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Women Religious: Oral Histories of the Sisters  
of St. Francis, Oldenburg

Archives

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10-12-2015

## **Sr. Robbie Pentecost**

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### **Recommended Citation**

Lennon, Mary Ellen Ph.D., "Sr. Robbie Pentecost" (2015). *Women Religious: Oral Histories of the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg*. 32.

<https://mushare.marian.edu/wrp/32>

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## **October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – Sister Robby Pentecost speaking with Professor Mary Ellen Lennon at Marian University in Indianapolis, Indiana.**

### Abbreviations

SRP: Sister Robby Pentecost

MEL: Mary Ellen Lennon

MEL: This is Mary Ellen Lennon on Marian University's campus on October 12, 2015 and I have the pleasure of being with Sister Robby Pentecost. Thank you for being here, sister would you like to introduce yourself?

SRP: I'm Sister Robby Pentecost and I have been a member of the Sisters of Saint Francis, Oldenburg, Indiana for 31 years and so it's, it's been, it's been a wonderful journey, a wonderful journey of mystery and adventure and possibilities. I began 31 years ago entering the community already with a degree in finance and accounting, which was an unusual background to enter as a sister. My father, I have, I had a mother and father and then I had a brother and two half-brothers and my two half-brothers were much older, so they, they weren't around a lot, but my, my father was not Catholic and so he was not exactly excited when I mentioned that I was going to be thinking about entering a religious life. My mother wasn't either because I was the only girl and she wanted grandchildren and she thought I was the best candidate for that for some reason, but I think along the line they both got excited about the adventure about it and when my, my father was really afraid that my entering, that I would, that I had one, wasted four years of college, my education and secondly that I would be told every step to make and every, you know I would not have opportunities to make decisions and be in positions that you know I could use my skills.

So he wasn't exactly excited until he started meeting the sisters and he came home, he had been traveling and he came through St. Louis and stopped to see me and when he met the sisters he said to my mother later, "They're pretty intelligent women," he said, "Oh my," (laughs), so he found it rather interesting.

For me before, how I met the sisters, I think that's kind of a, it's all been providential that this happened, this is not a planned direction for me, I and that's why when anybody says to me, what's your five-year plan? I say, Who knows? I'm not in charge. When I, I was just finishing college, and during college I had worked most of my times, I had never had an opportunity really to volunteer so after I graduated from college, I decided I wanted to volunteer, I had been my, my mother was very active in volunteering in various things and it was something that touched my heart.

I even had a course and this just came up this week because the professor that started that courses is in the process of dying and he but he was it was called The New York Study Course and you were invited to participate so it was, you weren't, it wasn't something you could just choose to take and of course when I'm invited to take things like that I with very interesting to me and what it was is that we would study various corporations, we'd studied the history of different history pieces around New York City, musical, I mean one of the things that I had to bring back to the group was Leonard Bernstein, we saw him conduct while in New York, but all of this was part of the course of you know of learning and I was in

his second course he did this every two years or his second time that he did the course and later he started adding in the social dimensions.

Now this is a public university, so to add in the social dimensions of homelessness and hunger and other and that part of the program would be that the students would volunteer, do some volunteer projects really adds an interesting dimension this professor was very profound and I think that also added to my vocational direction to have people, I mean, not only did we go to the floor of the New York Stock Exchange and visit with the corporate offices of the Metropolitan Insurance Company, I mean we did, you know, it was well beyond that, it was a well-rounded trip and really exposed, I think a lot of people to things that they didn't know existed. I, thanks to my parents, knew a lot of it existed in terms of homelessness and hunger, but I think it really kind of helped nurture my direction.

So when I graduated and went off to volunteer, I was gonna go to, I found through the Catholic Center at the university, I went to Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri and I, the there was a sister there that told me about a group of sisters in St. Louis and so when I called I was I was calling for Sister Marian Boberschmidt and Marian had already told everyone in the community that she wasn't going to take a volunteer that year because she was in transition between parishes and so she thought it would be better if there wasn't a volunteer, well when I called and she heard my voice, she said, "I just couldn't say no" (laughs). So we still, we're very good friends to this day and we still laugh about that moment (laughs).

And you know, so I arrived in St. Louis to the Holy Trinity Convent in St. Louis and there were I believe nine sisters living there and it was just it was it became it was not something I was exposed to because I had not been to Catholic schools so to be around this many nuns was a very new adventure, I mean, I was in a mission area of Missouri and our mission diocese, so there wasn't a lot of sisters and I had went to CCD classes and not, since not going to Catholic schools that was my religious education, so it was again a new adventure and what I kept thinking to myself, no I'm not gonna be a sister because I'm not holy enough to be a sister, it was a sense of I just wasn't quite at that level and when I was with them I discovered, anybody can do this if you choose, you know, it's not just based on who you, I mean, what, what your background is or what your, you know, how much Catholic school you went to or how much religious education you had, it was open to what the spirit inside of you was leading and, and the sisters were really good some of them would kid me and say are you gonna sign on the dotted line, so I have to laugh and say well I finally did, but it you know, I spent about five weeks with them and just found a group of fun, joyful, loving, prayerful women that were very educated, were very active, were doing things beyond what I thought sisters were doing. So it really opened my eyes to what was possible.

MEL: Sister, I want to understand, so before this you hadn't been considering becoming a nun? You were doing this as part of a class?

SRP: Well I was actually doing this because I wanted to volunteer, it was just the need and desire to volunteer and serve to be of service. It wasn't I wasn't considering religious life in fact that was one of the reasons my dad besides going into inner-city St. Louis and the fear of, I was living in Springfield Missouri, so that was about a four hour trip, the fear of inner cities, the fear of you know what I would be doing, I mean security wise, and then the fear of joining religious life. I think with my dad's fear, and I kept telling him, "Oh no that's not in my,

in my direction." I had been engaged earlier when I was in college, out of high school and into college, and I had decided, you know, at the time, it just wasn't the right fit and so I knew what that was like too and it wasn't, I mean I was the one that made the decision that it wasn't fitting.

So my dad would always tell me when I then came and decided to join--well I've been there, let me go back to, I had been there about five weeks volunteering. Part of my time I also spent with another sister from another community in East St. Louis which is even rougher area, but just loved every bit of it, but the Franciscan Spirit stuck with me. When I was in college I had taken I think it was a weekend or a few days and went on a silent retreat at a Hermitage and during that I encountered Marie Voto's book on Saint Francis and it just opened my eyes to, I just, there's something about opening my eyes and my heart, I mean, I felt, "Oh I've connected." Because for me sort of innate, but also nurtured I think but my father was the love of nature and the of you know I mean he was from Virginia and my mother from Wisconsin and so whenever we would go to visit his family we would go through the mountains in West Virginia and he absolutely loved the mountains, you know, as a child he would, we would be traveling and he would say, "Oh look at those trees!" My brother and I would reply, "One tree looks like another tree" (laughs), but that gradually changed into really love and appreciation for God's creation and all its beauty and its mystery and so you know I and I just and that kind of nurtured me the Franciscan Spirit.

So after I came back from volunteering and I was looking I, I went to work for a finance company, so I was collecting debt (laughs). And I was very good at collecting debt because I was very good at, talking with people and finding solutions with them, you know not just being hard-nosed and, and I remember there was a there was a competition that I wasn't even into competing, but there was a man in the office, a major competitor, he loved to compete and he was so angry because I kept beating him and I, you know, I knew then that I it was a different I had a different spirit or different drives and actually the manager of the company said, would, he just would laugh at me, I mean he just, he and I got along very, very well and he could see the competition, but it always drove that other guy nuts, but I do think it's the way that I approach people, um, and the way that we looked for solutions. They were willing to work with you, you know if you had if you saw people with dignity. I mean, we went to some of the poorest places and even the manager or not, the manager said to me, "Oh my, we got to work with this one." So he also had a compassionate heart and that affirmed that that could happen in business to me.

So, about midway, it was probably, I had been working for about six months when I got a call from Sister Marian in St. Louis and she said the priest that we had worked at the parish with I had worked with her at the parish asked if I would come back and be a, do an internship, that he would you know provide a stipend for an internship and so that worked into an internship, which then led to me entering the community. It was a very, very fascinating experience, but the you know it was during that internship, Sister Marian and I we would always arrive at Mass just on time in the mornings you know during the week and so we were always known as that woman and Robin, so we just had you know I mean it was just a really fun adventure.

My role as an intern was working with the senior citizens organizing programs and projects for them. So I played a lot of bingo back then, but we also did picnics and did it was an adventure and it was a, it was an inner-city parish, sort of a mixed parish of, I mean diversity

was very prevalent and it was just so fun to watch that you know and to deal with that and I and I found myself very comfortable in those environments.

MEL: I'm interested, Sister, in this process of discernment because you could have gone back to your life of finance. So it's hard to articulate, but during that internship, did you just realize?

SRP: There was, there was something gnawing at me inside and it's, I, you know sometimes we I mean I think we call it intuition and sometimes we don't try to rely on intuition, but discernment involves all of our senses, all of our I mean, logic and reason and you know looking at pros and cons, but even more so at how are you feeling and what's happening and there was something really happening inside of me and I didn't quite know how to deal with all of it except I journaled a lot during that time and just really discovered that you know that I think God was calling me, I just, you know, I was like "Oh really?" and really it was that inner--sitting and I would sit you know I probably my prayer has been and continues to be probably even further nurtured of meditation, just sitting silent. I love silence.

And one time during a seminar a few years ago, when we were talking about values that you bring to an organization and we, I was in my little group and I said, "Silence" and they said, "Yeah." You know when you're making a decision or when you're dealing with issues or something just to have the silence to think about it and just be quiet with it, really helps you integrate you know and listen and listen to what you're feeling but also some of the voices that other people have been speaking and you take that time away, you step away, you have a much better ability to make a decision, clearer decision rather than an emotional decision or an immediate decision. I mean some things you need to make quick, but I think the silence and it was so funny because the other people that I worked with in the organization got it, but when we brought it to the trainer that day, that was one of the values, he looked, he looked at me and he said, "Silence? I've never heard that before." I'm not sure he bought it yet because he doesn't get it, but I think people in the business world that get the importance of silence and of meditation and of really thinking through decisions, they get it, they understand the value of silence in your environment or having a place where you can go and really just sit.

And at Holy Trinity there was this inner room that there was no windows, nothing in, it was kind of, and it had been storage, but often it was just empty and I would go in there a lot in the dark you know I mean there was a light and lamps, but it was just that silence and being blocked, you know, really sitting with that and that's where I hear God I mean in that in that meditation.

And I I think it's just you know the discernment is really listening to your heart you know talking to other people but listening to your heart and what was interesting is that was my first opportunity and I when I look back I can I can see it where I was making a decision that like my parents weren't in favor of, I think now they've understood why I went that way, but I mean initially it was really hard for them just to understand it. My brother, thank God was so supportive he and his wife and they kept telling my mother and father, she's old enough to make her own decisions. But I never let, I mean I listened to what they had to say and my father would always say, I think you're running away from something and mine was, I mean it was just something that came out to me, I said, "Dad I think I'm running to something" and

it was just an interesting awareness that I could have different understandings and my parents were wonderful as I was growing up. We could have different opinions than they had and dad would often play the devil's advocate to make us think through our arguments or our thoughts or our opinions and you know I think that was a real valuable thing that they taught us, you know that it's okay to have differences it's okay, you know to see things from a different perspective, as long as you responded with respect and honor, you know, and I mean not that you were putting people down, but it's, but or that you know we're putting down that other the other side, but that you know I mean there could be that openness to have different perspectives and that has I think that helped me be able to go the direction I felt an inner call and it I'm not even sure because it was nothing I dreamt about it was nothing I looked for, I mean, I was you know planning. I mean I have a degree in finance and accounting at that point, there was all kinds of possibilities out there and God just called me to do something else.

And what I was discovering by with the women, one, again, again I have said their joy, their excitement, but they were helping people. They saw they saw how they could use their gifts and their education they had and they were very highly educated women, were making a difference and that's what hit me is I wanted to make a difference with my life, I want to do something that will impact people and little did I know what all that meant later on in life.

But I know, you know, I mean there were times just to give you a sense of my family growing up I had wouldn't, at one point we were living in Ken--western part of Kentucky when my dad worked in construction work, he built coal-fired power plants, which now I fight against, but he would too, if he saw the damage they were doing to the mountains, my father would have been very upset because he loved the mountains, but we were living in Western Kentucky and which was a very interesting time for a couple of years and I mean I forgot my, where I was going with the Western Kentucky, anyway, oh I know grant we were living in Western Kentucky and my father on the way to work every day would see these kids and he could tell that you know they were it was a poor family and they were kids I went to school with, but I didn't know who, but he was seeing these kids and so one day, he stopped, or he told my mother, he said, "Why don't you go and find out?" So, mom, I guess mom went and talked to the family and they didn't, they didn't have any heat. Their wood or coal and I forget which it was, they didn't have that so we ended up with the kids and the mom coming and staying with us. We lived in a trailer, a two-bedroom trailer, it was a nice trailer, but it was so funny because we had all these people packed in and then we took them it was around Christmas time and dad and some of the folks at the job got coal you know a load of coal and stuff for the winter for them and we got, mom got them Christmas presents, took the parents shopping.

So it was both of my father had grown up during the Depression and always had a compassionate heart; if he'd be walking in a mall and a child would want a stuffed animal, be crying, dad would go over by the stuffed animals, he always had a compassionate heart and my mom does too.

And so we started that was kind of and at the time too, my mother was going to a home at that time they called them spastic children, but certainly was developmentally challenged children and she would help with feeding them at lunch and I know I would go with her and at first I was just appalled by this, just, I just couldn't do it, you know, but gradually I

started understanding why she was doing some of these things. She had already started to foster that in me.

Then when we when we were living in Springfield, Missouri, we were the I guess host family for a Vietnamese family that our church adopted during the refugee crisis. To this day they still call my mother periodically, the women do but the one in particular that lives in Cincinnati and she's so excited that mom has moved closer, but they, they would always call mom around Mother's Day and at Christmastime and so that's you know forty some years of that relationship and then we had a woman that was dying of cancer that lived with us for a while and we had a woman from a shelter and I know one time I called home and when, after I was already a sister in training and I had this woman answer and I had no idea who she was, I was like, "who are you?" I didn't quite say that, but I did say, "Is Rose there?" and she said, "Oh no she's gone, can I take a message?" and I just said, "It's your daughter calling" and then she told me who she was and that she was from the shelter, she and another woman from the shelter, mom and brought home. So I called my brother just to make sure somebody knew about this.

MEL: So when you were a child, your family and your parents invited that mother and child, children into your home and you didn't know them?

SRP: No, no, but and then the other thing that I realized is when they came the girl and I were in the same class at school, but it never I never dawned on me to think differently of her, it never, that's the other thing my family taught me is not to look down on people, but rather to support them so you know I never, I mean I don't even think I don't even recall that it made me even think any other thoughts about this, this girl this classmate, so I you know there was something that happened and then when I was later on when I was a sister and I'd bring people home with me you know to visit, my mother goes, "I don't know" and I said, "It's all your fault" (laughs).

MEL: I'm not sure they should have been surprised, you'd be--

SRP: I know! When I shared this I did a piece of my homily for final vows and when I started listing all these things, mom said "Oh, oh I didn't know I was responsible." But anyway so that, all of that has helped nurture you know my vocation or my interest and along the way you know I found ways to utilize my background.

You know entering the community, when I decided to enter the community and I started going through the process it was I just never knew which director where I was going to end up or what I was gonna do, but you know all God continues to surprise me, when I was had finished my formal training with the sisters and I was looking for a job I was looking in St. Louis first because that's where I had met the sisters and I actually had a couple of places.

People laugh at me because I always ended up with funny stories. On my way, I had been doing that, it was about a four or five year process of train--of preparing, four year actually or, let's see, I guess three, sorry. Get back to my, the whole thing is about nine, but three years but during the novitiate, each year we were placed somewhere, and one year I placed here in Indianapolis and I worked at Holy Trinity Parish here with Father Kenneth Taylor and one of our sisters, Sister Alice Reznor and we still laugh about it to this day, but then one year I was missioned to Chicago with our Hispanic ministry, which was just a wonderful

experience and but after that I was going to be you know needing to find a ministry so I had applied at a couple places in St. Louis and I went to St. Louis to interview, interview for the one and then sorry and the one I interviewed for was and I'm not even sure what the title of the position was, but I worked at a housing project and the Catholic Charities at the time was taking over the management of one of the housing developments. I think it was testing to see if this would work or if they could do it and so I was I came in as a caseworker kind of person and that was a phenomenal experience.

I mean I did interview for that job and got it, but most of my most of my ministries like I haven't had the interview for too bad or too much, but that that was a wonderful experience it was very interesting and there were two sisters there were Daughters of Charity you know in fact I knew even though people said to me as I was entering the community you know, have you thought about other communities? And I said I just know I'm a Franciscan I just know it. And I think the you know the care of creation piece that now Pope Francis is just bringing to life and so many ways really just I just knew that I just knew that that was in my heart.

So anyway I started to work there and so there were only three sisters at this place and only three white people, the three sisters, so even the staff you know were all black folks and the one sister thought that the sisters, she was the head person at the development for Catholic Charities and she, she thought that the sister should eat lunch together. I just thought that was a little appalling to me you know and so in fact, one time she threatened to call my superior to tell her I wasn't eating lunch. Well, I was eating lunch, but I was going with you know some of the--one of the other staff and we had at least one staff person and probably more that was, that lived there, lived in the development and so I would go to her apartment you know and her family would be there, I got to know the families in the interact so I had a little different sense of ministry and at that time I laughed I mean I laughed to myself because I knew if she called Oldenburg that time Sister Kate Houlihan or Annata Houlihan was that Congregational Minister and she had been 25 plus years in Papua New Guinea. She would just laugh.

You know, so I felt, I felt really supported by the Sisters of Saint Francis and their way of doing things and doing it "with the people" not "for the people," so with people has always been kind of my motto and later and not too long ago, I had to, that was part of a discernment I had was you know "with" not "for" and I've always found it being in relationship with the people you're ministering with is just so important.

So, I love that time, I love that you know I would meet the folks and they were, and one of the, I learned one of my greatest lessons working in St. Louis, two actually, but this was one, was that if, we were doing a survey and one of the questions was you know, or there were two questions, one was, you know, what are the problems that you have in this community? And the second part of it was are there any problems that you see don't have solutions? And I went to an elderly woman that was living there and she said to me, "Well if we created the problem, we can solve the problem." So in her mind nothing is without solution and I thought that was just a beautiful, I mean it continues to say to me, oh there are these problems, well there can be solutions. It's really the matter of will and wanting to make the solution happen and that was one of my lessons in that and later on, well I worked there for about a year and then I worked, started working, which really the next place I worked because they asked me to come in and work with them was Saint Patrick's Center.

And Saint Patrick's Center was a program with the homeless and those at risk of being homeless and that's where that's what really set my path in terms of future ministries. While I was there, they were, I was the director of administration so I worked a lot with not only personnel issues, but with the financial piece and one of the things we learned during that time, you know, I mean one of the things we were working on at least was you know what do you do with homeless who have these long history gaps, so they had just if I was entering the scene they had just started a restaurant and was part of another restaurant kind of thing, but they were having a restaurant and they knew it wasn't going to be sustainable because funding, I mean because of a something was wrong with the pricing and all this stuff so we started we they finally had stopped that particular piece and so we started looking for what, what it would look like. What if we had our own restaurant that would serve lunch maybe break--you know we were looking at breakfast, probably not dinner, but, and so out of that evolved what's called McMurphy's Grill, which started in 1990. Actually the day the earthquake was supposed to hit St. Louis, there was a prediction of an earthquake so that was always fun.

But we worked, we actually got the building. I was able to utilize tax credits that we had been given from the state of Missouri, actually the state of Missouri would send people to me to talk about how to think about using tax credits; I don't think in the box, I think out of the box and it drives some people very nuts, but this worked very well, but we were able to get a building donated. That was almost a million dollar donation to St. Patrick's Center because of the tax credits that we could utilize. So you know, we were able and then also we had funding, we, the director and I would go around we would go for funding, but we were first of all, we knew that none of us knew how to manage a restaurant, so we went, Edith and I one day went to visit the owners or the partner, the main partner of the pasta house company and Kim, too, she just looked at us and he's like why do you want to start a restaurant? So we had a--we said, well it's the easiest thing to transition people who haven't had jobs and to train them into coming to work on time, work ethics, you know, it's not hard work, just some skills, some basic skills and there's always a need for people to do that work. He goes, "Makes sense." And then we explained that we didn't really know what we were doing. We needed their help. So they agreed to help us manage the restaurant.

Then we needed the funding so we would go to different corporations you know in town and really got their buy-in, I mean we, St. Patrick's Center and because of Edith and her connections. Edith Kenane was actually, she was a phenomenon, but she knew how to get people and she was she was you know she was pretty well-to-do or not pretty, she was very well-to-do, she, her husband had a very good job, but they knew how to give back their Catholic faith taught him to give back. So she was very creative in her, just in many, many ways and I worked at the time too with Sister Mary Beth Gianoli and so Mary Beth and I were involved in starting this restaurant the two of us and we were part of the leadership team and I remember we'd be, we'd have days of where we do meetings and so part of the day would be going out so we break into groups and Mary Beth and I always teamed up because we lived together and work together, so we always team up and go looking for buildings any kind of building that we thought would work before we got the building that got donated to us, but we, I think, I think it was in the process of I think it was for sale that's part of what drew us to that building, but and then we, it was like the whole team work together to get this organized and going and it really it lasted for twenty years and it's shifted in how it operates now because and it was has nothing to do with the restaurant itself.

One of the things that we built into it some sustainable approaches because at first we started out you know just wanting to train people, but then you also had to build in incentives for the manager and all to not just you know train people, but also to kind of make a profit so it wasn't it was a real, you created a real atmosphere for people to learn in because it was a real restaurant. Well it was McMurphy's Grill, so it's around the Irish kind of Irish pub kind of thing and I remember one day we had a manager that we had that we were having problems with and Edith happened to be on vacation, probably in Hawaii or somewhere and so we got a call, but I don't know if Mary Beth or I got the call that they were gonna let the manager go that day our, our consultants, the pasta house people and we're like, "Oh no what do we do?" And so Mary Beth and I had to go and we had to we tended the bar and collected the money, so the two sisters, which was just a hoot. And the funniest part about it, I who should have been doing the cash register couldn't reach it, it was too high up, so Mary Beth had to do the cash register (laughs).

MEL: And you did the bar?

SRP: I did the bar (laughs). Oh it was funny, well we warned him that we didn't know anything about making drinks, mixed drinks. We could do the beer and the wine, but that was it and we could do the tea and the soda and all of that we had that handled and usually for lunch there wasn't a big you know take on, on drinks, but and we just laughed.

We would also host special events at the place and there was all kinds of things that we would do at the location, but so that was and what I realized during that time is that I really didn't, I need it more background in order to be able to do things like this you know, to think through a business plan, to think through you know how to set up the financial entry and because the restaurant the profit margins are very small and you have to think through how to set up cost and prices and all of that.

So, and at the same time I had I took a week and went on a, there was a it was a conference or workshop on poverty and property issues with an organization called Network and Network is the same organization that now does "Nuns on the Bus." So network it's a national Catholic social justice lobby group located in D.C. and they were started over probably about forty two, forty-three years ago by Catholic sisters to raise before our Congress, issues that were very much at our heart and very much, which religious communities were working with and on and so they had you know they were on the ground, so bringing the poverty issues to the forefront, which was being missed in a lot of ways from a moral perspective, so I went to that conference, I met a very good friend who today we serve on a board together so that was probably 25 years 27 years we've been friends. She's a Sister of St. Joseph from Carondelet, which is in St. Louis, but her part of the community is in Los Angeles, so we have been, we've and we've encountered each other along the way.

But one of the things that taught me during that time was I talked to some of the other sisters, one who had her, who had a doctorate in economics and other, and so they really encouraged me. I was thinking I'd go for, my, at that time Oldenburg was encouraged me to get my master's degree even though I wasn't finally vowed yet, but they thought it was very important that I go for my master's and, and I thought I would do it in Social Work just

because of the kinds of people that I tended to work with and these women said to me, "Un-uh, we need women who have an understanding of business." So they were the ones that encouraged me and Oldenburg blessed it, to get my MBA and so which is the direction I ended up going. I've had I always look back and say oh my gosh, you know I have had such a blessed and full life and it's a lot of times by accident, well accident in a sense of you know being there and taking advantage of the opportunities. I do not believe anybody does anything by themselves. You cannot pull yourself up by your bootstraps. I do not believe that. That's a false myth. You know, we have so many people around us, I mean my family, my father was very committed that that I get an education and he wanted me to have an education because he you know as a woman he didn't want me to get stuck and you know then I had the religious communities and in fact I think religious women are probably firm, or not probably, they are more educated than the priests and deacons and whatever else you know cardinals, probably archbishops and cardinals in terms of their education levels are far above what most are and I think that sometimes is where some of the tension is created. But--

MEL: Your dad was worried about--

SRP: My dad was worried that I would get stuck somewhere and sad to say he passed away before I got my MBA, but I think and he ended up passing away, well he ended up getting sick so that we had to cancel my final vows or a postpone it for a year and then he passed away just as I was beginning to start my MBA program, but that's why I said, I said I planned for a wedding twice doing final vows can be like planning for a wedding, but that that's part of the adventure of my life. I don't do anything normal, but my dad, which was interesting, my dad who was not Catholic had decided to start the RCIA program, but he couldn't because he didn't hear well and he didn't want to do the or do it with a group, so he would go and meet with the priest, the pastor at the time who was a friend of ours who had come when I did first vows, he had been, even though he had changed churches along the way and he hadn't been moved, he ended up back in our church and he was just very supportive of my dad. If it hadn't been for him, I don't think dad would have joined the church.

But dad decided to join it on their 35th wedding anniversary. He came into the church and my mother didn't know this, it was a Sunday and so we're at Mass and Father Ready says, "You know, I've been after this man for years; I've been trying to get him and real him in," he said "and I finally got him." And then my mom is looking around the church saying, "I wonder who this is?" you know, "This is great!" So when they, he announced it was my dad, my mother just lost it, you know, just broke down in tears. That was the best wedding anniversary present you could get.

So, so dad was Catholic you know and yeah, but eight months later, he passed away and my uncle just he's my uncle to this day, who's now 90 says, "You know, Ralph, when he died he had been Catholic less than a year and he had four priests at his funeral. I'm gonna be lucky to have one at mine." So, you just never know (laughs).

But you know, I think, and so we ended up postponing my final vows to the next summer, which was really a blessing and it really took on a shape, a new shape and it was just wonderful, but the thing I do want to share, before making final vows you know I had been working well I was working at Saint Patrick's Center and then I started graduate school and

left to do, I mean I had to quit because doing graduate school got to be intense. I actually was thinking I'd start out part-time working, but after, dad had just died and all this and so the community said, just focus on school, yeah.

MEL: I was just wondering before you move on, how would you describe the experience of the restaurant for the people that worked there? That you provided this opportunity for.

SRP: You know, what you saw in so many ways is when you empower people or give them an opportunity to work; work is a, I mean you know, a lot of us think of work as drudgery, but work is creation, it's God's creation. When you give people a chance to work and recognize the dignity of that work, not just you know, put them in a line and make them you know, where it's miserable, but really help, I mean really bring out their own creativity. And their self-esteem, their whole sense of themselves just changes and for a lot of these people it just gave them the confidence, it gave them a reason to, to live, in some ways, or to work toward change.

You know, I mean, it's just when you talk to some of these folks who have, a lot of the folks we were working with too, had been veterans and they you know, they needed someone to care and someone to give them an opportunity to earn their worth, I mean to be given, to keep being given stuff takes away people's dignity, but giving them an opportunity to work, I have found that in several different instances with the organization I recently left, we had at one point been dealing with women who were with addictions and when those women were given opportunities to volunteer, they were thrilled! It just made them feel so much better about themselves, who they were and it wasn't just, they were given, given, given stuff too, but they could give back, when people can give back, it just brings out, it brings out who they are, it brings out the human dignity of the person.

And that's really what the restaurant did was bring the dignity of that person back. And you would just see the smile on their face, you would see, you know, the glimmer in their eyes and you could kid them and talk with them.

In fact, a couple years ago, or about, well I guess about three or four years ago, before the restaurant closed and transitioned to another and it was really because St. Louis geographically had changed and so the traffic or to get to the restaurant location was not working. So, because of the stadium and the re-channeling of streets and so that's why it changed. They are I think they are still doing the same concept but working out of other buildings and not having your own building and doing catering lunches and things like that.

But, I think it really we would you know, it gave everybody a sense of pride. I mean the people that came there. Usually once a month we would have, it was Edith's daughter that came up with the idea of having a celebrity host, so we'd have a host you know and people would come downtown and so you know and would give these the folks working there a sense of oh this is a special place you know and I'm, I can contribute to this being a special place, so you could see you know if you had. Actually the state of Missouri recognized that it was it had really worked into being one of the best job training programs you know, one of them, not the best maybe, but one of the best in in the state, that it started funding it because they started to see that people could leave there and be transitioned to other places to work. The whole homeless cycle can it's getting to the self-esteem of the people you know feeling good about themselves you know looking good.

I know in Appalachia a lot of people don't have teeth and they've lost their teeth because there's no men or no dental care for many of them and that just erodes their sense of self and beauty you know and so they're less likely to want to be out in the public you know and so if you didn't give them a reason to be out in the public and be recognized and affirmed in those it just they blossom and it can lead to other things and I think that's all of us all of us need that little bit of a coaching and nurturing on the way.

MEL: Your MBA, you were talking about your MBA?

SRP: Well getting the, so I got started working toward an MBA, which was. My mother after I got the MBA would always, and I was always working in odd things, she'd always say, "I wish you were just a nurse, or a teacher, or a pastoral worker," she said, "then I could explain what you do." Because that's the images we have of Sisters.

You know recently I joined this year the Nuns on the Bus traveling into Washington to see Pope Francis and on that bus we had three lawyers, we had a woman that worked or a sister that worked, these are sisters, so three of them were lawyers one worked at the United Nations, one worked in rural Mississippi, one was a Sister in Nigeria who was working here and had was spending a year interning with Network, the National Catholic Social Justice Lobby Group because she was learned how to do that in her country and then myself, were the seven that ended up on the last leg of the journey that I joined so you know these are not the norm, you're not thinking, you know, yes the rural Mississippi maybe, but the kind of work she does there isn't in a parish it's really outreach, really trying to create job models or food models, so you know I think so getting an MBA was not the norm and yet during it I and again you know I there it's really, things are happening that I am totally unaware of I'm making choices that I have no idea what's gonna happen where its leading me exactly, but it just feels right.

So I start the MBA program and early on in my courses I think it was probably the second semester, I took a management course under a professor, Dr. Katz and you know and I you know I had been out of school for ten years. I had been in the workforce or in the preparation for ministry process and what was fascinating about the experience in the class was there was one problem that was, he would he would often give us some cases to look at and come back with solutions and so you know I taken this course and there was some men in the course and there was some men from other countries in the course and this one young man who was from some country, he thought he had done wonderful on this case study you know and worked, oh, I think he just felt really confident I was not feeling very confident, I thought oh I don't know yeah so we had turned it in you know I'd done I had used what common sense I thought and so the day that we got our papers back Dr. Katz says, "Well one person got it totally right" and so everyone's kind of looking, he said, "One person got it totally right in the sense of that it was exactly what his family did." Because it was a case of his family study and I was the one with (laughs) so I mean I was blown away I was just I was totally stunned at that moment and I think that gave me some confidence you know at the time.

So Dr. Katz and I became friends and, he, one of his he was one that worked more in the entrepreneurial side of things and it dawned on me, well I had just helped start this

restaurant with Saint Patrick's Center that you know and the whole idea of creating businesses which now that's kind of a very popular thing with nonprofits is social entrepreneurship where you start a business as a way to subsidize I mean it can have a purpose within the organization, but it also can help fund the organization, so it never dawned on me that was a whole new thought, but I mean and I think today it's you know it's part of the norm, but I think you know twenty years ago that wasn't part of the norm. So I ended up following more of an entrepreneurial track with my courses and ended up writing a business plan for McMurphy's Grill that got published in by Gale Research. So I was the only nonprofit plan in the book.

And then one day Dr. Katz got called by Fortune Magazine to see if he had any ideas of people, the future you know of business plans and business training and so he referred them to me so I have I had an article in Fortune Magazine, as well, I mean talk about how things happen and then you start to realize that you're really not in charge, there's somebody else making these happen you know so that people could start realizing in a magazine like fortune that it's not all about the profit, it's about you know the purpose and the meaning and the heart.

And I thought you know when I think back it goes back to my professor in college that started the whole you know training about New York Studies, but made it broader than just about Wall Street, it was broader than Wall Street and I will tell you that having an MBA has opened doors continually, you know, it would have never dawned on me you know, but it really it really gives you some credibility in places that I just would have never gone, or never thought about.

But once I finished my MBA then it gets even more exciting, got lots of stories, but I ended up looking for ministry and I knew I wanted, I had been in St. Louis eight years and I thought well it's time to move on somewhere, something kept feeling that way and so I during my coursework I had studied micro-enterprise kinds of things and so I started looking for that kind of program to maybe possibly be involved with so I ended up finding two in Appalachia one in Ohio and one in Kentucky and I interviewed I sent my resume and my letter and they both asked me to come interview.

So I ended up interviewing with both and basically being offered jobs with both, but I went for the one in Kentucky because we had a Sister, it ended up it was in Berea, Kentucky and again listening to the signs of the time or the signs around me, which is another thing I think discernment is about, is really paying attention to the signs, but I had stayed with one of our sisters who at that time was in Danville, Kentucky, which was about probably 45 minutes from Berea and so I drove into Berea and as I'm driving in the first thing I see is a Catholic Church and it's St. Clare and I thought, "Oh, Franciscan." I do my interview, it felt good and all that, I go back to Noella's house and I talked to my mother and then I talked to my brother and his wife and during that I think it was when I talked to my brother and his wife I learned that my sister-in-law's great-grandparents were buried in Berea. I never knew there was any Kentucky connection, so talk about how things are happening and I'm thinking, oh there's signs, you know.

So when I was offered the job, I accepted the Kentucky one. And part of my job which is why, I mean talk about direction, was to design a curriculum to teach women to run their own businesses. So that was phenomenal, designing the curriculum.

Part of what happened before I actually started working was sister Amy Kistner and I, who at the time was that the Congregational Minister, had traveled out to the West, she needed to go out there and I said, "I'll go with you." So we drove out. We had the best time. We borrowed a van and slept in the van, you know, we slept in camps spots you know, but we had the van. Oh, we had the best time. But along the way and I have used this forever now with marketing. Along the way we did we kept seeing these signs for Wall Drugs. Driving out West you see, I mean, for hundreds of miles: Wall Drugs. "Get your 10 cent cup of coffee, Wall drugs. So I said, finally, and both Amy and I were like "Ahh."

So we stopped somewhere though at a rest stop and there was some information about this Wall Drugs. So I happened to pick it up and started reading it and I said, "Amy, we've got to go to Wall Drugs." We realized that this family that started this Wall Drugs was Catholic and they had ended up in this town you know without too many Catholics and they couldn't quite, they were having a really hard time of getting this Wall Drugs to take off, this drug store. I mean there's a whole reason why it ended up being the drug store and all, but how I started the marketing piece that I used with people is how they started getting people to come from the highway there was on the highway these they made these signs that said, "free water" and at that time people were traveling without air-conditioning, without a lot of water or things to carry water and keep it cool, so they would stop at Wall Drugs and kept it cold water and ice and that's how their business grew because of that simple and so I said, "You always have to think what is it that's going to draw people to you?" It doesn't have to be, you don't have to spend millions of dollars on advertising, it's, what is it? That will, that they need that you have? So I used that story a lot in my entrepreneurial curriculum or when I taught the course.

But so I developed the curriculum and it was for I was kind of contracted out from this organization to another one who was actually doing the program.

MEL: For women?

SRP: For women. It was called the Wings Program. It was run by an organization in Berea called, referred to as, everything in Appalachia is you know by initials. This was MACSON, which is the Mountain Economic Community something Development Corporation. M.A.C. Oh M.A., Mountain Appalachian or something like that now I'm gonna, I've got it totally confused, but MACSON. I should know all these by heart and I'm losing my little piece, but anyway so I would go and teach women to the course and it would be like an eight to ten session course and I started teaching the course, the first course we taught was in a very eastern part of the state in Whitesburg and what was fascinating about Whitesburg it's where Apple Shop which is a media production company of Appalachian films and all started and it still operates, fascinating.

So its got a little more going for it in some ways, but it's in a very remote, hard-to-get-to area and it was close to the end of the session and a woman, one of the women came in and she just, you know, she looked kind of you know she wasn't together that day and she said, "I didn't bring my notebook." I said, "Oh, it's last class, not a problem, you know, we'll get you paper" and then she'd you know she didn't have that and then she needed something for a severe headache and finally she said to the person who was the director of the Wings Program and myself. She said, "I just left my husband today."

And abuse is pretty rampant in many areas, it's not, you know, economics isn't the only reason for abuse, but her husband was a laid off or he wasn't retired, but he wasn't working as a miner and so he began drinking and was just very there's a lot of abuse when there's not when there's not work and the low self-esteem, so one of the things that I realized very quickly then because I said, "Well do you have a safe place to go?" and she said, "Well I'm staying with my mother and I'll try to get a restraining order" and I'm like, "Try to and stay with you?" rather, "Isn't there a shelter?" and there isn't in every county in Kentucky, which blew my mind having come from St. Louis, where there was shelters and programs to deal with this. The other thing I learned over the years was that not only was there not facilities, but the legal system the judicial system wasn't supportive of the victims. They're, often the judges felt like it was pretty much the good old boys network and the judges felt like it was the woman's fault you know and often their pastors and their families were not supportive either you know you can't get divorced you know of the very fundamental theology was taught often and the families didn't support. Their own families often didn't support it either, that has changed a lot as education has been brought in around that issue of domestic violence and I was associated with a federal judge who worked in that area who did a lot to change it at the judicial level.

Even there, there still is some women judges even that are not very sympathetic to the women going through that so even getting the restraining order is, can be challenging in that and very intimidating for these women. So I learned a lot after that. I was just stunned by that experience but that woman a couple years later I went to her again and she had left her husband, she had a wonderful job, she you know had so much pride in herself and want she was doing and it was just beautiful to see what you what little seeds can be sown.

Probably my favorite experience was doing the course one time and a woman at the end of one of the sessions and the session was focused on doing a cash flow analysis which sounds pretty fancy, but it's really not, you know, but tracking, when you start a business knowing how much cash you'll need, by the month you know, and really thinking through that whole process is very important, so I was doing this process with this group and this woman at the end of the class, said "I hate math! But I think I just understood what you did!" So it was even, I think even more, I mean these were not people that were to start big businesses. They were gonna start itty-bitty little contributing businesses to their to their income, it was an income enhancement really a lot of them, but at least giving them, but it really what it did in in the end was build confidence, build capacity and that they had the skill. Because so many women and I think this is across the board in this country, women are afraid of math and science you know and to empower women in the math and sciences is so important. I'm really kind of pushing that piece you know and I think with that's what I hope I can do with my MBA I mean, I've, it seems like that's happened.

So I've been director I've been and then it well once I landed in Berea I have been there for I've been in Appalachian now for 20 years plus and what I have found in the early days was that a lot of my work was getting it ready and empowering somebody else to take my job. I mean I didn't know that, that wasn't intentional necessarily, but it ended up being that way and you know so I feel like that has been a real a real asset. I have been director of the Catholic Committee of Appalachia, which covers 27 Catholic dioceses in the Appalachian region. I've worked with the Christian Appalachian Project and development and ran and started a program called Christian Partners with another colleague that worked with churches all over the country that supported the Christian Appalachian Project and so I had

the opportunity to travel all over the country and speak to churches of all denominations. Probably my funniest story was ending up in a little, little itty-bitty church in rural Missouri and the Pentecostal church and I learned that morning the pastor got sick and so I, I was, it was just assumed I would preach. They didn't quite know what sister meant you know and then I was a Catholic sister to begin with, but you know I just went with the flow.

So you never know where you, where God's hand leads you and I have just been blessed I mean it's not it's not been without its trials because a lot of it you know a lot of people want to enter religious community and live in community well as a Franciscan part of our charism is to go where the needs are and a lot of times Francis went by himself you know or he would have a brother standing on outside of the cave you know, but you know so in a sense you know a lot of times we're not living in huge communities anymore and that's across the board, but especially as Franciscans were like little mendicants out there. In Kentucky there are four of us sisters from St. Francis, Oldenburg and we live in I mean two of them live together, but the rest of us are on our own and yet I feel like where one is we all are and that's pretty much a thing in our community and it truly is something that I have always felt and when people say to me but where's your community and I'm like they're right here they're right here in my heart, but also right here in the neighborhoods that I serve and I mean you know there's community it's even broader than just the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg. It's so much broader and I recently told our new bishop that came in June and we were together and I just said you know one of the things here is it doesn't matter, I mean I often forget which community a sister is from and like that kind of becomes blurred because it doesn't matter if you know that we're so we can do things together we can serve together.

And there's a wonderful companionship of the sisters in Eastern Kentucky from wherever they come from, it's, there's a common bond among us and which sometimes you know can be frustrating to bishops. But our new bishop loves it. He's Franciscan too so, he gets that community and that connectedness piece.

But I so anyway I've ended up you know truly being blessed with the opportunities given to me and you know I a year ago I was given the opportunity and I have a feeling this is gonna take me to new places, but I don't know what it is yet so I'm not gonna even go there, but to participate in Nuns on the Bus in Kentucky for two days and it was just, it was a wild experience wonderful and hearing stories just really touched me so this year I got an invitation to join them again and you know I thought you know really often what people need is just someone to listen to their story and to share their stories and you know and it so I participated again and what I'm going to call it is a pilgrimage because it truly was a pilgrimage you know on the journey and into Washington D.C. to see Pope Francis and to be in those throngs of crowds which if I had been if it was just me going by myself, I wouldn't have gone. I told people you would see a whole lot better and a whole lot more than we saw you know from our locations, although the second day was much better, but you know, but it was really about the journey and the pilgrimage it wasn't just about where we were ending.

And then, but along the way taking the stories to send to Pope Francis and people feeling, you know, really empowered to tell their stories actually the videographer that we had with us was taking capturing stories people want to share even if it wasn't shared during our

town halls or events that we would always have a few minutes where people could tell their story to Sam and then she would capture them and they were they are being put on or they had been put on an iPad that will be given to Pope Francis so it's like those stories are sacred. There's a sacredness about stories.

I always say there's two about meals around the table you know oftentimes in my work it's Christian Appalachian Project and beyond because I worked a lot with volunteers and the volunteer program, always cooking, always cooking and I like to cook so that's a good thing. I said, I told them they needed to have that on the job description because they're getting people that aren't that don't like to cook and that that's really gonna change the dynamic because I really believe that it's sacred that when you come together around a table and to cook food, for me, to share that with other people is a very sacred experience and you know I found that you know on the bus to sharing meals with the sisters or with the people we were at you know whether it was here in Indianapolis with St. Thomas Aquinas sixth-grade class you know it was just there was there are sacred moments that we could then share.

And the journey to Pope Francis wasn't just about Pope Francis, although it was such, my mom goes, boy I never saw you so excited. There is something about this man that is going to transform this world, I mean he is having such an impact by what he does and what he says because it's not what's expected. People have, we have boxed in our faith and he's opening the box. He's challenging us to get out of the box so that we can truly respond with compassion and hearts and I know there's some Catholics are not happy about this, not happy about Pope Francis. In fact we had, while I was gone there was we have a pastor who's from India and so he's been back in India visiting his family and we had a visiting pastor who apparently one day, I was told by our other parishioners, said, "I hope Pope Francis, I'm glad he's going home, I hope he gets back to Rome and we can get back to watching the regular TV shows." This is a priest a Catholic priest, I was stunned, I of course, I probably would have said something to him.

Because I think our voice I think our whether it's sometimes to challenge with love is important and that's sort of why the Nuns on the Bus is important to me is that we have to raise up the voices and we can't let, we can't let legislators say, oh but that doesn't make any sense oh you can't do that, it's not practical, oh we can't do that you know we can't keep providing health care to all of these people you know so they can continue to live and live with dignity no we can't afford that, but we can afford to put money into bombs and into I mean there's a, Pope Francis is calling the fallacy of this.

And the same with the environment when you go to the Ohio Food Bank in, outside of Columbus it's the Mid-Ohio Food Bank and you see what they're, one of their things, it's real exciting that they're doing is 60% of the food they distribute is fresh fruits and vegetables, that's wonderful. Secondly, their, their, the building it was an old warehouse, they convert it and they have converted it they have, they were awarded the Gold LEED Star the Gold Star for LEED certification for that building and they are paying, they probably it's probably ten times the size of its original of the original building they were in and they're paying less on utilities, so to think practical there are you know again I haven't begun to think about the nuts and bolts in the financial sense, the problem is we're you know we bring our faith to thinking about just me and now and not look at the long run I think our I think it's sort of a disgrace when we if when we say that oh we don't have to be concerned about the environment when that's our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren

lives and we're impacting you know I think we've got to take a longer view of that and hopefully that's where my ability to be able to challenge and to the voice often people are very intimidated by finance people or business people, people that say oh you can't do that, investment folks, yes you can you know I think there has to be the voice of, oh yes you can, and here's why.

I often work with a friend of mine who's a Glenmary priest. He's got a master's in economics, so we get into trouble at times. One time we were in a EPA hearing in Eastern Kentucky which was intimidating all by itself you know, but with all these trucks actually as we're going into the building this police officer says to us, "just let us know if you have any trouble," and I'm like, "Oh good grief" because we were there was a little handful of the people wanting to address the damages sometimes in the coal industry and I'm at the other hand where all these there was probably 300 coal miners who had been sent by the company and paid for the day and paid for their lunches to come to this, but one gentleman after both Father John Rausch and I testified came to us and we had another priest who is a Franciscan from St. John the Baptist Province with us and he says to us you know I just don't he says my friends are making fun of me because I'm a Catholic and you know you all spoke and so they were you know he said I just he wasn't even a miner a coal miner, he was actually a contract he would worked at another business that supported the coal industry and he said you know I don't think you guys understand the economic benefit of you know the economic impact of the coal industry here you know, "It built the roads." We all look I said, "First of all let me just clarify. I have an MBA, he has a Master's in Economics and he has a Master's or he may have had a Doctorate in Agricultural Economics." I said, "I think we understand the economics of the region. And the guy just looks at me.

You know they don't, they don't expect the sisters and priests to have backgrounds that can challenge the business world or that can bring the reality and the facts to light. The coal industry did not build the roads. The federal government built the roads in Eastern Kentucky. They may have had to keep repairing them because of the coal industry, but it's costing the taxpayers, not the coal industry to build those roads. It was the Appalachian Regional Commission that actually ended that actually has benefited in the infrastructure of that community of those communities and it's not the coal industry, and I think that's our call today as sisters as you know we would become smaller in numbers is to empower people to be able to stand up and challenge the status quo that pushes people down that pushes or doesn't give opportunities for people to be what they're called to be to be their dignity to have the dignity recognized so that's where my story.

MEL: Thank you, Sister, very much.

*end of Part One*

MEL: Sister Robbie Pentecost part 2.

SRP: Well I just wanted to add, something that was you know a challenge for my father, back to my father's history, was you know, I mean he was really concerned about my becoming a sister. He, thinking that I had wasted my education and was running, running away from something and not running towards something is I, it just came out of my mind, when he said to me, "What are you running away from?" I said, "I think I'm running to

something." You know, I may not know what it is yet, but I think that's where I'm going, and but he was really concerned.

He had, again, not being Catholic, growing up in Virginia in a very poor area that wasn't very Catholic, he had one Catholic friend that they would all as they were going to school they would drop him off at the Catholic school and it was like behind a wall, so he was always scared of walls. So he always had these interesting images of sisters in growing up, not growing up around a lot of Catholics he didn't have a lot of experience with sisters, so he, his image was of because he would travel a lot and would fly and he would encounter sisters that would meet either a Bishop or Cardinal or whatever it was whoever they were and the sisters would be waiting for him to get off the plane and would be kissing his ring and my dad just had a horrible feeling that of seeing me doing that. He thought I was giving up all of my independence or and not understanding at that time the value of interdependence, but that I would never be able to you know decide for my life in the future and actually it's been quite the opposite.

And discernment. One other thing that I just realized too is I have recently discerned to leave my, the job that I was doing. I was the manager for the Christian Partner Program for Christian Appalachian Projects and have actually worked for that organization the longest I've ever worked for anybody. For 10 years I worked with them, but was offered back in, I guess about eight months ago to come and work for the community. I was asked to consider that and so I said to them, I mean my first gut reaction, and this is the problem when you let emotions direct you, was, "Are you serious?" and then I asked a few more questions, they wanted me to be their planned and major gift coordinator and what was funny about it, I have been doing that kind of work, I mean, in some senses with Christian Partners, but before that I was doing planned and major gifts with the Christian Appalachian Project, but I didn't feel like in the community that would be a benefit for me because I hadn't been really associated with any of our institutions. I didn't go to Marian University, I didn't go to the Academy and so you know.

But, what I, something in me and I think it's these years of recognizing the importance of taking time to sit with questions or just sit with situations. I finally said to the sister that asked me, I said, "Let me have a few days, you know, let me think about this" and then I went back to her and I said it was like at the end of February and I it was Lent had just begun and I said, "I'd like to really discern this during Lent" and they were giving me all kinds of time so that was fine and I had also let the people that were my directors of the Christian Appalachian Project know I was in this discernment, other people said, "Oh you should not have let them know," but I still think it's just fair, but and one of our sisters had given me, had shared about using the different, because some people were saying "Oh well do you the pros and the cons," so I was doing the rational pros and cons. And others said, "Just live, live both jobs for a while in your mind you know and really feel it and experience it," and then one of our sisters who does a lot of this work with people and she shared a book with me and it's using all of the senses for discernment and so really staying you know, yes, looking at the practical pros and cons, but also just staying with your feelings staying with and the more I did that everything kept pointing.

And I happen to be at a conference, actually talk about weird experiences really nuts, but this is just how things happen. I happen to be at an event in Louisville back in with March and Prince Charles had come to Louisville, which is in itself funny, Louisville, but a friend of

mine and some of us working in the Appalachian region who lives in Louisville, Christy Brown had she was really instrumental in getting Prince Charles there and so anyway I was in a conversation with a gentleman that I knew and he had just, he had been working at St. Meinrad he had just left there to go work for another organization and he's you know and he said it was kind of hard and he was thinking he said that he just went back to the to the, to St. Meinrad, he had left and then went back and he said, "I thought I'd feel really strained or really you know torn or when I go back and feeling bad about that I had left." He said, "But when I went there, I realized," he said, "As much as I loved that work, this takes on a more global or broader dimension, this work that I'm doing now."

And so I think you know that's what, I mean it just hit me I said, "Oh my gosh, I think that's maybe where I'm headed," you know, you start to realize, you know, what people would say started to affect all that discernment piece. So you know Christian Appalachian Project the work I did there, I loved, I loved working with churches and groups and people from all over the country and empowering them to share their gifts, but also to be empowered by the Appalachian people. But at the same time you know I mean you know, recognizing that I felt like even in this conference that Prince Charles attended, I was being called to a broader reality or broader work. I'm not sure what all that means, but that's where I'm at and thanks to you know a lot of people and Christy Brown continues to bring interesting people to Louisville.

And you know it's it just, I mean there's so many doors that continue to be open and that's one thing about discernment is you don't always have, well you rarely have a clear picture you know, but if you trust your feelings and your heart and what people are saying to you, it's good. The other part about discernment, again my mother was against it, she was against change. She didn't think this was the right thing, that I needed to stay there because it would benefit, I mean I would benefit the community more because now the community supports me, but also I would build up my retirement. So again that was the practical side of things, but as she started, as I took that six weeks to discern, she started also getting on board and seeing that yes this this was the direction God was sending me, so I think discernment is so important in our lives and as you know it's really led by God I mean you know my sense of who God is continues to broaden and how God works continues to broaden, but I know that I'm not in charge and I know that God, God is.