

University Oral History Interview Index

Interviewer: David Robinson

Interviewee: H.E. Archbishop Mar John-Cassian [Lewis]

Date of Interview: October 18, 2008

- 0:00:00 Cooking dinner, construction and guests.
- 0:01:56 Moving to Columbus. Moving from hermit to urban servant.
- 0:04:23 Early ministry in Columbus area.
- 0:05:57 Story of Dominican monk regarding priestly attire.
- 0:10:05 Different social programs run out St. Sophia's basement/community center.
- 0:12:50 Community problems.
- 0:23:07 Rumble on East 9th. Drive by shootings.
- 0:26:10 "Children of murdered parents and siblings." Title of group of children receiving counseling.
- 0:30:38 "My cousin just got shot last night. I don't want to get shot" Feelings of dread in community.
- 0:30:17 This is my fate. Cycles of violence. "This is my fate."
- 0:35:45 "It is getting better now." Father Cassian speaks of the gateway project and the benefits it has had for the community.
- 0:37:50 Slum lord sentenced in 2001. Ran apartments across the street from St. Sophia's Cathedral. Problem of predatory renting.
- 0:41:22 Father Cassian gives example of how a community project did not solve problems.
- 0:42:55 How to improve the community. "They have to get the drugs out of here." Talks about drug activity associated with corner stores.
- 0:44:36 "Thirty-five cents a cigarette"
- 0:48:52 Changes in the neighborhood "find me a father who plays ball with their son".
- 0:51:05 Social service agency rivalries.
- 0:56:36 Local Schools. Charter school partnership with The Ohio State University.
- 1:00:39 "That is an example of a kid who...nobody wants him."
- 1:03:11 "I work for the boss"
- 1:05:44 Father Cassian speaks about what keeps him in Columbus.
- 1:11:30 What father Cassian wants to see for this community in the future.

University District Oral History Partial Transcript

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Date: 10/18/08

0:30:38-0:32:04

AC:

I was sitting in my office one day. And...this was after we had a particularly...um um um um...a run of shootings. Like we've had this summer. This was a couple years ago. I was sitting in my office one morning...doing some reading. And I heard something out...some one out in the pews. So...the...the Church is open. I heard some noise out there. So I looked around. I saw that there were three boys. About ten years old. They were sitting on the pews, and they had there hands folded and they were praying. So I walked around gently, and came around and said:

"How are you doing?"

"We're praying" I said:

"What are you praying for?"

"We're praying we don't get shot. I don't want to get shot. My cousin just got shot last night. I don't want to get shot." So those boys are coming...they're they're still...they're, seventeen now, sixteen, seventeen now. And one of them is definitely college bound. The other two are here almost every day. Trying to get their bikes, from not being stolen. They were here yesterday...

0:32:54-0:35:02

AC:

It's that...that...that...that victimization that brings about a repeat cycle of suffering, violence and that whole cycle of violence, and...and brokenness, anger, desolation that brings about more violence which repeats the cycle. Creates hopelessness. Resignation that this is my fate. I had a...a little boy who was thir...eleven years old. He kept coming around here. Until he...and then he was like thirteen. Last year he was thirteen. And he's like doing st...you know petty acts of violence little vandalism things: breaking windows in cars, uh...tur turning over flowerpots and stuff like that, stupid stuff, stealing from the dollar tree, stealing, he finally got, stealing from the target store, that's what he is in jail for now. But I asked him:

"Why are you doing this?" because he is a bright boy. He said:

"Well I'm going to jail anyway, I might as well get it over with." Everybody...

"Why do you say that you are going to jail? You are eleven, twelve years old. Why...why do you think it is inevitable that you are going to jail?"

"Well my brother is in jail, my father is in jail, I never knew him, he has been in jail all his life, my other brother is in jail, my cousins are all in jail, I'm going to jail." You know you give up at a very early age where you can't say "well, okay not me." "I might as well get it over with."

Where is he? He is in jail right now. And when he went to jail everybody in the neighborhood said good riddance. It does not have to be that way. It does not have to be that way. We do not have to sacrifice our children to this system.