

Interviewee: Robert Clement
Interviewer: J. Gordon Melton
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Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

J. Gordon M: Today is the nineteenth of August, or eighteenth of August. We're
in the presence of Archbishop Robert Mary Clement. And I am J.
Gordon Melton. And also present is Father Adrian-

Adrian R: Ravarour.

J. Gordon M: Ravarour..

Robert C: Who's actually an associate bishop. He prefers "father," but he is a
bishop.

J. Gordon M: So what I want to do today is to maybe, I wouldn't say briefly, but
to-

Robert C: I think I was always very verbose, yes.

J. Gordon M: Summarize your life's work and how you got into it. Maybe we can

start with your birth and where you grew up and the like. Please.

Robert C: Yes. I was born in a very little town just beyond the Poconos in the Appalachian Mountains, in a coal mining region. Anthracite, that hard coal region in eastern, particularly northeastern Pennsylvania. And it was right next to Wilkes-Barre, a little place called Lee Park. I was born on March 12, 1925. Eighty-two years ago. My family was of divided religion. My mother's people were Episcopalians. My father's people were Roman Catholic, which had some influence on how the children were raised, and what happened early in life. And in this particular case, I was raised in the Episcopal Church with a fairly good understanding of the Roman obedience, but nonetheless, as an Episcopalian. But what today, back then, seems like all the Episcopal Church is more homogenized. There isn't too much of what they used to call low church/high church and brought a kind of, settled into a kind of Eucharistic-centered church now. But back then, the divisions were clear. And my family were what they called Anglo-Catholics, or high church, because they'd come from Cornwall. And the British people from Cornwall

[inaudible] primarily were what you would call a high church, because there had been so much turmoil, whatever you're going to call it, with Methodism in Cornwall as in Wales. So the Episcopalians tended to be more ritualistic. And they brought that with them to this area, because many people came from the mines of Cornwall to the mines of Pennsylvania. So it was a natural transition, and they brought the church as they knew it. So I was raised, as I would say, high church, Episcopalian system. And then around age sixteen, because I went through all the standard things, and so on, but because of the division in my family, there was one odd thing. And that was that I was not baptized. And on my own, in being aware of what the Episcopal church was, and what I had learned about Christianity, was that it was a major thing to be baptized. Back in those days, if you weren't baptized, you were probably damned and condemned to hell, you know, because you hadn't received the impression. But on my own, I sought out baptism. And oddly enough, at the big "lower church" uptown, not my own parish. And later on, when I went into the service, after I came out of the service, I went to my own local parish for confirmation. That area was in the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem.

J. Gordon M: The service. Was this during wartime?

Robert C: Yes.

J. Gordon M: World War Two?

Robert C: Right. And as I say, when I left service, I arranged for my own confirmation, which took place in the parish church, which is St. Clements.

J. Gordon M: Well, how did you then go on into the ministry?

Robert C: Well, back when I was baptized, there was something happening. And I can only call it the usual thing, vocation or call. And I felt moved to the ministry. I just, it's always, I don't know, for some people, for me, it's very difficult to describe. It wasn't like an angel came down from the clouds and touched me or something. It was just that there was a feeling that the love of God as I knew it back

then had taken hold. And that, as I say, the sense of call or vocation, and I don't know how many other people you've talked to, said they have a call or a vocation. Often it isn't one crucial, critical moment. It just grows among, knows that's what they want to do, I wanted to be a priest. And I remember telling my family—out of the blue. It was almost like saying, it had nothing to do with gay back then, but it had a reaction within a religious sphere, because my family didn't expect to hear their sixteen year-old or so son suddenly say one Sunday—with my mother taking the roast out of the oven business—"Mom and Dad, I want to tell you, I want to be a priest. I'm going to be a priest," is, I think, actually what I said. And they were quite taken aback. Because they didn't know that little Robert was showing religious tendencies of that sort. Yeah, I'm going to church and doing all that sort of thing. So it came as quite a shock to them. But they quite recovered and were very supportive. And when I began preparations from then, and especially when I came back from service, the idea of getting off to college and the seminary. And what happened was I began making the first arrangements. I decided I would go to the local college, which back then was a junior college, but became independent in a

few years' time, became Wilkes College. But it recently was part of Bucknell University. But Wilkes College was where I went. And the preparations were being made to transfer from there down to, what is it in Bethlehem, Trinity College? Anyway, one of the colleges back then in that area had a strong relationship to the Episcopal Church, and there was a tendency for candidates and so on, postulants to go to that school. And from there go onto one of the standard seminaries. But even by then, I was one of the spikey men. Not, I hope, in personality, but it was thought I would go to the university or college, Trinity, whatever it is, down there in Bethlehem area. And then go on to Nashotah House, which was *the* super high church system of the Episcopal church as you may know it. But that all changed.

J. Gordon M: I did my seminary work at Garrett, a Methodist seminary, which is across the street from Seabury-Western.

Robert C: Oh. Yes.

J. Gordon M: So I remember picking up some of the gossip about the Nashotah

House.

Robert C: Right. [laughs]

J. Gordon M: Still floating around in the '60s.

Robert C: Well as you know, the Methodists, the strong influence they had on
Wales and Cornwall.

J. Gordon M: Oh, yes.

Robert C: And it became sometimes a bit raucous, I'm afraid.

J. Gordon M: Yes.

Robert C: But anyway, that's why the family remained with Church of
England. And there was a tendency to be much more Anglo-
Catholic in those areas. I believe it's still true today. I'm not sure to
what degree in the Welsh church, but in the, I understand, even to
this day, in the Church of England Diocese of Truro, which is
Cornwall, it's all very high church cause of the conflicts with the

spread of the Wesleyan Methodism.

J. Gordon M: Yes.

Robert C: However, that's what transformed in my life. But when I got into university, I began to become a little unhappy with the Episcopal Church. And I knew I didn't want to go into the monolithic structure which was wrong. As much as I liked and admired much of it, I could see that it was too constrained, by far. And the Episcopal Church, well, there's little sort of things where I began to have certain feelings that it wouldn't work very well. And I discovered Old Catholicism at university. And I made my contacts there.

J. Gordon M: That early.

Robert C: Yes. And when I got through, I made contacts to Old Catholic centers. Of course, being in New York, they were in the New York area. And eventually, I had my training even at college changed by the group called the Old Catholic Church in America under

Archbishop Francis–William Francis of Woodstock, Archbishop Francis Brothers. And when I got in touch with them up in Woodstock, New York, it was arranged that I would come there to study after I finished at college. And I was told what to study; changed my major, so to speak. It was mostly English, but the social studies turned into religious studies. And then I would spend the summers and summertime at Woodstock preparing for the priesthood. And then, oddly enough, there came a time when I was spending more time there and not as much as some people might have thought I should for my degree. And things went exceedingly well at Woodstock. And I was at (most people don't know at that time) the seminary work was, Woodstock is very mountainous in the Catskills. And up above it is a place that was called Meres Mountain, which had originally been a Victorian resort area, hotel and so on. Well, part of those grounds had become the seminary work for the Old Catholic Church, and had gorgeous, small but very nicely done chapel. Mostly the work was done by the archbishop himself, the carving and so on. Very nice. The Church of Christ on the Mount, Church of the Transfiguration of Christ on the Mount. And that's where I did my seminary

training. I didn't quite finish college, but I was now a junior in college and broken away from the church. Finished my studies there, with being told what I would have to do thereafter. But I was ordained. I was ordained in 1948, a deacon on July Fourth, and I was ordained to the priesthood on August 8, 1948, which means fifty-nine years ago. So I feel I've been around a little while. [laughter] Around the block maybe more than once. So I was ordained, as I say, August 8, 1948.

J. Gordon M: By--

Robert C: Archbishop Brothers, Francis, yes. Archbishop Francis.

J. Gordon M: Were there co-consecrators?

Robert C: No consecrators. This was ordained to the priesthood.

J. Gordon M: Oh, that's right.

Robert C: Deacon and priest.

J. Gordon M: I'm jumping ahead of myself.

Robert C: I had no idea of episcopacy in any remote way at that time. I still had so much more to learn. So from there, I went back to finish my degree. And at the same time I was finishing the degree, I had to go from there, which is in northern Pennsylvania, down to Philadelphia to the priory for a lot of further instruction. That tumbles over a couple of years before, because the final finish not only the outward and educational formation was, even though I was ordained a priest, I wasn't fully formed in, I'm sure. As they say, you're still wet behind the ears. The formation is not finished. And I had to get behind some of the wet behind the ears and into real work, real understanding of humanity, and what needs to be done in the church. But it's interesting. I was a chaplain to Archbishop Brothers. Well, Francis, I think, he preferred. William Henry Francis. And then what happened there was, in 1950, there

came a split between, you're probably aware there are all these divisions of Old Catholics. Well, the Old Roman Catholics, not the North American, but the Old Roman Catholic Church, which was under Archbishop Marchenna, from [inaudible], and the church under Archbishop Francis, which was the Old Catholic Church in America, into which I was ordained. After a couple of years, we get to 1950, and they had a concordat agreement, whatever you want to call it, and it broke down. So in 1950, I had to make the choice, because I'd been assigned to work with the work under Archbishop Marchenna who, as I say, I had this agreement with Archbishop Francis until 1950. And I made the choice to go with Archbishop Marchenna. because I was working more directly with him, and so many things had developed. So I stayed with him. But that meant I suddenly was in the Old Roman Catholic Church. And they got all involved in technicalities. And because one was the Carfora work, and the other was the de Landes Berghes work– you probably know this split and what happened. And so after functioning for two years, suddenly this, well, in the Old Roman Catholic Church, after the breakaway or the splitting, they said, "We have to regularize you." So I had to be ordained again. That occurred on

All Saints Day, 1950. So, okay. Then I was with Archbishop Marchenna for years and years, for ten or so years, just working in the New York area, and trying to have a secular life, because it was unpaid clergy, of course. But I'd always believed in what was asked of me in ordination; do I feel an obligation when you give your obedience. I gave my obedience, and I gave my obedience then to Archbishop Marchenna. And we functioned together very, very well over those ten years or so. He had a lot of contacts with all of those churches, because he maintained fairly friendly relations with the African Orthodox and Nevilloyde and all the other independents, and St. Leonard's, which you may have heard of over the years from other sources as you've done work in the independent movement. So it was a very fulfilling time, and very active. A lot of my needing to take care of body, if not soul, but soul was taken care of. And if I had to leave town, there were periods when, because I became a television producer/director, working for NBC, an associate. But eventually I worked for the United Nations in that area and with the City of New York–NYC Broadcasting. So that was my secular side. And there was a period where I had to leave New York, go back to my hometown to get more experience

in the television area. But every Sunday, and the weekends, I was back in the New York area working with Archbishop Marchenna until I was able to make a transition in the '50s to really settle into New York, and just work with him all along. And this is going to be very interesting as a side, or maybe not a side note. Within the church, with that structure, after a few years, I became chancellor. Then I became vicar general, which I always said was the wicked general, mild clergy joke. However, I was vicar general, and there was a synod. And I don't have the papers, I'm sorry, in front of me, but I was elected bishop, to be co-adjutor to Archbishop Marchenna. Well, the first time this happened, I refused. I said, "We're doing all this work, we function ecumenically with other independent Catholics, but there aren't enough parishes and such. It's paper." And I said, "I refuse the episcopate, even though I was elected." A general synod with what I'm saying is laity as well as clergy. So I was elected, I refused. Then, a couple of years later with the situation still the same, I was elected. And he said, "Please, would you accept the election this time on the basis of preserving the succession?" He did have Bishop Martin Luther Williams as his auxiliary. But he wanted me so I'd be the primate if something

happened to him. And he was some years older than I was, of course, at that time. So I finally said yes, I would accept. Okay, I accepted, and the preparations were underway for me to be consecrated a bishop. With again, a fair amount of reluctance. But okay, I agreed it would take place. Then, at the same time, there was the election in the Old Roman Catholic Church. Bishop Vipartis, out near Chicago, I trust, again, you're familiar with this. Who was the man who was elected as his co-adjutor? Oh, dear. Should be branded in my mind forever. Anyway, what happened was, I was elected co-adjutor to the primate. He was elected co-adjutor to the diocesan Bishop Vipartis which was fine. I didn't think much about it. And it was all the going back and forth. And one day I went into the chancery office, and there was a letter in Archbishop Marchenna's typewriter. And since I was vicar general, and everything was just, I read it. And it was to Archbishop Shelley, in England, who was the titular primate for all of the Old Roman Catholic Church that devolved from Matthews, was Shelley in England. And the mandate had already been sent. I have the copies, which I'm sorry, again, to show you. The election, the mandate, everything. The most negative thing was I was part of the

Order of Port-Royal, and they were very Jansenist, primarily because Shelley was. And I was the least Jansenist person in the world, I assure you. But I was polite and courteous, and I had my membership in the Order of Port- Royal. But as you'll hear, I hope when we're just talking, I am so Pelagian it's, please_ So nonetheless, I was obedient and never, but to me, the love of God was more important than the elect, I assure you, by far. But it was, Shelley was in charge. The mandate was in place. It was a matter of finishing up final details. In the letter was accusations of me from, I almost remembered his name again. The one in Chicago had contacted Archbishop Marchenna about my being homosexual. And in that day and age, you can imagine, in the '60s, what this did. It was vile, it was smelly, it was stinking, it was awful. And to discover a letter from Archbishop Marchenna to Archbishop Shelley of opprobrium about me, at this point, done by the man in Chicago who, by the way, was gay.

J. Gordon M: Was it Schwikert?

Robert C: Schwikert_

J. Gordon M: Oh, yeah, with the flat church.

Robert C: Yeah.

J. Gordon M: The church that never got finished. [laughs]

Robert C: Well, Schwikert was the one who wrote this information, and who was taking Schwikert, but why did he bother? Because why, bluntly and honestly, Marchenna was gay. I mean, that was when I was scandalized by the games that were being played. There's Schwikert sending information that Marchenna's putting into a letter to Shelley. All Shelley would have done would have been blow his stack, because I don't think he was particularly gay. He was so rigorous, so ascetic, so Port-Royalist, so Jansenist, that he couldn't have functioned in any other way than to probably excommunicate me and, God knows what, burn me in effigy, I trust. I don't know. But why was this letter going? And I read it and he walked in. And I tried to be, I trust, a mild man. But you can imagine how wroughtful I felt. And we had a terrible blowup. I

mean, it was— and that was the end of any idea. I didn't care about any consecration or anything else. I just couldn't understand why he betrayed me, why he did this. He was just unbelievable. It was so horrible and so hurtful. Obviously I was angry. And just that, said, "That's it_ We're finished. Goodbye." And the most interesting thing happened. And others, I don't know, would look at it the same way. Is that radio still on? Or am I hearing music from—

J. Gordon M: Outside.

Robert C: Outside. Okay. It's very far in the background, it's just that I didn't want it to be disturbance if it were. Well, just after I left Archbishop Marchenna, he was stricken ill. I mean, to the point of death. But the interesting thing was, I did not go back to see him for a year because I was finished. I was no longer part of the Old Roman Catholic Church. I was just in a limbo, hiatus, whatever you want to call it. I just was nowhere.

J. Gordon M: Did you leave? Or did he ask you to leave?

Robert C: I did. [makes disgusted noise]

J. Gordon M: You left.

Robert C: He never asked me to leave. I just left. I was so wrought. He never said, "Leave." No. But I think he was so taken aback. But what could I do with such damnable things written for no good reason. I mean, I'm familiar with church politics. I was familiar with them with him for ten years. I mean, that's when Michael Itkin and others crossed the path. It's how I met Archbishop Hyde. It's all these things. I mean, these weren't ten dead years, but I was able to see. I always disliked intensely was the whole Old Catholic thing of fighting cats and dogs and savaging each other. And I thought I was free of that. I mean, he and I may have had our disagreements, but they were never anything that would make me have ever thought that he would do something so duplicitous. No, I would never have thought it. I thought yes, he may play games, and people do. But I'm trying to be a calm anchor as much as I can. And

literally, that's what I felt was one reason why I accepted these various appointments, because we were close. I thought he loved me literally as a brother, and that we had achieved a very common bond. So to have this happen was total devastation. So he didn't ask me to leave. I don't know if he might have later or not that very discussion, because I left. I was angry, but there was also the betrayal. I mean, I didn't know how to handle the hurt that I was caught up in this cheap kind of politics, religious internal politics that I'd always loathed, and never thought he would bring on me. I mean, he might manipulate a bit, but I never, ever thought there would be any way of turning on me. And as you know something later, he's going to be my consecrator. But nonetheless, I didn't speak to him for about a year. And then I thought well, I'm not returning to the Old Roman Catholic Church. There's no way that can be repaired. I'm on my own, I'm exploring various avenues of something to do. But I went to see him. And he was still seriously ill in bed. What I say is, from my viewpoint it was fantastic. I left him, he became seriously ill. I went to see him and he recovered almost immediately. Which made me wonder if some of it was psychological. To this day, I'll never understand. So I went back

and was very gentle and said I couldn't return. It was to heal the wound as much as I could. And it did work, to a great degree. What was so fascinating was that he was restored to physical health, to, you know, functioning and being active. And that was fine. But for me, there were contacts I'd made, and I think my background was fairly substantial. And contacts through Newark had been made with what was then an independent parish called, they were St. Cyril and St. Methodious, an Independent Czech Parish, which had more to do with the old Farskyites than with the Polish National Catholic Church. I don't know if you're familiar with that split in Czechoslovakia. The Farskyites were rather Unitarian, and the Polish nationals and then the others went off to the Presbyterians, and back to Rome. And that was another failure which was so sad, of the independent church, which still exists, to some degree, particularly in the Czech Republic. But probably in the Slovak Republic as well. But and of course now it's primarily the Old Catholics. But there's still remnants of the old Farsky movement amongst people in the hills and so on. But anyway, it was through this priest who had, very, very nice man, Pastor Lehner. I don't know if you have his name somewhere. I can't

remember his first name. But it was Pastor Lehner from the Czech Republic, which was Czechoslovakia then. He was, I believe, Moravian. Anyway, through him, he said the Polish National Catholic Church has need of a priest in Perth Amboy, their church of St. Cyril and St. Methodious in Perth Amboy badly needs a priest. There's an old priest there, Father Sychta, very fine man, but he's very elderly, and the people want a new, young, and they would prefer an American priest. And they want everything to go into English. So that was fascinating. So I was put in touch with then dean for that area, Magar, who became Bishop Eugene Magar. I'm sorry?

J. Gordon M: I remember that name.

Robert C: Yes. So Eugene Magar, and, of course, the primate back then, prime bishop, was Grohowski. So I was put in touch with Magar. They use signor, which is like monsignor. He was the dean of that northern New Jersey area. And it was almost too much. It was amazing. Because I was put in touch with the Polish National

Catholic Church. This Slovak parish, and Father Sychta, but I was put in touch with Magar who, by the way, ran a Slovak parish, but he was Hungarian. Magar was, in fact, Magar means, as you know, the Magar people, the Hungarians. Anyway, Bishop Magar, who had this very large parish, Holy Name I think it was, up in Patterson or something like that. But he was the dean. And that's when the Polish National Catholic Church was still a very substantial organization. And going into it was, in many ways, simply like going into a Roman diocese. Very, very similar. The structure, the agreement. And most of the Polish nationals were really Roman Catholic, or almost Ultramontanist at heart, I would say. Even though they broke over nationalism and ethnic concepts, they were still very much, still very similar to the Roman obedience, except they early on had gone into other languages. But what they wanted in Perth Amboy was a nice, youngish priest. By then I had gotten into my thirties, and hopefully was a little dry behind the ears, and had some experience and a few shocks. And went into, was, but it was so quick_ I mean, it was like they saw me and said, "Yeah, we want you_" Boom_ I mean, it was weird. It was so quick. They had the need of the parish, here's a warm body,

he seems to meet all the needs. He's got the educational background. He's got experience. The people will love him. He's a young American. Woomf_ And I had to slow them down. I said well, you know, there were things I did have to do. I said, "I can't come for a few months time. And also, in the meantime, there are some things I'd like to change as soon as I arrive in the parish." So they said fine. Had a meeting with the parish committee, as they call it. Talked to Father Sychta, talked to the dean, and he'll talk to the bishop, and all. I said okay. Everything was laid out as I wanted. Beautifully. And I was to come, and it was so interesting. They, literally, in the time, the few months, they had a rectory built for me. It was very quickly prefabricated, but with my arriving, I had a rectory. They'd done all that. They did many things. They made changes within the church. Call them ecclesiastical, visual things. They did it all. And I told them how I would celebrate the Mass, how I would handle it in English; and everything, there was not one murmur of any dissent. They wanted this priest. And it was a very nice parish. You know, a substantial number of people. So it was a very, very involved, parochial work. And I arrived, which was great, and took over the parish. So we decided that, the

decision was not to dishonor the old priest, so I was not the assistant, but I was the associate. So I could act as pastor. And the older one, but I was given the main Mass of the day. They had one for the Slovaks. But the Mass I had had most of the people. Even all the adults would come. And they all were pretty adapted by then to English. But it went very well. But I'm digressing for a reason. I don't know how much of this you want for your story, background.

J. Gordon M: I want it all.

Robert C: What? I functioned in the Polish National Catholic Church from September, when I arrived, I guess it was '58 or so, whatever it was for that approximate ten-year period. And the parish was fine. It was well settled, and it was just very nice. But the first thing I had to do, one of the first things, was arrange for a confirmation class. And I did, because we had a lot of young people. These young people with their younger children who wanted this American priest. They wanted to move from what they felt was stodginess. Though they loved Father Sychta, but it was the whole idea, they

wanted to move away from sort of the glacial way things moved in the past. So that's why I was there. And as I say, the parish was functioning beautifully. You know, weddings, funerals, we had our own cemetery, everything. It was just very well settled for parochial work. And I had within a fairly short time a very large confirmation class. And this is what gets interesting. I had served in both Catholic orders that by their lights would have been irregular once more, because they were aligned with Utrecht, as you know. So that was an effort to, about June or so when I had my ordination class ready. And the word came down from the central diocese, from the central curia, that for the sake of Utrecht, I should be, again, conditionally reordained, to regularize things. So that Utrecht would not get upset. They, I was once again in this, well, yes, they recognize but don't, that old story. So to regularize it, which I did with the bishop, because he had episcopal orders. But I said if people want all these, it's not legalities, but the structure, then I'm willing to do something. But only if it's to regularize. I don't believe that, you're not transferring orders more than once. But okay, if it's a matter of quality of regularization, fine. But the interesting part of it is, okay, Bishop Grohowski, no offense meant,

but he still had a heavy Polish accent. Even though he was so much an American, had been for a long time. The people really wanted English—clear decisive English—for the confirmation. So an agreement was made, oddly enough, with all the touchiness within, you can imagine, within a diocesan structure, and especially from the top down, anyway, the agreement was that archbishop, that the prime bishop would not come, Grohowski, that the bishop of Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Jielinski, would come for the confirmation. And that was arranged for Jielinski to come. But that was when they also said that the ceremony of the conditional reordination should take place on the following day. So Bishop Jielinski arrived, did the confirmation. The next day, privately, with Father Sychta present, I was ordained deacon and priest, to regularize things for Utrecht. But when these claims were made later, the most outlandish claims within the Polish National Catholic Church. At a much later date, when the gay issue came up. When they wanted to say, “We don’t know this man.” Shake their skirts as much as they could away from me. Well, I was ordained, which is a key, fascinating thing, by Bishop Jielinski. And then, when I left the Perth Amboy parish in a couple years time, because I felt, by that time, I had met my life’s

companion, John Darcy Noble, in England. And it was Eastertime two years later. I met him in '59, in '60 at Easter he came to the parish in Perth Amboy. And after a while, I realized it wouldn't work, couldn't work, my having a lover living beyond a visiting friend for a short while in the rectory. And I felt my obligation to him. I mean, my life was changed when I met him. So I had to make a tremendous choice. And my tremendous choice was to quietly bow out of the parish, which I did. It was awkward; it wasn't easy. It was awkward, awkward with the diocese, awkward in many ways. But I left the parish, moved into New York City to be with John, but it was handled as delicately as possible. And then I was assigned to work with the parish in New York City on St. Mark's Place. And that's where I functioned in the Polish National Church for the next years until '58, when everything blew up. But I functioned in the Polish National Catholic Church at the parish, being an assistant to do English work, because Father Zawistowski was still very Polish and was happy to have someone. But I wanted to reach out to American, shall we call it the general population when I was busy— was it actually recording?

Adrian R: This one ran out of tape.

Robert C: Well, good. I'll try to pause a moment so you can get your connection. I'm glad you're here because you're hearing history as it goes in this form, more objectively, perhaps. But as I say, I was at the parish in New York at St. Mark's Place for all those years. Fine. And it was less of a problem because I wasn't resident there. And Father Zawitowski never blinked an eye. But then again, it was back in, what is it, the military one, "don't ask, don't tell."

J. Gordon M: Yes.

Robert C: Well, that was what was happening.

J. Gordon M: Before Stonewall.

Robert C: I was having that in the Polish National Catholic Church. If anyone looked, they could tell that, you know. But if no one asked, I didn't tell anyone. And no one asked for they didn't want to stir any waters. Because I was available, if someone wanted to go on

vacation or leave or whatever, I was the one they would call to take over their parish in the deanery. So I found myself in virtually every parish for a period of time, in the New York, most particularly the New Jersey deanery. Because even though I spoke English, and they would have Polish masses, they were always standard with the choirs. And all I had to do was the pax abami(?), and so I never got that right after twenty years or more, but I knew the, you know, what we call the salutations. And I would celebrate the Mass and preach in English. And they would be singing away in Polish. But it was the standard old Gregorian mass anyway, so everybody knew what was happening when, communion when the bells rang. And what I had to say to them, or for a blessing. So I would be doing it in English in a Polish parish. But they, I was useful in a pleasant way, to take over Sundays in parishes where the priests, because they were always short on priests. But anyway, there I was in New York, and functioning at the parish. And then, oddly enough, I didn't leave the PNs over anything about gayness. What had happened in those latter years was I said I wanted to reach out to the general community. I was living in Greenwich Village, but all of Chelsea, all of Manhattan, because there were PN

parishes elsewhere. But there was only the little work, it was nice work, but it was all Polish-oriented on St. Mark's Place. I wanted to do something with English-speaking people. And interestingly enough, they had a very lovely building, the public library system. And they decided to sell it because there was another gorgeous building, which they use to this day, another complex, over at Sixth Avenue. And this was over around, then it would have been near Eighth and Fourteenth. Just off Thirteenth, I think, it was at an angle, it was sort of on there. And there was the marvelous building from the public library system. Beautifully kept up, as you can imagine. Just a great building that had been developed in Dutch style in the Victorian period. It had iron letters, numerals, which were still there. I believe it was 1886, beautiful Dutch style building, was available. I put in a bid for it, and they accepted my bid. But I can tell you, this is nothing for here, today that building, going values in New York, would be a couple million dollars. They had offered it to me back in roughly '68 or so for \$100,000. Even then, that was a low price. All I needed was ten thousand dollars down, and I had my work at the United Nations to pay any expenses, to form a parish. And I had the beginnings of people.

Oddly enough, some friends of Archbishop Marchenna by that time. It had just become, because we'd been friendly but separated. But it was people I knew of a, you know. So there was literally a parish beginning of about ten to twenty people. And I wanted to work amongst people of that background. To cover blacks, Asians, everyone, but an Anglo-Saxon set-of-mind, whatever you will, a middle class. But it was also for poor people. It's just that it wasn't to be ethnic. It was to be a universal appeal: rich, poor, educated, non-educated, black, white. Back then, the beginning of Hispanic, because that was when we had a great beginning of Puerto Ricans. It looked like a rich harvest. The field was white, and there was no labor. And I thought, I'm doing this bit of work over there, I'm at the United Nations work, but I can do so much more. I mean, the New York City work by them.

[End Tape One, Side A. Begin Side B.]

Robert C: –this potential building, and I didn't know enough about finances, where to get ten thousand dollars on my own for a mortgage for something as marvelous as that. I was too unworldly in the sense of not knowing how that sort of thing worked, which may be good or bad for a priest, but I believe that's another issue. So I appealed to the central office, through Bishop Grohowski. And I said I needed, if I could, and I would pay it back, just ten thousand dollars to get started, and here was this marvelous building offered. And would they please come, would he and Bishop Magar come and see the building. It's unbelievable. And so it took months. And the city let it sit. They had other offers, probably much greater than mine. But they were being kind enough to accommodate me. And they waited some months, it took me months to get Bishop Grohowski to come with Bishop Magar. Now this story becomes again, so weird, it's unbelievable. They came, Archbishop Grohowski arrived. Bishop Magar came in from New Jersey. They were together. I went up to meet them at one of the big hotels, I've forgotten which one, at Midtown. And they said gruffly, "How are you, father?" Okay. And then, "Get us a cab, we will go look at the building." So I dutifully went out and got a cab, which wasn't

impossible in New York City, and took them down to the building at Thirteenth and Fourteenth there. And we walked in. And I hope you'll believe me. It was such a splendid building. It had been kept up by the city. We walked in into this great entryway where the reception desk and all this. Quite something. We walked in.

Archbishop Grohowski looked around, we're talking about in the entryway. He didn't look through the building. He didn't examine anything. He looked around and turned to me and said, "This building is no good. The plumbing is bad." That's honest God's honest truth of what was said to me. And I was speechless. And I was told, "Get me a cab." So I went out and got a cab in the neighborhood because it's a busy street, Fourteenth. Got a cab for he and Bishop Magar. So we went back, drove back to the hotel, and he said, "You just look for another building, Father." There was no explanation. Nothing_ He had stood there and said, "This building is no good. The plumbing is bad." It didn't smell, so I couldn't figure out, I just was aghast_ And we drove up, and I will say that as I sat in that cab, and heard him say, "You look for another building, Father." If they couldn't come up with a simple ten thousand dollars which I was willing to repay and to have this

marvelous beginning of a work they said they wanted. One of the things I was supposed to do within the diocese was to take care of outreach to others; for children and for outreach to non, ethnic, we would call it today, populations. That's what they wanted me to do. Then they tell me they can't give me the basic seed money with this gorgeous building in a great location to do something. So as we rode up, I said in my mind, that's the end. I'm finished in the Polish National Catholic Church. I will tell Father Zawitowski when the anniversary is over. I believe it was, again, I have the paper, which has my picture in it, to prove that I was a PN priest. Plus my clippings from New Jersey and all the rest of it. Anyway, I said to myself, I'm leaving. I will leave at the anniversary. I will not leave Father Zawitowski in the lurch with the plan and the work for the anniversary. And that's just what I did. I stayed until the anniversary and then left. And just once again, for a couple of years, went into limbo. I tried, and after a year or so, once again, that core of people were interested. And that's why it was '68 or '69, I actually founded the little parish called American Orthodox Church, Western Rite. Because in New York at that time, I'm trying to remember that bishop, someone had incorporated the American

Orthodox Catholic Church. What's his name up in the Bronx. It's almost on my, you probably know his name because he was so active in his early years. And maybe it will just tumble in. So we just thought, oh, we'll call ourselves American Orthodox, then call it Western Rite. So that's what we did. But we also organized a church on our own, not knowing what would happen in the future, called American Catholic Church. And I've forgotten if we had a subtitle as well, because there was an American Catholic Church under Archbishop Lashley, the man in Harlem, who lived to be the incredible age of a hundred and five, I believe it was. Propato, Propato was the one who had the nice parish in the Bronx or upper part of Manhattan. He had American Orthodox Catholic Church, which would have been our preferred name. However, we founded a parish, oddly enough American Catholic, I'll have to look at the papers again, because I've almost forgotten the incorporation in the state of New York that we had along with the Orthodox Catholic Church, Western Rite. That was the real beginning of our work, and it was really a gay work. Because the people who were attracted. But even then, we had a couple of heterosexual people. So we would just call it a parish in general. But that's where

Beloved Disciple came along. When John and I talked, he was lay, of course, at the time, what was this parish of the American Orthodox Church, Western Rite? It was Beloved Disciple. We thought it was a lovely name. And also, by that time, firmly fixed was the spiritual concept, which I'd accepted since 1948, and had gone through all these other structures with a lot of problems internally with that. If God is love, how does this establishment-organized church call itself sometime Christian with the infighting, with the lack of understanding that seeing all this Augustinianism in that times, which I still feel much of Augustinian is anti-Jesus, anti-a substantial faith. It's why I attracted so strongly to the Celtic Pelagian concepts. Because when I rejected it, finally, I thought, no, no, no, Augustine was a great man, but he did some very nasty and, frankly, some very vicious things personally. And what he's foisted on the church for approximately fifteen hundred years is a disgrace and a sin, if he wants to talk about sins, in its own right. This man has been the greatest disservice to Christianity of all the men that have lived from the early age of the fathers. Sorry. Some people get upset when I get onto my anti-Augustine feeling, but that's it. That whole bit of grace and the rest of it that he's distorted

is distressing to me no end. So my original concept of the love of God, and always relating so strongly to the Johannite and the best of Paul, where they seem to come together, was what I really was as a priest, and what I had so much difficulty about spiritually and dogmatically within these organizations and the structures. So I was probably always a, what would you say, a maverick of some sort. Even though I appeared to be, I was quiet, and I tried to be, you know, compassionate. And especially because in the end, what is a priest or anyone committed to, but the people? And the care and love of them is what I was committed to in all of this church work that I ever did. In the PNs, with the others, and going back into the work through Marchenna and through Archbishop Francis. But my whole focus was it is the love of God, the happy things each day I look at and enjoy the new interpretations of scripture, what [inaudible] has to say, what the Thomas gospel can say. It's all gorgeous to me. And it's free. And it doesn't mean I give up an apostolic and sacramental concept. But it can grow. And also, the parts of the Celtic outlook which, by the time it was included, was approaching certain concepts that I would say you'd find out in Buddhism. And today, 1066, the Norman Conquest, is the second

date of infamy in English history. To me, the date of Whitby is where I think Christianity was betrayed in the British Isles, and therefore, throughout Europe and the rest of the world, ultimately. Because what I call, because I don't want to rage against Rome, what I call the Roman obedience, the Roman system, I'm happy to call European or Mediterranean. But the establishment church of the continent is what I find myself so seriously in disagreement with, especially at this juncture in my life. But I realize now it was what I was always somewhat in opposition to, and why I was so happy when the Church of the Beloved Disciple came along. Then we get into what was the motivation there. Well, it was a young man who grew into an older, middle aged man who believed in the love of God and the spirituality of Jesus, and that when it's committed to people, and the organization should reflect, hopefully, that love. Work within the structures as I have to, then try to be as released from them as possible. And like I say, we had the beginnings of a small parish. And then the incredible, if you want to call it, the incredible transformation of life when Stonewall happened. And while that's like an explosion in life and in religion, in spirituality it's just— and as I sit here I can remember, I can recall

the feeling of it. And I just don't want to become so hyper that I forget reality in what was so beautiful, so compelling and demanding.

J. Gordon M: When did you first become aware of yourself as being gay?

Robert C: Oh. Okay. Probably quite early in life. Early in puberty. I would say my puberty occurred around age nine or ten, but I mean, that was just— but it changed the flow of the hormones. And I probably was aware that I was primarily homosexual, oh, somewhere around age twelve or so. I just knew it. I knew I was different. And somehow, these naked things said about men, I didn't quite understand, but there was a growing awareness that that was me, that I didn't fit in. I was still going along with the family saying about getting married, and figuring on I would marry someone and they would have high hopes for this girl or that. And I would be very nice with them, but I realized as time went on, I wasn't trying to get them

into the backseat of the car or somewhere. It just didn't occur to me. In fact, a very amusing thing happened. In that age period, there was a young girl lived near me. And we went out picking violets in the woods. And we were gone quite a long time. We found lovely big flowers with long stems. And we spent quite a period of time. People had known that we'd gone off into the woods. Never meant anything to me. And we went out, and we picked violets, and came back, fine. Gave them to our mutual parents. I didn't hear from her, but I gave the violets to my family, to my mother and father, and I could not understand why there was this constantly saying, "Well, what did you do out there? You were a long time. You were picking violets for you and Eldona. What were you doing out there so long?" We must have been hours. I didn't think twice about it. But there was this kind of coming at me, coming at me, of, "What were you doing?" And it took an awful long time for the penny to drop. They were worried that I was, you know, being sexually active with her or something. I mean, really_ But I lived in a community that was like a little United Nations itself. And I'm sure all kinds of things were happening. But they weren't happening to me. But that's an

illustration of how innocent and naïve I was. I didn't think a little boy would go out with a girl at twelve, thirteen or fourteen, for a long time in the woods, could ever mean anything but that you went out picking flowers. That's what we did. [laughs] So, but things like that happened. And I would go out with young girls whose family would kind of push you towards them and make these kind of marriage noises. I wasn't the least bit interested. And I certainly wasn't sexually attracted. Not at all. But I did have, quite frankly, the famous thing about boys go through that stage or not. Well, I can tell you, boys who were obviously heterosexual, Kinsey was right. They do carry on and have relationships in those early years, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and so on. Because I certainly did with other boys. But I was still supposed to be thinking about marriage. But obviously, I was relating to boys. And I related to them and had everything from urges early, I don't know if I should be, this idea of a priest saying this, but from early masturbation to frottage, and all kinds of things happening with little boys trying to discover what was going on as their bodies change. And we actually ended up having sex. I mean, fellatio and anal sex at times. I mean, it was no big deal. It was just happening

amongst kids and confusing our lives. Confusing our lives very much. And as far as I can tell, since I left that area, I only went back at that time briefly, as far as I know, most of them were heterosexual. I believe one or two were gay and remain gay as far as I know, but I didn't keep that close a contact. But I was aware, finally, that it was boys. And certainly by the age I was sixteen, I was highly conflicted between my religious so-called principles that were inculcated into me, and my being gay. But I still wanted to be a priest for what I felt, and with looking back, were spiritual reasons. And though I didn't realize it at the time, there shouldn't have been any incompatibility. But yes, oh my heavens, around sixteen, when I wanted to be a priest, I was still a sinner and all the rest of it, an abject sinner. And how could I be queer, and how could I be— oh, yes. That was really, really strong, through sixteen, through eighteen, through a bit later, when I really— in fact, almost to the time when I was twenty-three and ordained a priest. But I at least resolved some of it by the time I reached twenty or so and thought, well, there's something wrong. There's a dichotomy. And I will continue, because I can't see myself as this evil beast. I'm not a monster. So there's no one to tell me how to solve the two,

accepting somehow for myself. And so after the terrible torment of sixteen to eighteen or nineteen, I began to resolve it. And frankly had an active sexual life. And a still continuing religious life of this preparation for the priesthood and so on, and to college, which was going to change over to the Old Catholics, but I just lived with it, and it worked out. So by the time I was ordained, I still had issues to deal with, but they weren't frightening, and they weren't making me grovel any longer. And I was saying, for me, it was almost, I felt positively, in a positive sense, unique. I mean, I can be a priest somehow, and I can also be a gay person. But I didn't know all of the things that would be helpful later on, because, let's face it, you're going to seminary, they're going to have a nice sociology course or special course in how to be a priest and gay at the same time? Good luck to this very day. You know, are you going to achieve this? Well, then how are the Lutherans, the Roman Catholics and everybody else going to change everything between today and tomorrow? However, that, I don't like the word accommodation, but I had to accommodate it, and I felt on positive terms, and honest ones.

J. Gordon M: So was Brother aware that you were gay?

Robert C: Yes. Oddly enough, he was. By the time I got to that point. But again, it was don't ask, don't tell.

J. Gordon M: And Marchenna?

Robert C: Marchenna obviously knew, but it hadn't come up early on. But he did know later on by association. And by the fact of things he said, which made me know that he was gay. But then again, it was oh, you were supposed to still be circumspect. It was don't ask, don't tell, but it was a little more open, but it was still very circumspect. We were all living pious lives in the eyes of the world. You know, you weren't gay, and you had to be very careful, because you obviously interacted with a lot of heterosexual people, and they weren't to think that you were a queer priest, or if they did, you were at least enough closeted that if they suspected it, no one would ever dare to say anything like that to your face. It was still the age of priests are always respected. And even if they think there's something a little odd about them, it is never discussed.

And if it is, it's never amongst the clergy. In other words, laity would never come and say, "Well, we think there's something a little delicate or strange," no, "about Father Robert." That was in the days when that was still unthinkable.

J. Gordon M: So by the time you landed in Manhattan, and you're with a life partner, essentially, and you've made contacts with other-

Robert C: I had outlets through all those years. Yes. Until I settled with John. I never denied my being gay. And that was the thing. It was the forced hypocrisy of one's life all the time. You were expected to be this pious, loving, holding hands together priest. And you weren't expected to break wind, let alone be anything else. But if you loved the work, and loved the Eucharist, and liked people, you made accommodation. And of course, if anyone were gay and came to me, I would never do the hurtful thing of a façade that would harm someone gay. Never. I mean, I would walk away from the priesthood or its function immediately if that ever happened. And fortunately, anyone who ever came to me under seal of confession, I never, to my knowledge, harmed or hurt anyone. I couldn't. And I

would never do this thing of, “you evil sinner” business.

Impossible_ I would try to engage, if you want, if not indepth counseling, engage and encourage people to accept themselves and a wider view of God’s love. Never any of that narrowness and walls closing in. If I had to live with that, no one else should ever have to live with it. And I would not inflict it upon anyone. You can see my feelings are very strong about that. The church has no right to harm and destroy people as it has, and does, unhappily, to this day.

J. Gordon M: At this time, being in the ‘60s, were you aware of other, of the Old Catholic bishops who were gay?

Robert C: I could tell that many of them were, even if it wasn’t discussed directly. As a priest, bishops I would meet, many of them, I figured, were gay. But it’s not the old story that you always know one by one, but there are kind of signals and feelings of the way people want to live their life that you know they’re gay, even though it may never have been mentioned. And I met many bishops and

clergy in the Old Catholic movement who were gay, and I think it was good and it was bad. Because many of them were, not just because they were gay, but they were unstable in their formation into the priesthood. And that made all this internal nastiness or busy-ness, intemperateness within the structures of the churches. But it was a good place for them, because they were rejected by rigorous Rome and the others, especially established churches back then. For anyone of a liturgical, sacramental basis, it was a place to go. But then they were often, they found if they didn't realize it, they should have, they were betrayed into the wrong place, and there was no real work for them. And so what they wanted to do for Christ wasn't possible. I was fortunate that to a fair degree, I was working within structures that covered both worlds, or whatever you want, where I could function. But I knew that many of those works were like some of the early work with Bishop Marchenna, it was interacting with other parishes was paper work. And the poor men who were gay who went into that kind of work had nowhere to go. And many of them were unformed or ill-formed spiritually as well as educationally sometimes, for the work of the priesthood. So I'm not trying to be vain. I was just fortunate

that what I did related me to people, to structure, to form and substance. And to develop being more and more a spirituality, a living spiritual presence, through the Holy Spirit within myself. So that by the time Stonewall arrived, not only the battering, but the good things, the internal development, the seeing of the vision of God's people, the vision of the kingdom of heaven on earth may have problems, but its potential, and it can be given to the individual, and hopefully spread into society. I was ready for what happened, I feel now. I was prepared, hopefully, within my heart and my capabilities, whatever they are, from that day to this, for what happened with Stonewall. It was, to me, a ringing message of freedom for GLBT people, as we would say today. We used to say gay or gay/lesbian. But GLBT for a wide community, and for an interaction with the heterosexual world. Yes. But the freedom that occurred at that point freed me from the falseness or the limitedness of what had gone before. But what had gone before, I hoped, prepared me for something great to come. And in the heart, if no other way. greatness did come. As they say, it's thrust upon you. I hope I'm not vain in saying that. There was a period of greatness in the world, and for GLBT people thrust on us, and I was

happy to grab hold of it.

J. Gordon M: Okay. Well, let's go back. You've got this small parish that has just formed.

Robert C: Right.

J. Gordon M: So how did it develop?

Robert C: It was just, you know, the things that people of gay background who were unhappy with established parishes, some heterosexual people who found the strictures of establishment church difficult to deal with, as they still do to this day. They get into problems over divorce, over birth control, abortion, all sorts of things. And the church had even more restrictions, I swear, in those days. It was, "Don't breathe other than the way we tell you." So yes, there was the forming of a nice little parish. Nice people who became engrafted into the big Beloved Disciple when it first formed. In fact, we wouldn't have been able to achieve what we did within the first year after Stonewall if it hadn't been for those loyal, solid, great

people. And most of them were gay. But I would not want to disparage the heterosexual people who helped establish that first parish. But my God what they did_ Maybe it was when I saw the vision, they saw it. Maybe they felt the energy that came out of seeing, because Stonewall, I keep going on. It was like, bang_ Something incredible happened, and it affected the whole world as one knew it. And so therefore, it affected the religious world. And it was ready for a reformation, a new reformation, a transformation within the religious sphere. It happened, and I'm glad it's still with us today.

J. Gordon M: So how did the parish react to Stonewall?

Robert C: The interesting thing was as, when Stonewall happened, it was very interesting; literally as it happened. Because I was living the equivalent of walking from here down to that park on Hollywood Boulevard, from where it took place, the Stonewall Inn. Of course, I'd been in and out of those bars. I just didn't happen to be at the Stonewall at that point. But I didn't mind, and my parishioners

wouldn't have minded. No one ever minded if I went into a bar or not. I wasn't wearing clerical. What I'm saying is, I got around in the community. I would visit anything and everywhere that impinged or was related to anything. I'll have to keep saying GLBT, so everyone understands I'm trying to be inclusive in the phraseology, which is later than what it was back then. Because we just called it the gay community, or sometimes the gay and lesbian community. But anyway, one was part of this, and part of the world. And I went to theater that was interested in GLBT themes. You had friends, obviously much of my life interacted, both religiously and secularly on that level. I was happy to be there. I hated the restrictions, and I hated being a criminal. Because you must realize, before Stonewall, and I'm sure you do, which rankled almost worse than not being able to be honest at all times in the church, was in our society what rankled was that I was a criminal. We were all criminals_ We were outside the law, and the law was specifically written against us, and we were unwelcome and unwanted in our society. And we could be tapped by the police or others very easily. And be accused openly of being a criminal for being gay; for being anything GLBT. I mean, the laws that were on

the books. And that was what I disliked so much, and what was so marvelous when Stonewall happened. Because from that day, even though the laws weren't changed, we were proud. We were truly proud, in the best sense of that term. As I say, I lived so close to the Stonewall Inn. And I missed the first night. The second night, not even realizing that the full revolution was underway, because the second night was oddly enough the day it broke out to everyone, the second night when they withstood the police with the high kicks and all, and it was such a nice mixed group of everyone, including the poor street kids, the put-upon transvestites, transsexuals, and just everyone who was poor, and ordinary people, and lesbians and all were there. It was such great mixture. And the oddest thing happened, walking up Fourth Street, because it was at Christopher. I don't know if you know the structure of it there on the little park. Well, from the park I was walking up Fourth Street, going north toward Christopher. And we were told all this hubbub was going on. And John, he was just my lover John at the time, walked over to see what was happening. And being in the back of the crowd, he didn't fully understand. But he was near the second day of the riots. And he came back to me and said,

“There’s a big carry-on going on.” And I didn’t realize myself. I was that close to the second day, and I kept walking up Fourth Street because then we lived at Fourth and Bank. But was that close to being actually present. But I can tell you, within a day or so, I don’t know how to explain this to young people, and even some older people who weren’t exposed to it at the time: the world had changed_ We were energized. We were alive. And we knew, all of us, because it was a community of people, we were burning with fire. We would never, ever go back to the way it was. Never. It was a, wow, talk about a time to be alive.

J. Gordon M: I understand your frustration at communicating it. I was in Birmingham for the King riots.

Robert C: Yes.

J. Gordon M: I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama. I was in college when the demonstrations that King ran. And trying to explain that now to college students is—

Robert C: Right.

J. Gordon M: –a pretty difficult task.

Robert C: Yeah, and it was. It was like everyone you met, because all that area was full of gay people, and you knew so many of them, it was like we just communicated from each other to each other that we were, the world was marvelous_ We could do anything. That's why all of the organizations sprang up. Even when we thought we were happy, because over a period of months some one go this way, and some that way. But there was never really in that earlier period, belligerence. There was disagreement. And I would be meeting with all kinds of people, all kinds of attitudes. No, we wanted to do this, the community, we should go there, we should [inaudible]. It was electric; truly electric. We could do, we felt, anything. We were no longer bound down. And we knew the laws would change. They had to, because we were free. We were free, and we were never going to be slaves– well, that isn't the word I mean. We were never going to be without our freedom again. We couldn't go back

to being beyond the law, beyond the pale. No one could make us beyond the pale, beyond law, ever again. We had arrived, we were, we are here. It was a marvelous time to see all the things that developed, all that grew up, all that was going on. Organizations that no longer exist, but did then. Gay Activists Alliance. All kinds of things. I'd have to go over the lists of organizations at the time. The women's groups. And it was just marvelous, because the, what is now called, it was usually just drag queens and transvestites was the reference, but now it's transsexual and a wider group meaning. But all of that came to us. Boy, did it come to us right away. And even though we weren't fully formed into the full parish structure, I was the only real clergyman walking around. And people knew I was a priest. And so right away, "What are you going to do about us? Where do we fit in? And if we're the noisy ones and so on, do you accept us?" You know, all together, and even though this took just over a year, in all that time we planned. And the people from the original parish, they were the workhorses. Oh, man, did they do everything_ They were the ones who made it possible for us to have, within what you would call it liturgical study, they made it possible for us to be able to have a choir to begin with, to have

acolytes. To have people who would do the donkey work. I mean, organizing a parish, the first one of its kind, as far as we knew, conflict worked. In history, because the work that Bishop Hyde had done had been so long before in 1946, Eucharistic Catholic Church. But we knew of him. And you know, those mentions in one magazine, and so on. But that had been a separate work. And it was no longer, I mean, it existed, but he was doing other work within orthodoxy and so on, so that parish didn't exist. And it had started, oddly enough, in Atlanta. So we had nothing to work with except in knowing that in the near past, in the '40s or '50s, there had been a parish in Atlanta. That's good to know when you have nothing, when there was no way to know how to create anything. It had to go back to what was my background in these Catholic type of parishes and the work I was doing, and our own people. And we had-

J. Gordon M: The work in San Francisco had not developed yet.

Robert C: No.

J.. Gordon M:Perry was still-

Robert C: Well, no, he was fairly active by now in, I think he was quite active in Los Angeles. But there was no connection. We knew of him. And I believe he started his parish in his home in '68 or '69, like we did. I believe it was '68. But I'm sure whatever he started then was like what we had in New York. We had a basic little Beloved Disciple. But I didn't know how soon they exploded, but we exploded with Stonewall. I mean, it was paint on the walls, whatever you want to call it. We exploded, and that parish was there for the full formal work one year later, to let the world know. Because I had to put together a context of what it was about, what it meant, and how accepting we were of our brothers and sisters, that something existed. Because at that time, they had nowhere to go. There was no such thing as an open affirming parish of any sort. Not even the Episcopalians or the Unitarian Universalists knew of it. We were new on the scene. So to meet that need, there was going to have to be a religious structure. And in that year, people gave money for the things we needed. I gave of my resources. John gave deeply of his. And what I had from my secular work, which was substantial

in television. Everything poured into how are we going to have a parish, and how to do it. We did contact Holy Apostles Episcopal Church, on Twenty-Eighth Street and Ninth Avenue. It's still there. It's an historic one, going back to the early 1800s. We had this very, and the priest there was willing. I don't know how much of this I should say for the record. Already it was a traditional parish that was, to put it rather succinctly, dying away. They had a very small congregation. I guess father's more willing sometimes to do this—they could use our money.

J. Gordon M: Oh, I know the story.

Robert C: So this was a very dying congregation. They had an orthodox group meeting at twelve o'clock on Sunday. They had their own service early in a parish that was having problems. And we paid very highly, frankly. We paid a lot of money, a very good fee, to be able to have our service at two o'clock in the afternoon, the nearest time we could work out. And so we had an arrangement with the Episcopal Church that we would have our Church of the Beloved Disciple. And eventually we even had our own sign out, Church of the Beloved Disciple, for our service, our mass, at two o'clock in the

afternoon on Sunday. And it took us that arrangement to find a church that would have time where we could come in, which they did. And they were close enough, just being in the upper part of Chelsea. We couldn't do it with the other Episcopal Church--St. John's, and the other one nearby in the Village. They weren't open to us. So we found the one church nearest to us that we could use, which was Holy Apostles. And we did so. And people poured their time, their finances, their effort. They did yeoman work. And it took us about a year, and we thought, well, fine. We have our little parish. It's growing. It even grew then, because people came to it and asked about it and wanted to know what, "Who's going to serve us?" is what they were saying. Because there was nowhere else for anyone to go. They weren't welcome in the local Presbyterian, Methodist, Roman Catholic, or Baptist or other church. They were still pariahs. But now they were proud and accepting of themselves, and wanted a clear vision for the future. So we worked hard.

J. Gordon M: The year after you were formed, how many people were you having come?

Robert C: Oh, we were still fairly small, because we were meeting almost like a home church, and working on how to have a larger church. And let people know that we existed, and what we had to say. So we were still, I don't know, we were only twenty or thirty or so, because when I think back to how many people worked that we would consider Beloved Disciple on establishing this parish that we wanted to work with and make into a great reality beyond just the name and a small group of people who loved what we were doing, I would say, at the most, in those early years, with help, and one thing and another, in that first year after Stonewall itself, which was '69, June, '69, that year we never functioned with more than thirty to forty people.

Adrian R: Before the parade?

Robert C: We're talking before the parade. And then, on June, 1970, I believe, was the first— and we didn't call it a parade then, which is interesting. We called it a march. It was called a march first. And we had no idea what would happen. So do you want to hear what happened on that first march?

J. Gordon M: Yes.

Robert C: At that point– go ahead.

J. Gordon M: By march, you mean [both talking] Yeah, right. They march is something that we will later know as the gay pride parade.

Robert C: Exactly. It is the beginning of gay pride parade, the whole gay pride thing. They were starting to use the term “gay pride.” But it hadn’t fully gelled. Some may have called it the gay pride march. I knew it as just, it was the gay march. And it meant lesbians and everyone. That we were going to march from the Village, up Sixth Avenue, to the sheep meadow in Central Park. And no one better ever bother us. And if we have to have a permit or not, which I don’t think we could get, there are common phrases for, “Don’t bother us. We’re going_ You try and stop us. We don’t care if it’s the police or anyone else. We’ll do just what happened on the night of the Stonewalls. We’re out there. We’re going. You hear us? We’re going_” so that morning, we figured we’d start around, what was it, ten or eleven. And on the streets in the Village, Christopher

Street, which was very convenient into going, as you know, we were going to pass Stonewall, which was absolutely important, and over to Sixth Avenue. And we did_ And I would figure when we started, we may have had about three thousand people. And we were enthusiastic, because we had no idea how many people were going to show up for that march, that walk, from the Village to Central Park.

[End Tape One, Side B. Begin Tape Two, Side A.]

Robert C: –want to run in again, and they knew, as the whole city did, right back to Mayor Lindsay, that the whole aspect of the gay concepts, whatever you want to call it, in New York City, had changed drastically by then. I mean, they knew this was something they were all going to have to look at socially and politically. These people had changed. They were on the march. They were active. They were going to be a force to be reckoned with in New York City, so you better be careful not to antagonize them, I'm sure, and see how the weather goes. And so we started with our three thousand people. And by the time we got to the Sheep Meadow,

going up Sixth Avenue with people who'd heard about it, and I didn't know what publicity there was in the *Times* and elsewhere or not. But people knew, and they were on the sidewalks. By the time we got to Central Park, from the people on the street who were watching this revolutionary march, from three thousand, we must have been at least ten thousand people by the time that march ended and we went into the park. Now my part in that march is very, you may find very interesting. The press came out for coverage, obviously, because they soon got word, well, they knew there was going to be a march. But that's why they didn't have CBS and ABC and the rest of them with the famous thing they do now with all the TV stuff. But they were covering it, people were covering it. And they were snapping pictures, and reporters with microphones in your face and so on. And I don't know how much of it was covered in video at that time, because video was different. Most things were still, they were still pretty much doing film and not tape, and so on. However, it was covered to some degree. But they covered three things in that march. I don't know if you can guess what they were. What they covered was the size of the march, the great mass of people. The second thing was the drag

queens, because that would promote interest. And guess what was number three? Me_ And why was I number three? Because I chose to wear a cassock. I was a priest in a recognizable black cassock carrying a sign (which we still have, I hope it's not gone missing), over my shoulder, which had, it was made by John, my lover. And the sign that I was carrying had on it, the Holy Ghost descending onto the people. And it said, "Gay people, this is your church." And it was just, "Gay people, this is your church," with the Holy Ghost descending. And that's what I was carrying. And John in a leather carrier, we had printed up five hundred, I don't know if there were more than that; it could have been a thousand, but maybe as low as five, six hundred leaflets. And they were, you know, today people will throw anything away, if you give them a leaflet that doesn't catch their attention in three lines. That wasn't true that day. Our leaflets, we put them on colored paper. I don't know, especially orange, but a bunch of colors. And I'll have to find one someday for you, for archives. And it described the church, what we were, and when we were having the first service. And John handed these out to people along the way, and in the park. And that wasn't that very many when you considered the

incredible thousands of people. And most of what people do is look at something and throw it away. Well apparently they didn't throw these away. I was amazed to this very day. They were handed out. They told what the church was, being a gay organization, GLBT and so on, with a little bit of what we were, and when the very first service would occur. Which I think Gay Pride was the seventeenth of June, and we set our first service for July nineteenth, 1970, telling people who we were, what it was, and where we were. And we were to begin on two p.m. on July nineteenth at the location, which was Twenty-Eighth Street and Ninth Avenue, for people to come. Now as I say, we knew that we would get some response because we would have our own, well, a lot of our people were in the choir, and so on. But we would get a handful, plus the people who were working. And so we prepared the church very readily. Beautiful flowers. We had hired an organist, a gay man. And we had had the trained choir, we had trained the people to carry our, not this cross, but is the other one around somewhere? Or still in the end of the chapel, hidden? The other processional-

Adrian R: Oh, it's in the chapel over there.

Robert C: But that was the one at the altar. We put that in front of the Episcopal cross, because that's our own. It was done by a now dead man, Robbie Robbins, who did masterful work. His carvings. He was, unfortunately, St. Joseph's Church in Greenwich Village, all of his work was ripped out after Vatican II and so on, but even though this was later, we knew that he was a great artist. And he did that for us. And he lived that would be in, more in three dimension. But the processional cross is marvelous. And he'd done the Roman Catholic chapel at West Point. NY Army Corps, and so on. So he was a very good man. And we had our own, as you can see, the very cross we used that day, this risen Christ, the triumphal Christ crucifix, and the other, which we had for the procession. We had all of our own things, our own candles, we still have those very candlesticks. So we were set to be a liturgical thing. From a Catholic background, that's what we would do: an apostolic and sacramental system. But everyone was welcome. And we were

going to preach an open message of God's love and acceptance by Jesus. And unhappily, the first three weeks of my preaching, we had on a system at the time, a recording system, which was stolen. Some people broke into the church at a later date. I don't think it was intentional. They just happened to find a nice audio recording system and took it. So that was unfortunate. So I can't tell you what the very first sermon was, excepting you can imagine, I can feel it to this day. And the sense of acceptance and the welcoming was what it was all about, even though I can't give you the exact words. That was the thrust of it. And it must have been responded to very positively. So what happened was that day we still worried about, especially the far right fundamentalists who could still be physically vicious or active, not just verbally. And we thought oh, boy, imagine if someone comes asking people to come to the church, and there's violence. So what we did is rather, I think, amusing. [laughs] We got a hold of some of our leather boy friends. Because we had wide connections in all areas. And we asked a few of them in particular to stand outside in case, this is simple, anyone might come to offer violence. It never happened. But it was so nice. Because one or two of them showed up on motorcycles, and they

were outside in their leathers. Which was so genuinely kind from the Leather-Levi community. Just nice. Again, but they felt welcomed. Everyone felt welcome. And the interesting thing about all this, we had planned this whole lovely service. In fact, the very set of vestments. I'll show you. They had to have two things put back on them. We didn't use the ones that Father Leo created later. This set, if you can just look around here, has gold thread in it. This is the actual first set. And we have to rework the yoke. But that was the first set used in our ministry to the gay, the GLBT community. We still have it. And we chose it because it was created by Native Americans as an attempt to give them an industry. And someone we knew had been involved, and was trying to get, for the Southwest Indians, a weaving and making things. And that was one of the vestment sets they made. We purchased it. And we were very unhappy because in the Catholic Church, they didn't sell. These poor Indians striving hard to create these beautiful things. And eventually they sold them as like house robes, or what is the things women used to wear? Men, too, around the hippier times. Caftans_ They sold them as kind of caftans, robes. But we were fortunate to have that one. And that's the one for the first, for our

first service. But we'd done everything that we could to create what we hope would be, we chose all the hymns carefully, "The King of Love, My Shepherd Is," and so on. But it's interesting. It was about a quarter to two, and we looked into the church and we said oh, it is going to be ourselves. Can you imagine, at a quarter to two, there was virtually no one there? One or two people. We thought well, okay, the people didn't read or didn't respond to the fliers. And we'll have our lovely service that we planned. And we'll have our own people and a few more. That's nice. That will work. Well, that was at 1:45 it seemed like there was no great appeal. Two o'clock, we opened the side sacristy door for our procession. We couldn't believe it. It wasn't just that every seat in the church was filled, the aisles were packed_ That church, which would hold maybe six hundred plus in a squeeze, had over eight hundred people in it_ They say six hundred. We know, with the squeeze. And we don't know how many people were turned away that day who couldn't get in. It was just phenomenal_ And the only thing, we had a slight problem. Because we had planned our procession, not just to go right to the altar, but to go into the back of the church and to come forward. And it was very amusing to watch, because

that's what happened. We had our procession go down to the rear of the church in this mass of people, and come back again to the altar with the music that we'd planned. But it was lovely.

Everything looked fine, because people had given us so much money that everyone was vested and looking really good. And we'd bought the crosses and so on, cause they were newly purchased. It was, but like I say, I couldn't believe what happened.

I'm thinking, what is the joke, we gave a party and no one came.

Well, we gave a service and no one came. And all of a sudden, they overwhelmed us. Absolute overwhelming. And that's why it was a large parish from then on. But, before people began to go back to, when they got more understanding from established churches, a number of them did want to go home. I mean, it's regretful, but it's understandable. They weren't out to lead a revolution forever. But they were so glad with what we had to offer, it was just amazing_

And we had a reception in the hall thereafter, and it was just hundreds and hundreds of people. But what we had was so interesting. Because we had all the Protestants, the Orthodox, the Catholics. There was no one else. And on top of it all, you had, the most incredible thing, we had Jewish people, a lot of them. Because

they wanted a home. Even though it was Christian, people were seeking God, they were seeking a relationship to the divine, and they would come to us because everyone else had rejected or turned them away. They had nowhere to go. That's why it was two years before MCC came, and before people began to find some slight acceptance, first in the Episcopal Church, and then in others. But nonetheless, it continued on as a vibrant, viable parish for a very long time.

J. Gordon M: So how did Bishop Hyde get mixed up in this mix?

Robert C: Well, mostly out of friendship, and asking him to come to preach once. Because even then, though we were all around the same age, he was the sage. He was the person to ask, with the experience. And he had done what he'd done in 1946 and had an open, active ministry to GLBT people. So it was only natural. One year we invited Troy Perry, with an amusing aside. In that same big

building, well, Troy came twice. He came to preach, which was marvelous. And the joke of it was, because that church had an alarm system. And just as he was coming forward to preach, the alarm system went off. And we joked about that being, he joked about it being his greeting, and so on. And so when I went to preach out here, one of their earlier churches downtown, I said, "Well, I was a little disappointed that Troy came to our church and this alarm went off and it was all this great welcome. I've come here, but where's the earthquake?" Anyway, he came for that. And also, Troy performed John's and my holy union, you know. And even by that time, holy unions were not acceptable in the Episcopal Church. So their bishop asked us not to have the holy union in the church. So we still had negative input, including from the Episcopalians. Oh, no, you really couldn't have the holy union in the church. So we went to a theater which had a lot of gay connections, called the Performing Garage. And we literally transformed it into a church; in other words, a liturgical setting so that John and I would have our holy union, which was performed by Troy at, in a very religious, well, what I would call religious atmosphere. But anyway, it looked for what it's worth, it looked

churchlike. Because we wanted to, since we couldn't use the church building itself, we had connection with the Mass there, but we couldn't have the holy union there. But we, you know, we adapted to it. Because we knew the world hadn't changed that much yet. It was only a couple of years. So the Episcopalians had some growing up to do, too. But they knew these things were going on. But before very long, the amusing, interesting thing was, they were allowing us to have holy union, but they didn't want it between a clergyman and his lover. And John had now entered into what we call the basic clerical estate, the studying estate. And that's where he was. He was studying. Because it seemed good for him to go into the priesthood. And he had such a marvelous mind for ecclesiastical spiritual matters. Astounding. He was always streets ahead of me. I mean, I had all this background and training, and I would struggle to get to a religious, say, conclusion or a point. And I discussed it with him like this great thing that I had arrived at. Not unkindly, but he would have already been there and known what had wracked me, he had already worked out. It was a beautiful thing, very often. When I first really struggled with transcendentalism. For me, it was a big thing when it was looked at not just as a simple

term we use in the church, but like a movement concept. How to look at it in quite a different way. Because I had very, very old-fashioned ideas of all these things, and that was a bit hippie, transcendentalism and so on. So I struggled with it, struggled with it. Got it organized positively in my life. And then went to talk with my great revelation, I found, see a kind of light again, this is just marvelous— and he would laugh at me. He certainly didn't find it a great revelation, and he had arrived at all this long ago, so to speak. And was only happy that he hadn't been able, because our missed communication, to help guide me to where I wanted to go. It was that kind of sweet, beautiful things that happened. I don't know how I— oh, it was just that, the union, but they didn't want that between myself and a cleric. But then we had other holy unions there. And they were, of course, that's where the holy unions began. We, John and I, in the very first month, that July towards August, 1970, coined the term "holy union." It was our doing, because we didn't know how we would do about "holy matrimony." And we were conflicted at the time, and thought well, we must come up with something beautiful for our people. And we didn't think it was quite the best, the very best we would come up

with was holy union, and that's what we called it. The people still wanted to be married, and we kept saying, "Look, marriage isn't succeeding very well among straight people. Are you sure you want that term? And we can't do that legally." But we considered, we always considered it the equivalent of marriage spiritually. So we would always have a problem. And we never got too upset when people spoke of gay marriage. We said, "We really use the term holy union." Of course, today I'm in favor of the whole marriage concept. But back then, as I say, we started having holy unions right off. Even in the church, long before John and I had ours, which they forbade. But the others were allowed. And there are pictures in the *Post*, the *New York Post*, at the time, because some of them looked so quaint to them, of these gay people being married. And they always called it marriage. They would use "holy union" to some degree, but they liked "marriage" because it caused controversy anyway. But they, we had, our biggest problem was how did we look at holy union, and how would we look at it today? There are changes that we can talk about holy union or not, and the system later on, if you want. But as I say, they had all these pictures. And then, what if the *New York Post* choose, how

photographers get a weird pose. So they had John's and my holy union, and what pictures did they choose? One where a friend is looking on in a very funny way, like oh, is this really happening? That kind of, not snide, but they'd choose the least attractive, or the one that's going to tweak interest and so on, when you get to the press. But I lived through a lot of that. In fact, that very first day was so interesting, because when we had the first march and I became the center of interest because I'm a priest and carrying this sign, I think if I were photographed once, I was photographed a thousand times by people with their cameras. I said, "I wonder if this is how Elizabeth Taylor feels?" It was fascinating. And people did come up with, and I don't know if it got out on any talk radio, asking questions. I probably gave forthright answers. Mostly, without trying to be belligerent, but I find it, "We're here, we're queer, and that's it," like they said later on. So we weren't mincing words for anyone. And that was the first day of the church, and how the work went thereafter. And the fascinating things that happened.

J. Gordon M: So as I understand it—

Robert C: But I just want to say one thing. It was a very quiet ceremony. But our first holy union was between a transsexual from woman to man, and a woman. The world may not know that, but that's what it was. It was a female to male and female.

J. Gordon M: So Bishop Hyde came to visit, and then you developed a relationship. And as I understand it—

Robert C: Well, remember, I'd known him over the years; I had met him in passing. Oh, no, it wasn't the first I knew him. We had met at various Old Catholic things over the years. And he was friendly with Marchenna, became friendly with me. And that's how we developed an earlier friendship. And that's why when we developed the open ministry, he wanted it to continue. And that's why we are still Eucharistic Catholic as well as American Catholic. That was with his approval and his grace in giving it to us. He gave us both. And that's why we had in common. As Troy Perry came, we got sidetracked with Troy also doing a holy union for John and

myself. But we had Hyde come, Bishop Hyde, because he was such an important figure, and our people should hear him. And they did. And as I say, he also came as co-consecrator for John. But it was often very difficult for him to travel because of his medical condition. So one didn't put great pressures on him. But he honored us twice despite the illness. He couldn't come for my consecration. So in the end, oddly enough, it was because I'd healed the wounds with Bishop Marchenna, that he and Bishop Williams came. But we couldn't get anyone else to consecrate me. We tried all over. And I don't know how many even supposed gay Old Catholics, they wanted no part. They were still hiding. There was no Stonewall yet. So most all of the Old Catholics, except for Hyde, who had gone into a quieter work, they were all, they weren't going to have any part of any gay queer work. No way, even if they were. They were all in their closets, primarily. And we tried everywhere to find a consecrator for me. We even went to straight places to see if any of them were, unbelievably, if they would be open—Orthodox and others. We couldn't get a person to touch me. But even the one who was in the South who was fairly open, we thought might. No. So because of the repaired friendship

though I was no part of the Old Roman Catholic Church, and hadn't been for ten years or more, Archbishop Marchenna, to his honor and to our great appreciation, agreed to consecrate me with Bishop Williams. And there was a third one invited from Los Angeles, whom you know, but he chickened out. I think some people out here or someone said, "You better stay away from something gay, lesbian," and so on. So the third, because traditionally you usually have a consecrator and two co-consecrators, if possible. Though the whole Old Catholic Church has, as you know, only one [inaudible]. So anyway, we had arranged that. But the one from Los Angeles just didn't come. And the same thing happened with Bishop John's consecration, that we couldn't get a third. Because by then, our connection with, I guess we're talking a number of years later, anyway, Archbishop Marchenna had gone off to something else. We weren't in connection with Bishop Martin Williams. So when it came time for John's consecration, it seemed a very good thing to find if Bishop Hyde could come this time. And his medical condition was such that he could. And he had invited another bishop who shall remain nameless, who backed out at the last minute as well, because he

was afraid that there would be national publicity, and he was a chaplain for the American Legion, and he didn't want anyone to know this in case the people in the city where he lived, you know, if there was any publicity. So from someone who was supposed to be openly gay, he suddenly became very closeted. So it was Archbishop Hyde and myself consecrating John.

J. Gordon M: So when were you consecrated?

Robert C: I was consecrated, what was it—

Adrian R: October the sixth, 1974.

Robert C: Right.

Adrian R: Assisted by Martin Luther Williams; by Richard A. Marchenna.

Robert C: Right. That's all recorded in history. Heavens, in a lot of places.

Adrian R: It was televised.

Robert C: Right. The amusing thing about, when I mentioned Bishop Jielinski was, after I was on my own in founding this first Beloved Disciple parish, away from anyone else, the American Orthodox churches of means, and oddly enough, the subtitle American Catholic, differentiating from Lashley's work, when it became known and became all over the country known of this work, that's when the PNs and all tried to make me, like the Soviets used to, a non-person. They were very upset when CBS asked them about me. Of course, the simple answer was that I was no longer was a priest within their jurisdiction. It's as simple as that. But in that day and age, they got very upset, and wanted to-

J. Gordon M: So you were never a Polish National priest? Is that what they were saying?

Robert C: Yeah, they tried to say I never was, and we don't know this man, because he never existed, it was all this and that. So despite all the publicity, and all the things that still exist to prove I was in the

PNCC church, they wanted to say no. And I learned some of the stories, which is what was so amusing. The story was going around, it was so outrageous to make one a non-person. What they were saying, they didn't know me, was that I had come to Scranton to the clericist, to the bishop's offices. And I had broken in and stolen a ordination certificate. Which is absolutely fascinating. So fine, so you're going to create this weird story. Well, you can see what's wrong there. I wasn't ordained by Bishop Grohowski. I was ordained by Jielinski in my own parish. But they didn't get their story right. I had stolen these things from Grohowski, from the central diocese, from the curia. And all this snatching occurred that I got into this place and found these documents. And I presume I'm supposed to forge Grohowski's signature on my ordination certificate, which, of course, isn't there? I don't know what the whole story was about. So, anyway, there came a period with that, and I said, "Look, I was not a functioning priest. I had been a priest. I was never excommunicated. I was never, what is the term? Deposed or any such thing. I became an inactive priest. They did nothing about it for those years. No one ever came and said, 'Boo, yes or no.' No one gave me any documentation of where I stood or

any such thing. Okay, I'm gone." It was fine by me. But I, of course, had my ordination certificate. And somewhere along the way in these early stages, I received from the Deanery of New Jersey, New York, but primarily New Jersey, a request to see my ordination certificate. I said, "Fine, come right ahead, you may see it happily. You can come to our office." And he said, "Yes, I want to bring two other priests with me. We would like to see it. We're a little confused. We're not sure of what's on it, of what its dates. We want to be sure it's correct." I said, "Fine. Come ahead." Now once again, the jolly thing we did, we had one of our big leather boys in our office with us. A gorgeous man. But a very big, hulking man, standing in the back room. What we did was a big, heavy glass was placed over the certificate, on the desk. I thought, you know, they're apt to do something crazy. I just, considering what's happened over the years with weird things, I'll just have someone look like, don't fool around, I don't know who these priests are coming. But you're certainly not going to touch the document. And there it was laid out for them. I said, "Now you've seen it. I trust it meets with your approval with what you want." And there was mumbling, yes, and yes, and yes. And about three weeks later, the

monsignor, the senior priest called and said, "Would you read off the one seal and so on to me?" And I said yes, I had it, read it off. And he said, "All right, thank you." And that was the end of all that. And I still have it, of course. It's a vital document. But they were so upset. But they couldn't even get their stories straight to make me a non-priest or a non-person. [laughs] Delicious things, if you want to call it that, I would call it that, happen in the priesthood.

J. Gordon M: How long did you remain in the parish in New York?

Robert C: Oh, for quite some time, of course. Because it was a very, we moved once, from the Episcopalians, because the parish priest—may I use a blunt term? Was poaching on our property. Literally. We were paying a lot of money to be there. And for that, we got a little office and our storage space was the old fire loft, which they weren't using. So we could keep things there. And a little office. And we would have to take our things in and out on Sunday into their vestry or sacristy, and that was it. And there came a time when we discovered that people attached to us were being wooed away by them.

J. Gordon M: Sheep stealing.

Robert C: Yeah. And especially, it's another involved story, I don't know to what degree. We pounded that religious order, the [inaudible] Companions of St. John. But I worry about talking any further, because I might...what is it?—could be sued for when it's spoken?

J. Gordon M: Slander.

Robert C: Slander. So let me only say, without going into detail, may it be here after my death, if necessary, that in the founding of that order, some irregular things happened. And they did happen from, unfortunately, the Episcopal church mixing into our parochial and the affairs of the religious order. So we had troubles. And we finally said, well, this can't go on. It's just not possible, and we will separate. Because some of the people who had separated from us for their own reasons had an axe to grind from the Episcopal

church towards us. And it was just, they had become untenable. This was a great, lovely parish. But we also had our offices on Christopher Street, in the Village, which was very helpful, but it wasn't the total center. And we made arrangements with the Moravian Church across town. And we told the Episcopal church, with suitable notice, that we were leaving. And what was so interesting was that they said, "Oh, well perhaps you'd like to find some other Episcopal church to go to." And we thought oh, that's very nice. And there was a local dean and so on. And we'll have talks with them. This was actually before we had a full settlement with the Moravians. So, okay, we'll see if there's not another Episcopal church. There was a very famous one downtown, historic one. And then there was another one in midtown where the dean was, and all sorts of parishes. And we thought well, what has happened, even though we're having problems with them, how nice this sounds, we'll have a sit-down talk with four or five parishes about somewhere to go. And it took a little while to organize. That's fine. That's sheep to the slaughter. Went to this meeting and who comes out to chair the meeting, but the priest from the parish we're leaving_ We didn't know this_ How are we

going to not talk about him, but talk sensibly to someone who's poisoned against us? You know, it's very happy in the end, we're leaving because he's mixing into our affairs. You know what he proposed at one point around this time? We were supposed to be able, if we wanted to, to have service in the evening as well. And we finally decided we'd have two services. We'll have the two o'clock service, and we'll have our evening service, which is allowed. And he said, "Oh, no, you can't do that. Oh, no, no, no. Not anymore. MCC wants to come from the Episcopal church uptown down to our church." Now we knew something was going on. "You can't do that. You can't have this service." So he was getting MCC in there without telling us. And that's why we couldn't have, because they were going to have an evening service, and they were going to come to his parish. And "wouldn't it be nice, we'll have the three parishes together." And I don't care if the man hears of this and says I'm slandering him, this is what it was: MCC is new and they're organizing. They were relatively new, I don't know how long they were at St. Clement's before they made the change. I knew their pastor, a very nice young man, Wells, I believe it was Pastor Wells. But they wanted to come down to Holy

Apostles. Probably they were growing, I don't know. I think St. Clement's was fairly small. Whatever. I didn't know their internal affairs, and didn't want to. Cause I hoped they didn't know mine. [inaudible] They wanted to come, apparently, and we didn't know this. And so not only weren't they coming, but that was when we discovered that there was all this internal thing with the Episcopal church sheep stealing from us, and literally messing into the affairs of our religious order here. It was very awkward and difficult. So we went to this meeting expecting an informal discussion, but not going to be chaired by someone whose parish we were leaving. So it did get nowhere. Where could it go? And that's why we went to the Moravians instead of to another Episcopal church. So we went to the Moravians, and it was fine, except that it was twenty times more work on Sundays because they were a staid, old-fashioned Protestant church with what were almost thrones for the deacons, you know, this whole big thing of big, heavy chairs, and a little communion table down front, and the choir all- it was, to convert that to a liturgical system, which we did, like I don't know where the picture is. The wall behind...

Adrian R: Oh, well, we might be able to get it out for you to see. But it's fallen about. It was on our wall until this other came up.

Robert C: So anyway, we would have to transform it every Sunday into a liturgical interior. And it took an hour plus of hard labor of four or five people to convert. We literally would take the big central pulpit and convert it into an altar. It was quite something. But we were there for a fair length of time. And then our problem that happened was some people took, it was a mutual problem. We had a holy union and we said we did not want it to be a whole elaborate wedding at that time. It wasn't something we wanted. Holy union was supposed to be an agreement of two equal people. And of course, we weren't very much into brides and grooms. These people kept saying well they wanted this, they wanted that, and they wanted— and it was turning into a full blown super straight type wedding. I mean, wedding gown, the full wedding gown. The ring bearers. The bridesmaids. The groomsmen. The whole thing. I'm sorry, but at that time, our minds wouldn't go there. And we wouldn't go totally that way today, either. Because travesties we're

always worried about. And we thought this was turning into a travesty wedding. So we said “don’t do this” and “don’t do that.”

And on the Sunday, they did this and they did that. And for the first time such a thing, I put my foot down and said, “No, this can’t be done. That can’t be done. The couple can come in. She can wear the wedding gown, but not the long, trailing veil. We might have the child with the ring, but the bridesmaids, the groomsmen, and all the rest of it, they can be people standing on the side.” But not this elaborate thing that they’d done without even full consultation.

And that was all right. They went through their ceremony. It was very nice. And our holy union ceremony is, I think, very beautiful. It’s crafted, done very nicely. And that was okay. But we were disturbed by this couple. And what we discovered later is our service was close enough to the fact that the Moravians had had an extra long service and a meeting going on, which I didn’t even know about, and what had happened was they, of course, we got there because there were some friendly members on their board.

And how much, I think the pastor knew we were gay, but I don’t know it had ever been explained to him just how...

J. Gordon M: Gay you were.

Robert C: Gay, or we had felt totally open. And they were obviously limited, to a degree. And their pastor was very nice. But I think the communication broke down with their board members and possibly with us not understanding or presuming that everything was okay. But what happened was, when they arrived for this ceremony, it was with great limousines, hired limousines, and the whole thing. And the Moravians came out and saw a wedding ceremony going on, two persons of the same sex, and were just distraught. But they didn't stop us. And we did have the ceremony. But it was shortly thereafter that they felt they couldn't accommodate us, and asked us if we would leave. Which we did. But it's always bad because when you move from one place, right across the city, you lose people, you lose contact. And also, I will tell you something else in reverse. When we left the Episcopal church and went across town, we did not ask for a permit either. We said we're a religious procession, and we're going. And we processed across Twenty-Third Street, they were just below. What we're talking now, going from Ninth Avenue to First or Second,

whatever it was. And we picked up all the holy things and the elements, and did everything. And just processed out of the church onto the streets, went hundreds of people across town on Twenty-Third Street to the new church. But then again, sometimes we'd get very strong about separation of church and state, and not telling us what to do.

[End Tape Two, Side A. Begin Side B.]

Robert C: We discovered that they started having a gay service, a gay-oriented Episcopal service, at two o'clock in the afternoon for people who might come by and not know that we had left. They started a two o'clock Eucharist, Episcopal Eucharist, to hopefully lure in people who didn't know any better. That is going pretty far. And we didn't know this until we had had a priest go over to see if people might be showing up at two, tell them where we were across town. And there they were, having their own GLBT Eucharist at two o'clock in the afternoon. By the way, it failed to

take off. But nonetheless, what attitudes. So we left the Moravians and we went to the West Side Discussion Group. Which, interestingly enough, used to meet in a big kind of open hall in the meat-packing district. The very gay, wild district, which now, from what I'm told in New York, has changed so much that it's one of the most exclusive areas of New York City now. That whole area has gone through not just simple gentrification, but is for the very wealthy, very, very upscale, as they call it. But back then, it was a place where a group like West Side Discussion Group could afford to have meetings. So we had a sub-rental from them for our Sundays for a short period, until we were able to get the building we have, the building that was our own, on Fourteenth Street, just off Ninth Avenue. That became the real parish establishment, legally, whatever you want to call it, structurally became Beloved Disciple, where we were for so many years. And that was a little miracle in itself. Because it came up for sale. I don't know quite who told me. Sorry, I can't remember. '72 to 2007. I don't know if it was one of our board members, or one of the people or something. Anyway, we discovered this was, all of a sudden this building became available. And went to see it. And said, "Oh, wow, this

would be terrific_” It was in a shambles, bad shape. But, you know, it’s like looking, say if you went to a church that was beat up. It wasn’t a church, but it made a superb church. But if you went into a building like a church and it was just, you know, say the altars were beat up, everything looked, you know, there were no lighting, and everything was dangling wires. And just, you know, a mess. But we looked at it and said, “This we can transform into a church. Wow_ We’ve finally come to our own home.” And we had to find out the price. And it was dirt cheap. I mean, I think I may have said earlier, the building is now worth millions. That was the, no, that was the library building that was worth millions. Well, I assure you, this was a building in the end, of comparable type within the same neighborhood. It’s now this incredibly glossy area. Super apartments and all. So that the Beloved Disciple building now, I’m told, by people who are still back there, would be worth millions, for its location and what it is. But we got this building for comparatively little. And the reason we got it was a very old man in his eighties said to his son, who I think was a lawyer, to sell the building. And somehow the man heard about us as a church. And his own son said, “Oh, no, no, no, you don’t want to sell it to them.

You don't want to sell it cheap." And the man said, "I do." And he gave a dirt cheap price, and said to his son, the lawyer, who didn't want to do it, "You sell that building to them_" And that's how we got Beloved Disciple. As I say, I always felt it was like a miracle. Our need was great, and in God's time, there it was. And if someone was, someone for a spiritual reason said this elderly man wanted that building to be a church. So that's how it came about. And over a year or two we did convert it. And, in fact, it was fascinating. Now when we opened, the first floor was in such disarray, it was so bad, I mean, there were just wires hanging and things broken and [inaudible]... The walls had to come out. It was just amazing to get, for this space. But when we started, so the second floor, which later became the parish hall, was the parish. It worked out very nicely. It had a fairly high ceiling. The whole thing had had high ceilings put in when it was turned from a business-business into, as I said, where they did all this repair work and changed it. So you had very high ceilings on the first floor, which made a church. Which had like twenty-foot ceiling or something. Twenty or twenty-two. No, it was twenty-two was the width. We were narrow, but high. So it was about a twenty foot high ceiling.

But even the second floor had something like twelve foot height. So we put our church up there. And the day that we would consecrate, not consecrating, but opening the church for its first service, as I recall, NBC and all the rest were to come, they didn't come. Which they would have done earlier, but they were now, because we were changed. I think if we go back, that was the day, the beginning of the Arab-Israeli war. And we were so backburner that other than a brief mention that we existed, you know, we weren't some great, splashy thing. They had bigger fish to fry, which was the Arab-Israeli war. But that was when we started our first service. Ah_ Here's Eldon. Yes, please, have him come in. [pause]

J. Gordon M: I've got a question. During the years that the parish existed, were there ever other parishes associated with it? Or was it just always the one parish?

Robert C: We had thought it would turn into a diocesan structure. Whether it was my lack of abilities or what. We were getting interest from people all over the country, primarily call them generic, or whatever you want, Old Catholics. And many of them had seen

that there could be success, so they were willing to consider independent Old Catholic parishes, whatever you want to call them, that might align with us, for which we were happy. I don't know how much that was in Broshears?

J. Gordon M: Yes, Broshears was going to—

Robert C: That one, yes. And we made some contact, and we did with a number of others. But I didn't know what it was, it wouldn't, it never gelled. It never came together. Whether it was a lack of direction on my part, or whether they were playing frankly Old Catholic games. I never could understand. Cause it was this large, beautiful parish, functioning well. You would have thought that others who would want to do in strongly GLBT areas would have been, said, "Well, we can open a similar work here." Especially in all those earlier years. But like I don't know what happened to Ray Broshears, there were others all over the country. The only ones we had a strong connection with, and this is very odd, was with

Montreal. Because we had work in Philadelphia but it never, we used to go down there, and it never seemed to gel. Mainly because, well in that case there didn't seem to be a local priest. But as far as others around the country contacting us, we were never, in a sense, did we give any reason that we were exclusionary of some sort. It just never seemed to come together excepting Montreal. Montreal had a very nice structure of parishes. There were few of them.

Montreal and one other one in the Montreal area. And then the one in Quebec. And organizing very nicely, I thought, and there was a young man there who was doing good work. And they had a religious order of sorts, and it seemed to be functioning. So we would go up with some frequency to Montreal. It was amusing, because taking, later on, all that episcopal regalia in a Volkswagen bug, this little car, Father Leo's brother had a little bug. And that was all, later on, I got my own car, at Beloved Disciple, but there was some years in there before I drove, and before I had this car, where we were totally dependent upon this brother for transportation. And this little bug, if you can imagine, three crosiers and heaven knows what, for three people to stay, plus all their clothing and everything, vestments and all, because they didn't

have very much out there, though they were doing their very best. So we would go up there and actually the problem, the final problem with Archbishop Marchenna, again, was over Montreal. The people in Montreal would come down, we would go up there. We gave them great episcopal oversight in those early years in the church, in the later '70s. And we thought well this is a good, solid connection. And it seemed to be going very well. And lo and behold, discovered that Archbishop Marchenna was, to put it politely, winging them away from us. Offering them, I don't know what was going on behind my back, and it was reported to me. They said, "Archbishop Marchenna is supported by you," because we'd arranged living quarters for him. And Archbishop Marchenna was so good to us, I said, that he consecrated me. We must take care of him for the rest of his life. And had very fine people work out all sorts of things for his aid and health. And he was given an apartment that the church gave him and all, that we discovered two things people, and it got very disturbing, was that he was having, toward the end, meetings at this apartment with the people from Montreal. But also, that even before that, before Montreal, that he was criticizing the way I was running the parish. In our own parish

hall. Which was quite distressing. And I don't tend to be the world's most competent priest. But I thought the love and affection we gave him would not be something where people would come to me and say that he's mixing into the affairs of the parish, and against what you're doing. Which was then that we discovered that he was doing this with the people from Montreal. And they would come down and have business we didn't even know about, structuring a new system in Montreal. And suddenly there was no Montreal, and our relationship with Archbishop Marchenna came to an end. I mean, again, we just, you know, it was repeating a different way of his doing something. And I couldn't understand with all the niceness in that parish, with all that people had done to help him, in all sorts of ways, because he was getting pretty elderly by then, to have a pleasant life with an income, with care, with concern, with a place of his own and the use of our church because he still considered himself separate, and he had an ordination in our church, and anything he wanted, is what I'm saying. That, to return this by doing this thing that we didn't know about, and alienating all of Montreal when we're thinking everything is just comfortable and going on, and that's when we had a break again.

Very quietly, but very firmly. That is to say, we don't understand what this is about. And I think whatever he was going to go onto, it wasn't like he said, "Thank you for what you've done and all," I don't know how to express. And he left to live with these people in, well, with a friend of the church, a friend of our church. A man who was in serious physical condition. He went to live with him until he died suddenly of kidney failure. And by that time, he was in contact with someone with an Italian name in Brooklyn, and was over there. I don't know the man, I think he may still be around. I just don't know. But that's how he disappeared out of our camp. But in the meantime, it destroyed all the work in Montreal. Because they went off on their own. A man's going to become a bishop, miteritis and all the rest. But it's so amusing, though, we thought things were so nicely settled. [pause] We thought things were so nicely settled, the people in Montreal seemed so lovely, that when they instituted, founded the parish in Quebec, they said, "In honor of you, Bishop, we're calling it St. Robert." I hope this doesn't sound, a lot of this, like a diatribe. I don't, you know, I just have to face reality. I'm not angry. But I'm just, to this day, totally confused and confounded by some of the things that have happened. Fifty-

nine years later, looking back at weird things that happened internally in churches, I'm still amazed, especially at some of the extreme ones. And very saddened. I was saddened when that breakup occurred first with Archbishop Marchenna. And if anything, more saddened when I discovered he was doing this behind-the-scenes business. The second time around, it was Montreal. And it just, disturbing people in the parish. And if I may just make a simple statement, I don't know how it all equates with Jesus and the message. I just don't. So, anyway, that brings you up to a point. And the parish, despite these things up and down, and the problem that occurred there, went pretty well.

J. Gordon M: I'm assuming that through the 1980s, that there were a number of gay churches and gay religious organizations.

Robert C: So we lost people to them. We had said originally that we thought, all along I knew that there would be other works, after the first two or three years, when they came in. First was MCC, and then others. And I knew if we had any effect that what we today call "open and affirming churches" were going to come about. I could see it

starting especially in the Episcopal Church. And besides, what we had to say about openness and acceptance, churches were bound to wake up some through the message of Christ, and that they were being at times, very ungodly in their reactions to GLBT people, obviously. So, yes, there's been a major change, and it's all to the good. But I still think there's a place for another independent voice. But now backed up by Celtic principles. And where the world seems to be going, perhaps we're jumping to an end, but anyway, but as far as Beloved Disciple, yes, we lost people. But we were still a nice, nice parish. And if there had been a more, you know, I was getting older and older. Even at eighty-two, I feel fairly young. But I mean, you know, logic of progression of age and so on, Father Leo had left to become Old Catholic on the West Coast. And it just didn't seem, of the priests that I ordained, and I've ordained, unlike, if I may say, many Old Catholics, I've ordained five or maybe six people in all this time. Because I didn't ordain Bishop John or Bishop, Father John or Father Leo. They were done by Archbishop Thomas Fehervary, and Bishop John was ordained by myself and Bishop George Hyde. And then later on, there were the ones I ordained. And of that group, the very best was Father Philip,

which we have to get to before we're finished. Now parish was effective going on, going through the changes that were going on, even the whole GLBT community. And, but as I say, functioning well in our own building. It was all very nice. But I discovered something. It's very difficult to transfer a vision to others. Even when you think you're getting across sometimes. The central vision may not be really, really understood. And that was the biggest problem. I thought Father Leo would be the most effective. I was surprised when he went to San Francisco, became an Old Catholic out here, and then eventually joined the Episcopal Church. Which he is, by the way, is a very, very fine priest, doing a very specialized job. He's very qualified, he's very capable. And part of it, I hope, is because of what we did, helped him become a very valuable priest for the Episcopal Church. He's a troubleshooter in that northern diocese of California. I mean, he really does especially good work. But when we talk, he's interesting because we're still so much in agreement. And he's in agreement with not only Celtic concepts, but through his association there in San Francisco with that small Assyrian church that we come into agreement there into the modern things that are happening. Which is, it's a pleasure to

talk to him, because, to use a very common phrase, we are very much now on the same page. But he is giving his efforts to parishes in difficulties in the Episcopal Church. That's his assignment. I forgot what they call it.

J. Gordon M: He's got a lot of work cut out for him.

Robert C: But he's done very well. He went as a monastic. He took his order, his Franciscan order, with him. And he still has his building in [inaudible] there.

J. Gordon M: A retreat center.

Robert C: Yeah. Up by Clear Lake, I think it's called. Anyway, he's done far more things for them. He still keeps the order as alive as he can. But he's so involved now in parochial work. But he's doing a fabulous job. They sent him to one parish in serious trouble. It took him, they like to feel it will take a year and a half, but it seems to take two. He got that parish out of trouble. He was sent to this major parish, which I won't mention, in Northern California. Two years later,

approximately, he'll probably be moved, but he's done a splendid job. They're in good shape. So it's a happy thing. Anyway, back at Beloved Disciple, when I ordained a group of men thinking that most of them would eventually go out and do mission and so on, and the work was still demanding. I found it very wearing, as one person running the parish. One man alone running a major parish. Even though it might have slowed down a little with lost other churches, it still was a big parish. And the demands were tremendous. So much so that the honest truth is I knew I was burning out. But I had the students, they went through our own specialized, all of them were graduate students, college and so on. But they all seemed, we had, I don't know if this will be misinterpreted. We had one woman student and the four men. And unhappily, the woman student didn't work out educationally. Intellectually. And it was because I was considering ordination. In those days, it was very daring to think of ordaining women beyond the Episcopal Church. But my feeling was, everyone, there's no barrier of gender to receiving the priesthood. And I would happily have ordained her, but we were quite serious in what we did. And there was no Old Catholic playing games. I think you understand

what I'm saying.

J. Gordon M: I understand completely.

Robert C: She did not measure up intellectually. And just, you know, it was a shame, because I had thought there's the potential of a woman becoming a priest, and it didn't work. But out of the four men, it didn't work, either. Because what happened was, I had that splendid, I had all the training, and John and I put a lot into it. Trained the priests and restructuring the whole system of holy union, and so on, so that it became a very well-conceived construct, I guess you would say, for holy unions and for seminary training. And it went on. I mean, seminary training, in depth, from our own viewpoint. And trying to give a lot to it, as well as, so you can see, it was a very, besides all the parochial work, and all our things that

come in and out from being part of the GLBT community. You're not isolated, and you're not isolated from straight and from religious communities and from secular communities. And when you're the only church like it, you've got more on your plate than most churches. And let's face it, to be honest, all the churches have a lot of problems to begin with, especially today, or if they're at all traditional. But even the so-called mega-churches or fundamentalist churches have a lot of problems. They're built in. They're part of the system. And anyway, the church functioned well. But unhappily, of the four priests, only one worked out. Father Philip. The others just, what they were trying to do, if I may be blunt, is they never understood essentially what independent Catholicism at its best or plus is about. And that was very stressful to me.

Somewhat shattering when I realized I had not communicated the vision, the ideals, to them. I'd thought so, and thought it was happening in the instruction, in the committing of information. It took the longest time, some years. And I thought yeah, okay, we have potentially really four great priests. And out of it, only one of them, after they were ordained, worked out. And there came a point when all I was getting was rancor and crosscurrents. And to

my amazement or horror, a lack of understanding of, again, basic principles. And I thought well, I thought this was leading to spiritual formation in particular. What did I do wrong? Was I only getting back what I wanted to hear? Were the results of the exams and the talks and the tutorials nothing but feeding me in some, by intelligent people, what I wanted to hear? And not what was really where they were, what they were about, what they were understanding, what they knew of the nature of the church. That it failed on that level is, to put it more than mildly, disconcerting. It's discouraging to think that I lacked the means or ability to communicate even some of the basic of the idea. Because once they left, when we had a problem where they were in a huff, so to speak, on their own, finally, what did I discover? Three of them, the three that left, all tried to find their way into the Roman Catholic Church by a back door. And I found out about the back door because Rome couldn't deal with them without coming to my door. And what they did was they went to the Melkites. Because in talking, we'd always said the Melkites had a little more independence in the Roman system than the others. But I also noticed that their patriarch was grounded some years ago for being too independent.

But one thought well, they obviously thought through the teaching we had, oh, they're the Melkites, so we'll get into Rome, and we won't have to go through them. The regular thing. We won't have to go back to seminary, we won't have to have any of the things the Episcopalians have to go through. We'll get into Rome and we'll still be vaguely Western Rite, I gather that was in their minds, by going to the Melkites. Oh, I have to tell you. Before they went to the Melkites, after they left our system or our church, they tried to found their own. And I think it lasted about two months and it totally collapsed. These were the men I thought were going out to found parishes in the New York/New Jersey area, which was our real intent, that there was still a body of people with something that we had to offer from Beloved Disciple. Well, they tried to do it right in the New York area, in the GLBT community, and it just failed. They attracted no one, because they, but we still had Beloved Disciple. They went out. Then they obviously thought, oh, right, we'll go to Rome and we'll find a place somewhere in the Roman system. And I assume they thought well, the Melkites, they can probably still remain vaguely Western, and come in through an Eastern door. And of course, the Melkites contacted me. And what

could I say? I mean, I could say their moral character, as far as I was concerned, or their ethical position, I could be very polite about, say everything's all right. But when it gets to a canonical position, what could I say? There was no way I could meet the standards in direct conference with the Melkites. Because they'd walked out. I mean, I couldn't say they hadn't left. I couldn't say that they had abjured the American Catholic Church. With the best will in the world, they put me in the middle of a web, so to speak, of trying to be nice, be gracious and helpful, which I did. But when it came to the clerical structure, they put me in a position that I couldn't say to the Melkites that these men were in good standing, that they were in good favor, that they, I didn't know if they expected me to say they hadn't left the church. I don't know what they were up to_ So of course, unhappily for them, and not happily for me, either, there was no way, even remotely, where they could go any further with the Melkites. And what's happened is, for those that are alive, they just go, I think, mostly, well, there's only two alive, they go as parishioners on a Roman Catholic church on a Sunday, even if they're not formal parishioners. But they just go to Roman Mass. Like Dignity's members were. And the two that are

alive, I'm happy to say, their lives are all right. But their priesthood went nowhere. Just absolutely nowhere. You know, if they'd come back, but it wasn't just coming back. If they had returned with understanding, but perhaps they never could understand the position. Or I hope it wasn't that they might have thought that I would not accept them. Because if they were humble, and I don't mean humble in a nasty way, but if they understood like an error or mistake, I would have welcomed them home, if we were in agreement. But perhaps they'd never been anything but Roman Catholics in their heart, which is, you know, understandable. But if they couldn't accept independent Catholicism, and one that was so open within the GLBT community, and I think generally speaking, I hope, we were a very caring, concerned, and even loving church. You know, it wasn't like we had a lot of strictures. Maybe they wanted to go back to sin and guilt. I don't know. Perhaps that trying to instill in them love and caring compassion that a priest, you know, is working amongst people. It is a title. But it's somehow to convey a loving message from Jesus, from the Christ, from the Messiah, from God, to humanity. And it isn't playing at something. It isn't some structure, per se, if it doesn't have a heart in it. So, and

I always felt that we were telling, or giving to people, as best we could, within our human frailties. So why they didn't come back, I have to assume, or maybe even say presume, that there was something there that we were offering that they could not accept. And the only thing I arrived at was sin, guilt and punishment maybe on their side as something. And maybe they were, and I couldn't, you take something out of what is it, take the person out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the person? Maybe we took someone out of the Augustinianism, but we couldn't take the Augustinianism out of them. and I suspect, in the end, it is that they were slightly Ultramontane, that they were Augustinian to the bone, probably, or even if they didn't realize it, they were formed that way, and they couldn't accept freedom, they couldn't accept a different way of looking. And unhappily, they couldn't outgrow the old-fashioned spiritualism, which is, you know, what can I say? But I did have Father Philip Vasianto. And he was a gentle, charming, calm man. And I, in the end, toward the end of the work in New York and Beloved Disciple, people don't like to say it when it's their selves they're talking about. I think the honest truth is, I collapsed into a burnout. And John and I talked

about it. And I was, at that point, getting on, and getting on, and so was John. And the one person who could continue the work was Father Philip. He wouldn't be as concerned with all these outside, peripheral things. He wouldn't be the bishop with worrying about the priests. He could just run it as a nice, local parish, which I thought was absolutely lovely, was the best thing to do. And when I spoke to him, he felt that he could continue the work. But if I were leaving, he wanted to actually change the nature of it to quite a fair degree. He said he felt that the building should be closed, that he would go back to working as a house priest, to start doing that sort of work. And then he would locate, again, a church where he could have services like we had in the past, in someone else's building. I felt that was about all he could accomplish at that juncture. That he could not take on the upkeep of the building. But he was well aware of who the people were, how to keep them together. But he wanted a flock community, and not a parochial parish community. And that was what he foresaw. And he was starting, actually very nicely, getting that together. And he said also, as he reestablished, or not, he founded, restructured the parish, that's why he wanted to go out to find another building to use when he would have

centralized masses and so on, that he would continue the hard work and so on. And he thought it would work out very well. And he started it. And that, I had left.

J. Gordon M: When is this? When had you—

Robert C: About 19__, what is it?

Adrian R: Just say 1986.

Robert C: That's right. It was about '86. That's right. About '86 is when I retired and the physical plant was closed. But Father Philip was still there. And it was about late '85 into '86. I went to New Jersey for a while. I frankly admit a thoroughly burned out person. Just, but I was so happy that Father Philip could be able to continue the work in the way he wanted, but Beloved Disciple would continue. And I knew that I would probably not be coming back. But I would be supporting him, as I did, with whatever help he needed and to rebound, if he needed, into a building and so on. And let him build

up, on the parish we had, build up a new parish. But it is true that even when I closed the building, with great sadness, there were hundreds of people still connected with that parish. And I didn't know how he was going to do it, but I had suddenly become just destroyed. I wasn't spiritually dead, but I was very, very washed out-hurt. And so John said, well, he had to finish a little more work to get to his social security and so on for a move. And he was the leading expert—I don't know if you know or don't know—on dolls and toys in the Western world, bar none. And that he had to finish up through the museum and so on. That's why we did the brief while in New Jersey, and then decided to come here. Actually, the decision was to go to Hawaii, but we had dogs, and we could not, would not put them into quarantine. We came to our second choice, Southern California, because he felt I needed to recover. Literally. We'd just come out here to see if I could restore myself. And it's true. It took a couple of years. But yes, I was restored out here. But we were living way out in the country. But that may be another story for you after a moment. But I left Father Philip, and then we went briefly to New Jersey. I left him with the parish and he was, I would say, doing moderately well, and it probably would

have bloomed in the way he wanted, and been expanded back into an active parish with a physical structure. And of course he, what's the term, he became infected with HIV/AIDS. And he went on as long as he could. I was gone. By that time, in fact, by that time, I was on the West Coast. But he didn't tell me for some time. But unfortunately, back then, there were no protease inhibitors.

Because we had so many, well, that was one of the big things that hit the parish, you know. I suppose I shouldn't have, I don't know how I came to omit that. But in our struggling through, you know, into the '80s, we managed to remain a big, viable parish. But the number of deaths from AIDS, it just, that was one of the things that partially destroyed me. Because, besides all the things in a parish where you're running into major, major deaths with AIDS and not being able to do anything. And people so immediately close to one's heart, and so many others, and so much in the community. It was one of the things, as you might say, pulled one of the props out from under one. It was, it was hard to go through. And it was still, as you know, an amazing thing of consequence in '86 and so on, '85 into '86. But Father Philip didn't tell me for some time, and I was on the coast. And then, obviously, he just, I had no one to replace him

with. I was scarcely recovering myself. And so disconnected by then from the East Coast, I didn't know what to do about the parochial work. And that's why we quietly [inaudible] up with some marvelous people that I always felt, to this day, that in some way they were betrayed. So I couldn't come back. He died within a couple of years. By the time he told me, I was out here. Still not in the best of state for recovering from all the stresses and nervous tension that had built up through the parish, through a lot of things that—as we just said—to extra-dimensional problem of HIV/AIDS. So that's why it just kind of seeped away at that point. But to this day, all I have to do is ask Father Leo who was back that way and visit, I haven't been back since. He goes back and visits. He's the one who told me what happened to the other priests, what their lives are now, and he's the one who's been so kind as to do their masses and memorial masses. He's trouble keeping a sense of Beloved Disciple. But he wouldn't come back, either. But he's at least kept a lot of contact. And he tells me, just through the priest and his friends, there's still a lot of people, that they're like Church of Beloved Disciple.

J. Gordon M: I've got, I know I've got to come back and do this more, because much more stuff is here than we can cover in an interview. But there are a couple of things. I wanted to get into this one. As I understand it, you work in, you were somehow associated with in Canada? I actually tracked you down through a priest who was at that time in Saskatchewan and had moved to—

Robert C: Oh, that's the other man.

Adrian R: Not LaRade.

Robert C: No. Shockley.

J. Gordon M: Shockley, yes.

Robert C: Shockley, that's an interesting, [inaudible] I've been out here and done quiet work in an odd way. There used to be a Polish National parish in San Diego. And the priest was still a friend of mine, but he's now entered the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego. Sometimes when he would be away, I would take the Polish National services

for him. But it was just one of those things. But there were independent churches. I had contacts with the liberal Catholic Church out here, and others. As near as I can to Vista which is, well, forty miles north of San Diego. But I kept a lot of contact. However—

[End Tape Two, Side B. Begin Tape Three, Side A.]

Robert C: For a few dates, that's what I need. Because I come back from when it occurred, covered what was going on out here. Oh, no, no, that's, what we did with the consecration with Marchenna was use, though we were American Catholic, because of Hyde, and we had, by that time, had legal title. He had turned over all of the Eucharistic Catholic work to us, and then later, the American Catholic. The instrumentum for the Archbishop Marchenna work, oddly enough, because I was not Old Roman Catholic, he was doing it for us in the Eucharistic Catholic Church. So the consecration instrumentum reads: Eucharistic Catholics. But also, as you know, through Hyde, besides the Eucharistic Catholic, we

obtained the original incorporation, which we have to this day of the American Catholic Church. So I don't know if there are points that are of interest to the story that are obviously there. We feel it's very important to be the continuation of the American Catholic Church legally, and to continue all the work of Archbishop Hyde, see a future for it. Because he's still very active in his American Orthodox Catholic Church, which became AOCC. That's very important, but we are not, per se, Orthodox. We're in agreement with Orthodoxy, but we are a Western Rite now, very much Celtic-influenced church, moving into modern times. But, amongst the things that happened when I was living in Southern, as I am still, to this moment, Southern California, was a connection with the Philippine Independent Catholic Church. The Independent Catholic Church in the Philippines, the PICC. I had become, through contacts of one sort or another, acquainted with the PICC parish in San Diego. And became quite active with it, to the point where I was celebrating Mass for them. They didn't have any problem with that because, according to them, they have a strong connection with the Episcopal Church. But since I've been, by their standards, ordained in the PNC, Polish National Church, then I was

fine as a priest to do work in the San Diego area. So I was very active at the Philippine Independent Parish in San Diego.

J. Gordon M: So was this in the '90s?

Adrian R: '93. October 24, 1993.

Robert C: Yeah. After coming here and doing things at various churches, but I became very much active with the Philippine Independent Catholic Church. And I was very active in that parish. I will tell you one thing, though, because it's a gay measure. I was so active in the parish, but it was extremely conservative. And one man ran the parish council, as president. The priest at the parish, again, for reasons of not being sued, I will not mention names, the priest at the parish was a very mercurial type, in fact, he's an Old Catholic of some type. Again, he's gone in and out of churches. But he was active in the Philippine Independent Catholic Church, in that parish. Very nice parish. But the man in charge has secular control,

you might say. So, okay, the priest was there, I was very active. And very happy with parochial work in the Philippine Independent Parish in San Diego. And the priest suddenly said in their Old Catholic generic way, he was leaving. And so, fine. He was leaving. So it was decided they wanted a new priest. And they would have me. And they asked me to be the priest. So, fine. You know, I was just getting along absolutely fine with them. They were using English. I didn't have to know Tagalog, and everything was lovely. But this priest was very mercurial. So he was leaving the people, I thought oh, okay, well, we have Bishop Clement, he can be our priest. And I'm happy to be their priest, because it was a very pleasant relationship. I didn't mind the Philippine Independent Eucharist, which is rather like a combination of the Episcopalians and Novus Ordo. Okay, fine. What the people want, they can have. And I had a very good parochial pastor, a nice pastor relationship. And the only person I didn't even think about, because it was a pleasant enough relationship, I'm talking about I had some very close parochial, pastoral relationships with people there. The head of the committee that they had was a nice man, I thought, and I didn't pay too much attention. It was just, he was

there, and everything was agreeable. So Father "blank" decided to leave. Okay. The bishop would be our new priest. That was nice. That was one weekend. He was all agreed that I would come as a priest. And I got there the next week, and to say there was a chill from the Arctic, and the ice was thick, was putting it mildly. And I discovered that Alexander Yin was, the priest decided in that way of his he wasn't going to leave. So how could he get rid of me? You know, to be the new appointed priest. So what did he do, he told the priest about my being homosexual, and made such a point, the chairman of the board, that I suppose made me out to a monster. The chairman of the board said something, I think, to the effect of, that famous phrase, "We don't want your people here." But it was something about, "we don't want dead people." Some weird, really weird phrase that probably would be meaningful in the Philippines. But what he was telling me was I wasn't wanted because I was homosexual. Now I thought people knew or didn't know, but again, I wasn't asking or wasn't telling. But it was just going on. It was a pleasant relationship, and that was fine. But the gayness was brought in to destroy my being the pastor of that parish by a priest who had a vicious streak. But I made friends

enough in the Philippine Independent Church that this didn't destroy things. It just meant that that particular parish was somewhere where I wasn't welcome. But in the meantime, I made friends with another Independent Philippine priest who is Latino background. I think he's gay, but I've never pressed the point with him. Because it wasn't germane at the time, or ongoing. But he knew I was gay. I was having no more nonsense. Wasn't having anything hidden or surreptitious. And he was very friendly, very nice. And made contact with me, for me, with the, they don't use prime bishop like, epismo maximo, the maximum, the bishop maximum, if you will. Anyway, the epismo maximo of the Philippine Independent Catholic Church. And they were using, for their parish, several do, oddly enough. Even though they have this close inter-community with the Episcopal Church, one of their main parishes, as you know, in Los Angeles, meets at what they call the Continuing Episcopal Church. The breakaway, Holy Child Parish meets at Our Savior Anglican Church. Even though they're part of this thing with the Episcopal Church. And their other church meets up here, somewhere in Van Nuys, Immaculate Conception. Well, okay. I was put in touch with the archbishop.

And they, at that time, were also using St. Andrew's Anglican Church down in, oh, dear. Just south of, there's a naval station there.

Adrian R: Los Alamitos.

Robert C: Los Alamitos. Thank you. In Los Alamitos. St. Andrew's Parish. And that's fine. I didn't have much to do with that, the Episcopal parish, friendly with them all. I've been actually very friendly with the partially conservative breakaways, others. Maybe I've been a little less luck [inaudible] with the immediate Episcopalians, because they can get pretty onto their own whatever it is. Because I made contact with this diocese and had a nice relationship going, I thought, through one of the auxiliaries. But they're doing the, freezing out Episcopalian business. We don't want any competition. I don't know what. Even though I was to be an Episcopal priest all those years ago, I've never fully understood how they function and how they apply their own canons and their own way of looking at things. But I know it can be very exclusionary, let's put it that way. And they always want to look

down their noses at independents, even if they think they're good. But anyway, I had a very nice relationship with the archbishop. And what was made clear was, as traditional as the Philippines may be, and anywhere else, this, from the funny word, the get go, was, the archbishop was informed politely, and very nicely, that this was a gay man. This priest, me, this bishop. And there was never so much as a roil on the surface. There were no waves, nothing. I mean, it was come to us, we want to start a diocese in San Diego, we hope you'll learn some Tagalog along the way, but we will work in English. We have thousands – and they do – fifty to a hundred thousand people in San Diego County are of Filipino background. They felt the parish that was functioning wasn't enough. They wanted to start a series of parishes. And I would be given all the names and contacts and blessing of the supreme bishop. Great. And I would be the bishop of a new diocese of San Diego. Which sounds absolutely marvelous. And was. The whole intention was very, very good. And this worry about, you know, I wasn't going to shout it from the housetops, but my being gay was not to be considered, what is the name–

J. Gordon M: An impediment.

Robert C: A what?

J. Gordon M: An impediment.

Robert C: An impediment in any way. Thank you. So fine. And everything was really going, and there were using St. Andrew's Church. And again, I said if they feel they have to regularize me because of the Episcopalians, the Episcopalians aren't going to be happy with Philippine Independent people. If they have a bishop who shows up from, you know, one of the churches that they don't recognize, and my orders would come from Marchenna, their whole feeling is rather like Rome, but even worse. Like we'll recognize, but we don't recognize, and we'll put it all over here, and we'll nod politely, and that will be the end of it. So the Philippine Independents realized this, and they said to me will I have consecration again. And I said yes, it was realized that I consider it super(?) and I accepted on the fact that you're doing it for regularizing within your community. I can understand regularization. That's fine. I just don't, got to go around calling

myself irregular. Regularizing fits in with legalities of the church, of comity of the canon law. So I said yes. Fine. There's a nice potential diocese, nice people, and why not? I mean, if that's all it takes is regularization, they realize I'm not abjuring any of my other orders, that's fine. No problem. And that was how it stood. And it was fine. And the consecration took place. And there were some other bishops. It was very nice. And all of a sudden, everything went awry. Nothing happened. Because the bishop, he made these few visits to America, then he went back to the Philippines and didn't appear, and didn't appear.

J. Gordon M: Is this Partikian?

Robert C: Pardon?

J. Gordon M: Partikian.

Robert C: [several talking] Right. What happened, I didn't know it, were two things of great importance. Ga and the other, what had happened was the Philippine Independent Church had developed its Pitt. I

didn't know this. I didn't know it was Archbishop Ramon,
whatever his name was, for the one church.

J. Gordon M: Partikian.

Robert C: Well, not Partikian. He was earlier. No, no. This was a recent split.
And this split occurred around when? '93, '94? '93, '94, there was a
big split. But it wasn't Partikian. It was Ga and the other supreme
bishop I didn't know existed. I've forgotten his name since.

Adrian R: Father [inaudible]

Robert C: Yeah. He could tell us again. So there were two supreme bishops.
And I was under Ga. And there was another one. And I didn't
understand this at all. So I figured well, all right, I've been
consecrated in the Philippine Independent Catholic Church. It's
under Ga, who's another supreme bishop. Okay. I'm thoroughly
confused. But under Ga there is to be established a San Diego
diocese. And I will be given all this information to contact, to set up
parochial work. How lovely, how very nice. Okay. But, then

suddenly, there's silence. And silence. And nothing happens. And the other potential bishops, I mean, the other bishops, with their potential dioceses at work are just as confused as I am. Well, in the interim of, to say in passing, one of the others died. He was elderly, like myself, and he just died. But there were other bishops. And were not functioning. And I think most of them went to some kind of, they created their own independent work. So when some Old Catholic groups, because they're always around, so I'm left, as far as I can tell, and this other bishop died relatively recently—at that time—are left wondering and I'm to be bishop in San Diego. What's going on? What's happening? Then, it happened. Ga had contracted cancer. And none of us knew it. He went back to the Philippines and was actually just there to die. And that's why there was nothing developed in America. And the interesting thing was, I've got a copy somewhere of the agreement. They agreed to go back into one church. Ga was supreme bishop, you would say, emeritus. And the other functioning one in the other body, and he wanted to die back with the [inaudible]. So most, but not all, of his parish, he had a substantial voice...

J. Gordon M: and the church split in two. There were five million. Two and a half million in each group.

Robert C: Yeah. And Ga was the head of one group. And, but what they did, when he was dying, because he was all that great friend of Marcos and all that, anyway, he wanted to die with one church. And most of the church went back. But in the agreement, it's very interesting. There's an agreement for all the priests to go back. The bishops are left hanging. There is nothing stated about poor bishops like myself. I don't know what they did. Well in the Philippines, some of them would be almost dioceses. I don't know how they worked out. But it was worked out that the priests could go back. The bishops were left. So I went to the other side, because they have their parishes and they have a bishop here. I went to ask Ramento, who's the bishop [current bishop of the Philippine Independent Catholic Church in North America.]. And we had a very pleasant relationship, very nicely. But nothing ever came of it. So in the end, what he said to me was, "We recognize you. We know that you were consecrated by Ga. But there's no place in the structure here.

And what you can be is a core bishop. If you can found a parish of your own, you can be entitled to Episcopal consideration within your parish." But he didn't say a core bishop within the diocese. They didn't say anything, but "and if we do assign you to a parish and they have none free, yes, you can be a bishop in one of our parishes. But it would still be only a core bishop. We would acknowledge you to have episcopal rights in the parish." But with the number of parishes, they haven't established any new ones, like Ga was going to do. And they haven't given one any of these names or contacts or anything. And so what finally happened was, I was nowhere. And I'm still nowhere with their church. And I thought well, okay, fine. And then they consecrated an auxiliary here, in Los Angeles. So I have forgotten his name. So I went to visit him once and he acted like I was some kind of acolyte walked in for him to assign something to. I thought, this is crazy. And that was my last contact with them, because with Esplanado, the bishop for the Americas, they arrived at, you know. But at least they acknowledged to Esplanado that I was a bishop. And I thought well, I'll try and see if I can have some friendly relations with the Episcopalians. And it was nice, and I had with one of the auxiliary

bishops. And then, beyond that, they, with all the polite sanctimoniousness, they know I'm a bishop in the Episcopal Church here in their diocese. As a real functioning, as they would say, their orders, because of the Philippine Independent Catholic Church. But again, they're just polite. And that's as far as it goes. They say, "Oh, how nice Bishop So and So," but that, and I don't know what, what does one pay on a bus now, a dollar or something? That and a dollar would get you on the bus. I hate to sound caustic, but, I mean, they're very polite. They say yes, in essence you're a bishop. But I think they're also saying to themselves, we can't use you in any way if you're a bloody nuisance. And we'll be polite to you.

J. Gordon M: Please go away. [laughter]

Robert C: Yeah_ So that's, and it was interesting that I ended up associated with the Episcopal Church. Oh well.

J. Gordon M: Now how does, relating to this group.

Adrian R: LaRade?

J. Gordon M: Okay.

Robert C: We have no connection with LaRade other than limited politeness.

Adrian R: There's only three minutes left on this tape.

Robert C: Well, what happened was, I told you the church in Montreal. And what they did, under our aegis, when we were first connected with Montreal, they incorporated as the Eucharistic Catholic Church which was given to us, in essence, by Hyde. We thought, it's lovely_ It's an associated church. And we have this nice parish. They have their parish in Montreal and Quebec and so on. And another parish in the Montreal area. All very lovely in their order. So we say, go ahead. But in Canada, that's separate incorporation. So with our blessing and knowledge, they incorporated as the Eucharistic Catholic Church in Canada. Fine_ But then when they left us, they became, as far as we could tell, part of the Old Roman Catholic Church. And they left this, I've forgotten the legal term,

when you let a corporation languish and die out. There is a term for it.

J. Gordon M: Yeah.

Robert C: Especially in Canadian law. And they did that. And they weren't connected with us. And for this very, very long time, I didn't even think about them. They were gone all those years. That's a lot of years to be gone. And Quessy, the head of their church, became head of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church, of all things, Archbishop Roger' church. Quessy became the head of the Old Roman Catholic Church. So they let this lie, languish, disappear legally. And then somehow, Shockley discovered that the corporation had lapsed. They let it lapsed, is what they did. So it becomes lapsed, in essence, defunct in Canada. So he decided, under Canadian law, here's the Eucharistic Catholic Church. It's pro-gay and all. He has this church, at that time, where was it in-

J. Gordon M: Saskatchewan.

Robert C: Saskatchewan. And so he did what he could, what was allowable in Canadian law. He resuscitated, revived, the Eucharistic Catholic Church. Which he can do. I didn't know this man. And then he let me know that he had revived the Eucharistic Catholic Church. Would I be interested, because really, I'm the metropolitan, you know, that sort of thing, for the movement, and so on. So, he seemed nice. And he said, "I'm moving to Vancouver." I don't know if he moved back again or not.

J. Gordon M: Last I heard, he was moving.

Robert C: Yeah. So he got in touch with me. And he said well he was the Eucharistic Catholic Church in Canada. He was interested so much in the gay movement, and did I object and mind. And I said, "Well, first of all, legally, under Canadian law, I don't have any incorporation there. You are the Eucharistic Catholic Church. I hope that you will fulfill the promise and premise of the Eucharistic Catholic Church." And he was very [inaudible] about his feelings. And I thought oh, fine. There's nothing I can do about it. I can't go up there and scream, "You can't do this," or something. Not that I

wanted to, even. But I thought well, sounds nice. There will be a continuation, a revived Eucharistic Catholic Church. And he's having it, fine. I'll give him all the approval, support or help that I can. Which I did. Because what I could give him was only moral support. Fine_ If someone wants to do the work of the Eucharistic Catholic Church and take it on, it's a splendid thing. I'm happy for the man, and I think what he wanted was the comfort of, he liked the idea of, I guess, primacy or something saying, "Okay, go ahead." Which I did. And then, lo and behold, not telling me about it, or any such thing, he did something under Canadian law. He just transferred it, gave it to LaRade.

J. Gordon M: Who was a priest.

Robert C: Yeah. I thought he was going to Vancouver. He thought he could do the work there. But it would be Eucharistic Catholic, because he felt so good about Eucharistic Catholic. And moving from what he called themselves, some old something or other Catholic church of some sort. Or Old Anglican, or whatever it was. Anyway, there's the potential, it's a nice thing. And I would encourage the man,

indeed, but then to discover under Canadian law that he can just transfer it to someone else, and of course he wasn't required, but I would have thought out of courtesy he would have told me that he was retiring or retiring the title, Eucharistic Catholic, and asked me, or tell me where it was going and why. But I never heard this_ And the next thing I hear is LaRade contacting me, or did we just discover-

Adrian R: No, no, no. LaRade contacted you, he claims.

Robert C: I think he did, all right. I think what happened was, I got an invitation to a consecration in Washington, DC, that I knew nothing about.

Adrian R: Francis-Maria Salvato of LaRade?

Robert C: Yeah. And I didn't even know what this was about. Had no idea that it concerned, or would ever concern me. Because he was consecrated and left Salvato almost immediately, apparently. Very Old Catholic. So had this consecration, and that's where I first read

his name. I didn't know these people from Adam. And I'm in California, so I wasn't just going to go to Washington for people I'd never heard of. I thought it was what you'd call a gracious invitation, broadcast to people. Ignored it from there on. Didn't think twice about it. But then, where was it we actually discovered LaRade suddenly was Eucharistic Catholic? Did he call us? Or did we find another way?

Adrian R: He wrote to you and asked that you resign as the head of the Eucharistic Catholic Church, as the archbishop, and everything to do with the church, because now he was going to be the head of all the, the entire Eucharistic Catholic Church in the United States as well as Canada. So he asked you to resign.

Robert C: Well, certainly by implication.

Adrian R: No, he asked you to resign.

Robert C: Would I be willing to give it up, or something like that. Out of the blue_ And that's when Shockley turned it over to him. But I do

know that he wanted me to consider that he would be the head of the church, and that I would be, I don't even know what I was supposed to be. But, and he wanted to do the work in the United States as well. Well, I'm not giving up title to the United States to anyone, on the premise that anybody wanted to do. But I think he wanted—

Adrian R: I retract my word.

Robert C: What?

Adrian R: I retract my word. The word wasn't "resign," but in essence, it meant for you to turn everything over to him.

Robert C.: Right.

J. Gordon M: Retire.

Robert C: Yeah. And I thought, well, what is it you want to do in the United States?

Adrian R: There were some people in New York who expressed interest in the

church. And he said that they were either involved with him on the Internet and that–

Robert C: Just what I wanted, an Internet church. I was on Internet presence to work well, but I can't quite picture Internet parishioners. However, I think what you say, that was more or less what it was– that a few people around New York were interested; probably people who all wanted to be priests or something and needed a permission slip. The Eucharistic Catholic Church is something beautiful. It has great meaning from the past. And it's not something to be bandied about. Just because someone did something funny, you know, in Canada, and did a legal maneuver of pushing names around.

Adrian R: And he also uses the name Church of Beloved Disciple.

Robert C: That was Beloved...?

J. Gordon M: That's what it says here. Beloved Disciple Catholic Church. [several talking]

Adrian R: Or uses both.

Robert C: Well, I'll look at that again and see what's up there. But really, and then when I discovered what his position was, I couldn't hold communion with him. He's--

Adrian R: [inaudible]

Robert C: Yeah. With a vengeance. What is the Roman organization that's so right wing?

J. Gordon M: Opus Dei.

Robert C: Opus Dei. Sounded pretty close to Opus Dei to me. And yet he was open about being gay and all. But then the church structure struck me as extremely Opus Dei, Augustinian, old, Ultramontane. And I thought oh, really, it starts out sounding fine, sounding very pro-GLBT. But that's like a front to an edifice that seems to be extremely

reactionary. So that when I discovered that I thought well we'll be polite to him, but as far as I'm concerned, this can go into limbo. He's not the successor to Hyde, who is still alive, thank you. And he's not a successor to me or to this movement. This movement could not, could not exist, ultimately, in an Augustinian, Ultramontane system. It just, to put a little window dressing of GLBT on it, I don't know how he managed that. Because these people are so full of reactionary concepts. Anyway, so not to engage in an open polemics with him, any knockdown, drag out fights, and all that horrible old Catholicism. We've just ignored him. And if he wants to call it, he's legally Eucharistic Catholic Church in Canada, I can't do anything about that. And if I could, I couldn't afford a long legal battle that might go one way or another. So it's like a lot of people in America. How many churches call themselves American Catholic? Four or five, six, at least. But they don't have any connection with our regional legal title. Do they think I'm not going to run out, and everybody who calls themselves American Catholic sue them or scream at them or shake a crosier at them like the Roman Catholics and they used to do in Scranton, all those years ago. I find that always an amusing

concept. But, you know, so just like anyone using American Catholic, it can lead to confusion but if he's Eucharistic Catholic up there and he has legal title to it, there he is. But a relationship with us other than, at best, friendly, polite, what should I say, the same feeling I would have for any independent church. I don't fight with them, but they aren't part of the same church, and they certainly, most of them, I hope some of them will be at some point, part of the same movement. Of that seeing Christianity, Jesus, and spirituality in what I think is becoming an ancient, but also a new light. And I'd rather be in the vanguard or where the world is going and have the GLBT community contributing to that, as well as the Celtic input, and all the others that are coming together. I see a future beyond the so-called establishment churches. And if Benedict—is it sixteen?—goes on the way he is, it will take, would you like a prediction?

J. Gordon M: Yes.

Robert C: Just to see how it sounds. If the present pontiff, the pope, goes on circling the wagons the way he is, and accepting all of the

Latinization that he's doing, and then allowing a bull, literally under his name, out of his old office, to say there is only one church, to repeat that old thing, in salvation, he's implying can be found only in the Roman Catholic Church. And it applies to the poor, to not the poor, but I mean, to the insulted Protestants that they are inferior and that they are probably not even churches, then the Roman Catholic Church, if this goes on, is going to become less and less an important concept as the politics die out, as the rhetoric becomes more, what I see is a large organization that will implode on itself. But it will take hundreds of years. And then it will be a sect of some sort. But it will not be, unless they change, one of the vibrant voices in future Christianity and spirituality. They, when he shot himself in the foot one week about the Latin and the conservatism, and shot himself in the other foot the next week about there's only one true church, then that's appealing to the lowest common denominator, and it also has, I feel, over a period of time, the seeds of death. I think the mega-churches will have a place, but they actually are inflated to the point of death to, in the future. And all of these things will devolve, they'll become smaller, they will implode. But it's a shame to see the potential of the

apostolic and sacramental ministry devolving within the Roman obedience into a lesser and lesser thing, a less and less viable concept of importance. And they've lost so much in Europe. This last bid is trying to say, we're going to stay inside our tower. But that's not going to help to create anything in Europe. And ultimately, to some degree, in America. America isn't that stable, even in the Roman community. It may sound strong amongst the newer Latinos and amongst the suburban parishes, but why are there so few men seeking the priesthood? Why are parishes disappearing? And far beyond the pederasty business, the parishes are contracting. And if you look at, well, where are the men? They aren't there. They're not going to be there. There will be enough, from their viewpoint, hopefully to keep alive. But they are suffering right now. And if you go to a large parish, you may be old enough to remember. When I was younger, you went to a large parish with three, four, five thousand people. You had five, ten, or fifteen priests. Today you're lucky if you have three, serving the same two, three and four thousand people. I know a priest right now in this archdiocese. He's burned out. He can't figure a way out. I can't offer him a parish of consequence. But he's a splendid young man.

And what does he have in his parish? A major parish in the suburbs, not very far away. Three priests for five thousand people. And what are the three priests? One is Filipino, because there's a large Hispanic element in his parish. He doesn't speak any English. There's a Latino priest brought in from Latin America, not the United States, one from Latin America, with the old system. And he wants to be an American for obvious reasons. And he has a minor, not a major, a minor grasp of English. And then the third part of the parish is this youngish priest who's approaching fifty now, anyway, a splendid man. And he says he doesn't know how he'll go on much longer. He just finds it unbearable. Because in essence, for every English-speaking person, he's the priest. Thousands of people, he's got to keep this whole institution going. He's close to a full burnout. So what do they do? Where are they going to find anyone to replace him? And that's happening on the inner, and just now to some of the outer—

J. Gordon M: Mexico City has just exploded the last generation. They have whole sections of Mexico City, they don't even have a Catholic parish.

Robert C: Right.

J. Gordon M: No priests at all.

Robert C: And then they wonder why the more extreme fundamentalists or evangelicals are doing well. They can work through laity.

J. Gordon M: Yes. One last question. Are there any of the issues with the presentation on Bishop Hyde that you wanted to clear up?

Robert C: Oh, yeah. Yes. I need to here because—

J Gordon M: Bishop Hyde says that one, he ordained or consecrated you as a bishop. And he also said that you had gone to a meeting before—

Robert C: Yes_

Adrian R: In his area, whatever state it was, and presented yourself to them as...

Robert C: I wanted to be a bishop.

Adrian R: And that you wanted to be a bishop. So those were the two things that I remember reading from his papers on LGBT-RAN.

J Gordon M: Okay.

Robert C: Why would I have ever gone to him to say I want to be a bishop? I mean, he was so alien. And having turned it down once in the Old Roman Catholics, under pressure the second time, and that was years ago. The only time I *needed* to be a bishop was for the work of Beloved Disciple to go on into the future. And actually, his own Eucharistic Catholic work. What I'm trying to say is, how he could ever have said that I asked to be a bishop, no way_ And then, if we could find, are you trying to find-

Adrian R: Yes.

Robert C: Because this thing about I'm supposed to have gone to meetings with people I never knew about or met.

Adrian R: It's probably an accident of memory...he's confusing you with someone else.

Robert C: Well, I hope so, yes. And then, there was this confusion about whether he consecrated me.

Adrian R: You asked him to, but he wasn't able to attend.

Robert C: Well that was it, but that was right around '94 or so when we were seeking the episcopate. But seeking the Episcopate was not asking to be—

Adrian R: That was '74. You said '94. '74.

Robert C: But maybe he confused our need to ask at that time when he was so ill with, but to phrase it "I need to be a bishop" as if I were asking, or like I must be a bishop. I want to be a bishop, no, I didn't *want* to be a bishop. I may have been asking as I was asking, as I say, a number of places, so that we could have the episcopate.

J. Gordon M: Let me make a suggestion. Why don't the two of you look over that item and suggest some editorial changes that would bring it into conformity with your memory. And let's see if Bishop Hyde would approve that. And that way, we can get that changed with the least amount of trouble.

Robert C: But I was confused about meeting with people that...

Adrian R: Probably a memory of someone else.

Robert C: Yeah.

Adrian R: There's another thing we have to correct on his papers. You pointed out that you found an actual transfer of the American Catholic Church—

Robert C: Well, the legal transfer.

Adrian R: Legal transfer, December 15, 1981. So you operated under the aegis

for a long time on that.

Robert C: Because what had happened was they had revived the American Catholic incorporation, which was fine. And they used it for a while, and then they put in an alternate named Catholic church, Orthodox something or other, as a title. And they kept the incorporation using a new title. But then what happened was, as if they considered themselves Orthodox Catholic Church of America or variation thereof, they were using, strangely enough, the American Catholic incorporation, but calling themselves a different name.

Adrian R: You could do that.

Robert C: Yes. But that's why he said to me in the early '70s, "You are American Catholic. We are functioning as an Orthodox body. And you just use American Catholic, there's no problem." And then we get to '81, when it got to be a bit of a problem, because I'd been submitting things so that it would become an actual legal entity. So they had their meeting and went through all this. And literally,

legally transferred. In other words, I have the papers, which I found, of all the legal transfers. So actually, on December 15, 1981, besides being a commemorative thing—

[End Tape Three, Side A. End Interview.]