

Sean Sammon

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

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Sammon, Sean

Transcript – Sean Sammon

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Marist College (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.)

Summary: Brother Sean Sammon reflects on his early life growing up in Manhattan and his Catholic schooling. As the former Superior General of the Marist Brothers order, a role he held from October 3, 2001 until 2009, we hear what he has to say about his time with the Marist community and what he hopes the future of Marist will look like.

GN: 00:00:00 Today is May 15th, Tuesday. And we had the real privilege of interviewing Brother Sean Sammon for the Marist College Archives. I was going to start to give a listing of Sean Sammon who is a Marist graduate, who is now in the Marist faculty as a scholar-in-residence, he's a former Superior General, he's a Master of Novices. Let me stop there [Laughter.] Sean, there's like four parts to this: Before Marist, Marist College, after Marist, and then later life, the administrative work. So it has a kind of four segments I'm trying to lay out here.

SS: 00:01:09 Terrific.

GN: 00:01:10 I'd like to have a little thumbnail review of steps along the way, like the beginning. Where were you born? Parish, school, grade school? That kind of thing.

SS: 00:01:23 Ok, yeah, I was born in New York City in Manhattan. My father is from the west of Ireland, my mother from the north of England, and I was born and baptized in St Vincent Ferrer Parish on east 66th street and right down from where the St Andrews used to be.

GN: 00:01:39 Yes, right. That's an area we've passed it all the time from the west going home for the Cathedral. And that's another story [Laughter.]

SS: 00:01:46 And I went to elementary school there and had the Dominican sisters of St Mary's in the Spring. Actually, the woman who was the Principal, her name was Sister Marie Veritas, were very tough at the time, but she was later Marjorie Tuit. She was a social activist as a Dominican sister, and she had a profound influence on the school. It was very progressive and there were very progressive ideas. A simple example in elementary school, I never saw a nun hit a kid in school. She came in one day to the fifth grade, she was the principal, and she belted this kid who probably should've been hit about five years earlier, but she came in the next day and apologized, and I had never seen an adult apologize to a child. It stuck with me. She said, "What I did yesterday was wrong, and I did it publicly, and therefore I need

to say I'm sorry publicly." It was like, there were so many life lessons these women taught me. From there, I actually...

- GN: 00:02:40 What years were these? Roughly.
- SS: 00:02:43 This would have been... I graduated elementary school 1961, so this would have been from 1954/55 to, well it was eight years, so I was born in 1947...
- GN: 00:02:56 Kennedy was president, that's what I go by.
- SS: 00:02:57 Well, actually, I remember the election for Kennedy.
- 00:03:00 I was in the eighth grade when that was taking place. So, it was the fifties, really. And the neighborhood is a very working class neighborhood. One of the rich things about it is that we're all sorts of different ethnic groups and religious groups. I grew up with Jewish friends, people with different ethnic backgrounds. So, when I actually encountered things like antisemitism and stuff later in life, it enraged me because I said many of the people who had those sentiments didn't have, didn't know people and didn't have relationships. But then, I applied to four Catholic high schools. I didn't apply to St Agnes, and this is kind of an interesting thing. I applied to Power Memorial, which is a Christian Brothers school. LaSalle, but not LaSalle on Second Street, there was a LaSalle high school up in the seventies, and it was, like, not too far in the neighborhood of Fordham Prep, and All Hallows might've been the last one, I think.
- SS: 00:03:51 But I got into all four, and I was going to go to Fordham Prep, and then a friend of mine was at Saint Agnes. And I got the idea in my head that that's where I should go to high school. Well, my eighth grade teacher was wild because she said, "Are you crazy? You should be going to Fordham Prep or the Jesuits," but I still remember I got my elementary school transcript, went down, Tim Murphy was the principal at St Agnes, and I said, "I'd like to apply," and he said, "Why didn't you apply with the COOPs?" I said, I didn't know that Saint Agnes was here. So I got in, and I went to St Agnes, and that's how I ended up there.
- GN: 00:04:26 Where were you, were you living in Manhattan at the time?
- SS: 00:04:28 Yeah, I was living, we were living on east 67th street.
- GN: 00:04:29 So that wouldn't be too hard to go down by the subway.
- SS: 00:04:32 Yeah. It was a very simple commute.

GN: 00:04:33 What were the conditions at the time economically? This is post-Depression era. Those jobs are back pretty much. So, were you hustling after school? Did you work at a prestigious?

SS: 00:04:47 Yeah, I had a part time job. I walked a dog. I did, I worked in a, like a local store as a clerk. Yeah. And it was, it was a time, and like what I remember is my mother would pay cash for everything. Like it was, they were really affected by The Depression. Actually, both came to, well, my father was in the Irish revolution. That's one of the reasons he came to the states. They were killing the messengers. He was 14 when he was in the revolution as a messenger, and he went to England then and then he came to the states. My mother's father was a ship builder and a minor in the north of England. He came to the states for a year to earn money thinking he'd go back and things would be better. They weren't. So, he brought the whole family over.

GN: 00:05:28 Where in the west of Ireland is he from?

SS: 00:05:30 Mayo.

GN: 00:05:30 Oh, okay.

SS: 00:05:31 Yeah, from actually right near Westport.

GN: 00:05:35 Okay. My father drove a laurie, so he was on the run, you know, for the beginning. Both sides wanted him. They wanted the truck, anyway, so, his only way out was to flee to America. Inn that, we are the very much the same. Back to Saint Agnes. How long were you there? How many years?

SS: 00:05:55 I was there just a year.

GN: 00:05:56 Just a year.

SS: 00:05:57 I went to The Juniorate at the end of freshman year.

GN: 00:05:59 Okay. In St Agnes, Brother Cyril? Rob? Who did you have?

SS: 00:06:03 Oh, Cyril was there, and Cyril had a profound effect on me at different times of my life. Cyril was living there and was the recruiter for the Brothers because whenever I hear a church bell ring, I remember we were freshmen... now, can you imagine saying this to freshmen? We were in the classroom on the very top floor. It's 9:00 in the morning and a funeral is taking place and the bell was ringing. And Cyril, giving a vocation talk, started

by saying, "Do you hear that bell? One day, it shall ring for you." It was like, chilling, you know, to these 13 and 14-year-old kids. But he was a presence in the school. John Malich was there, Robert Besium was there, Jude Parker was there.

- GN: 00:06:42 Ziggy Rancort? No, you, right, right right...
- SS: 00:06:43 Yeah, Ziggy wasn't there at that time. He was still at the college. But what I encountered was a group of young, very vital, happy people. We actually only had one lay teacher, Mr. Lemanina, who wrote one of the freshman classes and he and John were very good friends.
- GN: 00:06:59 Through your high school, there can't be very much activities in St Agnes, per se. I mean, it's a midtown school and so on. Were there activities? Was there choir, plays ...?
- SS: 00:07:16 For the size, there were a number of things. There was, the sodality was going on. It was a lot of volunteer work. But you're right. I mean, we didn't have a science lab. We did a science fair at one point, and literally, it was, we took an empty classroom and set up tables and put up exhibits. They were very creative with what they did. But we didn't have a gym, you know, a regulation gym. We used to use the 54th Street gym.
- GN: 00:07:37 Good.
- SS: 00:07:37 It was. It was incredibly limited, but there was a terrific spirit among the students there.
- GN: 00:07:42 Yeah. Yeah. It's, you know, and I think it reduced to a fairly good number of graduates, I mean, it was a school ... people hold onto Saint Agnes, hold it with affection, you know, with hard to it. Where did the interest in the Marist Brothers... who planted that seed?
- SS: 00:08:02 Would have been, John Malich would've been very influential. He ran the sodality. He would've been about 24 at the time, maybe 25. And sodality, was, you did a lot of service projects and a number of freshmen got involved in it. It was like one club that was a thing that seemed to draw a lot of the freshmen in. Also, there was like an expectation in the school that some people would go to religious life, and Cyril was very visible, very upfront about talking about the Brothers. I mean, he came in several times during the years, but it was something that had come to my mind even in elementary school, like Mary Nell came during elementary school, and I was just intrigued by ...

China. I mean, it's very naive when I think of it now, but like, they were 10 years, not even 10 years after China had changed governments. There was all sorts of persecution, it seemed quite dramatic and adventuresome and stuff like that. So, all through elementary school, we had had people come in and talk about vocations. Trappers came in, so it was always something that was there. And then Cyril talked a good bit about it, and he was just very close to the students. He didn't work at the school, but that was his base, 38th Street community. So he's over at the school a great deal.

- GN: 00:09:16 Was he into his Mariology at that time?
- SS: 00:09:17 Yeah. He was, yeah.
- GN: 00:09:19 Collecting books and so on ...
- SS: 00:09:20 Yeah.
- GN: 00:09:25 So, you go to the Juniorate- Esopus?
- SS: 00:09:28 No, in Cold Spring, and Leo Wall was the... first year it was just the former Poughkeepsie province, and Leo Wall was the director of the Juniorate, and we only had about 40 people in the whole, in the three years. So it was very, a very kind of intimate atmosphere.
- GN: 00:09:43 Did you have Verke?
- SS: 00:09:46 No, that occurred in the second year, and the second year, the Esopus folks came over, and we went from 36 to 120-something overnight, and it was a much bigger operation than... Dennis Damien became the Juniorate director and...
- GN: 00:10:01 So on, or when the rest of the team...
- SS: 00:10:03 Yeah, came over. Pat, James was there, Jimmy Consella, well, Danny Grogan was with us when we were just at Cold Spring as a smaller group, and Roy Mooney was there. So they had some exceptional people.
- GN: 00:10:18 Yeah. That, I always say that the sphere that was created in those Twinnie Houses, you know, whether it be the Juniorate, the Novitiate, the Scholasticate, they, put an implant in my mind. That's just, they can't be erased. So, the operations, though, let's talk about the academics and what we would have

in high school in those days. Right. You were there for, were you located there for three years, and then you went to Tyngsboro?

- SS: 00:10:53 Yeah.
- GN: 00:10:54 Okay. And so, it was really first, second, and third year of high school that you did there.
- SS: 00:10:57 Yeah.
- GN: 00:11:01 Foreign language? Any?
- SS: 00:11:02 Yeah. I studied a year of French there with Gregory Ballerina, and I had Latin for three years.
- GN: 00:11:11 You had Latin for three years. Okay. What...
- SS: 00:11:16 And actually we were put in French Four which was [Laughter] because they, they kind of put it, it was only about five of us in the class and they called it French Four. But the classes were so small they were trying to do an intensive sort of French the way they put it together.
- GN: 00:11:32 Yeah. Well you had, you have capable faculty to do it except that it had to be translated. I mean, if it were French Canadians, you know, you come to us with a terrible accent. That's what some of the French teachers used to say here about the Brothers and their ... especially those coming out of Tyngsboro. Well, the machine for the car, and so forth.
- SS: 00:11:54 When I went to learn French, when I went to Rome, I was going to go to Canada, and one of the brothers and friends said to me, "what would possess you to go to Canada if you wanted to learn French?" [Laughter] It was this comment.
- GN: 00:12:08 [Laughter] Moving on up...
- SS: 00:12:10 But I got a terrific high school education. I mean Jimmy Cansella was probably the best math teacher I have ever had. Danny Grogan made the Civil War come alive. I had Roy Mooney's senior year English literature notes till about 10 years ago.
- GN: 00:12:25 Really?
- SS: 00:12:26 And when I talk to kids here about Beowulf, Ralph Royster Doyster, you know, the WWI poets, Siegfried Sassoon, they

haven't heard of any of these people, and they're finishing college. It blows my mind. We got that in high school.

- GN: 00:12:40 Yeah, it's amazing. What went on, I mean, I've heard people ... we'll moved out into another phase, later. Well, moving up to Tyngsboro, now you come into David Kammer, and Judy, and Brother Jude, Brother Jude, who was still there.
- SS: 00:12:57 Yeah. He used to do the summers.
- GN: 00:13:00 There's also, it was kind of a farm, wasn't it?
- SS: 00:13:01 It was a farm, like we worked, actually, we raised everything that we ate except fish.
- GN: 00:13:04 Yeah. So...
- SS: 00:13:11 We learned canning, I was the milker. I ran the barn, and we'd go down at 4:30, I'd milk the cows, and I took care of the pigs to chickens. We had...
- GN: 00:13:19 Was there a milking machine? At least?
- SS: 00:13:20 Well, there's a thing you put on, but I learned how to milk by hand, but we also knew, we would put the machine on because we had to milk twice a day. And, the second year, Wilford, who was the farmer, was sick. So, Greg Last Name and myself got up seven days a week and milked in the morning, and then someone else did it in the afternoon.
- SS: 00:13:36 We often went in the afternoon, and we worked with, like, Peter Anthony Bossis. Louis Theotore.
- GN: 00:13:43 These are the carpenters, this is technical work.
- SS: 00:13:44 Yeah.
- GN: 00:13:46 Well, this is not traditional work. Their classroom is the shop.
- SS: 00:13:41 And they taught us a lot of those sorts of skills.
- GN: 00:13:53 Yeah. Yeah.
- SS: 00:13:54 Because actually, in the Kirk House, when I got back from Columbia, there were curtains that needed to go up and they tried to put them up and they put about six or seven holes in the wall and then just left it. So, I went Sunday. I got my drill

and I just put the whole thing up. And they said, "Where did you learn that?" We learned that in Tyngsboro. You just learn those kinds of skills from these guys.

- GN: 00:14:14 Yeah.
- 00:14:23 I'm trying to get to the agenda, the curriculum and the Novitiate. The fourth year was really fourth year of high school?
- SS: 00:14:32 Yep.
- GN: 00:14:32 Okay. How many were you?
- SS: 00:14:35 In the Novitiate?
- GN: 00:14:35 Yeah.
- SS: 00:14:36 My class was 21, and then there was another, like, 20 novices. So, there was about about 40 some odd.
- GN: 00:14:42 All right. Okay. And there you did history, English. Were you taking the English Regents or were you part of the New York City?
- SS: 00:14:51 We had taken all of that in high school.
- GN: 00:14:52 Oh, I see.
- SS: 00:14:52 So, like, when we got to Tyngsboro, John Cobra was on the faculty. John Malich had just come out of CU [Catholic University] with a Master's in theology. We had oh, Robisho was his last name. He had a nickname. He was a Marist father who taught us philosophy. John Bosco was there during the summers. Conan Deneen taught us a psychology course. John Colbert taught us creative writing. But we took... John Wilcox then later came. So, we took Old Testament, New Testament, Dogmatics, Christology, Mariology, liturgy...
- GN: 00:15:30 Again, The Constitution, the Rules of Economy, all of those part of it.
- SS: 00:15:34 We did those, yeah.
- GN: 00:15:38 Fast forward. The Novitiate today is quite different from the Novitiate you had. Was it not?
- SS: 00:15:45 Yeah, it is.

GN: 00:15:47 With good reason. I think.

SS: 00:15:48 Uh huh.

GN: 00:15:52 I used to say that I couldn't believe what I was taught in the Novitiate, spiritually. It was kind of basic simplicity. The Rosary, go to bed saying the Rosary, the angel will finish it. Why you don't know versus, you know, I really don't know what level you would address the question about prayer life. I mean, I was reading to myself, do you want to go to the contemplative view? Do you do the Jeditic kind of approach? Where do you see, what does the Marist spirituality... Is there such a thing?

SS: 00:16:29 Yeah, no, I believe there is. Like, and I think really a lot of it's been the recent research that's gone on that Champagnat, obviously, a lot, relied a lot on Ignatius, and that was in terms of some of the spirituality they began to develop. But Jean Colin, who founded the Society of Mary, he really relied a lot on a Spanish mystic, Mary Agrasia? [María de Agreda] And what he did was, some of her stuff is a little bit strange, but he would manage to draw out of her writings the basis for a Marial spirituality, and that's something that I think the institute lost for a number of years. The original founding vision was that we are Mary in the world. Not that Mary is a model. Not that Mary is someone we're devoted to. That, just as the Jesuits had the sense that they were Jesus in the world trying to re-evangelize after The Reformation, since the Jesuits were suppressed that when the time that society of Mary was formed, of which the brothers were going to be a branch, we were seen as the replacement for the Jesuits, but being Mary in the world and putting a maternal face on the church. So, in some ways I think they were ahead of their time.

SS: 00:17:19 To me, a lot of what they were talking about were things that emerged because at the time of Vatican II. Unfortunately, I think the formation that came in, because of things that happened that was given to people up until probably Vatican II, fell back on hold of things. I think we just lost a lot of the heritage of the institute, so Lewis and myself have spent just about a year working solely on the founder, the history of the institute. Today, we were finishing up the first volume of the history of the institute. It's like, there's three volumes of the new history, and looking at the crisis of 1903, when there were 4,200 brothers, a thousand left the institute, 1,200 were what they called "laicized;" they were still brothers, but were lay people because you couldn't operate as a religious. Another thousand went overseas, and then there were about 500 who were retired and were taken care of.

GN: 00:18:29 Overseas is pretty much Canada? Whereas...

SS: 00:18:32 No, well, no many went to Canada and the United States, but they went to many different countries. The reason the congregation is in so many countries is due to crises. It's not due to planning. When there was a crisis, they realized the only way to preserve the institute was to...

GN: 00:18:48 ... is get out.

SS: 00:18:49 Is to push it out.

GN: 00:18:52 Back to your own development. You're in the Novitiate. You come on now after the formation with the spiritual life developed there with David and Jude particularly, I think, were kind of the pushing towards. We were in Esopus, myself and Vinske, and Bill Levine, and Chesky, and Peter Hillary beforehand. Well, Pete was pretty much of the old school, very old school. He was not going to have any kind of support on the kneelers, they had to be hard wood. That's what you kneel on when you pray. Forget this cushion stuff, you know [Laughter.] So that's why it was in a process of... and we were trying to change it somewhat, why, we had started the vision of going out and working with the apple orchard people and trying to do instruction of their kids and religion, and as a carry-out for that, we arranged with Esopus to use the gym. So this was the tradeoff the lollipop, and, and they cooperated, but, for us, it was an eye opener. You go to Highland to work when the kids come in and they go to the refrigerator, they open it, there's apples there. They come back 20 minutes later, you know what's there?

SS: 00:20:20 Nothing.

GN: 00:20:20 The same apples!

SS: 00:20:21 Oh, the same apples [Laughter.]

GN: 00:20:22 So this was, you know, we had ...we were religious, we were making a sacri- [fice.]

SS: 00:20:28 Yeah, I know it's ...

GN: 00:20:30 I know, it really ... it made its mark. Alright!

SS: 00:20:36 One thing about the novitiate I would say is, like, David was, we went to the mission 1965. The council had just ended. If Rauner

wrote a book that was published on Monday, we had it in the library on Thursday. And I didn't realize, I think he was getting a lot of pushback in the province at large, you know, like what are these guys need to be reading all that stuff for. But I couldn't imagine a better theological foundation than we got there. And even his conferences, like, he was trying to push us further into like a world that was beginning to emerge, and I think he did that at a lot of personal expense, which we weren't aware of, but I think him just seeing that the world that people had been prepared for was falling apart... it wasn't going to be there anymore.

- GN: 00:21:23 I'm in touch with him almost weekly.
- SS: 00:21:25 Okay.
- GN: 00:21:26 And Jude was one of his supports to Jude, Driscoll, so kind of, because he was a member of the, Luke Driscoll was also part of it. I'm getting a lot of names together here, but you follow [Laughter.] You come to the Scholasticate?
- SS: 00:21:44 Yep.
- GN: 00:21:44 A new world now. What were you studying?
- SS: 00:21:48 I was studying English, originally, and I was living at Lafayette Street with John Bosco. It was when they started that first small community, and I studied English until I came to junior year, and then I decided I wanted to switch to psychology.
- GN: 00:22:02 Did you have George Tower?
- SS: 00:22:04 No, I didn't.
- GN: 00:22:05 Thank God. [Laughter.]
- SS: 00:22:07 I know, I didn't.
- GN: 00:22:07 Shroeter?
- SS: 00:22:09 No, I didn't have Shroeter, either.
- GN: 00:22:09 Milton Teichman?
- SS: 00:22:11 Milton Teichman I didn't have.
- GN: 00:22:12 Father Louis, at least!

SS: 00:22:13 Father Louis, I had. Who was one of the most influential people?

SS: 00:22:17 When I was here, to me. I took Contemporary America Novel with him. He made literature just come alive. I was really quite interested in American literature.

GN: 00:22:26 Yeah, yeah. He had a medical procedure this morning.

SS: 00:22:30 Oh, he did. Okay.

GN: 00:22:32 I don't think it was serious. Not that, it's never not serious, but I think it was planned. I think he went in, and I don't know whatever the heartfelt, but it would be what, I'm just guessing. I just really called to say that's where he is. We're on a daily basis. But the student here in the Scholasticate, who is the director?

SS: 00:23:01 Of the first year here at the Scholasticate? The first year, might've been you ... Arthur?

GN: 00:23:06 No. You had Chicago Lyons.

SS: 00:23:12 Highous Lyons, no, I don't think so. The second year was, the five, was Jerry Cox, and Larry, and Richard LaPietra, Mo Bibeau, and Jerry Weiss.

GN: 00:23:23 Yes.

SS: 00:23:23 But I lived off campus for two years. I only, and when I finally came to campus it was in Benoit House and I lived there with John Malich and Gene Ostrowski.

GN: 00:23:33 Oh, okay.

SS: 00:23:37 So I never really experienced the Scholasticate the way it was here.

GN: 00:23:40 Right, right. Oh!

SS: 00:23:42 Because the second year at Lafayette Street, Dave Kammer was the director.

GN: 00:23:45 Right. Okay. Okay. I had lost track of all that. What about the student body? How much was lay students? How much Brothers? How much ... what else?

SS: 00:23:58 There were probably about 800 students, maybe 900. About 120 were student Brothers, and there was a lot of contact with the lay students. I mean student Brothers were involved in theater, were involved in a lot of activities. And actually, people like Pat McNamara, Han Cameron, they were all lay students here when we were scholastics, and they joined the brothers later on.

GN: 00:24:17 Was Jeff Dolani here?

SS: 00:24:20 Jeff was here. Yeah. And very, and Jim Bridge.

GN: 00:24:23 Jim Bridge, that's the theater group. Yeah.

GN: 00:24:25 Jerry Cox, of course, we'll go into it. Were there women on campus yet?

SS: 00:24:34 They came in '67 in the night division, and the next year in the day division, but most of them were. I remember there was a group that I knew well, but they were, like, candidates for a religious order. I remember Ruth was one young woman, but they were just a very, very small group. They grew in senior year a bit more, but not, nothing like what you'd have today.

GN: 00:24:56 Oh, right. Well no, they dominate now.

SS: 00:24:58 Yeah.

GN: 00:25:00 But, yes, at the very beginning, the nurses, they didn't, they took Marist College courses at the hospital. I gave it.

SS: 00:25:10 Yeah.

GN: 00:25:11 Literature and composition.

SS: 00:25:13 Okay.

GN: 00:25:14 They had to have some academic programs for their nursing degree, they had to be able to read and write. And so, I had that function. And, I don't know, we were bringing students over here for the lab on a yellow school bus. I just continued right up to the hospital, walked in, and taught them, and I'd pick them up when I went home. So that was that role. The faculty here...

SS: 00:25:48 Yeah

GN: 00:25:49 Was Cashin here? Linus here? Who was...

SS: 00:25:51 Yeah, Eddie Cashin was here. Linus was the president. Danny Kirk was here.

GN: 00:25:57 Oh, Kirk was here.

SS: 00:25:58 Yeah, he taught, because taught me Eisabel, the personality theory. Yeah. He was here, and Bill Idol was here. Ed O'Keeffe was here in the psych department. But some of the other people who were here... Well, Jerry Weiss was here.

00:26:16 Oh, I'm sure blanking on his name.

GN: 00:26:19 Mike Shurkas?

SS: 00:26:21 Yes, he was here in the theology department. And Joe Greg was here.

GN: 00:26:27 Oh, right.

SS: 00:26:29 Oh, he took...

GN: 00:26:30 But he died somewhere in the early years.

SS: 00:26:32 Yes. During those years. Joe Bob was here, who taught Greek and Latin. Italo Beneen was here Eddie Donahue was here.

GN: 00:26:41 Yeah.

SS: 00:26:44 Richard LaPietra was here. Because I had an experience with Richard with when I switched to psych, I had to take a chemistry course. So I had signed up for a course not realizing it was organic chem honors, organic chem. So after the first class he called me up. He said, "What are you doing in this class?" I said, "I need four credits in chemistry." He said, "You're not qualified, you just had high school chemistry. This is an honors course for chemistry majors." So I said, "Look, I'll make you a deal... would you let me try for 30 days, tell me what I need to do to get up to speed, and if I don't do it in 30 days, I'll drop out." He said, "Fine." So after 30 days he said, "Stay." And he was such a wonderful teacher. I was so dumb, I had my hand up all the time, and he was so clear. What I didn't realize until later is the chemistry majors knew as little as did, but they were too embarrassed to raise their hands. So, I ended up getting an A+ in the course, which is funny. [Laughter.] But I will never forget how kind he was to me in terms of letting me stay for those 30 days, and he gave me program learning books, difference

between molul and molar and all those sorts of things. And he was absolutely a phenomenal teacher.

GN: 00:27:43 Yeah. Everybody who's ever had him has said the same things. Now...

SS: 00:27:47 Every class was like a one act play. It was just brilliant, really.

GN: 00:27:50 Right, and also play acting, too. He wouldn't let you in. You'd wait outside, don't discharge. If you're late, 10 minutes late, don't come in. Still, he's left his imprint, I say, on me personally because we became very good friends in later years. The other thing about, coming back to this now, Marist College in those years really did not have, you know, I remember a monsieur out in Long Island, somebody who was saying, I think it was Bob Lynch, saying that he was in high school and they wouldn't know what to... "Oh, go to Marist, they'll take anybody."

SS: 00:28:37 Okay.

GN

GN: 00:28:55 So it was like an open door. And it was survival. And I remember Linus, I don't know where the dormitories were at this time about, but, you know, Paul had this idea that was going to become a community college that would be supported by the mid-Hudson communities. And then Danny Kirk, and John Malich, and John Willhoff did this statistical study and they came to Linus and said that there are not enough students in the Hudson Valley, and if there were that wanted to go to college, they wouldn't necessarily come here, you know. But we have 10 high schools in New York. They graduated 400 every year. So the idea of billing dormitories, first Sheahan then Leo then Champagnat... were any of those up when you came there?

SS: 00:29:28 They were all up. Yeah.

GN: 00:29:29 They were all up? Oh, okay. So that's where the student body was, they're all from Long Island for the most part.

SS: 00:29:35 Yeah.

GN: 00:29:36 And very few from the west of the Hudson. It was all Connecticut, New York.

SS: 00:29:41 Yeah.

GN: 00:29:43 Okay. But I had people say that after they had left here and went to other places, they found themselves just as well-educated, you know, that you didn't lose by coming here. Yeah, I mean we were just patting ourselves on the back.

SS: 00:29:58 I found myself incredibly well-prepared. I think we got a better education than they're getting now. I mean, Bob Lewis for example, we had Contemporary American Novel...we read 15 novels and all the supporting literature. And I remember I had some kids over to the Gate House for dinner one night and I was talking about the course, and he said, "What'd you read?" I said, "Well, we read 15 novels" and he said, "15 books?" I said, "It was a course in contemporary American novel. We read a book a week." Like, they read, and even now, like, the freshmen come in and they read one book. I mean, in high school we used to read three over the summer. Even philosophy, I've tried to get some kids interested in philosophy. They take an introductory course, they read *about* philosophy they don't... Eddie Donahue had us reading Hegel, Heidegger Kierkegaard. Italo Beneen had us reading the existentialists. Either we got a great education... Later I went, when I went to graduate school at Fordham, I felt very well-prepared. Later, I worked with people from Yale and Columbia. I felt I got a terrific education. Absolutely could hold your own. And in some ways it was richer in terms of the exposure that we had.

GN: 00:31:02 Yeah. I think it has to be said for the record that, in other words, people will say, "Well, why did go to Marist?" People who came here were very satisfied. I mean, it was tough.

SS: 00:31:16 Yeah. [Agreeing.]

GN: 00:31:16 First of all, you had to go to class, you know, you couldn't... we developed this attendance policy, have responsible attendance. It used to be mandatory, but they dropped that, but dropping it didn't change any.

SS: 00:31:30 No. [Agreeing.]

GN: 00:31:31 Kids who stayed in the dormitory just failed out. You couldn't, "Tell me what he [the professor] said today." That's not going to work.

SS: 00:31:39 And you had challenging projects. Now they have this capping project, and I've read some of the capping projects, and some are good. Some haven't really impressed me as, like, an integrated project. Whereas, like, for Bob Lewis, I did a paper on

the concept of the Schlemiel in the literature of Bernard Malamud. And you had to read all of Malamud or you really immersed yourself in Yiddish literature, Chaim Potok, all these people. I fell in love with it, and I remember, years later, I was up at The Culinary [Institute] dinner one night and I was with Senator Salandon and his wife, and we were talking and his wife said, "Do you know what a Mensch is?" And I said, "Let me tell you something. My senior paper was on the concept of the Schlemiel in the literature of Bernard Malamud." Well, we started, and that is bound us every time I see her, you know. But, like, that's the kind of thing. In addition, for Bill Idol, I had to do a senior project study in REM sleep and dreams and do an overnight project on that. So the kinds of intellectual challenges we had, I think are far superior to some of this stuff the kids get today. Plus, the other thing is, a vast majority of the scholastics had Regent scholarships.

- GN: 00:32:44 Yeah.
- SS: 00:32:44 So, like, I mean in terms of an intellectual community of students, you had bright people. I think of people like Freddy Griffenstein and other people like that...
- GN: 00:32:54 John Klein
- SS: 00:32:55 In science, literature, history... you had people who really were reading all the time and talking. It was a very rich world to live in.
- GN: 00:33:02 I gave John Klein a B+ in composition.
- SS: 00:33:05 Did you? [Laughter.]
- GN: 00:33:05 He never got over it. [Laughter.] And he could write, but ... why I did it, I have no idea except that I think we were not supposed to give too many As. And so, the Marist Brothers were humble, they would bear with it, you know, not easily, but they did. All right. You go to out of finishing Marist College. Now, apostolate. You go to St Agnes?
- SS: 00:33:33 Yeah. This was fun. This was a funny time. What came up was I had applied to Fordham when I was a senior in college, hoping you go to graduate school, and this is kind of a strange time in the province history. I didn't get into Fordham until four years later, and I could see in retrospect why. I had no experience at all. For a program in clinical psych, you needed experience. So, what I did was I went part-time to the New School and I worked

two days a week the first year at St Agnes. Jimmy Kearney hired me there because I remember, when I went for the interview, he said to me after the interview with he and Barry Ryan, who is the director of guidance, he said, "You're really not what we're looking for." He said, "We're looking for someone at the end of a Master's degree, not beginning one," but, he said, "We'll take a chance on it."

- SS: 00:34:14 And it worked out. The second year, they wanted me to come on full-time, because Barry was leaving, and take over the guidance department, which I did. Then, I continued at the New School doing nine credits and working full-time at St Agnes until I got the Master's degree at the end of that second year.
- GN: 00:34:29 Oh, so...
- SS: 00:34:30 I was living up at 115th Street then. You know we, there was nine of us who the province let us live up there. We were working on rehabilitating tenement buildings in East Harlem and then teaching at different schools. Joe Letter was at the Kelly School which was run by the Christian brothers. Joe Letter was there. Mike Kelly was at Hayes. Barney Sheridan was down on the lower east side. John Malich moved in when he became Provincial. John Wilcox was there, he was studying at Union Theological. Tony Miserendina was there. He was working at... I'm not sure where Tony was,
- SS: 00:35:09 but we were working at different high schools and then living there, and on the weekends and some evenings we worked on rebuilding these tenement buildings.
- GN: 00:35:15 What did you teach when you were teaching?
- SS: 00:35:17 I taught, well, first I taught in Chicago during the summer, I taught English and math, and then later I taught psychology.
- GN: 00:35:25 [Inaudible Name] was here to teach psychology.
- SS: 00:35:27 Yeah, he taught psychology.
- GN: 00:35:28 Yeah, oh.
- SS: 00:35:29 I had a class of 41 doing general psychology, and then I did a seminar for eight kids in psychology, and they read Rollo May's Love and Will, Treblinka, Frankel's Love and Will. They read some very interesting stuff.

GN: 00:35:45 Alright, there are three aspects I want to talk about: writing, teaching, and studying. What intrigues me is your writing. How do you do the research? Like the Champagnat Study, *The Heart that Knows No Bounds*, and the detail that you get... where the heck did you get that?

SS: 00:36:06 Okay, well...

GN: 00:36:07 How do you sweep it all together?

SS: 00:36:11 The way I construct things is as a teacher. So, for example, that book was an exception, but the other books that I've written were... like, I like to teach, so I would do workshops and I'd refine it, and then I'd sit down, and based on the outline and everything I'd done in the workshop, that's our creative book. But, the book *The Heart that Knows No Bounds*, Benito gave me a week to write that. That book I wrote in seven days because it was for the canonization. Well, I was lucky because Steven Pharrell had done a major doctoral dissertation on Champagnat. Ramuel Gibson who was...

GN: 00:36:47 In English or in French?

SS: 00:36:48 In English, and he was an Australian. Ramuel Gibson, who was a New Zealander, had done a major thesis on the spirituality of Champagnat. There were, Fred McMann had written *Strong Hearts, Gentle Mind*, which, he was an Australian. So, I used a lot of those secondary sources and kind of took the best of them and worked them into a popular account.

SS: 00:37:11 Like, Benito said to me, "I want you to write a book aimed at a youthful audience, and I want it to be able to be read between the General House and the Vatican on the subway." So when I finished it, I actually took the metro in to St Peter's, and on the way in and out, I was able to finish the book.

GN: 00:37:27 Incredible.

SS: 00:37:30 I also have had some excellent critics when I've written. There are people who will be brutal in their critique, and I find that always more helpful when you're writing a book. People who will give you an honest opinion.

GN: 00:37:42 You have one on spirituality of the 20th century. Where did that come from?

SS: 00:37:48 That was...

GN: 00:37:52 2-0-0-1

SS: 00:37:52 *Revolution of the Heart*, I think it is. That was one of the circulars I did, which were like, they're small books, I did five of them.

SS: 00:37:59 Well, with that one, there was a whole controversy going on in the institute about, like, what our spirituality was. There was a whole group in Latin America that were very Ignatian, and I don't think Ignatius is our spirituality. So, I set out to write a book. Talking and trying to use the stuff I knew about Champagnat and had researched, and then using some contemporary thought and trying to see how that reflected off what Champagnat was doing. So, like, Ron Rolehauser is an oblate of Mary Immaculate who was down at the Oblate School where he talks about spirituality as passion. When I went back and looked at Champagnat, I said, "There's a lot of similarities here." So, I crafted a circular around that. Now, to give you an example of frank feedback, the first letter I got from a brother after that circular was published was from Mariana Verona, who's in the province of Chile. The first line of the letterhead, "Dear Sean, your recent circular is a disservice to this institute." [Laughter] And then three pages tearing it apart, which I love because you get into a discussion.

GN: 00:38:57 Why did you add alcoholics' children?

SS: 00:39:02 That was out of personal interest. My father was an alcoholic, there's alcoholism in my family.

GN: 00:39:06 I see.

SS: 00:39:06 So, I got involved with Al Anon [Alcoholics Anonymous] and started to read about it. So, I wanted to write a simple book that would be helpful to people who came from families...

GN: 00:39:14 And it had to do with the study in your dissertation or ...

SS: 00:39:18 In Graduate School. I actually was going to do my dissertation on the area of alcoholism, and then I did it on an area of developmental psychology. I was more interested, I had a fellowship in neuropsychology, I was interested in the neurological aspects of alcoholism.

GN: 00:39:31 Alright. Teaching, how do you prepare for teaching?

SS: 00:39:36 Read a lot, try to develop stories. When I teach, people tell me I'm a storyteller. I feel like stories can, will stay with people, and the point may stay with them, also.

GN: 00:39:50 How do you focus on what are you trying to say? What's the meat of it, you know? Is it developmental? Or is it something that's growing, or here it is, you know? In the message you want to give, you get it across by story within the lecture itself.

SS: 00:40:12 Yeah, no, what I would do is I'd say like, "What are some key points I want to interact with the group on?" And I like, like an open atmosphere where people come back and people draw on their experience. So, like, I did a lot of workshops, and in the workshop atmosphere, I do some presentation within small group interaction. Like, I think people learn in a variety of ways. So I tend, when I do the First Year Seminar, not First Year Seminar, I mean the Emerging Leaders Program, like I do a program called The Imposter Syndrome: learning how to be an adult. I'd set up a couple of goals on that. I want them to know that life is developmental, that the most stressful time in life is the early adult years, that there are four major tasks, and let's take a look at them, and can we apply this to your own life? So I'd have that general idea, but then I'd work around that frame in terms of developing things.

GN: 00:41:13 Okay, and studying, do you have a particular private area you'd like to pursue? A biography? Reading? What's your hobby?

SS: 00:41:25 Oh, okay. Well, I like to do work in... I love biography, but my mother was a reader, so I don't watch television. I read all the time, and my family's like that, we're all readers. She was a woman who educated herself in many ways through [inaudible.] When we were growing up, Dickens was in the house, Wilkie Collins was, all this literature around. So that, like, I would read a lot. In terms of areas of interest, like I'm writing a book now called ... what is the working title of it? Surviving Early Adulthood: skills for the early adult years.

GN: 00:42:02 Yeah, I saw that someplace. Yeah.

SS: 00:42:02 And I bounced it off just a couple of graduates, and they said, "Gee, we'd really love a book like this. It would be very helpful." So, I'm hoping to do that over the summer and in the fall. That would come from like a lot of work that I've done and from a lot of their stories. I will also, I'm very interested in area of sexuality because I feel like the church's outlook on sexuality is informed by the 1950s. I don't think it's speaking to young people.

GN: 00:42:25 Right.

SS: 00:42:25 And since I'm not a priest, and what are they going to do to me? I might as well write about it is what I think.

GN: 00:42:31 They had disinvited you to come and talk about that.

SS: 00:42:35 And in my age, doesn't matter. I'd rather stay home.

GN: 00:42:40 When do you do your writing?

SS: 00:42:43 I do it whenever I have a chance. I read a book, an essay, once about Edith Stein and her writing, and it said, if you're going to be in a religious order, you're never going to just have time to write. You need to work and write. And so, it said, if you're not willing to do that, then you're never going to write. So I write when I have a chance.

GN: 00:43:00 We have a teacher here, she just retired, same thing. She has a notebook in the car.

SS: 00:43:05 Yeah.

GN: 00:43:06 She writes sometimes at a red light. Yeah, I mean, things will come to you just to note, you know, to put it down there.

SS: 00:43:13 When I was a runner, I used to run with a small pad, the same way, you'd get ideas running. Like, when I work out at Mike Arteaga's, a phrase comes, had to edit something, etc.

GN: 00:43:24 Turn the page. Called to administration. You've been in it for years. I mean like nine...

SS: 00:43:31 Too long.

GN: 00:43:35 [Laughter.] So we're talking about the nine year lapses, you know. You went to Rome as Assistant General, and you were there ... and then you were Superior General. So, how does your diet stand up, how does your language ability stand up in this foreign environment? You know, how do you even sleep and move around and stay alert through it all? It must take a terrible ...

SS: 00:44:02 With great difficulty. [Laughter.]

GN: 00:44:04 Oh yeah. With great difficulty [Inaudible] Well, you talk to it. What drives you?

- SS: 00:44:15 When I got out of graduate school, I went to work at a place called House of Affirmation up in Massachusetts, and I was based in Whitinsville the first year. And then after a couple of years, they asked me to be what they call the International Clinical Director, and we had centers all over the country and one in England. A lot of it was doing promotion of the center. We worked with a lot of priests and religious going through transitions or with emotional problems with five residential centers. So, I started traveling then, but my real love was teaching and doing therapy. So, I did some of that. When I got elected Provincial, I remember Martin Resnocoff, who was my mentor at Fordham, he was furious because he said, "How long is this going to last?" Because he said, "You know, you're a good teacher, you could really... so I thought you'd be working in the area of psych and making a contribution."
- SS: 00:44:58 And I thought I'd be doing that, too. So I remember I said to him, "This will be for no more than three years, maybe six, but that would be it because I didn't think it'd be anything beyond that. When I was Provincial, the province went all the way to Japan, so I had to go over to Japan, and then a couple of times I had to go to Rome for different sorts of meetings. So, I got used to traveling. But you're always... a friend of mine, Craig, would say to me, he said, "I think you're in perpetual jetlag because you're moving to so many places." When I went to the chapter of 85, I thought this is going to be it. I'm going home. I was stunned when I was elected Vicar General, I had no language but English.
- SS: 00:45:39 I mean, I had a little bit of French in high school, but nothing to speak of. I was then thrown into a community that lived and worked in French, with no French. I was also diagnosed with a brain tumor. When I came home from the chapter, I went to get a physical, they found I had a brain tumor, so I had to undergo neurosurgery. So right away, people think you're damaged goods because, I remember when I went back, people were like looking here [pointing] to see if they had cut into my head. [Laughter.] I said no, they went in through here [pointing.] But the brain tumor was one of the best things that ever happened to me because it gave me a whole different view on life. And a good friend of mine said, a woman friend, she said, "That tumor sent you on a journey that's the shortest distance, but takes the longest time: from your head to your heart."
- SS: 00:46:19 Because I've lived the second part of my life out of my heart. I think I lived the first part of my life out of my head. But what happened is, I go back and Chris Manion, who was the youngest on the council, I was the second youngest, and we had become

good friends, he was murdered in Africa. He was murdered in Rwanda, shot by the Rwandese army during the genocide. So, Benito came to me, because the council wouldn't replace him, which was a whole other thing that I never was able to sort out. He said, "I can't let you take time off for French because I need you to do his job and your own job." So, now I'm the Vicar and doing the work of a counselor, with no French, living and working in a community that was French-speaking. It was terrible for two years.

SS: 00:46:58 What I did is whenever I had time, I studied French. And then, finally, I insisted that I get some time off and he sent me to Verenseraliet, which was a retirement house in France. And this brother, Maurice, was going to, they said perfect my French, it was *improve* my French is what it was. He was blind, he had a baton. Every time I made a mistake, he hit the table. I said, I'll develop a tick, I don't know if I'll learn French here. But to show you the state I was in with my French... The last day, they had a party for me, and this is a retirement house, there were a lot of retired guys. So, in the dining room they had some wonderful wine on the table. Thinking that my French had improved, and that I'd compliment the wine, I noticed that on the label, there were no chemicals or stabilizes or preservatives like they have in this country. So, I say in, what I think is, my best French, I said, [Inaudible], but I'd actually said was, "The wine is excellent. I noticed there are no condoms in it." [Laughter.]

GN: [Laughter.]

SS: 00:47:53 And John Bertell, who was the director, burst out laughing. Some of these older guys almost fell out of their wheelchairs. [Laughter.] So I said, "What did I say?" He said, "I'll tell you later," but, he said, "In the future, you might find a word other than [French] to describe wine." [Laughter.] So I just struggled through it in terms of getting the French. By the time I got the French down, I was finishing up as Vicar. I thought I was going to come home because I thought, in no way would this congregation ever elect an American. So, I was stunned when I was elected General. Actually, someone said to me, "You look like you're in shock." I was in absolute shock. Then, the council said they didn't want to work in French. They wanted to work in Spanish.

GN: 00:48:25 Oh, gosh.

SS: 00:48:26 So I had to learn Spanish. We worked in Spanish and English, then, the second council.

GN: 00:48:31 Quite a story, honest to God. Alright.

SS: 00:48:33 But I loved, absolutely loved, living in Rome. The Italian people, the style of life... I'd moved back tomorrow. I made many friends there.

GN: 00:48:44 The range of problems that was come on your lap over there, I mean. All kinds, with, I'm only guessing, like, financial ones, personal ones, decision making, diagnostic ones, almost. In terms of teaching and "What are we going to do?" Or, "Where are we going to stand?" I mean, how often were you called upon to "What do the Brothers say about homosexuality?" and, "What did they say about..." You know. I mean, did you have a firsthand advisor that you could go to?

SS: 00:49:17 No, I... there was a terrific council and there was so many people were helpful. You can't... Like, I never felt I was doing the job alone. No, and we had all those problems.

SS: 00:49:26 We had personnel issues. We had a major financial disaster where a guy who was an affiliate of the order borrowed millions of dollars saying it was for the Marist Brothers. The banks didn't do the due diligence. We had to restructure corporations. We had absolutely incredible people working. Not only Brothers, but lay Marist together, and the lay Marist movement was forming then. I never felt I was in it alone, so they were just terrific people. And like on every committee in Rome, we have lay Marist and Brothers: financial people, organizational people. And I found anyone I called and asked would they help? Absolutely. Like five Americans came over. I just picked the phone up and say I needed, I needed someone to organize things. [Inaudible name] He said, "Give me a week. I'll wrap things up. I'll be over." Came for six years. So people were just incredibly generous.

GN: 00:50:22 Again, turning the page. Let's talk about the future. Talking about the Marist Brothers.

GN: 00:50:30 You gave a wonderful little talk one night about how you thought we're on a downswing now from where we used to be at 12,000 to 6,000 to 4,000. What is a good case? Well there's a good chance it's going to come back. I said, well, it is for Americans here during the Great Depression and seminaries and so on and so on. Do you see this as the Marist Brother of the future or we don't yet know what he looks like?

- SS: 00:51:01 No, I think so. And Lewis and myself talk a lot about this. Like, I said to him that one of the reasons I wanted us to study the history together is at every moment of crisis, the congregation had to make decisions which helped created the future. Like an example and this stuns me. When we first started running schools, around the end of the 1900s, a lot of priests thought that schools was not the not the most effective way to evangelize because a lot of kids were falling between the cracks. So, they put together what they called "Catholic Action:" youth groups, retreats. The brothers opposed that, and were against it, and it was only when Thea Fing came in and said, "We're going to do that, and we'll incorporate it into what we're doing." Then, a whole new future came up, and the congregation began to grow again because, to me, it responded to some of the signs of the times.
- SS: 00:51:52 I think we're at a point where we have to do that now, and I don't know what the future's going to look like, but when Ernesto, who's the General, was over, you met him in the chapel that day. When he spoke to the province chapter, it was two-thirds brothers and one-third lay Marist in the chapter. He said something that stayed with me. He said, in 1967, we were 9,000 Brothers, 10,000 lay people or 15,000 lay people, and 300,000 young people around the world that we're working with. Today, we're 3,500 Brothers, 40,000 lay people, and 750,000 young people we're working with. That we've tripled in our work, and yet our numbers are smaller, we have to stop thinking in old categories.
- GN: 00:52:33 Yeah.
- SS: 00:52:34 We have to think of, like, this world that's opening up if we really are interested in evangelization. So, for me, there's that possibility.
- SS: 00:52:42 The second thing is, and I love this [inaudible] who was at our house actually the other night, he's a Brazilian, he's on the council. And, when I went to the last general conference between chapters, he presented the statistics, and he said we're actually growing as a congregation right now, worldwide, and that more people who are coming in are staying rather than leaving. The reason we are still dropping in absolute numbers, he said, is all these people over 65. He said, but don't worry, they'll be gone in 20 years [Laughter.] I said to him, "Thanks very much," but, like, he said, we'll probably bottom out at 2000 among the Brothers, at least, but it will be a standard normal curve then, and then we'll start to grow slowly but within a standard normal curve. So, you won't have this enormous

number of us who came in in the sixties around the world, *that* was the aberration, and yet we made it normative. So, when people look back on the congregation, we probably have about as many people as we had now in the 1940s, and then it just skyrocketed in the fifties and sixties for a number of reasons. What I think is very hopeful is the whole lay Marist movement, which people are still trying to get a definition of, and still trying to understand how that's going to get lived out in so many ways.

- GN: 00:53:52 I think one of the places I find most exciting is Esopus.
- SS: 00:53:56 Yes.
- GN: 00:53:57 What Brother [inaudible] is doing over there. The girls, the whole community, they talk that it's home now, you know, people go there and they feel secure in their territory. What you said that we'll end up building houses, I'm sure, will be the next move. And Sean O'Shay's daughter worked there one summer, and she said, "Dad, I would pay to work there next year."
- SS: 00:54:24 Yeah.
- GN: 00:54:25 You know, it's just such an invigorating, you know...
- SS: 00:54:28 It transforms people.
- GN: 00:54:30 It does, and I think that Marist may not be the one, I was going to spend more time on community life and all that. That's why it's... I think the spirit of a belief, Jesus Christ, you know. Okay. We talked the last few minutes about Marist College, specifically Marist Brothers, Marist College. I don't think there's much impact now for the Marist Brothers on Marist College. I think you are a particular unique voice that there's something personal and something unique about it, and I think the *ministry* is good. I'm not quite sure all that's going on and how it's going, but when I see "Campus Ministry" on a van, I guess it's a hired one because it had a Nebraskan plate on it or something.
- SS: 00:55:26 Yeah, it is. [Agreeing.]
- GN: 00:55:27 [Laughter.] So I said, what the hell is this? Liz and I gave a sizeable contribution to the college in the Legacy for the continuation of the Marist spirit, whatever that means. Yeah. So, you speak, what do you think about it?

- SS: 00:55:45 But that was one of the reasons I wanted to move the Novitiate here because I agree with you. My fear is that the influence and the heritage of so many people, yourself and others, Richard LaPietra who built this place, and then generations that came afterwards, that that was slipping away. I mean, the story I often tell is the one about the Champagnat dormitory, which you probably heard. When a student guide was taking some perspective students and parents around, they got to the Champagnat dormitory, and one of the fathers said, "By the way, who is this guy, Champagnat?" and without missing a beat, the students said, "I'm really not sure, but he must've been a major donor because they named a building after him." [Laughter.] I went crazy when I heard this. So, I went to admissions and said, "You've got to do a little bit of in-service, which I've been doing. But no, I wanted to move the Novitiate here and do a different model of an open house."
- SS: 00:56:32 And we've been working on that this year. Like, for example, just two weeks ago, three weeks ago, we did a Busy Person's retreat. We got 13 kids who signed up, four of us worked on that. We had them all over for dinner when the retreat was over. Wednesday nights, we've been doing, during Lent, we did an evening prayer in the chapel at 9:15. We had 50 kids on Ash Wednesday. We never had less than 12. Many kids have asked us if we'd continue that throughout the course of the year because one of the things I wanted to do was do a morning prayer at 8:10 and make it open to staff or faculty, anyone who wanted to come, and then do an evening prayer once a week, and if people wanted it more than once a week, we could do it. People come when they want, that sort of thing.
- SS: 00:57:10 The second thing was to have kids over to the house, and I think it would be good for the possibility of vocations, but also kids getting to know who we are. Like tonight, it's interesting, a graduate from two years ago texts me last night, he and his brother are in the area, can they stay over? They're going to stay over tonight, they'll come for dinner, they'll stay tomorrow. We had Landon Moore up. Landon is a divinity student at Yale Divinity studying for the episcopal priesthood. He's Episcopalian from Saratoga, and he was preaching at Christ Church, so we all went to Christ Church. He spent the weekend with us. Mike Duffy came up and spent the weekend with us. Mike is one of those kids who was featured on the webpage. He went to Asia and raised \$20,000 for freshwater wells. They were based at our school for handicapped street kids in Cambodia.
- SS: 00:57:56 So, I'm trying to stretch them, the kids, and get them out to as many Marist contacts as possible, and get kids here aware of

things. A woman who I prepared for Confirmation last year, wrote to me recently, she's third year abroad in South Africa. She said, "I walked down the street from the dormitory that I'm staying in and there's a Marist College. Does that have anything to do with Marist College?" I wrote back and said, "No, but it's got everything to do with the Marist Brothers who have something to do with Marist College. So, let me get you some contacts so you can meet these people." I've tried to say to the third year abroad people, "We have a network." What Joe Bell and Jay used to do with Ernie and his wife in Spain. I mean, we've got that network all around the world that the college could benefit by. But, to me, we've got eight Marist now, with two Marist fathers, and six Marist Brothers on campus.

SS: 00:58:45 I'm going to try to exploit that. We have no interest in money in the administration or whatever, but my fear about Campus Ministry is that it does a lot of projects, but I don't know if it links it to faith.

GN: 00:58:55 Yeah.

SS: 00:58:56 So that, to me, what I'm interested in is the evangelization aspect, and I'm hoping that house can become a center of it. One thing we're starting next year are home liturgies. John and Kevin and Richard said, Richard Morris said he'd be happy to help with this, but I want to have some kids over in groups of five or six, they've never experienced to home liturgy. That may be a way of awakening something in terms of their faith.

GN: 00:59:22 Terrific. I got in at the end of that. I said, "Is there something you'd like to say that we didn't touch?" There's about a thousand things. I'm just talking about Marist College, now, I mean, we have something like 45,000 alumni.

SS: Yeah.

GN: I'm sure half of them have a Marist Brothers, you know, [inaudible] to them somehow. So, they didn't go four years with a LaPietra around or Jeff around, or Larry Sullivan around, without being somehow stamped by... it's who they were.

SS: Absolutely.

GN: And I think that's what I would like to not lose track of, you know, and I think that we are persevering in that, and I don't know where the next person is going to come, but we need more. [Laughter.] Not a lot.

SS: 01:00:10 No, but we need some visibility. Like, one thing that I hope to introduce next year, Maureen Hagen, who runs our Sharing Our Call/Deepening Our Call programs, she said to me, if there were any faculty here interested in a one-day program, they'd be willing to come over here and do the program, so that people could, you know, fit it into their work day, but just expose people to who's Marcellin Champagnat? What's this network we've got worldwide, like, what's the vision? Because, like, I go into some classes for the freshman seminar, go into Kristin Bayer's class, I've been into Carla Hill's class to talk about the history of the Brothers. I do a thing for the international students every August where I talk about who are the Brothers, Marist Brothers, who is Champagnat, who are the Marist Brothers at Marist College and its history, and where we are in the world, and like, at the international students orientation last year, there was a kid from one of our schools in Australia. There was a kid from another school in Mexico. It was amazing.

GN: 01:01:05 Have you always had my program in History of Development of Marist?

SS: No.

GN: It starts with the buying of the MacPherson Estate.

SS: Okay.

GN: 1903. And I've done it a couple times. Yeah. It's in a recycling now because since I last touched it, I mean, we put up the Murray building, the medical building, four dormitories, and the places just flowing, you know, and it's hard to get pictures of it happening, you know?

SS: Yeah, no, it is. And now there's the steel works across the street.

GN: Yeah, right, yeah, and, down the line, is the medical school, perhaps, you know? All of this stuff is just booming. Do you have anything more you want to say? [Laughter.] I mean...

SS: 01:01:57 No, except that, like, to me, one of the things that Marist College needs to go into the future and continue is it needs its Marist heritage because, if it loses that, it'll become another small private liberal arts college. I think the tradition of all the people who have gone through here have left, as you say, a mark in the lives of alumni. When I run into alumni, they're interested in Brothers from the past.

GN: 01:02:21 Yeah.

SS: I mean, when Tom Ward got up at the dedication last week, and he was talking about Brother Paul, I knew he was talking about Paul Stokes. Most people thought he was talking about Paul Ambrose, but he was talking about Paul Stokes.

GN: The Sheriff [Laughter.]

SS: The Sheriff, exactly! [Laughter.] Like, pack your bags, all this sort of stuff. And later, I was kidding with some of the people in that age group, and even Paul Wryn and people like that, about that whole time, but they have memories of all of that sort of stuff that goes back.

GN: Paul Wryn is another character. I mean, he's one of those, for instance, always saying that, I was talking to LaPietra, you know he learned more here, you know, going into the academy after that and the whole navy business, you know, and they said, "No, where did you learn all this?" You know, "I went to Marist College."

SS: Yeah.

GN: It's just, you know, I had his daughter in class, and it was just like, "My father, my father, my father talks about this place," that she had to just come here.

SS: Yeah.

GN: I see what this is all about. And she, herself, has made her own marks. Okay.

SS: Great.

GN: Let's say thank you very much, Sean.

SS: Okay, thanks, yes.

GN: And maybe this is part one of three.

SS: Great, okay.