

JB: Yes, because it was so rich, with so many, many experiences within it. There were thirty-nine of us representing nineteen different countries, including Africa, Ireland—you name it—and I was one of them.

PK: And were you able to bring that information and that experience back into your ministry at St. V.'s and with the charismatics?

JB: Well, I did not go back to St. V.'s. I went to a ten-week summer program at Wernersville, Pennsylvania.

PK: Oh, Wernersville.

JB: It was actually a continuation, and an emphasis on the third month of the 3M in Wales. It was the exact same thing—the practical aspects of the Spiritual Exercises. The head of it was Fr. George Aschenbrenner.

PK: So that brings you to the end of the summer of 1997. What did you do after that?

JB: I collapsed!

PK: So health problems became an issue?

JB: I was directing, as part of the Fairfield Jesuit Community. That is where I was assigned to, and I did some directing under the auspices of Fr. Joe Ryan.

PK: Oh, yes.

JB: Yes, directing faculty and faculty-connected people at the university. I was also doing directed retreats in various places looking for directors, Gonzaga at Eastern Point being one.

PK: And then after a while your health became an issue?

JB: Yes.

PK: Was there any particular experience that precipitated that concern?

JB: I ran out of gas. Actually, I could not do the job anymore, as it was right after my surgery.

PK: On your heart?

JB: Yes, the triple bypass. So I did exercises, and walked a lot. And I caught sciatica, which did not totally

immobilize me right away, but I had to limit my exercise and my walking. And then the sciatica became so extreme that it doubled me over. I could not walk. There was no strength in my legs, and so that is when they said, "We've got to bring you up to Weston, so they can take care of you."

PK: And when did you come here?

JB: That was in October 2003.

PK: This is October 2005, so it has been two years.

JB: Yes.

PK: And how have you found it being here at Campion?

JB: I think it was the one place where they could have done something for me, because of its accommodations. The provincial and his staff made that decision. I was a little hesitant, because I was rather devoted to Fairfield, and to a lot of people there that I knew, and the Jesuits that were there, also. And they said, "You can't get the help that you need by just going to see doctors. You need to be under constant care."

PK: How did you feel about that?

JB: I thought it made sense because I could not walk.

PK: And are you open to doing spiritual direction and things like that now?

JB: I would hope to, yes.

PK: OK, great. Well, we are coming to the end? Could you summarize how God has worked in your life?

JB: I believe that my life, the ups and the downs, were distinctly in the hands of God. And many thanks are due to the people he has given me for companions and friends. Yes, it is just clear that God was there the whole time, and never was I abandoned by being left on my own. It says a lot about the Jesuit

Society, and it says a lot about God's compassion and care, and it says a lot about the need we have for companionship, and the blessing that it is.

PK: Well, thank you very much for sharing, as a companion, your journey with other companions.

JB: And it is good to have had the opportunity to voice this as some kind of contribution to the life that Jesuits have lived, and are living, and will live.

PK: Amen.

JB: Under the blessing of the greater glory of God.

PK: Well, thank you very much.

JB: Prego.

Rev. John V. Borgo, S.J.

Born: January 6, 1927, Pittsfield, Mass.
Entered: August 14, 1944, Shadowbrook, Lenox, Mass.
Ordained: June 15, 1957, Weston College, Weston, Mass.
Final Vows: July 16, 1989, Fairfield Jesuit Community, Fairfield, Conn.

1941 Pittsfield, Mass.: St. Joseph Junior High School - Student
1942 Lenox, Mass.: Cranwell Preparatory School - Student
1944 Worcester, Mass.: College of the Holy Cross - Student [January to July 1944]
1944 Lenox, Mass.: Shadowbrook - Novitiate, Juniorate
1948 Weston, Mass.: Weston College - Studied philosophy
1951 Boston, Mass.: Boston College High - Taught freshmen
1952 Fairfield, Conn.: Fairfield Prep - Taught freshmen
1954 Weston, Mass.: Weston College - Studied theology
1958 Pomfret, Conn.: Tertianship
1959 Lenox, Mass.: Cranwell - Taught freshmen(1958-63), Latin (1963-69), chair of Latin Department (1965-69)
1969 Portland, Maine: Cheverus High School - Taught Latin
1970 Fairfield, Conn.: Fairfield Preparatory School -

- Assistant Student Counselor and studied student counseling at Fairfield University (1970-72); Assistant Student Counselor in Prep and Capsule, and taught psychology (1972-82); Assistant Student Counselor (1981-93)
- 1983 Sabbatical:- Studied two units of Clinical Pastoral Education, #1 in Springfield, Mass. at Mercy Hospital, and #2 in Providence, RI at Roger Williams Hospital and Rhode Island State College
- 1984 Bridgeport, Conn.: St. Vincent Medical Center - Hospital Chaplain
- 1997 Sabbatical - St. Beuno's, Wales, UK: 3M Program [March-May]; Wernersville, Penn.: Spiritual Exercises Program [ten-week summer program]
- 1997 Fairfield, Conn.: Fairfield University - Spiritual direction, retreats
- 2003 Weston, Mass.: Champion Health Center - Praying for the Church and the Society

Degrees

- 1951 Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-Boston College
- 1958 Bachelor of Sacred Theology, Weston College-Boston College
- 1968 Master of Arts in Latin, Trinity College, Hartford, Conn.
- 1973 Master of Arts in Student Counseling, Fairfield University, Conn.
- 1984 Clinical Pastoral Education Certificate, Mercy Hospital, Springfield, Conn.