

BRO. FRANCIS KELLEY

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Ann Sandri

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Bro. Francis “Frank” Kelley

Transcript – Bro. Frank Kelley

Interviewee: Bro. Francis “Frank” Kelley

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Summary: Bro. Frank’s early education, through college and seminary and becoming a Marist Brother. This includes: being a student at Marist college, a candidate at the Marist monastery in Chicago, and his teaching all prior to coming back to Marist as the Director of Campus Ministry. Bro. Frank also gives his opinions on how Marist has changed over the past 20 years.

Gus Nolan (00:00):

Today is Monday, March 11th and we have the privilege of interviewing brother Francis Kelly. He's the director of Marist College campus ministry. Good afternoon, Brother Kelly.

Bro. Frank Kelley (00:14):

Afternoon.

Gus Nolan (00:15):

Frank form now on.

Bro. Frank Kelley (00:17):

Yes, please.

Gus Nolan (00:18):

Okay. We're making this a go ahead of the interview here to get your perspective on the work that you do at the college, director of campus ministry. And that's for the Marist College Archives. In years to come, people will go back and look and see, well who is he, and what happened? And we're trying to give them an overview from the list I just showed you of early professors, and the first graduates, and beginning of women coming on campus -- an array of people. You have administrators, faculty, staff, students, a whole range of people well over a hundred now. Let's begin with where we are today and that is say something about yourself. Frank, could you kind of give us a thumbnail overview of your, before coming to Marist, early childhood, where you were born, brought up, grammar school, that kind of thing? For few minutes.

Bro. Frank Kelley (01:27):

I was born in Dunmore, Pennsylvania, which is right outside Scranton. I was introduced to the Marist brothers by a nun who had taught at St Mary's in Manhasset.

Gus Nolan (01:39):

Well, before that, how, where did you go to grade school?

Bro. Frank Kelley (01:44):

I was born in Dunmore, Pennsylvania. I went to St Mary Mount Carmel grade school and to Dunmore Central Catholic High School, and that was my educational background. Grew up in an Irish Catholic family. After high school, during high school I had heard about the Marist brothers. I wanted to be a teacher in high school. I had decided, you know, I graduated high school in 69 and decided I wanted to be a teacher. The, the sister I had in school said contact the Marist brothers. So I did that. John Francis Colbert, arrived at my door and that began my life, off to Marist College in the spring.

Gus Nolan (02:29):

Still from Pennsylvania? Oh yeah.

Bro. Frank Kelley (02:32):

Yes.

Gus Nolan (02:32):

Okay. Where did you enter the Marist Brothers as they were? Was it at Tingsborough? Was it initiated?

Bro. Frank Kelley (02:43):

No, I came here, right to Marist to the campus, in the fall of 69, yeah, 69. So I lived in Benoit House on the campus as a student.

Gus Nolan (02:57):

As a college student.

Bro. Frank Kelley (02:57):

Right. There were 30 of us, student brothers we were called, and we lived in Benoit, and some of the faculty lived in Gregory.

Gus Nolan (03:07):

Okay. Do you, where did you go to the parsonship and novitiate? Or did you?

Bro. Frank Kelley (03:12):

We didn't. All that was taken away by Vatican too by the time I entered. So we did, I did four years college living with the brothers.

Gus Nolan (03:22):

I see.

Bro. Frank Kelley (03:23):

And then candidacy for two years, and then I entered the novitiate in Cold Spring after that.

Gus Nolan (03:30):

Uh and that's about when 1978? Thereabout

Bro. Frank Kelley (03:36):

Right, so novitiate was 74, 75. So my class is the class of 1975.

Gus Nolan (03:45):

Oh now, what was your first assignment? Where did you go?

Bro. Frank Kelley (03:48):

When I graduated from Marist, I was sent to Marist Chicago. I spent several, years there as a candidate living in the monastery, you know, examining the life. And so two years at the monastery then we went to novitiate in Cold Spring for a year and then I was sent back to Chicago. And so I spent a total of nine years in Chicago and then I was transferred to central Catholic in Lawrence.

Gus Nolan (04:23):

Okay. Talk about Chicago. Who were some of the people that you were associated with and can you imagine some names off the top now?

Bro. Frank Kelley (04:32):

John Shanahan was our principal at the time, my first time there we had a co-director aide, which of course new to the order, I didn't know it was brand new to begin with. So we had three brothers who were the directors of the monastery -- George Camille LaBlanc, Vinnie Andiorio and Vito Aresto. So there were 34 of us still at that time. Now, this is 1973. 34 of us living in the monastery in Chicago, at that time.

Gus Nolan (05:04):

You use the term monastery, was that their term at the time?

Bro. Frank Kelley (05:08):

That was the term of the building that was connected to the school.

Gus Nolan (05:11):

I see.

Bro. Frank Kelley (05:11):

The tradition in the Midwest was to refer to brother houses as monasteries.

Gus Nolan (05:15):

I see. Okay. Then you came to Central Catholic in Lawrence?

Bro. Frank Kelley (05:21):

I went to Central Catholic in Lawrence, five years there. Was director of a community there, Sheridan Street, and then at the end of the five years, I was asked to become vocation director for the Poughkeepsie Province.

Gus Nolan (05:35):

I see.

Bro. Frank Kelley (05:35):

So I went I was asked to move back to Chicago, and my district was Chicago, the West coast, and the South. So as my, in my time as a vocation director, I covered Marist Chicago, Marist Eugene, Oregon Marist Oakland, and our community that we had down in Canton, Mississippi.

Gus Nolan (05:58):

Okay. Were you alone in that field?

Bro. Frank Kelley (06:02):

No, there was another person assigned to the East, the Eastern part of the country. First Pat McNamara followed by Michael Flanagan. I see. So when I finished up, Michael was still a vocation director and then Reenie Roy came into replace me, I think it was.

Gus Nolan (06:21):

Okay. Was there a community with which you were attached though as you moved around or?

Bro. Frank Kelley (06:28):

Yes, I was assigned to our community on what we call 11th street. It's one of the small houses that was a feeder to Marist High School Chicago. So I lived with the brothers there. Louie Richard, Hank Hammer, Vito, Tony Huck and Mike Morrison. So that was the community I lived with when I was vocation director.

Gus Nolan (06:52):

Okay. Let me talk about your academics. Did you finish college here and then did you go on, is there a graduate school in your background?

Bro. Frank Kelley (07:05):

I did three years at Marist and then they closed Benoit House as a student brother residence. They divided us up. They sent a group of people to Wheeling, West Virginia and opened up a student brother house down there at Wheeling College. I was sent to Chicago. We had, there was a house on Ellis Avenue in Chicago. Brother Ron Mulholland was the director of that house and there was a group of young student brothers there. So my senior year, because they closed Benoit to us, we all had to move to a different college. For me it was my senior year, it was a bit traumatic to leave Marist College. So I went to DePaul University for a year and then transferred those credits back to Marist College, and graduated from Marist then in the spring of 73. Then right after graduation, sent back to Chicago to teach at the high school. And while I was there, in my time in Chicago, I got two master's degrees. The first was Loyola Chicago in pastoral ministry. That's my campus ministry background. And my second was in theological studies from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. And that's biblical studies and that gives me my degree to teach, which is what I teach here.

Gus Nolan (08:35):

I see. So you do have that religious training in your academic field. Very good. How about Marist College now? How had you got here? Did you apply for this job? Who was here before you?

Bro. Frank Kelley (08:56):

After my third year of being vocation director, I realized I was working with a lot of young people who did not want to make a commitment to be a brother for life, but they wanted to give a couple of years of service to the brothers. So I began what was called the Marist volunteer program that was a non for profit program where I traveled around the country for five years, recruiting seniors in college to live in community with the Marist brothers, Marist fathers and the Marist sisters. That gave me my experience of working with college kids. That was my first experience with college kids. I did that for five years and I lived in the Bronx at Our Lady of Grace in the Bronx. In my fifth year, Tom Delaney mentioned, I saw him at Pelham and he said, he mentioned that we're looking for a director of campus ministry at the college. Sister Jean Hamilton was here before me and she was ill, so she was retiring from being director of campus ministry. So Tom encouraged me to apply. So I asked Pat McNamara, who was the provincial at

the time, you know, could I do that? And he said, sure, you know, go up and apply. So I came up and I was interviewed by Deb DiCaprio.

Gus Nolan (10:11):

Oh yes, okay.

Bro. Frank Kelley (10:12):

And then I was sent off to Jerry Cox and at the end of the day they said, you're the person we want for the job come to Marist. So that was in 1998, I guess at this point, we had to figure out living, where would I live? I said I wanted to live on campus with the kids and just happened to be that the great Joseph Belanger was on his way to China for that year. Remember the year he went to China? So I lived in his apartment for the first year as director of campus ministry. And then I got my own apartment on the first floor of Champagnat and that's where I've been since.

Gus Nolan (10:53):

Okay. You've lived there since?

Bro. Frank Kelley (10:53):

Yeah.

Gus Nolan (10:53):

Okay. So what is going on in the former residence of the priest? I forget the name, divine residence.

Bro. Frank Kelley (11:08):

Well, when I arrived here the Byrne House as it's called now, Byrne House had been turned over. It had just finished being the counseling center and the health center and the ministry center. They're all in there together. That changed I guess just before I came because when I arrived it was counseling and campus ministry. There was one campus minister at the time that was Mike Williams.

Gus Nolan (11:37):

I see.

Bro. Frank Kelley (11:38):

So I became director and then I worked with Mike. When I arrived here, Mike lived over at Eden Terrace and the priest then was father Luke McCann. But Luke lived over in Kirk residence, right?

Gus Nolan (11:54):

Yeah. The application here well the word campus ministry, is that just a Christian, a Catholic or a universal? How do you describe it?

Bro. Frank Kelley (12:15):

It is what I've learned in the last couple of years as we're starting to open up campus ministry to other faiths, is a campus ministry is a very Catholic term. Most places use the term chaplain, used to use chaplain, even the Catholic colleges use chaplain. But somewhere in the maybe 70s or the 80s,

everybody switched over to this title campus minister. And that's the predominant title still in almost all of the Catholic colleges across the country.

Gus Nolan ([12:48](#)):

Is that so? Yeah, they don't refer to them as chaplains?

Bro. Frank Kelley ([12:51](#)):

No, I only know two places that kept the name chaplain.

Gus Nolan ([12:56](#)):

I see. Okay. Do we have another campus minister from another faith on board at Marist?

Bro. Frank Kelley ([13:05](#)):

Currently? Yes. Yes. We have we have a Protestant minister. She's a Baptist Protestant minister. She's full time in campus ministry and we have a part time, female rabbi that is on our staff now. So when I first arrived here 21 years ago, it was two people and now 21 years later we have two, currently we have two priests. We have two Marist brothers. We have two women, one the Protestant minister and one the rabbi.

Gus Nolan ([13:40](#)):

Who are the two Marist brothers? You -

Bro. Frank Kelley ([13:44](#)):

- and Michael Flanagan.

Gus Nolan ([13:46](#)):

Michael Flanagan. And he resides?

Bro. Frank Kelley ([13:48](#)):

Both of us live in Champagnat. We have apartments in Champagnat. When we came here they impressed upon us that they wanted the ministers to live in the dorms with the students. I thought that was great. I liked that idea. So Dennis kept that all during his time, that he would like the brothers to be in the dorms with the students.

Gus Nolan ([14:23](#)):

Do you work separately or is there a all of the dishes. Do you ever get together as a board of campus ministry?

Bro. Frank Kelley ([14:33](#)):

Yeah, we have each minister has specific responsibilities. We meet once a week as a team and everybody shares what's going on and asks for ideas or suggestions, help, and stuff like that. So, everyone has, you know, specific areas they target. Like Michael Flanagan is in charge of our weekly community service program. The Protestant minister is one of the people in charge of our retreat

program and all of our women programs, she oversees those. Of course the Rabbi oversees Hillel and so it's broken down like that. The priests do the Eucharist, the liturgy.

Gus Nolan ([15:13](#)):

This is important. I've been here for 40 years and I've not known that there was those separate. I know occasionally we'd have a Jewish minister, a rabbi here for the service or whether it's some event that was being celebrated by the, as you describe it now as a continuing inter locked of all the interests of the ministry, the different phases, the world persuasions it's a revelation and I'm glad we're getting your head to record this. The other points about it. So for instance, some of the programs that you do, a one that comes to mind of course, would be the food drive for Thanksgiving. Is that shared by everyone or is that pretty much your endeavor?

Bro. Frank Kelley ([16:03](#)):

Yeah, so the food drive is overseen by brother Michael Flanagan. That's his responsibility besides weekly community service. And I oversee the Giving Tree program, which is the, the gifts for the kids at Christmas. So that's my specific area. So everybody has specific tasks that they oversee during the year. Remember when I came to Marist College 21 years ago, there were about 22 active students in campus ministry. Today we have over 1400 students in campus ministry.

Gus Nolan ([16:36](#)):

How do you become a member of campus ministry?

Bro. Frank Kelley ([16:40](#)):

Well now I get to speak on the first day of school to all of the freshmen and I got a moment or two to explain to them campus ministry that we are the largest student organization at Marist, that we do retreats, we do service projects all those kinds of things and come talk to us at the activities fair. So you know, the first Friday of the year there's a big activities fair and that's where kids come and sign up and we usually get about -

Gus Nolan ([17:07](#)):

-They do sign up?

Bro. Frank Kelley ([17:07](#)):

Yeah, the students freely sign up on their own if they want to be part of it. Yes.

Gus Nolan ([17:12](#)):

And is there any particular expectation on their part to show an activity? Do they do something?

Bro. Frank Kelley ([17:21](#)):

Yes. Well remember that, remember all clubs and organizations here give priority points. Okay. So I call them the blocks of gold because the priority points decide where they will go on the list to be able to pick housing for the next year.

Gus Nolan ([17:37](#)):

Yes, yeah.

Bro. Frank Kelley (17:38):

So each club and organization is required to have a policy of like how many, how many meetings does a student have to attend in a semester, how many activities does the have to participate in a semester? And then from there, if they meet the quota, the goal, then they're awarded one or two points for each club or activity.

Gus Nolan (17:59):

Those meetings are recorded? You sign in?

Bro. Frank Kelley (18:02):

That's correct. We have, we have what we call our monthly community meeting. The first Monday of the month everybody in campus ministry has to come to a meeting, a community meeting. Now, because of the size, we have to do four of them back to back in the theater. So seven, quarter to eight, eight-thirty, and nine-fifteen on the first Monday of the month.

Gus Nolan (18:23):

I see.

Bro. Frank Kelley (18:23):

And a student has to come to that sign in, and then they get one priority point for attending the meetings and they get the second priority point for helping us like with either hunger month, one of the hunger month activities or the giving tree activities.

Gus Nolan (18:38):

There's just so many ideas going through my head. This is not the way I usually carry on this. Well I guess one of the questions I would say is How do you see Marist now in terms of its image? What is the image of our religious basis to the outside world?

Bro. Frank Kelley (19:03):

Hmm

Gus Nolan (19:06):

Is it a Catholic college?

Bro. Frank Kelley (19:08):

There are still a lot of people, especially from Long Island, that view it as a Catholic college. I speak to all of the parents at the orientation in June and I explain to them that we are a private college that we were once Catholic. As soon as the talk is over, I'll have people come up to me and say, brother, I'm so happy my son or daughter is going to a Catholic college. I just start to laugh. I say, you're from Long Island, aren't you? They said, yeah, we are, we are! How do you know? There's a block. Other places, other people have pretty much picked up private college, Catholic tradition.

Gus Nolan (19:44):

Yeah. Well it was pointed out to me that if 75% of the students were black, you'd tend to say it was a black college. Okay. So if 75% of them, you know, were Norwegians you might say, you know, it's a foreign There's more, percentage wise, Catholics here than at Notre Dame.

Bro. Frank Kelley (20:07):

Yes. About the same.

Gus Nolan (20:09):

About the same. And is Notre Dame a Catholic college? It's hard to say otherwise, you know.

Bro. Frank Kelley (20:17):

But it's, you know, it's, it's because again you know, the administration at Notre Dame is Catholic, you know, they're under the auspices of a Bishop and we have surrendered all that.

Gus Nolan (20:28):

Yes. I always hate when those things are being decided. Thanks to Linus Foy. Along that line then, how have you seen the changes? What major changes have you seen in your time here?

Bro. Frank Kelley (20:50):

Well first obviously go to the easiest one. That's buildings. I came here, I remember I was a student here, came back in the 90s and it was a different place then. In my last 21 years, it's quite a different place. A lot of building has taken place and a lot of effort obviously on the part of the administration to shore up and spread out the name Marist College. I think we're much better known today than we were 21 years ago when I first arrived here. And sports teams help with that. We consciously advanced and broadened our recruitment of freshmen. So that helps with that. California, Hawaii, very conscious in the West coast. So you could see that Dennis was moving it to become a big name. You know, a big name where people know Marist College.

Gus Nolan (21:53):

Marist Poll is another thing.

Bro. Frank Kelley (21:54):

Yes. That's another thing, amazing thing. The number of people that will say to me, well, we know you. Are you the people that do the Poll? Yeah, sure. So that was a tremendous help to us. So in that way, buildings and those other things have caused our name to expand. I think there are a whole lot more people in United States who are conscious of Marist College than they were even 10 years ago.

Gus Nolan (22:17):

Yeah, okay.

Bro. Frank Kelley (22:18):

So that has, that's been a change. The student body they tell us every year it gets smarter and smarter.

Gus Nolan (22:28):

I was gonna say, let's talk about the students for a few minutes. How do you see the students?

Bro. Frank Kelley (22:33):

I think the students are, you know, I would think that they're probably pretty regular that you'd find any place in any college today. Our kids are kind of a B average, I'd say, student from high school. In 21 years, you see things change. When I first came here, very few people seem to be involved in campus ministry at all. Then I was here for the gold years where it just grew and grew and grew. Now students, now what we're seeing in the last two years, is that students seem to be less involved in anything across the board. We're noticing more and more they are in their rooms. They're with their friends. They're playing video games and that's their socialization. Clubs and organizations are taking a hit in the number of people who are joining. There's this, I think we've gone from a very communal relationship among students, before cell phones to a very individualistic communication among students. I mean they'll want to talk to somebody, if they're on the third floor of Champagnat and they want to talk to somebody on the eighth floor, they'll call them or they'll text them. They don't go to see them.

Gus Nolan (24:04):

Right.

Bro. Frank Kelley (24:04):

So a lot of the communications patterns have changed tremendously since I've been here. I mean, the cell phone changed everything where these kids are and they're less apt to join organizations. And yet the studies all show that what they most seek is community. They most seek is community. So there's a bit of a contradiction. Everyone seems to find a little community someplace.

Gus Nolan (24:33):

Yeah, well some of the community is back home. You know. How about the parents? You find them more or less independent? Less independent and more dependent, the parents helicoptering? Is a word they are using.

Bro. Frank Kelley (24:48):

It was a tremendous opportunity to watch that, to watch, where the parents... The cell phone again. Parents became so immersed in students' lives, to the point of absolutely unhealthy. Like I, when I teach class I, I'll say maybe I'll give you a break today so you can call your mother and tell her you're okay cause she hasn't heard from you in 10 minutes. They laugh. So they know, they've become aware of what adults are talking about these helicopter parents. It's intrusive.

Gus Nolan (25:22):

Yeah.

Bro. Frank Kelley (25:22):

But also find because the culture has made so much fun of it, I mean, so much has been written about it, it seems to be that people are backing up, people are, parents are backing away from it. But remember, they only have one or two kids.

Gus Nolan (25:36):

Right, okay.

Bro. Frank Kelley (25:36):

They don't have seven or eight kids. They've got one or two kids, probably both of them shortly together in college. And that's where they put their time and effort, these parents, you know. It's very different than, you know, when you had seven or eight kids. Right. So parents are more involved, sometimes to the detriment of their students and to the detriment of us, you know, they can be a real pain in the neck.

Gus Nolan (26:01):

The tide has risen also financially. I think they're much better off than when you came here.

Bro. Frank Kelley (26:09):

Yes. Oh yeah. When I came here, I remember almost the whole student population was Long Island kids when I came here. I would say we have a lot of middle class kids. I'm surprised that the number of our students who pay, whose parents are blue collar workers, that's high. I'm always a little shocked at that. And then of course we have the upper middle class and we have some wealthy, but you know.

Gus Nolan (26:37):

Oh, I heard something like 7% is in the 1%.

Bro. Frank Kelley (26:41):

Oh, okay. Yeah. Yeah.

Gus Nolan (26:44):

Well I mean, my statistics could be wrong.

Bro. Frank Kelley (26:48):

My sense is the way parents... And I live in the dorm and I coach I moderate two sports teams. Those parents are very blue collar parents and very, there's no air. Like I always, on Parents' Weekend, I always look to see how parents dress. The typical Marist parent is in jeans, not in fancy clothes. And that indicates something you know about background.

Gus Nolan (27:15):

Well how about the parking lot? Go to the cars.

Bro. Frank Kelley (27:17):

Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah. Go to the student cars too. Yeah. Everybody has a nice car. Yeah. Because they're very conscious, remember, they're very conscious of their children are being taken care of behind the wheel.

Gus Nolan (27:30):

I see.

Bro. Frank Kelley (27:31):

So the bigger the car, the more secure the parent feels that their kid won't, if even in an accident won't be hit. So you have kids with these outrageously huge cars, but they're, that's feeding the parent's concern for the safety of that child.

Gus Nolan (27:48):

Yeah.

Bro. Frank Kelley (27:49):

Yeah. It's interesting, but I would say, you know, kids, kids who can afford to come here, I mean there's a lot of kids who obviously their parents can afford to come here. We didn't take much of a hit. You know, when we went into the recession years therefore a good number of years, we had no change at all. We went right along with acceptance. Now that's changed in the last one or two years. I hear that it's gotten a little tougher to recruit.

Gus Nolan (28:16):

I see. Now, how about their own generosity? Referring to the Christmas, and Thanksgiving. They don't go to churches often, but they come with one hand shorter than the other carrying a package.

Bro. Frank Kelley (28:32):

Yeah, these, these kids have been taught and taught well to be community minded. Almost all of them had some kind of community service requirement that they had to fill in high school. Now, of course I had to do it to graduate, so it was forced, but a lot of them came to realize I like giving some of my life away, so we have no problem at all meeting the quota. You know, I talked to the parents in June and thank them early on for their gift they're going to buy for their kid, for the giving tree. And in they come. And that this, I mean look at 1400 kids are involved in campus ministry. That's about generosity. That's a club of generosity.

Gus Nolan (29:15):

They give time and they do something.

Bro. Frank Kelley (29:17):

Exactly. They give time and they also give their material resources away to this. They're thrilled to be able to buy toys for little kids and stuff like that.

Gus Nolan (29:26):

Okay.

Bro. Frank Kelley (29:26):

So I think there is a true generosity sports. We turned to the sports teams and we say we need you to buy the bikes for us. Every year, it's done totally successfully.

Gus Nolan (29:38):

Yeah.

Bro. Frank Kelley (29:39):

Although they tend to be selfish, I think more selfish than probably my generation was growing up with five and six brothers and sisters, but they have generosity of heart when it comes to caring for those in need.

Gus Nolan (29:55):

Tell me about this, I see a van out there with Marist Ministry on it. Who owns it? What does it do? Why is it there?

Bro. Frank Kelley (30:03):

We have, we, our campus ministry has been given two vans by the college. They rent two vans for us. The student affairs rents two vans for us each year. And those vans primarily are used to serve to take the students out to what we call weekly community service. So we have about 350 students a week that volunteer to go out and, you know, be, do some kind of service in the community. And we...

Gus Nolan (30:32):

Give me examples. What do they do?

Bro. Frank Kelley (30:33):

Most of them grade schools, working in a classroom with a teacher. They might be doing after-school programs, they might be visiting nursing homes.

Gus Nolan (30:43):

How about the food?

Bro. Frank Kelley (30:46):

The food is done in the evening by students who take their own cars. The van, we wouldn't have a program if we didn't have van drivers. So besides, we have about 30 student van drivers who have been trained to drive the van and their service is driving the van. So all day long, from nine o'clock in the morning till six o'clock at night, we are rotating out there somewhere two vans, dropping kids off, picking them up, dropping them off, picking them up.

Gus Nolan (31:17):

Okay, who organizes that?

Bro. Frank Kelley (31:17):

That's Brother Michael's job.

Gus Nolan (31:21):

Okay all right. Two questions, I don't know which one to do first. Let's take this to the crystal ball, where do you see Marist 10 years from now? Is it going to be here?

Bro. Frank Kelley (31:37):

Well, I think it will definitely be here.

Gus Nolan (31:40):

Yes. But will college be needed? You know

Bro. Frank Kelley (31:45):

In 10 years, yeah. You know, things aren't, it strikes me that things move, but they don't move that fast. College might be second to the church for being slow moving. In 10 years, it'll still be here. The sports teams will keep college going. Kids will want to play sports. 10 years time, I bet we're a university.

Gus Nolan (32:14):

Well, we are already, I mean, it's not Marist College anymore, it's Marist. I just, I'm sending you a lot of back in, I know I thought it would be Marist College with the address of Marist, 3399, you know, North Road, you know, so I mean, and the building over there just says Marist. It doesn't say Marist campus, I mean Marist College, the high rise.

Bro. Frank Kelley (32:39):

Subtle changes maybe already. Yeah, but I think we're headed toward university status under President Yellen. I wouldn't be at all surprised and you know, and he'll keep expanding our programs. We certainly have done a lot of building in the last two years and that doesn't seem to slow down and he, you know, they seem to be, the medical school hopefully will be a track that keeps us alive into the future. The Manhattan thing sounds very exciting, especially if they start to have classes down there and stuff like that. So I think they're trying, it may not be traditional and as we know it today, but I think we'll be quite alive and well.

Gus Nolan (33:19):

Online learning would be another factor.

Bro. Frank Kelley (33:20):

Yeah, yeah.

Gus Nolan (33:23):

Okay. How about the Marist Brothers at Marist College? We over the Marist or novitiate? Do you hold a future for that or is that just, just a holding action?

Bro. Frank Kelley (33:38):

I don't know the mind of God. Brother Michael and I are the last two brothers employed right now. There are two of us employed by the college and I am the last teaching brother right now at Marist, and I'm just an adjunct.

Gus Nolan (33:58):

All right.

Bro. Frank Kelley (33:59):

I don't know of anyone in the pipeline preparing to teach, come to teach. I've recommended one or two people move to the doctorate, their doctorate, so they could come to teach here, you know. But we're

shorthanded everywhere, you know. And you know, the high schools are the center of our heart, you know so I don't know what will happen. I think there's some people out there who are interested in the future, the younger people coming here to work. And then we have the possibility also, of course, of drawing from the worldwide network of Marist Brothers.

Gus Nolan (34:36):

Yeah.

Bro. Frank Kelley (34:37):

You know, there's this possibility, as you know, we run universities in several countries in the world. Well, we haven't seen yet to tap into that, like exchange with the Marist universities yet. Or maybe bringing brothers here who are in universities to teach. I think the days of when I came to Marist, I think there were 32, well there were 32 student brothers, and there was whole flock of you who were faculty in a couple houses, you know. So those days I think those days are gone, those are gone for everyone.

Gus Nolan (35:16):

Yeah. Well the Marist Brothers for the moment, even in the USA are on a downward trend I would say.

Bro. Frank Kelley (35:25):

Yeah.

Gus Nolan (35:25):

Okay. I think Sean has certainly made a presence in the administration level at least.

Bro. Frank Kelley (35:31):

Yes. Yes.

Gus Nolan (35:32):

Has given some direction that might help.

Bro. Frank Kelley (35:36):

Yeah. I think we have, we have two brothers on the board of directors and I think their presence there is essential. John Klein and Sean.

Gus Nolan (35:44):

Yeah.

Bro. Frank Kelley (35:45):

So that's respected and I hope that the college will keep that in the future. You know, we have to hold onto what we have. I remember I was maybe after 10 years, I met Dennis one day and Dennis said to me, you know, "Frank, I finally feel that I figured out where I want the Marist brothers. I want them in campus ministry and in the dorms." So that was his kind of realization at that moment, you know, because we were down to, you know, I think it was, it was only, I guess Don, Don Kelly, and myself at that point, teaching, you know. So I'm not hopeless, but I think we will be very small in number.

Gus Nolan (36:32):

Yeah. Well, I mean I've heard stories, I mean, Sean has talked about, even with the Roman concept of Marist Brothers that it's on a con and it will go down to maybe 2,500 or something. And then he says they swing back up both in Africa and South America and so on. Somewhere and such, the institutional Marist, you know, and whether we remain a name here or what kind of presence depending as you say, the mind of God and who knows what may happen there. Okay. On another level, what do you think, if you had a chance, you might as well had it any way, to address the board of directors here, what would you say is a need at Marist? Where do you think you'd like to...

Bro. Frank Kelley (37:29):

Guard the history, guard the traditions, meaning do a much better job of educating the board of directors to the history and the tradition. I'm not really sure what's going on there at all. My second point would be guard the tradition and the history among the faculty. That seems to also not be happening.

Gus Nolan (37:58):

Yes, I just know, sidebar, I've asked other former retired faculty about what they saw and then they saw Marist they were there for three different colleges. One, it was survival. Would we make it? The second was kind of a Dennis, the faculty against Dennis Murray. You know, he tried to use the money for the fences that are walls and not for the salaries. And so fighting to get the salaries. Now the third phase is, it's a touchy point. Many professors come here looking for where they could go from here as a bouncing block because it has a good name and they could be picked for some other chairmanship or whatever. We'd had three or four presidents come out of Marist, so that remains to be seen. So what you're saying and getting that same light, you know, is true, I think, you know. That's where we're at in terms of, or what are the needs, you know, this seems to be, one of the reasons we're doing this recording is simply to put into the archives, who we are and what was is. They'll listen to you in future years and say, "He was a guy, you know, in almost 2020 saying, here are the students, you know. They are so tied to their phones. They're so, watched over by their parents. They are, but they are generous. They give their time and money a point of benefit or whether this is a Marist tradition in that."

Bro. Frank Kelley (39:38):

Right.

Gus Nolan (39:40):

And that part of it

Bro. Frank Kelley (39:43):

Yeah, I think we're going through a change. Dennis. Dennis got it. The tradition, the history, the values. I think David's in a learning curve. I think he's getting it. I like more and more when I hear him refer to the history of the Marist Brothers, the presence of the Marist Brothers. That's the language we have to keep, but I think we have a lot of faculty who are like, we didn't come here for any of that stuff, we came here to teach. So I don't really care about who founded you or what your emphasis is, you know, you're not bringing your religion into my classroom. This often, sometimes we've gotten resistance from faculty. Very, very rare, but I would think there's not much of a good grasp out there among the faculty as to the story or the history of the college.

Gus Nolan (40:43):

Yeah. More than likely, yeah.

Bro. Frank Kelley (40:45):

John Schleppe used to, once a year, he would do a public presentation. I remember attending one. It was done really quite well and he said he was going to do it every year, but that people's, I guess, lives get busy. And that didn't happen. I also asked Sean, what about if we gave out his book on Champagnat to every new faculty member who would want a copy. That's a way of at least getting the story out there, you know, to people, because when people read it, they're deeply touched by Marcellin and men and the story.

Gus Nolan (41:18):

Yeah, right. Well, I give a little slide presentation about the history of the development of Marist from Paul Ambrose on through Linus through Dennis and so on. And in that sequence, do you think Paul starting from a two year college to a four year college doing this writing up for the charter by himself with two fingers on a typewriter without a secretary, without a ward, without a campus without an endowment. You know, and getting this attendance. It's an amazing story by itself. And then Linus comes along and starts saying, John Malachy, Stan and so on they originally thought that doctrine Valley would be able to supply the students to keep a college. And then Dan Kirk and John Malachy go and they say, now if this is not going to work, so Linus, is able to get the New York state building a dormitory authority to fund the building of Sheahan, Champagnat, Leo, you know, we have 10 schools, high schools in New York that could supply students that we were all in. Yeah. So, and that's, that whole story is odd towards self. Sometimes,

Bro. Frank Kelley (42:37):

No, I know I stopped at Holy cross maybe a year ago, then went into the bookstore and right on display there was the history of Holy Cross and I thought, yeah, we don't have the history of Marist college. We don't have a one volume history that people could pick up. Now why? I have to even ask Dennis, I guess sometimes. Why don't you commission someone to do that?

Gus Nolan (42:57):

Yeah. Hello? We are gathering all the facts now.

Bro. Frank Kelley (43:01):

Yeah, so as long as it was all there, somebody can put it together.

Gus Nolan (43:05):

All right. How would do you ask this question to a parent, Is Marist worth the investment and with that, there are several points. First of all, it's going to cost \$50,000 a year. So financially it's going to cost one. Marist is the place where you have really have to go to school. You miss too many classes. You just can't live with a dormitory. Okay? So does that part of it, you have to pay us, you know, so they all throw you out. If it pointed back, you didn't make, the grade. Is it worth that investment because at the end of it, maybe you won't get a job that will pay off the investment financially. They did put into it, why should you do it?

Bro. Frank Kelley (43:53):

I think college is certainly worth the investment, even if they get no job at the end of the line for awhile. Because the primary function is to help them become human beings, not careerists there's where.

Gus Nolan (44:08):

How to live not how to make a living.

Bro. Frank Kelley (44:09):

Exactly, and that there's where we need to turn a corner and clearly say that you are here first and foremost to become good and better human beings and then get a career. That's one of the negatives I see about Marist college. We have become so career focused. We're forgetting the human, you know, and the spiritual. And we are a voice. A few of us crying out in the desert, you know, I think it's worth it. I often wonder why don't people just send these kids to the state universities much cheaper, you know, same courses. But there's something, it's worth it to them to pay the money for the prestige of a private college degree.

Bro. Frank Kelley (44:59):

As long as they can afford it. That's good for us, I guess. I don't know that they kids here get any better education than the, than you know, the state colleges. I think what we, what we give is a personal touch. We have, so much support staff for students and we're small enough that it's felt everywhere. Mentors in the dorms adults in the dorms, counseling first year programs. None of this is all extra stuff, accommodations, that program, you know, for the special kids we spend, we really do a great job in shoring up people who might need a shoulder, an arm around a shoulder or a handheld for awhile. And I don't know that the state universities could do it as well as we do. So I think parents know their kids and I think parents know, my kid needs a place where someone's going to be there in case they start to fall.

Bro. Frank Kelley (45:58):

And I think we do a real living in the dorm and being part of an adult team in the dorm, we do an excellent job of keeping our eye on students both behaviorally and academically. And I think people want a place where they know there's going to be some rules because there's still rules, you know, and kids don't like them, but there's still rules. So I think for that sense, people will pay and they'll pay into the future, you know, as long as they can.

Gus Nolan (46:29):

Plus there seems to be a magnet, that Marist kids draw Marist kids from the outside. There's a certain similarity between them, like airs, attitudes it's still one of the few places where students still hold the door for you, you know?

Bro. Frank Kelley (46:47):

Yes.

Gus Nolan (46:50):

It's a certain spirit to the whole thing. I think.

Bro. Frank Kelley (46:53):

I think you're correct. Freshman quickly learn how to behave here where they're brought up short on it. Like I like I'll say, could you couldn't hold the door for that person? Yeah. I don't know how many places are gonna have that they're taught, you know, what's the number one reason? At least the kids say why they chose to come here. Cause it was a pretty place. It was pretty, yeah, that's a big selling point. We spend a lot of money on pretty. But you know what, it works for kids and it works for parents, you know?

Gus Nolan (47:29):

Okay. You've been here a number of years. Why, why did he stay?

Bro. Frank Kelley (47:38):

That's a good question.

Bro. Frank Kelley (47:42):

First and foremost, for me it is an opportunity to teach on college level. I treasure being a teacher more than I do a campus minister. So I get to teach on a college level and I don't, so I don't have to deal with all the silliness that I dealt with for 14 years teaching high school, discipline and all that. The only thing is I got, I had the opportunity to come in on a very small and very weak campus ministry program and to build it into something big and strong. And now I have an attachment to guarding that, guarding what I have built and my legacy with that and preparing, getting it ready to pass on, you know, to the next, the next generation. I also believe that we are still, the Marist brother is still valued and respected on this campus by the majority of the people. This has been a very easy place to work and a very rewarding place because of the respect that people have shown me as a Marist brother and have supported me as a Marist brother. People look up to the brothers, the students look up to the brothers, you know. That's, I think why I stay, I couldn't imagine going anywhere else at this point in my career. And it's also the place where I went, this is my college home myself, you know and I loved it when I was a student here, and I'm thrilled every day that I can contribute to the legacy of Leo Golan. Someone I thought was a tremendous campus minister when they were here in my time. You know, that man inspired me. I knew that. So I think that's why I stay. I hope to God that more there will have the opportunity for more of Marist brothers to come.

Gus Nolan (49:36):

Okay. Well that is what I wanted to ask you is, is there something I didn't ask you that you would like to kind of add to this. Why I found it very interesting and rewarding learning things I never knew before. How long do you think you're gonna stay?

Bro. Frank Kelley (49:55):

Well, I turned 68 yesterday.

Gus Nolan (49:57):

No, yeah, belated Happy birthday to you.

Bro. Frank Kelley (50:00):

Thank you. So a few more years. A few more years.

Gus Nolan (50:09):

It's called security now.

Bro. Frank Kelley (50:09):

Miami looks more and more enticing every year. Oh yeah. We went down there for a week at Christmas time. So 68 two or three more years I would say. Well, I think we're going to go through a transition of a lot of people leaving that hired or came with me in the next two or three years. And I think when that shift takes place, then I'll move along.

Bro. Frank Kelley (50:38):

I'd like to retire from being director of campus ministry cause that, that really is a young person's work. 68. It's a stretch. But I would like to stay here. I hope to be a brother presence on the campus like Joe Bell was. And Ziggy was because they were so important to me coming here. If there's any future brothers coming and maybe continue to teach one or two classes and maybe help out with the alumni. And I'm, I'm on the college alumni board, and that's a great opportunity to tap in, I know thousands of alumni, you know, so I'm trying to get more and more people involved in the alumni association, you know, so I would be busy like Joe Bell. I would keep busy.

Gus Nolan (51:24):

Very good.

Bro. Frank Kelley (51:25):

Good.

Gus Nolan (51:25):

Well, thank you very much.

Bro. Frank Kelley (51:26):

Thank you.