

September 12th, 2015: Sister Therese Tackett, speaking with Professor Mary Ellen Lennon at the Convent of the Sister of St. Francis, Oldenburg.

Abbreviations

STT: Sister Therese Tackett

MEL: Mary Ellen Lennon

MEL: This is Mary Ellen Lennon in Oldenburg, Indiana at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis. It is September 12th, 2015, and I am very happy to be with Sister Therese Tackett in the hearth room. Sister Therese, would you mind introducing yourself?

STT: My name is Therese Tackett, as one of the Sisters here. I grew up, was born in Bluefield, West Virginia. Where I grew up and lived there until I left to enter the convent. There were eight of us children in the family, and I was the seventh of the eight. When I was in the eighth grade we had nine grades of grade school, we didn't have a freshman year in high school, that was with the grade school. And when I was in the ninth grade I kept telling my sister, my mother, that I wanted to enter the convent, and I had even picked out, there was a Sacred Heart Messenger being published then. And in there they had this most beautiful white habit which I fell in love with. And so I thought maybe I want to enter this community way up in Wisconsin.

Well my mom sort of convinced me that I was a little bit too young to go to the convent that far away, because I was only fifteen then. And so she asked me to stay and make this at least this sophomore year in high school at the public school, so I went to the public school one year. Then, she told me I was so intent on entering that she told me to go to high school here at the mother con—, at our academy, and so I came up all by myself to enter in the high school though my junior year in high school. Well at that time if you had enough credits you could enter the convent when you finished high school. And so I had enough credits, and so I entered after my junior year in high school. I would not recommend that now, because you now when I look back on how my life has materialized, I realized that I was much too young at that time. I would highly recommend that other people not enter that young, go out and become independent, go out and and know what life is really is, and do that. But at that time I didn't know better so that's when I entered.

The next year was our postulant year so there were sixteen of us, no twenty-one of us entered. Sixteen whom stayed all through the final vows. And so, I had never been away from home and so in my high school year I sort of cut loose and was not a fit.

I got lots of not good grades in high school in conduct at the academy. And so, but when I entered I still knew the girls that were over there so they would try to sneak over different things to me and so being the age I was, I would take them. So later on though,

I realized that what I was doing was just growing up. And so now I that's why I don't recommend just growing up, I have been before you enter rather than after.

MEL: What kind of things?

STT: Although it worked out, you know work now—it's not I know the course for it but, but I would not recommend it because you aren't really old enough to make your decision really. Well, first I'm gonna have to teach, an interesting thing for me is when I first taught I taught in Indianapolis, and the third grade. And I didn't realize I talk differently. At the academy they teased me about talking differently from West Virginia, but I I just thought I talked like everybody else talked. But when I gave out the spelling words, some of the third graders could not understand what I was saying, and so I gave the words CAMP camp, well I said it came because that's what we said at home. Well she chuckled, and then she said, my mother says it that way too. So then I realized I had to talk differently. And so that eventually came. I taught for about ten or fifteen years at different inner-city schools or very poorest folk.

And then I became principal of one of the inner-city poor schools. And since then I've been principal those in Cincy, and a school, these are all poor schools, and in St. Louis was the first only time that I was not in a poor school, that was at St. Catherine's. I was at St. Henry's and in St. Louis which was extremely poor. And so what I learned was the same thing my mother had taught me at home, you are frugal with what you had. You make do with what you had. So I would collect things that other people would throw away, and I would make do with those things. And so because the people that I worked for, knew the same thing. When I was in Cincinnati for the first time, they allowed me to teach at St. Joe's which was an all black school. They were, the person who was in charge at that time, Mother Marie, did not let me before because she was afraid I would be prejudiced, coming from West Virginia. Well I wasn't, because I understood the students, because I was prejudiced against. And so I enjoyed my work year there, then I was sent as principal to a very poor school down by the river in Cincy. Then I came back again to be principal at St. Joe's. And I was there twice, I went to St. Louis in between the last two times.

And the thing that was I valued was the experience that I came up and we in, in our family the eight of us and my mom and dad, raised everything we ate. The only thing we bought was meal, cornmeal, flour and sugar. We had two cows which my brother and I milked, morning and night. And so we had plenty of milk. We had butter, we had chickens at laid eggs, and so we had our eggs. We also had chickens that we raised for meat. Until I entered the convent I had not had any red meat. Otherwise we we used what we had, and we didn't know we were poor, that was the value. My mother, the only time I was conscious of it was my mother had, we had these feed sacks that had patterns on. Chicken feed sacks, and we had chickens so we had chicken feed sacks. She would make our clothes out of that, and I swore that every kid in school knew, that I wore chicken feed sack, but they didn't because mother made him so nicely. But see though I was very self-conscious of that.

But as I entered, and you you were given what you had, I what we always had been at home, you know. I was given what I needed, so I didn't find it—I did not find that part very difficult at all, because of my upbringing at home. But was we shared everything we had at home. And so, when we raised chickens my brother and I, because I was the next in line with the one at one of the twins, we had two sets of twins in the middle. And so my twin right above me had been hit by a car when he was smaller, and his twin got promoted on he could not because he missed most of the school year. And so he was here below her so he and I did all the milking, all the chicken fix, and that kind of stuff.

And so when I came to the convent I did not know how to cook, and that became a joke. When I first came this shows just just how you bring your home bringing with you. When I came to the convent one of the first Sundays I was at this one mission where I was, and this sister told me to make bread, because on Saturday, because each of us the four of us went to Marian College every Saturday. And so she said, make the bread before you go. Well, it was my turn to make this bread. So she said, gave me the recipe and everything, and I had watched people do it. Well, I had both my hands in the flour, I should have known better because my mother made bread also. And I said can somebody give me water, and Sister Rosita said, what's wrong don't you have two hands?

So it was like the embarrassed I learned a lot by embarrassing little things. They didn't be mean to be mean to me, I know that because I dearly loved Sister Rosita. She was my principal in school one time, but it's those things you look at and you say, well I didn't read I didn't learn how that kind of because we did not have that kind of thing. Another sister asked me in the convent, asked me to make jello. Well, we didn't have jello so I didn't know how to make jello particularly I was a big recipe in the kitchen, at the big kitchen. And so I thought I had abbreviated it the way it was supposed to be. Well it ended up being just watery, and so Sister was very nice she said, oh Sister, she said, little Sister don't worry about it she said. Because we can put this over fruit and nobody's ever gonna know the difference.

And so sometimes it was easier than others to make the mistake, but what I have found one of the things that I became conscious of, I went for the first time in my life since I entered, I went to eastern Kentucky to do work in a fellowship center. I was to maintain this fellowship center. And for the first time I was among people who talk just like I did. And I became conscious of that because this one woman we had a group that made crafts on Thursday afternoon, we met every Thursday afternoon, we'd have snacks that we bring and so on. But we would be making crafts so we could sell for this fellowship center. And so she said to me, and she was older and she said, do you know what poke is? I said, I know what poke is, you know my mom used to send it out. I said the greens that you sent out and you have to get it when it's young. And she looked at the others than she said, she's one of us. Even though I didn't have lost the ability to talk that way I was taught how to talk properly, when I entered the convent as far as being people could understand me then.

But it's been interesting because all the experiences I've had, have tapped into my growing up. They really have because only once that was in St. Louis the one school in St. Louis, have I ever been in a parish or a school that was not poor. And so in those schools I was able to accept them just the way they were, and we knew how to do things that would help us get money to help. In Cincinnati one year, no, it must have been about for about four or five years the state said they for Catholic schools they would pay for books, certain books. Of course, not religion books but like, we got history books and so on. Reading books. And the one sister who taught in junior high, at Moscow, and she taught at junior high, and she said everybody said well you have to get "open highways", which is the watered-down reader, because your kids can't do anything but that. And she said, yes they can. So she ended up getting those kids the ones that could do it, she knew who could do it who not. She ordered for the ones that could do it, books that—but what he called that—anyway it was regular, I still can't think that word—that's part of getting old. And they can hear that, too. Literature books. And one time she showed me one of their tests and I had taken literature many years before that in college.

But I had never, if you don't use it you forget it, and some of the tests things I could not do I could not remember, because it was like alliteration and that kind of thing. And I could not do the matching part because I thought I don't remember what that means. I don't remember how to do it. But she had those students doing just what it prepared them for high school. And see, people usually would say, well they can't do this. Well yes, they can do this if you let them do this. If you encourage them to do this. Just yesterday was a young man came, and he's now a must be in his thirties, forties, early forties, very great success. He was very poor in Cincinnati, but his I don't know remember his grandmother or his mother raised him, aunt, had to be a grandmother, but raised this young man because of the Sisters believing in him, now he had me for one year in junior high, but his lower grade teachers believing in him and pushing him. He said, caused him to be able to go to Catholic school in Cincinnati, Franciscan school, that's in high school. And he went to Xavier University, and he went on to get other universities to get other courses. But he graduated from Xavier University. Now is very successful, and periodically he comes back. Yeah. So you know, I think then you realize that even though we did not have money at that school, we were doing something that was worth ten times more than money, to get for that—. To me, that's what we pass on to other people.

And people remember what we did when we were in their schools. One school there's three of us that taught in the same school, one taught seventh grade and two other two of us who taught sixth grade at that year. They had a reunion after fifty years of graduating from that Holy Name school in Indianapolis. They come once or twice a month to see the three of us, this is like ten or twelve people, with their wives, and we have this huge—they take us out for lunch because they appreciate what we did. Even though one called me the one she said, you never smile. Well I was told I shouldn't

smile. I do now, I would now but they remember what we did and it has made a difference in them. But that makes a difference in us because they remembered.

And we remembered what we did there. But those are basically—I went to Ball State for my first masters, and then I was going to be checked, not chaplain, guidance counselor at the academy for, and so they thought I should get preparation for that in the counseling. So, I finished at the University of Dayton in counseling, and I have used that a lot, because I feel like it's much more easy for me to be able not to interfere with the person but to allow it's like the one professor there said, you solve the person's problems by allowing them to solve them themselves. Because they, by talking to you it makes, it begins to make sense.

And so I learned a lot from them, you know. Plus I learned a lot from my teaching, and I'm learning a lot from my retirement. Because now, I do have to keep a schedule, because I have a job and I just finished that part of the first part of it. We have in our website the reflections for each Sunday reading, and so I'm the one who actually organizes people who will do that. Then I have to go through and make sure we have all the readings for those every Sunday, and then they volunteer for which however, whatever month they want. So then I have to—so we just finished that and I sent it out.

So, then I have to make sure they start bringing them in, so. That's one of my jobs. Another of my jobs that I, it's a volunteer thing, when I first came up to the third floor of St. Clare Hall, where I am, one of the Sisters came up who was beginning to get into not Alzheimer's but dementia. And this Sister loved to work jigsaw puzzles, and I knew this from I had seen a lot of them work where she was in living before here. And she sort of took a liking for me because we were close in age. And she talked to me about the fact she wasn't remembering things, and it was really hurting her. And so I said to her, would you like to work some puzzles, here? And so then the two of us started working jigsaw puzzles, and I used my budget money to buy the jigsaw puzzles so we would happen most of the time to have all the pieces you know. And so that woman and I started, now there came a time when she could not do it anymore. She couldn't she couldn't pick pieces in right.

And so now then I did them in my bedroom, so it wouldn't embarrass her. We still have in our hall up there a beautiful red bird, that she put together it's only about eight inches high, and about four or five inches but she put that together and I said to her would you would like for me to find a frame for that, so you even have it in here? Oh, she said, yes. So that's now she's dying now, and so she's dead, and so we put that it's still in our hall. But you would never know is a puzzle. And most of the puzzles are that way, we have some for Christmas event and we have some for just ordinary times with no snow that night thing.

And so far, I've been able to raise, give back, because I don't take any money out. I've given, if I have now enough money to give and it'll make a thousand dollars so we've made on jigsaw puzzles. So if

there's always something that we can do, and a lot of times I'll visit with somebody that's down you know, because I know how that is, getting down and not knowing people. And sometimes it they respond sometimes they don't, but at least they know somebody cares. So I've done that a lot.

There's always something here that you can do, and get involved in. Sometimes we play cards but sometimes sometimes it's just a matter of sitting around and talking, and watching a game. The Reds game. That's a big thing in this community, the Reds in Cincinnati. Well when they're not playing, the Bengals. We vote for the or we take the Indianapolis team, the Colts. Because people are from Indianapolis.

But there's a big thing there, but our biggest thing right now is looking at how can we not spend as much, but how can we save what we have. And that's what we're doing, and we even though we're in St. Clare Hall which is for the infirm, a lot of us aren't mentally infirm, so as a result we can do a lot of things that will bring in money. So, I don't know if there's any question you would like to ask me.

MEL: No this is beautiful. Thank you, Sister. I am very interested in your childhood. You just spoke so beautifully of your childhood. Growing up, would you like to talk a little bit more about growing up?

STT: As I said, I had an older, two older brothers. And then there came a set of twins, a boy and a girl. And two years later, three years later, two and a half years of years really, came in a second set of twins. And then two year, two and a half years later here I come along. And then my sister comes three years later. And so we're paired that way, and it was interesting to me because Mom never spoke about being tired but we knew she was tired. And many times on Sunday, my father would say to the older boys, take them for a walk, because your mom needs rest. And he knew, he knew she—. Dad was a railroad engineer, he had been in the First World War and he had gotten mustard gas, and so he couldn't do a lot. But he was an engineer, he got in the army early because he lied about his age, and so he was there in the army early.

And he was over in Europe, so that when my brothers grew up, the Second World War came along, they entered. So my one brother was over in the Battle of the Bulge, the other brother brother was just in the Navy, so he was in quite a bit of it in the Navy. A third brother had epilepsy, and he wasn't supposed to go into any kind of, it was supposed to be a refer. But he he wanted to go in, so he joined the Merchant Marines. And then the young, other brother was too young, but I grew up during the wartime, and so an interesting thing for me too was the Sisters there were Poor Child Jesus Sisters, they were not Franciscan Sisters, which was another community altogether. And they—but they were all German Sisters, and so I didn't particularly want to enter the German Sisters because that was not an exchange for me. Not because I didn't like them, because I liked them. We had a wonderful priest there too, but my none of us were born in a hospital, we were all born in our home.

And an experience that Mom talked about later, in age after after we knew the facts of life, my mom said the doctor when she was delivering the second set of twins, he was fixing or fixing up my cleaning up the one the first one which was the girl, I think the girl, and then all of a sudden he wasn't making the move to come over again. And she said, are you gonna come and get the second one? Oh, he said, Miss Tackett, he said, just because you had twins once it doesn't mean you're going to have them twice. He said that's just the afterbirth. And she, said, well it does the afterbirth kick? And so he then realized she was having the second set of twins. But it, I could tell stories about that because she had, they were all less than five years old. The two boys weren't, but they were close like six, seven, or eight, that kind of thing. And so Mom said, she was went to town, and the only way she could shop because dad wasn't home, was to go to town and take all these kids. So she said, she was downtown in Bluefield, with all these kids. She had a double stroller, so there were two, four in a stroller and then my two others brothers decided they were going to run ahead. So my mother said all I could do was to yell, somebody catch those new boys. She said she'd get in a taxi and come home. But she said, that she knew that well she was not gonna be able to shop with them.

And we walked to school even though it was a really long hill that we had to walk up, it was a mountain, really. I called it a hill but it was really a mountain that we had to go up to grade school. Then in high school we had to work, walk at least a mile and a half beyond that. But we walked wherever we went, we never did anything but walking. So I had leg muscles, and I was I was strong, really. I'm not as much strong anymore but I really had muscles of a boy, because I was not going to let my brother's outdo me, as far as lifting that kind of thing. Wasn't very feminine but it was it was part of it.

But I don't know if you want me to tell you anything else, well this is a thing that might be interesting, too. We were the minority. The Catholics were there very much the minority in the city, and so we in grade school we weren't exposed to them but we went to high school, they would they really made fun of us because they said they had various, not very nice things to say about the pastor and the Sisters. Very warped ideas of what they did and what—and so we had to defend ourselves, really. And so I knew what it was to take care of myself that way, too. And I knew what it is I felt at an early age what it was to be black, and have to expect somebody else not to understand. Because they didn't understand me when I came, because I was totally different than people here. I was not a bone of German in my body, because my mother was Scotch-Irish and my father was French. We finally traced that back, but this is almost it was a totally German community.

And so as a result, when I first entered this is a thing was strange to me too, I could not pray the way they pray morning, they prayed morning pray that. But when we had this reading and then you were supposed to meditate on that, I could not I could not understand what we were supposed to be doing in that quiet. Because, I didn't pray that way. When I pray in quiet, I prayed quiet, you know what I mean? But it was we were all supposed to know what those things were that for—there was a word for them too and I

can't think of the word they used for them. Fervorinos, I think they were called. Things that we were supposed to be meditating on and you know, supposed to be taken as holy. I don't think it took on us. Well we all talked about our whole class talks about that. You know sometimes the things that we thought and the things that we wondered about, and then the way we found out the truth about it, they was all true. But not in the way they thought, we were going to learn it was true. We learned about life really, you know.

MEL: I'm interested in that first year when you were a novice, and you said your friends were bringing things over. Do you remember your classmates or how you felt that first year when you first entered?

STT: Well, see how do I say this, I was so taken in by the friends I had made at ICA, I hated to leave them, but I knew it was part of the rendition that you did. And so I came on over. And then my postulant year we had visiting Sunday, but I didn't have any visitors because my mother and dad lived in West Virginia. And so sometimes they would come over you know that they were my visitors. The kids from the academy said the one time they brought me apples, and I put him in my, we had this long postulant skirt, long, get a lot in the hem. I had the apples in my my pocket, long pocket. Well they clumped on the floor when I when I leaned down, when I genuflected. So all my hiding of them went to naught. But you know it's things like that because I missed the girls there, and I came back my postulant summer, no my senior summer, but the summer before I entered. And just to see what their what it was going to be like, to be entering and that kind of stuff, and so. And I met some of them again they're not because they were entering but they knew people who had entered, and so on. So they came over to visit with them. And so it's a, it was a just a growing up period and I said that to somebody one time, I said, you know I don't think I grew up until I went out and started teaching and got into many years of teaching and principal-ship. Because then I had to deal with real life. When you're a novice and your enclosed, now they don't and closed them as much. And so they they still are part of life. But we were part of like too, but a whole different set of life.

But when entering, I eventually learned to really what do the the quiet prayer when I went for a thirty day retreat in Wisconsin one year. Made a thirty day retreat. Then for the first time I was able to, it was at a Capuchin retreat house, so it was Franciscan oriented. And so I learned the real art of prayer. I prayed otherwise before that, but I learned what that relationship really was. So I think you grow into it, you don't learn it all at one time.

MEL: Would you talk about how your prayer has changed over your life?

STT: I think my prayer has changed in a way, and our prayer has changed in a way. It's not just saying office, but it's having, making quiet time like Francis and Clare did. It's becoming more Franciscan. When I first entered it probably we were Franciscans in name and we were trying to be Franciscans, but we didn't know anything about Francis

and Clare at that time. But there came a time in community life where we had workshops on that. Where we had people coming in to give us retreats on it, on Francis and Clare, what they really believed in. And so by being, doing that, I wanted to tap more because Francis and Clare were tuned into nature. And as a person growing up in West Virginia I very much was part of nature, because I planted the gardens. I still had before I broke my leg, before I lost my leg, I still grow a garden every year. I had a garden every year when I lived by myself. Because I would set it out and I would take it, and I hold it I did everything with it. Planted, I planted tomatoes, I almost was tempted this year to get up tomato plants, tomato plan to put to my bedroom, a small one, one of these small ones that you had small tomatoes on. But I didn't, I have flowers but I don't have a tomato plant in my bedroom. But it's things like that and in St. Clare Hall you can make your bedroom your own. You know, because you can put up what's, what helps you in prayer.

MEL: Would you describe your room?

STT: Why don't you come up and see it?

MEL: I would love to, Sister.

STT: You can bring that up with you.

MEL: Oh, okay sure. I'll shut it off then.

Part II

MEL: September 12th, 2015. Part two, Sister Therese Tackett. Thank you, Sister. I'm happy to be in your room.

STT: As you can see puzzles are a big part of what I do. And I'm the one who actually works them, there's a finished one right back there. Somebody else did that one. I've got at least eight or ten people who make puzzles so we can sell the puzzles. So they're a part of our work habit up here. And we call ourselves the St. Clare Puzzle Makers.

When we sell them we have a little card that somebody made for us beautiful card, that she made for us that we're the puzzle makers. Several things the back there on the wall, is my mother and dad, and then below are the four boys on one side the four girls on the other side. That's when mom celebrated her ninetieth birthday. And each each thing and hanging on the wall means something to me. This is a picture that I painted, by number. I didn't paint it by myself, but it was painted by number. And it made a difference, it was when I was in retreat that I did that within several retreats when I was having a change in my own life. And so as a result that puzzle really that picture really means something to me. Back here, back here and I'll turn this light on back here, so you can see it. On the wall is a hanging that's birch bark.

MEL: Yes—

STT: In between jobs, I took a job, I took a job or a year off in Wisconsin doing high school retreats. High school, worked with high school students, and we did high school students, junior high confirmation or high school confirmation. And that birch bark was in there was a couple there who did the marriage retreats with Father, and that's a piece of the birch bark that was in one of the trees on in their property in the woods. And so he knew that I had fallen in love with birch bark, so I had to those. This one I kept, I gave somebody else's the other one. This one says, "you are God's work of art". It's a very very beautiful Ephesian saying that made a lot - meant a lot for me in retreat. And so each of these means something to me.

MEL: Would you read some more? Like there's a beautiful prayer I think, below that one.

STT: Oh, oh below that one it says, "Oh that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that your hand would be with me, and that you would keep me from evil." That's a thing from scripture, one of the Old Testament scriptures. I don't know if it's I can't remember now if it's Hosea or if it's a Isaiah. Yeah, but that's what that is.

This one is a—turn this light on, when I was at Evansville, I did volunteer work. And some of that was working with the kids' cafe. I was a cook for the kids' cafe. I'm not a very good cook, but I cook for them and they they didn't mind. But it got too much for me so then I just answered the bell. At that time I felt I wasn't going to be in youth ministry anymore so I gave this youth minister all my things from youth ministry and he gave me this in return. And it was made up, I could never find anybody of those little cards that said treat your name, and all your good points—whatever. But he did this and he made it, and I can't read it from here.

MEL: Oh, it's beautiful. "Therese, hidden within your name is a special story. T is for thoughtful, the caring you. H is for happiness, you always bring. E is for enrich, a quality you share. R is for reasonable, your understanding way. E is for eternal, your spirit will live. S is for sensitive, another side shows. E is for excite, your spirit is catching. Therese is much more than just a name. And music, your music?"

STT: I like music. Right now my thing won't break, plays. It's a little bit broken because I knocked it when I was getting it down to actually test it out, and so I can't play you one. But I have some, these are all Christmas music. This is a thing that lights up when you turn it and it has it and it has water that comes up also. Oh yeah.

MEL: Your books?

STT: These are all my books, these are some puzzles. This is a puzzle that's going to Haiti. It's three pictures it's like the stained glass windows of the Blessed Mother, three of them. And there's a young lady that goes she's a high, over high school now, but she's somebody that works in our kitchen.

And she, it's interesting, she's been to Haiti, all of her vacation time she spends in Haiti. And she told me she was going to Haiti for a weekend, and she thought that instead of luggage she could take this one along, it's three stained-glass windows of the Blessed Mother connected. Their church in Haiti the church she works at, it was all destroyed their church was told, and they've just rebuilt a new church, and she said she thinks they could use this in their new church. And I, before I had given her another picture puzzle, that she and then but she hasn't gotten, but she thinks that she can take the two puzzles down. I packed it like this with big board inside, so it would be. These I'm hoping to send to Navajos, one of our Sisters is coming home from there. Because I won't sell these, I give those as gifts. That's something that she can give to somebody. This here is one that Sister Joan Miller fixed for me. "True prayer is never an escape from self but a centering on God, whose face reveals to me my own true face, the face God is summoning forth from my deepest center." I love that saying, because it's true. And all of these have been part of my growing spiritually in faith.

This is a thing I like because it's Appalachia, and it's called, lift it up, because I can't remember the full title of it. But it's called mountain moments, and it goes through, was given to me by a man who we rented from, David and Cindy, and what it is is they take the alphabet, and it was made by a priest who is a Jesuit, and who Al [Fritsch], who was in Appalachian for a long time. And then, the first one is all and then what it does is gives a little quotation from scripture then a reflection, and then a prayer. And I love it. I usually try to work with it each each month, I haven't done that religiously this month. I don't know if there's anything else you— Oh, that the first one is, I love that. "Follow the voice of your heart, your spirit. Remember you're to dream, listen to the wisdom of your soul, and dance to the music of your heart." One of our Sisters gave that to me that's a gift. And the other one is a picture the Celtic Trinity, it's all female. Oh yeah, and there's a, if you get it down there's a thing on the back of it that gives you an explanation of what each one represents. It's the story. you can read it, then you can turn it around to see who's who.

MEL: The Celtic Trinity. From ancient times human beings have responded to experiences of the divine with works of art. They have used metaphor and image to describe what they have seen. Individual expressions of personal experiences of the divine, have often challenged rigid, religious traditions. Religious institutions have mistrusted the images of the ancients as well as the visions of the mystics. The spiritual genius of many ethnic groups through the centuries has been responsible for profound images of faith. The drawings on the walls of prehistoric caves and early scripture, sculpture, are powerful witnesses to highly developed spiritual as well as artistic sentiments of people who live centuries before the birth of the traditional religions of the east and west. The civilization of the Americas which flourished prior to the arrival of Columbus, and missionaries from Europe, were routinely destroyed. Images of faith were often condemned before any attempt was made to understand the experience which gave birth to these images of the Spirit. Religious authorities urged on by patriarchal bias were especially fearful of the role of feminine images in these primitive

yet often highly evolved cultures. Male clerics and theologians were careful to exercise control over the images to be used in worship and devotions. Should I keep going? Native Americans, Africans, Asians, as well as early European traditions saw their religious traditions and images cast aside in favor of the Christian images current at the time. Little effort was made to see any connection between indigenous faith and imagery with the heart of the gospel of Jesus. Treasures of faith were lost as cultures were systematically destroyed by colonists and conquerors. It is time to recover discarded religious treasures. A beautiful image from ancient Celtic religious experience was God as a Trinity of women, the maiden gave birth to creation, the mother nurtured and protected it, and the crone brought it wisely to its end. A raven accompanied the crone as a symbol of life and death. Though it ate dead things, it flew high into the heavens. In this icon the three women are depicted from different races to extend the Celtic image to a more global perspective. The snake now associated with the devil by Christians, was another sacred feminine image. It represented life, fertility, and rejuvenation. Devouring its own tale it represented immortality. Feminine images have suffered greatly under Christianity. Women will continue to suffer oppression in any religious Society until their images have been reclaimed and honored. Feminine images can shed new light on the Christian gospel, and unlock vast new areas in Christian spirituality. These feminine insights can help to present a new and healing perspective on problems that face our modern world.

STT: Isn't it beautiful?

MEL: It's beautiful, Sister.

I think, it's growing up because I did a lot of work outside, I became very much a tomboy. And so I don't think that until I did that and accepted the fact that the less strong female, but although my mom was not less strong, that we also could be leaders too. And I like that image there because she is the one the female deer is the one who is leading, and he's simply looking up and down to see if there's anything they need to be afraid of. And running, and I think this image of it my mother, was Scotch-Irish, my father was French. Now Scotch-Irish is a Celtic religion, has that tradition. And so when I saw this, and I got a copy of it, I valued this because it said a lot to me of what I was feeling inside myself, you know. Because I think God can be, God is not neither male nor female, we all know that in our head. But church is always indicated that it's a him, and that's really not true, you know. And so as a result, it's neither but we all need both images within ourselves. And also we are both male and female in our in our in our self. We're part that, because mom and dad or mine where it's where I got who I was, from my mother and father. And a lot of it, that more quiet side I got from my father, he was quiet.

And that image up there, I don't have it I don't have it with me now but my cousin in Cincy was an artist. He was a no he wasn't, he was not the brother in the family but he Charlie grew, drew a beautiful and I had seen it before, Appalachian man. And it looked just just like my father would have looked, quiet, had a beard, Dad that didn't have a

beard but just quiet. A lot of times he would just sit you didn't know what he was thinking about. But it was always that gentleness, and so when I went to Appalachia for the ten years, I asked Charlie if I could buy that picture. So he let me. Then after I had been there two years, I said to him, could you draw me a mother or a female with that? So he did, and the two are in our archive in our heritage, renowned. Because I said, they're very much a part of who we are you know, because who I was anyway. And because they reminded me of who I really came from, you know. That's where I am that's where I grew up.

And there are times in religious life when I've looked at and I thought I knew I didn't talk like or at one time in a retreat my retreat director was Sister Amy, who's now home also. And I remember going out on the field way over beyond the cemetery, and I remember sitting there and for some reason all of a sudden I was struck by the the idea that here I was, I think I'd been in on twenty-some years, maybe thirty years in community. And I thought to myself, I don't talk like like I grew up in Appalachia, I don't talk anything like that. So I'm not part of that culture anymore, nor am I really a part of this culture, that was just that—. But then I literally walked through the cemetery and watched the graves of different people that I had lived with. Classmates that were dead, a classmate that was dead and I thought but I am a part because I lived with these people and I am a part of these people.

And so it helped me bridge that gap or that hurt inside myself of not really, and well we did a thing within community on bridging gaps among cultures, and we were doing this we had Hispanic, we had black culture, and we had Native American culture, and I found myself walking all the way down on Harvey branch, up and down up and down. And finally I came back and I had to say it to somebody so I said it to one of the people who were directing this retreat, for this weekend. I said we're missing a culture here. Oh no we're not. I said well what about the the people that are working with the Appalachian people? But they're white, I said. But they are totally different culture, I can vouch for that.

But I thought they didn't understand, because a person is white doesn't mean they're the same culture. Even if they're from this area here, how you grew up if you grew up on a farm particularly it's a whole different life than growing up downtown Cincinnati, with all the amenities of life, you know. And so it's it's a matter of realizing and I realize that more and more as I grow older the things that people value, now I value time by myself, a lot of people don't they're afraid of it, I think. Because they have to have things they always have something going on, and I don't. I'm just happy to be by myself. I have a dulcimer over there which is Appalachian music, but I haven't played it for years. I want to get back to it, I've got a book that has the music in but I wouldn't dare try it because I don't even know if the things in tune right now, and I would like to have it in tune if I was gonna play it for you. We were taken, somebody was here and knew it, I think it was one of our Sisters knew dulcimer music. One of our music teachers, and so she organized a little thing because Maria and one of our council members was doing it

practicing it, I was practicing it so we had a little group. We never got extra good, but we were we were doing quite well, I thought.

But if you don't play it and you don't, you lose it. And see I that's one of the things I haven't. I did play it once here I practiced on it, just to see if I remember the fingering and that kind of thing. It's a whole different sound of music, it's more of a quiet, mellow you know, sort of sad even music.

MEL: Sister, would you mind talking a little bit more about that painting and maybe describing it, because not everyone can see it. And just tell us about a little bit.

STT: Well the picture is showing, it's in the fall, and it's depicting two deer, an effeminate deer female deer is usually following the male. But in this picture, the female deer is what has walked across the creek and it's getting ready to jump up on the other side. Whereas he's still looking down to see if everything's safe. And that is I think well I just think just dawned on me just now. Even though my masculine side was very well developed because of working out in the field and so on and doing men's work, I realized that that's to speed in my life at that time in my life I had developed the feminine side of me. I was more tender, more caring, you know what I mean? I wasn't as independent. But it's meant a lot to me, it took me about four or five summers to do it, to complete it every retreat. I did it mainly during my retreats, I would keep it, and so I would do and I completed it. And I'm very happy with it because I think it does mean a lot to me.

MEL: It's beautiful.

STT: Yeah.

MEL: Well, thank you, Sister. Sister, thank you for your time. Would you would you like to talk about, well you can talk about anything. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

STT: I can't think of anything.

MEL: Okay.

STT: Unless you have a question you want to ask.

MEL: No. Thank you for your time.

Part III

MEL: September 12th, 2015. Part three, with Sister Therese Tackett. Thank you, Sister.

STT: I want to share a little bit about the fact I have only one leg. I had been returned to where I was in Kentucky, because I wanted to meet again two people that were returning from mission work. And so I was, had met with them in the morning and then I was coming back, driving back in the evening. And I was extremely tired I found myself getting sleepy coming up and I'd have to stop periodically. And when I came up I knew I needed to get gas because it was not it was not on a full tank, and I needed for it to be a full time for the next driver. So I stopped to get gas and realized that the car I had, it was on the other side of the car. So I pulled back out and went to the next place, and I didn't realize I had my foot out at the door, trying to help stop the car.

And then, in my tiredness I didn't have my foot on the right pedal. And so instead of having it on the brake pedal I had it on that accelerator pedal. And so, as I lunged forward it tipped to the left and hit the protective metal bar before the gas tank, so no damage was done on the gas tank, but it severed my it was pretty well severed my ankle. And so they stabilized me at Batesville, and then sent me to Cincinnati to another hospital which would not have could not accommodate me with the accident that I had had. So they sent me to UC Medical Center, trauma center. And while I was there one of our Sisters was there and did she was a pastoral work there. And she and I talked and talked and talked. We never talked about the accident, we never talked about my any feelings I had about the accident. But I think she calmed me down, we talked about community and what our future is community and so on.

And I'll never forget that because when I left, instead of thinking about what I had lost, I found myself thinking or knowing, knowing not thinking, knowing in my heart that I could do something without my leg because they had to take the leg off above the knee. Above the leg, and so I knew that there was something that God had was going to let me do that would not require a leg. And where I had ended up was in St. Clare Hall, and I can wheel myself around to visit the Sisters that are here, so I first that was primarily what I did. And I was able to sit with someone who is crying, and put my arm around her and so on. And I didn't have to worry about time at that time, you know. I wasn't doing extra stuff like I am now. But it was a it turned out to be a blessing because it brought me to a beautiful set of the community, the retired that have a huge storage of grace and wisdom themselves. Yeah, so and I've lived with it, this has been five six years now that I've lost my leg so I've grown to be able to see myself not as a cripple but as a person who still can get around and do different things, so. It hasn't been as much of a loss as I think it is, if I had if I had wondered what was I going to do, etc., etc. Because I never thought about that.

MEL: Thank you, Sister. Can you describe St. Clare's as your home, St. Clare Hall as your home?

STT: Oh, St. Clare Hall is a beautiful place to be because we have nurses, nurses aides that take care of us. They give us our baths which was a new thing for me, I was used to bathing myself. Now I had to have somebody help me because I can't get in and out

of the shower by myself but the rest of it I do, I wash myself. Then somebody has to come back in and help me get back out and so I'm limited in that way. But everybody here just does, the nurses are just so kind to us, and people just sometimes people get upset about having to be here, but I can and I can understand that because you aren't as free as you might be. Sometimes mentally they can't do it anymore, sometimes it's a physical ailment, arthritis and so on. And so, it is but I think the truth of being here is to admit your limitations and then know that the end of the world is not there with the limitation, you know.

That's what I have found for myself. I can be very happy you know having what I've got, and I work with that and there'll be a day when I can't do puzzles anymore and there'll be a day when I can't do other stuff anymore. Probably a day than when I can't will myself around. But I know that I will be taken care of, because I see the avenue of being taken care of. You're welcome.

MEL: Thank you, Sister.

Part V

MEL: Part five.

STT: I'm explaining my menagerie of animals and people on my little thing here. One is Ziggy and Ziggy's nose is very dirty, and other parts of him are dirty because he's been around a lot of places. This was a very precious thing for Sister, a Sister in our community who was the secretary for me when I was in one of the offices at Oldenburg. And she was very special to me, so when she died this is one of the things I asked for. I wanted to have her Ziggy.

This woman, was made by an Appalachian woman, she made this by hand. In fact it's kind of turn her around, when you turn her around a whole different face is shown, sort of a [unintelligible] face, I think.

But it was made by a woman that I only met later in life after my father died. We didn't know my father's people, and that was made by his great niece. We went to visit when we found out where they were. We went to visit her. She also sent me this little—

MEL: bunny—

STT: —bunny rabbit. This is a, I'm never sure if it's a ape, or if it's a bear, I think it might be a bear, was given to me but when I was in the hospital after I had an accident after I had a trauma thing in my head, I had a blood vessel that burst. And so I had to have a shunt put in. And he was, I woke up to the fact that this animal was with me. Here the sister who I was very close friend of mine, had bought it on her way over and then she realized later on the way that it's got a part of his neck is and there's it there's a hole in it's somewhere, I can't even find the oh, here it is, here's the hole. That and she said, I

didn't realize it was a marred thing before brought it over to you. And the other one I simply bought a clown because I like the clown image. Thank you, Sister.

STT: You're welcome.