

**New England Jesuit  
Oral History Program**



**Fr. John J. Mandile, S.J.  
Volume 46**

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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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September 2007

Fr. John J. Mandile, S.J.  
by Fr. Richard W. Rousseau, S.J.  
May 31, 2006

**EARLY YEARS**

**RICHARD ROUSSEAU:** Good morning.

**JOHN MANDILE:** Good morning.

**RR:** Let's begin with a bit about when you were born, your father, and your mother.

**JM:** I was born April 6, 1926. And I had a very wonderful family. I attribute what I am today to my mother and father. They made great sacrifices and gave me a fabulous religious upbringing. Other kids I knew had fathers who on weekends would play baseball with them. But my father worked at two jobs—in the post office and at Boston City Hall. I once said to my mother, "Dad doesn't come out and play like the other fathers." And she said, "Your father sent seven of you to the parochial high school, and that costs money!" I accepted this because I trusted my mother! I find that if I trust people, I don't need to know the reason they do things. These early years were just great.

## ALTAR BOY

JM: I was an altar boy, and, to me, that was the greatest thing. So much so that I believe it was those diocesan priests who nourished my vocation. Bill Raftery [also a Jesuit] and I were altar boys together. Since we lived in almost the same neighborhood, we were assigned to the same Masses. We had the 6:00 or 6:30 morning Mass. Like soldiers, we were expected to be on time. I served that until I was seventeen. I would wake up in the morning, take a flashlight, and walk a mile, often in darkness, through the rain, fog, and drizzle to the church to serve Mass. But I thought it was great!

I don't know how to explain this, but I think it came from my mother and father, who were quite religious. It spilled over to the whole family. They made sacrifices for us. I also loved the priests very much. I did have a few incidents with the pastor. He once threw me off the altar because I wasn't wearing my white gloves! [Laughs]

RR: So things had to be just so! [Laughs]

JM: I used to wear my father's wedding gloves, which I ended up losing somehow! We altar boys used to borrow each other's gloves. We had lockers to store our cassocks, but they had no locks on them. Without our gloves, we were not allowed to serve. Well, I tried putting my hands inside the sleeves of the surplice, and I said to myself, "I'll hide them there and he won't see me." This was helped by the fact that at the 11:30 Mass there were three rows of altar boys.

So my hands were hidden, but I was caught. The pastor spied my bare hands. [Laughs]. And he motioned to me, "Come over here." So I approached him and he said, "Where are your gloves?" And I said, "I couldn't find them." And he said, "Get off the altar!" I was twelve or thirteen at the time. There

I was at the big 11:30 Mass in front of all those people! I was embarrassed and humiliated. I went off the altar, went down to the locker room, and took my surplice off. I said out loud, "I hate him! I hate him!" But all of a sudden Fr. George Roche, who was in charge of the altar boys, happened to come by and heard me. He said, "Jackie, what happened?" So I told him. Then he came over and did the most beautiful thing ever, he hugged me! That really meant something to me.

RR: A very kind man.

JM: Yes. Then he said, "Jackie, you're lucky. You see him only once a week, but I live with him five days a week!" [Laughs] He was a psychologist. He took my mind off myself and turned it on him.

RR: So you felt sorry for him?

JM: I felt sorry for him! [Laughs] And I remember him saying, "Now you be sure to come back." That made me feel great. It took a half hour to walk home, and my hatred was building up again. When I got home, I went over to my mother who was doing her ironing. Of course, I didn't say a word but, like all mothers, she could read my face. She said, "What's wrong?" And I said, "I hate him! I hate him! [Laughs]

So I went through the whole story. She says, "Tell me, Jackie, do you like your father when he yells at you or yells at me?" And I said, "No, I don't." "Do you forgive him?" "Yes." "Well then, you forgive your pastor." And, as I said, I trusted her! I could have harbored that hatred but, because someone who is in charge is honest with you, you just believe them. So I believed her. It was a big thing for me.

#### HIS FAMILY

RR: Let me back up a bit. Tell me something more about your father.

**JM:** My father was two years at St. John's Seminary. And that was beautiful. But he never coaxed me or said anything about the priesthood to me. He let me decide for myself. He did teach me Latin, however, which was great. But if I brought it up, then he would encourage me. I admired him for not saying, "That's good, because I didn't make it." I felt he was honest in leaving. Again, honesty, honesty! He became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis on Prince Street, and went there once a month.

I also talked with my maternal grandfather. He was a barber who owned four big barber shops in Boston. He didn't go to church for years and years. And I said to my mother, "How come your father doesn't go to Mass?" My father's side of the family was poor, while my mother's side was comfortable, even though they had thirteen kids. They had money, because he had those four barber shops. It is understandable that my maternal grandmother couldn't go to church, because she had all those children.

My mother said to me, "Look, this is the way it is with Italian men in Italy: they don't go to church much. It's a different culture. But now that he's here, I'll ask your father to please speak to your grandfather and encourage him to go back to church." So he did. And my grandfather went back to church when he was eighty-five! He didn't know how long he was going to live, but he actually lived until he was ninety-seven."

**RR:** Your mother and father must have been pleased.

**JM:** So do you see once again the importance of trust? If you get this kind of answers, you can say, "Okay, now I understand."

**RR:** How about brothers and sisters?

**JM:** There were seven children: Margaret, me, Geraldine, Richard, Mary, Francis, and Carole. I have many



nephews, nieces as well as grand-nephews and grand-nieces.

#### HIS EDUCATION

RR: How about your schooling? Let's take a brief look there. What was your experience in grammar school and high school?

JM: My public grammar school was excellent. We loved it, even though my parents were all parochial school graduates. We didn't have any parochial school near home. But even my parents approved of my public school education. We had prayers every day, Protestant prayers! And we said the Pledge of Allegiance every day! So it was very good.

We all went to Catholic high schools: the three boys went to BC High and the four girls to St. Thomas's in Jamaica Plain. The schooling was great. At BC High I had scholastics as teachers; Jerry Bowman was great! He was like my parish priests. They all had a kind of sacredness. It's hard to put sacredness into words. You just feel it. I was thinking on and off about the Jesuits. I used to walk and reflect in St. Joseph's cemetery in West Roxbury. There's just something there that is reflective: nature, birds, and the sight of all those St. Joseph nuns' graves.

When I had an argument with my mother, I used to run out of the house! I was fourteen! We argued because she didn't like one of my friends and, of course, I did. And I used to go up to the cemetery and felt better talking out loud in the quiet. But meanwhile, I don't know how, God was my sounding board.

#### VOCATION

JM: So, that's where my thoughts were filled with the seeds of a vocation. When I was young, I was influ-

enced by the diocesan priests and later by the Jesuit regents at BC High. The home room teacher, however, thank God, helped me a lot. [Laughs] I was thinking about the priesthood, but I wasn't focused on the Jesuits. Finally, I said to myself, "I don't know; I'm going to talk to someone about joining the Jesuits."

So I decided to ask someone about it. I won't tell you his name because he's dead now. He asked me, "What's your school average?" "Well," I says, "I'm not good in math. My overall average is 85." And he said, "That's not good enough. You've got to have a 90 average for all your marks." So I said, "Well, I'm not good at math. I'm lucky if I get 60 for anything beyond algebra."

But that didn't stop me! If I want something, I'll fight for it despite any obstacles. If they point out my limitations, I'll accept that. But I won't give up. And I didn't. So I went to my home room teacher, Fr. Blatchford, and asked him, "Father, I'd like to become a Jesuit, but here's the bad news a scholastic gave me." So he said, "Forget him! What he told you is stupid. You want to become one of us, you just apply. An 85 average is just fine."

RR: Much better advice.

JM: And so I did; I applied to become a Jesuit and they accepted me!

RR: It was wise to go to someone else.

JM: Yes, I wasn't going to give up. The regent's attitude was faulty. I just went to the wrong person.

RR: Yes. At that stage in his own life he wasn't that well-informed himself about such things. He may have been uncertain and thought that this was the best thing to say.

JM: That's true. And I'll tell you this, Dick: I feel that in a way I may have thought at the time that he was

testing me, and I think that was what he was doing. It seems my life has been full of tests. But that's fine with me. I'm not afraid of being tested, because it's something that makes me stronger. If I fail, that's alright. I'll just get up and go on. I don't give up easily. So what else can I say but, "Thank you, God, for whatever you bring to me!" I always wanted to be a missionary. I liked that idea. But all of a sudden, I knew where I should go.

#### NOVITIATE

RR: What happened during your novitiate?

JM: I just don't remember all the details. But I'll never forget how in my second year in the novitiate, Fr. Bill Kelleher, the Master of Novices, had me taken to the hospital with appendicitis. And in those war days, they kept you two weeks in the hospital for appendicitis.

Anyway, at that time, I was reading a trilogy of books: *The Man Who Got Even With God*, *The Three Religious Rebels*, and *The Family Who Overtook Christ*. In the first, he was a kind of cowboy and soon he had a girlfriend. Though of course it was only a novel, there was something in it that attracted me. He then became a monk and joined the Trappists. And I said, "Wow! This is terrific!" Finally, it was on the last day before going home to Shadowbrook when the Master of Novices, Fr. Kelleher, came into my room. I'm still in my bed and he's looking out the window when he says to me, "Bro. Mandile, I don't think you belong here at Shadowbrook."

RR: And he's still looking out the window.

JM: He used to do that to me when I went in to see him in his room. He never looked me straight in the eye. I wasn't prepared for any such message. So I said, "Father Master, I came here to be a Jesuit. I'm going

to be one!” That’s what I said, just like that!

RR: Good for you! [Laughs]

JM: It just came out of me! So he left with me still on my back. I wasn’t feeling too good at that point! Later, I went to a good old priest friend again, Fr. Creeden. He was a great old priest. He lived in a room opposite the dining room. He was an emeritus professor, and had a big pinkish face and nice white hair. We all went to confession to him. I told him what happened and started to cry, and he said, “Pay no attention to what he said! You want to become a Jesuit and you will!” He made me feel great again! So I walked out and I went by the chapel just down the hall, and I said “Thank you!” and walked right by! And one month later the *deus ex machina* happened: Fr. Kelleher was transferred to Boston College as president.

RR: I remember that clearly myself.

JM: I said, “Look at that! God must want me to stay!” I think there was some kind of personality conflict between us. Everything had a military aspect with Fr. Kelleher. I remember once having said to him, “If I wanted to join the military, I would have joined the Army instead of coming here.” I don’t think that went over too well! [Laughs] At that point, the *socius* [assistant], Fr. John Post, took over. And I hit it off beautifully with him!

RR: There’s a providential aspect to all this, isn’t there?

JM: Yes, God was testing me again, though at the time I didn’t think he was. But as I look back, I can say, “Thank you, God. Thank you for testing me. It’s what I needed.”

#### TO WESTON COLLEGE

RR: You then went to Weston College for both philosophy and, after regency, theology. Generally speak-

ing, what was it like for you? An example or two might help.

JM: I liked it at Weston. There were a lot of us, and we had a lot of fun together, including our studies. I was just contented. Of course, there were a lot of years involved.

RR: Did they go by fairly fast?

JM: Yes, they did. And I was happy. I think just being with so many great guys was wonderful. The teachers, including those at Shadowbrook, were good. We had little or no real quarrels.

RR: And did you find your regency much different?

JM: Well, my going as a student to BC High and later as a teacher, like many other such events, were both steps forward. I felt that both of them led to the next step. All that was really needed was patience. But they were all active years. For example, during theology Walter Martin and I joined the Deaf Mute Society. We used to go once a month to BC High when it was at the old Immaculate Conception. We learned sign language and helped out a lot of people. It was a wonderful ministry.

We had picnics, and we all took turns in getting the lunches ready. We worked on our potato garden on study holidays. The war years were at Shadowbrook, though the war seemed remote, because our information was limited. We were in the world, but not of the world. I thought we were happy.

RR: That's great. We all have our ups and downs, but if you basically feel that you have control, you also have a sense of courage and direction.

JM: Yes.

#### REGENCY AT BC HIGH

RR: So just a word about your regency experience. Did teaching give you a different outlook?

**JM:** For me, it was a gift! I said, “I can’t believe I’m teaching here!” Joe Laughlin, John McGrath, Bob Mellett, and Tom Curran—we were all there as teachers. We were a team and knew each other well. There were so many of us there that, as I said, we were a team! It was great. For me, teaching those kids was wonderful—helping them out, working with their parents, and always looking for the kid needing a lot of help. I liked that. It was uppermost in my mind.

Then there was Fr. Frank Gilday—what a rector he was! You could say anything to him at any time. If I told him that I had done something wrong and was sorry, he took it in stride and advised me. He was great that way and I loved him for it. I loved teaching! Even just a taste of being out teaching was great for me. I said, “This is wonderful!” I had never thought of being a teacher. Somehow, when I went back to theology, I realized I was interested in teaching. But I’m getting ahead of myself.

#### THE POWER OF PRAYER

**RR:** Who ordained you?

**JM:** I think God was looking after me. The year before my ordination, the fire destroyed Shadowbrook in 1956. Archbishop Cushing was quite sick that same year, and thought that he wouldn’t make it. We prayed hard for him, and by the next year he was alright. So our ordination went off well. It was very beautiful. It made me feel very happy for my father, because he had wanted to become a priest. My mother was also happy and said to me, “Your father was so proud of you, because he didn’t make it himself, but you did it on your own.” He hadn’t pressured me about it at all.

**RR:** So your parents supported you through all this?

**JM:** Oh, yes. That reminds me of something else I wanted

to say. From the day I left home in March '44 to my ordination, what kept me going was prayer. And I don't mean just my own prayer, but that of my family and neighbors. I would get letters with prayers for me in them. And to this day, I firmly believe in the power of prayer. We need prayer. So when people say, "I'll pray for you," it means a lot to me, because I know just how much it has helped me.

RR: I can see that it gave you a lot of support.

JM: Yes, and it was continuous. It helped me so much through my ups and downs.

RR: When families and others pray, it creates a sense of community where people can also work together with a sense of direction.

JM: Yes, very true.

RR: I get the impression that your years of training were golden years, where you got much support in becoming a Jesuit.

JM: Right.

RR: In that sense, we can all be grateful.

JM: Yes. If I needed help in philosophy or theology, there were certain persons I could go to who were smarter than I who would help me! At the very least, they could make things clearer. And I said, "Wow! What great support from my brothers, especially when you can't always go to the teacher."

RR: Let's move on to when you finally finished studies and you went to tertianship. That experience is pretty much the same for everyone unless something unusual happened.

JM: I found it a waste of time! That whole year was just terrible.

RR: It was at Pomfret, wasn't it?

JM: Yes.

## FROM TEACHING TO CHAPLAINCY

RR: And what was your first assignment?

JM: It was teaching at Cheverus. I was there about four years. And I loved it! But after a while I suddenly found that I wasn't being fulfilled as a person. It was a turning point in my life. Teaching was fine, but something was missing in my life. And in the summers, I used to spend a month in parish work at St. John's in Winthrop. And I loved it there. I got a taste of weekend Masses and activities. And I said to myself, "This is kind of nice." It put me back in contact again with diocesan priests, of whom I was enamored in those early days. In any case, I lasted only four years at Cheverus, because I had an argument with the Prefect of Discipline. [Laughs] In those days you represented yourself. And I didn't think it meant anything. I was changed to Boston City Hospital. However, during tertianship I had been sent to work at Boston City Hospital for a month. But I had a terrible experience!

RR: It sounds like you had a pretty tough assignment.

JM: It was. The month was divided in two. The first two weeks I had night duty, and the second two weeks, I had the 6:00 AM circuit. Worst of all, I had to listen to ongoing criticism from the chaplain.

RR: A challenging time.

JM: Yes! After all those assignments, I also had to write only the number of confessions in blue ink, and then do the number of communions in red ink. And if I didn't have them just so, he made me erase the whole thing and start all over again. He said to me a couple of times, "How come you only had this number of communions and that number of confessions?" There was nothing about counseling or praying with people in need. The whole thing was terrible, and I found myself hating hospital work. He caused it. But I con-



soled myself by saying, "It's only a month."

So I went to see Frank Gilday when I left Cheverus. He was still rector at Immaculate Conception Church. I said, "Frank, I'm so happy to be with you. But I'm going to be very honest with you as well. I'm not happy about the hospital work because of the chaplain. He can be a nice guy socially, but professionally, he's a disaster. I found it very difficult working for him. And I said, "The first time he bothers me, I'm going to leave Boston City Hospital, and I'm afraid that superiors may not listen to me." So Frank said to me, "Jack, thank you very much for telling me. I don't want you to get in trouble." I said, "I'm thinking of going home and visiting my parents for a while." He said, "Thank you. Do what you have to do." Our talk was a great help to me, because he understood what I was going through. So I said, "You're a real father, and I can talk to you as a father."

So the next morning the chaplain said to me in his military fashion, "Welcome aboard, Jack!" And I said to him, "Hold it! Time out! During my month here as a tertian I had a very bad experience. I'm not going to go through the same thing again. The first time you bother me, I'm going to go home and live with my parents." After that, his attitude towards me changed completely!

RR: You stood up to him!

JM: He reversed himself! At the time, there were six other Jesuits there as well. And I became his favorite, something I didn't like either! But I said to myself, "This will pass. I may be here one or two years. I know that God is testing me." Anyway, when the Provincial came on his visitation and I told him what had happened, he said, "If you don't like what you're doing, get a job of your own someplace else."

#### RETREAT WORK

RR: So you were there at the hospital for about three years. What happened next?

JM: Then I went to Manresa Retreat House in Ridgefield, Connecticut for two years. But I didn't like it much.

RR: It was a rather small retreat house, wasn't it?

JM: Very small, in the upper corner of Connecticut. George McCabe was in charge. He was nice, don't get me wrong, but I wasn't happy there. So when Jack Tucker and Arthur McCarthy opened Our Lady of Round Hills Retreat House in South Dartmouth, I joined them. And I loved it there! But then it was closed.

RR: Why do you think it didn't work out?

JM: The increased cost of gas made it impractical for school buses to bring students there for retreats. We also had some problems with inner city students smoking marijuana and leaving a terrible smell in the rooms. Though some of them were Catholic, a number of others made it clear that they didn't like all the crucifixes in the house. A lot of little things like that were happening. In addition the hope had been that a lot of Jesuits would come there for their vacations, but, for whatever reason, they never came in any number.

RR: As someone from neighboring New Bedford, I was sorry to see it go.

#### FULL-TIME PARISH WORK

JM: I know. I loved it there. On weekends I said Masses in New Bedford and other towns in the area. I loved it. This gave me a welcome taste of real parish life. So when we had to give it up and I was asked where I would go next, I was able to say, "I have an offer from St. Anthony's in Revere." I had been there a few times and liked it. And they were in need of a

priest right away.

RR: How did you make a connection with them in the first place?

JM: Weekends at South Dartmouth were quiet, so naturally I looked for a place to help out with Masses. St. Anthony's once had a sign on our bulletin board asking for a priest to help out. So I went there and I just liked it. They also had a missionary priest there, but he was dying. So I asked, "If he dies, you'll be looking for someone. Would you be interested in me?" And they said, "We'd be glad to have you."

Then Arthur McCarthy, a colleague at South Dartmouth who was great to work with, said, "Jack, now that we have to leave, I'm going to Europe, and I'd like to have you come along with me." I said, "That sounds great. I'd love to come, but if I don't take this job at St. Anthony's now, somebody else will. I don't want to lose this job, because I have a feeling that I will like parish work. Besides, I'm Italian, and they're all mostly Italians there, and I seem to be driven toward it." He understood and went to Europe alone. But, tragically, he died all alone on a train over there!

RR: Oh, really? How sad.

JM: Yes. Someplace in Austria, I believe. A German Jesuit who spoke English had been helping him out. In any case, I regret that I wasn't with him when it happened.

#### SAINT ANTHONY'S IN REVERE

JM: So I spent four-and-a-half years at St. Anthony's and I loved it! I especially loved the weddings, the funerals, the novenas, the youth group, and all these parochial duties. And that was the time in my life. I said to myself, "Now I know why the missionary zeal left me." I was also busy helping members of my family,

nieces, nephews with their marriages. I was with them a lot and I'm glad I was.

RR: I'm sure they appreciated your pastoral help.

JM: I learned to be more patient and tolerant. Once in a while I lost my temper, like the time I yelled at a couple of hospital nurses. I know I have a short temper, but I always apologized if I got angry.

I remember a similar incident during the years I was at Weston. Unfortunately, there was a fellow Jesuit who hardly spoke to me. [Laughs] He wouldn't say hello to me unless I did so first. So one day I said to him, "Why do I always have to say hello to you first?" He said, "Because that's the way I want it!" It was an echo of the novitiate where someone said to me, "I don't think you belong here." So I said, "Wait a minute, now. Did I ever hurt you in any way?" And he said, "Yes, you did!" So now we're on first base. I said, "When?" "A year ago." Now we're on second base! [Laughs] So I asked him when this happened. And he said, "At table."

RR: What did this turn out to be? [Laughs]

JM: I said to him. "I can't remember that at all. So, I'll say this: I apologize now for whatever it was!" And that ended that.

RR: Great!

#### CALL ME FATHER!

JM: Another time when I was at St. Zepherin 's Parish, I learned just how important it is to be tolerant with others. But sometimes you have to go through a crucible in order to be tolerant or forgiving.

At the hospital where I was working, there was a lay woman in charge of all hospital chaplains—Protestant, Catholic and Jewish—who wouldn't call me Father. So I said to her, "I'm Father Jack, and 99 percent of the people in this hospital are Catholics."

Somehow this led to our yelling at each other, and she threw me out of her office. So I went to see my pastor, who said, “No, Jack. That’s your title. It looks like she has a problem. I’ll back you up on this. We’re going to get a lawyer.” So he did get a canon lawyer, a priest at St. James Church, Wellesley. He was very good and spoke at a meeting with the whole staff of that hospital. He was representing me, and they wanted to hear my side of the story, though, as a matter of fact, he ended up doing most of the talking.

Before we went in, I had said to him, “You know, I like that woman. She’s a very good administrator. When we go in to speak to a patient, she is very helpful, gives me the patient’s history—what is wrong and what I can expect. So with regard to our differences, since she calls everyone by their first names, she can call me Jack in private but not over the public loudspeaker system. That’s the time when she should call me Father.” So that’s what the lawyer said.

RR: Was she there at the time?

JM: Oh, yes! All the heads of staff were there. And the head of the hospital staff finally said, “We heard both sides and now here’s our decision. Father has that title and he has the right to it, whether you believe it or not.” I should add that she was a fundamentalist. I later found out what she believed: “Call no man father but your heavenly father.”

RR: That was a well-thought-out decision.

JM: I also said, “When the Pope comes to the US, our President, who is not a Catholic, calls him ‘Your Holiness.’ It’s a person’s right to their title, whether or not you believe in it.” However, all’s well that ends well. She and I are now good friends.

I should add that at times we become too pompous as priests, which doesn't impress the business world. And, I'm sorry to say, Catholics, including my family, sometimes put us on too high a pedestal. I'm aware of my own weaknesses and those of my brother priests. Years ago no one would have believed this, but look at what has happened recently! I used to say to my sisters, "Some day you're going to be surprised. Why do you put us on such a big, high plane? We're not perfect. We too have our faults. But remember, just as the Holy Week prayer says, 'O happy fault.'" I'm so happy people now understand us better.

RR: Could you tell us more about St. Stephen's and your work there?

JM: I went to St. Stephen's as asked by the priest in charge of archdiocesan personnel. He was an altar boy with me at St. Theresa's in West Roxbury. One day he called me and said, "Jack, we need a priest just for six months." I said, "Yes, but I like to look around for myself." And he said, "We understand. You can do that. But could you help us out for only six months? It's an emergency." So I said, "Okay, I can do that." And he told me that some Spanish-speaking priests were coming there. He said, "So before they actually arrive there, we need someone to fill in for six months." So I agreed, and, you know, I got to love that place too! [Laughs]

I then worked at St. Patrick's for five years. I loved it there at St. Patrick's! I have found all parishes show loyalty, but St. Patrick's was the most loyal of all. It was even more loyal than Zepherin's, though I still loved it there very much. And when I say "loyal," I'm talking more about the people than the priests.

### STARTING AT ST. ZEPHERIN'S

RR: Which parish did you go to next?

JM: After St. Stephen's, I went to St. Edward's in Medfield. So then I thought to myself, "St. Edward's, that's my family's parish." Also there was a team of priests there, both terrific guys but also very, very conservative! But I loved their company. Also I enjoyed my family's closeness; they live in Medfield. It turned out, however, that the team broke up because the pastor had a heart attack.

They had to get somebody else, and it gave me a chance to move out. Meanwhile Fr. Valenti [S.J.] was at St. Zepherin. I had driven him there a couple of times, because he couldn't drive himself; he was getting feeble and the pastor had to let him go. And they hated to do it. So I told the pastor, "I would like to be here with you."

RR: Not enough of a challenge for you at the previous parish?

JM: Not enough of a challenge, right. And this new parish was right on a main street. So the pastor said, "Oh good! You're younger and I'd like to have you."

RR: Was it a good move for you?

### SUPPORTING THE PASTOR

JM: Yes. And I spent eleven years there with that pastor. He's retired now. And then a new one came. And I've been with him for about six years.

He had to withdraw for eight months, because of some allegation against him. The very day it happened, I said, "I've been with you for two-and-a-half years. You're innocent. I just know you are. You're not the type! I'm older than you are, and something in me tells me that you're innocent." He says, "Thank you, Jack, I am innocent." But for several months it was very hard on him.

RR: He was finally completely exonerated, wasn't he?

JM: Finally, yes. He got a civil lawyer from our parish rather than a church lawyer. His lawyer vigorously took on the accusing lawyer. In his argument the pastor's lawyer said, "He picked Father out from a group of people. Why did he pick him? Is he certain he was the one?" And the complainant's lawyer said, "You know, he's now beginning to doubt that he was the one." That kind of doubt was all that was needed. The fellow actually apologized to my pastor. His parishioners were angry and said, "Sue him! Sue him!" But he said, "Enough is enough. I can't go any further with this. I thank God for helping to bring out the truth."

During all that time, he was deeply depressed. He would come back to the parish once a week, though he wasn't supposed to. But he said, "What else can they do to me?" All he really wanted was to see what was happening in the parish and feel once again the comfort of the people's prayers.

I asked him what was keeping him going, and he said, "The children of the parish. They send me letters with their prayers. Their prayers are almost all I have. I don't trust my superiors; they won't even let me face my accuser. Never once was I asked, 'How are you doing?'" It was the children's prayers that kept him going.

I said to him, "Good for you. Difficulties can happen to all of us." He replied, "Why did it have to be so harsh?" And I said, "The next time you see God, you ask him, because I don't know the answer!" As it turned out, when he came back after his ordeal, he had changed completely! He mixed with the people so much more!

RR: So it was providential in a sense?

JM: Yes, that's why I later said to him, "There's a reason



for everything, and God wanted you to go through this suffering. There was a reason for it.” And he thanked me for my support.

#### SUPPORT FROM FELLOW JESUITS

**RR:** Now for another somewhat broader question: Am I correct in assuming that during all this time you yourself were getting full support and cooperation from your Jesuit community along with help and guidance?

**JM:** Oh, yes. Every so often I came back to Campion for meals, because otherwise it’s lonely living in these rectories, especially when my colleagues take their regular two days off each week. I had to eat in my room by myself watching television. So that’s why I’d come back here for meals to be with my brother Jesuits.

Some of my diocesan friends had said, “You’re lucky.” And I’d say, “Yes I am. And that’s why I want to help you as best I can. Your temptations are greater than ours. First of all, you have money in a savings account to deal with. We can’t have savings accounts. Of course, you can buy a boat or a home. It’s things that can get you in trouble. We live in a community, and if somebody acts up, we have to look into his behavior and do something about it. The rector handles these things.” As for pastors, they often didn’t socialize, because they felt safer when they controlled their own kingdom. Unfortunately, that limited their knowledge of what was going on around them. Some crazy things were going on at the ranch because of that isolation. I said, “That’s the trouble! These situations need to be challenged.”

## RETREATS

RR: I understand that you were involved with retreats at various times?

JM: When I was in a parish, I didn't give any retreats. I was too busy. But I attended some from time to time. I think retreats are beneficial. I love them, especially the eight-day ones. I recently missed out on the one at Cohasset, because I applied too late. There was "no room at the inn." The reason why so many of us are now going to the annual retreats [sponsored by the Boston College community] in Cohasset is that there are no longer any Province retreats. So I've decided to make my next retreat here at Campion Center. I'm going to try out a one-on-one retreat.

## HOSPITAL WORK

RR: You have a number of options. Now could I ask you if I have missed anything of importance in my questions, especially those related to the several churches you served? You've already covered a whole lot, but is there anything in your work at these parishes that we haven't touched on?

JM: All right. Let's turn back to my hospital work. In all these parishes we were closely linked to nearby hospitals. And thank God for that! It was great for me, because I approached hospital work with a new perspective. And now I enjoy going to hospitals, because I can feel God's grace at work there. I come out of a hospital feeling that the people there maybe helped me more than I helped them. When I'm tired, I say to myself, "I don't feel like going to the hospital today." But I go just the same! Sometimes after a hospital visit, I say to myself, "Wow! That visit was just great!" The unexpected can be wonderful. God's grace helps. I am also very much touched by wakes and funerals, because you're dealing with people's emo-

tions, and this teaches you how to be kind and respectful of their dignity.

#### A JOYFUL PERSON

RR: We're nearing the end of our conversation. So let me ask you two final general questions, even though in a sense, you've already answered them. Could you pull things together in a final overview? Have you been able to sense God's support and grace through the years of your Jesuit life?

JM: Well, basically I'm a happy, joyful person. I've always been that way. And I think I've done an awful lot of good things for myself and for others. I think that being a Jesuit is a wonderful gift. It's great to be empowered to rebound after being hit by something negative. It has strengthened confidence and I thank God.

I have learned from my mother not to hold personal grudges. She showed patience and forgave anyone who tried to hurt her or her family through meanness or envy. She certainly took to heart what Jesus taught us, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." And even if they do know, they are not totally responsible, because they were products of a negative upbringing. She was tested, as we all are, and she answered with forgiveness, patience, and love.

RR: You've used that term "tested" a lot. It isn't necessarily a negative term. It can also be a positive one, as I think you indicate!

JM: Well, by being tested all my life, I found happiness.

RR: Thank you very much.

JM: This has been great. In closing let me add, that in these later years I have taken up painting. When I'm ninety, I won't be able to dance, play golf, or do much of anything else. But at least I will be able to do some

painting and tomato gardening! As I've said all along. I'm basically a happy man, and I thank God from the bottom of my heart.

RR: This has been a good interview, and I want to thank you for it.

JM: Thank you!

*To our heavenly Father, whom I thank for my wonderful parents and family; it is through their love, loyalty, and sacrifices that I am the person I am today.*

*To his Son, a companion whom I have tried to follow and be like, though at times faltering, but ever loyal.*

*To the Holy Spirit, who has strengthened me and pulled me through harrowing experiences.*

*To our Blessed Mother, whose loving protection has answered my pleadings and those of my family and friends, and also the one request that her Son asked of her, "Mother, behold your son."*

*Finally, my secret wish has always been: I can't wait to see God, face to face. As St. Paul puts it so well: "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him."*

Fr. John J. Mandile, S.J.

**Born:** April 6, 1926, Dorchester, Massachusetts  
**Entered:** March 18, 1944, Lenox, Massachusetts,  
Novitiate of St. Stanislaus/ Shadowbrook  
**Ordained:** June 15, 1957, Weston, Massachusetts,  
Weston College  
**Final Vows:** August 15, 1961, Portland, Maine, Jesuit  
Community Chapel, Cheverus High School

1940 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High  
School - Student  
1944 Lenox, Massachusetts: Novitiate of St. Stanislaus/  
Shadowbrook - Novitiate, juniorate  
1948 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied  
philosophy  
1951 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High  
School - Taught freshman year  
1954 Weston, Massachusetts: Weston College - Studied  
theology  
1958 Pomfret, Connecticut: St. Robert Hall -  
Tertianship  
1959 Portland, Maine : Cheverus High School -  
1959-1962 Taught freshman year  
1962-1964 Taught theology  
1963-1964 Taught history  
1964 Worcester, Massachusetts: College of the Holy  
Cross - Chaplain, City Hospital  
1965 Boston, Massachusetts: Immaculate Conception  
Rectory - Chaplain, Boston City Hospital and  
University Hospital  
1968 Ridgefield, Connecticut: Manresa Retreat House -  
Retreat work  
1969 South Dartmouth, Massachusetts: Our Lady of  
Round Hill Retreat House - Retreat work,  
librarian

- 1973 Boston, Massachusetts: Boston College High School -  
 1973-1978 Parish work, St. Anthony Church, Revere, Massachusetts  
 1978-1979 Parish work, St. Stephen Church, Framingham, Massachusetts  
 1979-1984 Parish work, St. Patrick Church, Natick, Massachusetts
- 1984 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Residence & Retreat Center -  
 1984-1985 Clinical Pastoral Education, Mercy Hospital, Springfield, Massachusetts  
 1985-1986 Pastoral ministry  
 1986-1988 Parish work, St. Edward the Confessor Church, Medfield, Massachusetts
- 1988 Sabbatical  
 Semester I: Santa Barbara, California: Institute of Theology and Spirituality  
 Semester II: Jerusalem, Israel: Tantur Institute
- 1989 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Residence and Renewal Center -  
 1989-1996 Parish work, St. Zepherin Church, Wayland; Our Lady of Fatima Church, Sudbury  
 1996-2005 Parish work, St. Zepherin Church, Wayland; pastoral ministry
- 2005 Weston, Massachusetts: Campion Health Center - Parish work, St. Zepherin Church; pastoral ministry

#### Degrees

- 1948 Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy, Weston College-Boston College  
 1958 Bachelor of Divinity, Weston College