

**November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – Sister Joanita Koors speaking with Professor Mary Ellen Lennon at the Marian University, Indianapolis.**

Abbreviations

SJK: Sister Joanita Koors

MEL: Mary Ellen Lennon

MEL: This is Mary Ellen Lennon at Marian University in Indianapolis, Indiana. I am sitting here with Sister Joanita Koors. Thank you, Sister, for being here. Would you like to introduce yourself?

SJK: Yes, thank you Mary Ellen. And I once again say I that I am very humbled to do this. You could have picked a lot many many many of the Sisters which I'm sure you that you did pick them out. But anyway. My whole life has been what I guess humility or humbleness. I thank God for everything but anyway, I'm quite humbled. Anyway, I am the second oldest of eight children born to mother and Alvin Koors in Greensburg, Indiana, and we grew up in a Catholic home, grandparents Catholic and so on. Went to Catholic grade school so. And we lived on a farm in this rural area of Greensburg, and by the way that's the that has a tree coming out of the courthouse for anyone that doesn't know that. But anyway, but we as growing up we worked together a lot as a family, we worked together, played hard and worked hard and prayer was also very important in our family life. And we had great satisfaction and great satisfaction and helping out. I was very close to my grandparents growing up, and cousins and that kind of thing. Went to Catholic school in Greensburg, St. Mary's. And at that time most of this staff at St. Mary's School were Sisters, and they were young, vivacious, fun-loving. Played ball with us and anyway it was a great experience going to school. But it was in the sixth grade that I actually received my vocation. I had, I was first of all backing up I was born with the name of Doris, but when I was in sixth grade I had Sister Joanita in school, just for a couple weeks only and it was on a rainy Sunday morning kind of like today, I suppose, and a couple Sisters were going to a neighboring parish to do Sunday CCD class, and they were killed in an automobile accident. And our class was singing in church for one of the early morning Masses, and Father had announced that two Sisters were in an accident and were killed, he didn't say the names of them. But it was kind of like St. Paul being knocked off the horse, right then and there it just hit me that if one of them was Sister Joanita that I was going to come down and take her place. Didn't know why, but anyway that was just the thought that I had. And later, at a later Mass Father did announce who the Sisters were, one was Sister Joanita and he said, but there will be a couple from here taking their place. And I mean it was, I don't know, just kind of providential or whatever.

But anyway, I think that's when my vocation was born. And and then lo and behold Sister Stephanie Zimmer came to take her place, and she was everything that I thought as Sister or a teacher you know, should be. I mean I just dearly loved her, she was gentle, kind, loving, never ever raised her voice. And she and yet had the vast discipline, she she made everybody feel truly worthwhile, and loved and so on. Anyway,

I dearly loved Stephanie, she had a big influence on my life. So anyway, so I kind of kept that secret about becoming a nun, hidden because you didn't go around saying that you're going to be a nun, people would think you're, I felt like that would kind of look at you strangely or something. But I did share that with Stephanie at one point during this that school year, and then she left that year. She just came for the one year, about and came back here to Indianapolis. But anyway, so the thought of becoming a Sister stayed in the back of my mind, throughout the rest of grade school. And at that time a lot of our, some of our students with the Oldenburg, which is about twenty miles away from Greensburg, and they would go as boarding students, five day students or if you wanted, this is 50 years ago, if you wanted to be a Sister you could go as an aspirant, too. So, I asked my parents if I could go to Oldenburg versus as an aspirant, no way I mean but then as a five day student, and they really didn't care for that either. We with the eight children and paying to go down there it was going to be hard, and plus boarding being away, they thought, you know, that we should be home. But I got my way and I went, but I only lasted three days and two nights in high school, because I got homesick. So my mother at that time wouldn't take me back then that Saturday to say, to take my things back to Oldenburg. But my dad did, and so I came, so then I finished out high school, went through the freshman through senior at Greensburg Community High School. And the thought of becoming a Sister kind of came and went back and forth my mind because there were other important, fun things to do in high school. But yet it was always in the back of my mind. So finally when I was in a senior near graduation I thought, well, this is it. I mean, prayer life had always been important and God and I had these conversations and a lot of times maybe it was kind of dealing I suppose, I don't know, but or bargaining with God, I don't know what it was but it was prayer in that time of my life. And anyway the decision was yes, I was that God was calling me to go to enter the convent. And so, this was, like I said around the high school graduation time, so I did tell my mother that that's what I thought you know, might want to do. She said she wasn't at all surprised, and it was at that time it was you when you left to go to a convent, you left, you weren't to come home again and, you know, and all that.

And again that was back in 1965, fifty years ago and my dad was, he was proud of the fact that to have you know, I guess a daughter to go to convent, but at the same time he couldn't understand why you couldn't come home at that time, you couldn't even eat with them once you enter the convent, that kind of thing. Even which he would have never done but he said, you know, if you stay home I'll get you a convertible. But but anyway he was just kind of his reaction to it, I suppose. But anyway I did enter then in September a, and at the time people thought well, she's not going to stay, she didn't last at the Academy for three days, I mean, how's she gonna stay in a convent like that? And my grandmother she said, I'll bet you that you don't stay, and I said, I said well what can nuns bet? I mean we didn't have anything you know, and so we needed to have handkerchiefs so it was a peasant handkerchief, so that we had this bet that I wouldn't stay and I said I will at least until Christmas because I know that if by then I'll be over the homesickness, and I you know, I do want to come home for that reason. And sure enough I stayed. And it was grand, we had eighteen that entered in our class that September and twenty more to enter in February to make up on a postulant class. So

was good, it was it was a change, definitely a change and we had visiting Sunday once a week, I mean once a month except during Lenten magnanimous you know, longer. And and then going into the novitiate year we had in first year postulants, and then the novitiate was two years. The first year in novitiate is a canonical year, so you didn't have visiting quite as much, but we were formed more on prayer and scripture, and all that. So, it was great.

MEL: I'm interested in your first couple of months.

SJK: Okay, first couple months had many tears, but there were others. But we had a great class, it was, I mean we were all in it together and supported one another. And we had a good time, we learned new terms to recreation and collation, and you know had sacred silence and you know, and it seemed like we were I can remember writing moments and I think we're praying all the time because there would be morning prayer, noon prayer, after- evenings, before you went to bed. I mean it was, but we were fortunate at that time to have so many others that entered at the same time, we shared this same, a lot of the same feelings and thoughts of just a great support to one another. So it was it was different, even eating supper that first night. We laugh about it now because they had, it was on a Wednesday, and back then the Sisters didn't have meat on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, I think. And so, but anyway this was cheese and bread and I think chips or something else, and one of the postulants had right away started to make a sandwich and our novice or postulant director Sister Charlene who was Patrician at the time said, oh no, you know, that's not etiquette, you know, you don't make a sandwich, you know. Only on special occasions could you make a sandwich. And so, everything was you know quite different and she, when another one asked for mustard, oh no, you don't ask for anything that's not on the table.

Anyway, so we got kind of a lot to learn but a lot of chuckles through the whole thing, so. But it, it was also a time of I guess learning to pray and come closer to God. I, when I entered it was a matter of wanting to give my life totally and completely to God. You know, and this was definitely part of it, and God was there. And if there's one thing I've learned through life looking back, I mean, God's been there through it all, it's a journey. And the trust is, you know, you can look back and see how you know, God doesn't let us down, so it was meant to be, it is meant to be. Yes, it was a different, it was different but beautiful and nice, and then when we then we were in when we were invested too, after the first year that's when we got our habits and white veils, so. That was a big day. And then after the first year, the canonical year, novice most of several of us went out to teach then, so it was kind of going out as a teenage teacher you, say well I would have been just turning twenty I guess, and in my first mission then and again it was just as a second-year novice so I was in the community two years, and we were sent out. And I went to a wonderful place in Evansville, Indiana. It's called St. Wendel, Sister Martha Marie was the principal, an adorable and wonderful wonderful heartwarming person. Back then we had she was superior principal but it she wasn't a superior, I mean we had shared responsibility, I mean she was just in her laugh was contagious. I mean everybody loved her and that too was just, and my parents felt good about that too because it just so happened that my mother used to live with Sister Martha Marie's

sister and Indianapolis when she was working before she got married, so they were those connections, and that kind of thing.

And then they would come down for to visit to St. Wendel, and and they just saw how much just how nice it was and now you know how happy we were. But there were four of us living there and it was a little country parish. And I love teaching, I loved people there in St. Wendel. And again we hadn't had hardly any college, I mean just two years and actually one year when you think about it. But I was teaching third grade and so the first grade teacher Joanie Miller, showed sat down with me on Saturdays and she had showed me how to make out lesson plans and how to teach the books. And I started out with I think was thirty-eight, I think it was, no forty-eight third graders. And I wasn't sure I was doing it right and all the time, and anyway but she would every Saturday she would sit down with me and show me how to do it. And and I'd thank her and say you know I was set for the week, and after about the third or fourth time thanking her she said, that's okay she said, I said appreciate all the time you're doing and teaching me how to teach. And she said, Joanie, if you know Joanie Miller, she's real blunt and honest and I love her dearly, and she says well, I taught these kids in first grade I don't want you to mess it up.

So that I mean, but it was wonderful. I asked Martha Marie who was their principal, she was full-time teacher as well as principal. I asked her to come in, too, to see, observe to see if I'm doing okay with these kids. So she comes in the door, waves at the kids, goodbye. But anyway but it that's kind of, we learned teaching and we also learned the Franciscan spirit and prayer just by doing. I mean we had hands-on experience and it was you know, in the people, the people there were so good and that's what I found in every place you know that I've been. So from there I was there two years and during that time too we would go to, we would come here to Marian in the summer time to take courses. And then if you lived in Indianapolis which I did later on, then you would also take evening classes to get your education so you did it on an installment plan, while you were teaching and going to school at the same time. So anyway leaving St. Wendel I went to, [unintelligible] in New Albany, which was also a wonderful experience. Sister Joel who had just been here at Marian for thirty-two years, I lived with her there. She was she went there as her first time principal, along with us and Sister Agnes and Sister Marilyn Conklin and myself. The four of us were new and two older Sisters, Sister Albertine and Leticia Marie, stayed there as I mean they stay there we were all new and then anyway that was too was a great great experience, taught third grade and we had a wonderful community life with Sisters. And the people, the parish, the kids were wonderful. The parents, they all helped out, were very involved in the parish and it was just you know, did a lot of fun things too. It was it was good, it was great. And from there I was there about four years, and then came to I think around that time.

MEL: I, if if you wanted to I would be interested to hear about the community you had created with the Sisters or the community who had created with the parish. Just if you remember a day or activities, or people that you worked with. Because it sounds like a very memorable time.

SJK: When I was at Perpetual Help and when I was teaching third grade the children were very much behind in academics, in reading from where a third-grader should be. At that time one of our Sisters was the supervisor for the Archdiocese and I asked her to come down and just come to the classroom and listen to them read and everything. And she said, and she did, and she said you need to start you know get volunteers in here, you know, to help as teacher aides, and shared a few other things. Because this is just like my third year teaching experience for one thing, so she shared what she thought could work and it's also with individualized instruction came out, small group work and so on. And so I did that and asked for volunteer parents to come in, and that opened up a whole new thing. I mean, that we would have groups going and they volunteer, I had volunteers every day that would help with the groups and small groups and then with the individualized instruction. And ever since then I've been in good schools for forty-three years and during the teaching times thirty-three, at least thirty-two of teaching I always had, they weren't that at the beginning they were all volunteer days and then when we could, we had pay days, we got that. And I said I couldn't teach without them. So with the, and that was a lot of the involvement too of the people, and the mothers you know coming in and helping out and just seeing that every student, every day, learn you know, and enjoy learning and taking the children where they were and letting them see their own gifts and talents and having the parent or volunteers or whomever you know, to really bring that out and help them so that no child felt left behind or left out, and that they all were successful.

And at the end of that year every one of the students were way above grade level, you know. But it was unfortunately the year before they had had several teachers for various reasons and so they—anyway this all worked out that so that was one way of working with the parents. But all parishes or almost every parish that I had been has a big picnic or festival, in that too, working, running that where they threatened to cake booth or the just helping out on the festival grounds, just working with the people. In the Catholic school situation you're not just a school itself, you're part of the ministry of the parish and it's working together with all the people and just having fun with them. And then being there through their through their hard times, the funerals, the deaths, any hard time that they might be going through. Just being present and also serving on different committees, whether they be liturgy committee or any other committee, just being working with the people, so. That's being part of the parish was a big, was a great part of the success, I think in teaching the school. Because it's a, giving you you're just one big family, and I've always said that the hardest thing in religious life, I always felt the hardest thing in religious life for me has been leaving a place because they become your family, you know. But then it reminds me of a story that I think I read a long long time ago from guide post or something, but anyway it was about this hobo I think he was going from farm to farm and he had asked the farmer, he'd say what's the place like the next place up, and one would say, oh it's just great or it's awful you know, it's so on and so forth. And he'd ask the next one how is it, and he would you say it's good or bad and then he'd ask the next one oh, it's wonderful, you'll find wonderful people there. And I felt like that's the same thing that's happened in my life, going from to place to place. That every place has been wonderful. The point of that story was that whatever you left is usually what you find at the next place. And for me it's been it's been a journey of

wonderful places, wonderful people. I don't regret any place I've ever been. I've loved, you know, every place and communicate, still do with a lot of the people, you know for the past. We keep up and it's just been good.

I mean, I think even going back to Stephanie and what an influence she made in my life and it was at the time I said, you know, I wanted to become a Sister I could remember writing this on an inventory that she did. That's when I told her I wouldn't be a Sister, back in the sixth grade. She said, I think the question was what is your greatest desire, excuse me, what do you want to do and I it was at that time to become a Sister and to teach and be able to be like she was, because she was such a positive, wonderful, heartwarming teacher, person. But anyway I kind of got off the track there, but that's kind of what I found in every place. In [unintelligible] back at [unintelligible] you asked about that some of the fun things we did. We did pray together in the mornings and evenings, and cooked meals together, we'd have our cook turns and that kind of thing. Joel was one that would like to go out and have picnics, she had come from Little Flower in Indianapolis. Well, I remember one time that she brought had the Sisters which were pretty many at that time, from Little Flower, come and we went and there was a place halfway between New Albany and Indianapolis and I forget now the name of the park but anyway we met there for a picnic. But we would do different things like that too, and just get together for, you know fun times.

And then went went to Bloomington, Lake Monroe with some some of the parishioners too, for boat rides or camping trips or whatnot. I mean we did a lot of things too, with the people just for fun, so. And again they were really good to us, the people were, so. I remember one time I was out on the lake with this one gentleman who said let's go for, we were there camping the whole family and us, and we had gone out and then there's lightning and thunder came, and I think that's the time I made the act of contrition most sincerely in my whole life because I thought this is it. And I saw the wife a couple days ago, but at Sister Joel's funeral, and she said, do you remember that? I said I'll never forget it. But anyway, but people included us in their fun things like that too, which was really nice.

Anyway, so I was at Perpetual Help for a while and went to and then taught and came to Indianapolis to teach at St. Gabriel's and also St. Michael's which was really great. Both of those and being so close to the speedway too, was fun. And at that time to finish out college of Marian, and then by that time I was able to finish that out, to get the bachelor's degree finally and went on to Clark College in Iowa. Dubuque, Iowa for the master's degree. Then went back to Richmond to teach there, and while I was teaching here in Indianapolis Sister Mary Carol Schroeder, she was from Marian. I don't know if you know Sister Mary Carol, just a wonderful wonderful person, thoroughly. And I didn't really know that well but I just knew she was extremely smart and so on. But then she was chosen to be on the council, on the leadership team at Oldenburg. So she was on that and I was teaching at Gabriel at the time, and she came to St. Gabriel for visitation and I had first grade and I had one of the students give her a tour, one of the first graders give her a tour of school, Brady, he did a great job. And she couldn't believe that a little first grader could do that and then when she saw what we were doing in the

classroom, how I could be teaching with this group, here working, this group's working and they're all on task. And it, she just couldn't believe it I guess coming from college and seeing what a first grader could do. I could remember I was Sister Norma was my spiritual director at the time and she said that Mary Carol came back so surprised. I mean, not surprised but just so much in awe you know, what the children were doing and everything and so. That was a big boost to me, I mean. Because I just always taught and thought I was doing just what I was told to do, you know. To be acknowledged Mary Carol I mean, it was just really a boost, so that was nice.

And then, but anyway then I from there I was supposed to, which I did, I went to Richmond and during Mary Carol and Norma's term. I was supposed to go there as teacher and building coordinator because it was a consolidated school, and the principal there didn't know that she had said that and she had had somebody else take over as building coordinator of the building that I was in, and that was fine with me. But then after a year she asked me to go into that position too, which is kind of like building principal but because she said I was actually doing it so so that was nice, too. I mean, I really appreciate that because I liked helping out the other teachers and getting what they needed or whatever. But I love teaching and so it was kind of like it wasn't just being told to do that, to go into that. But it was being you know, recognized for the abilities but it was again, it was just God gift and it was the staff, that's another thing with teaching the co-workers and all the people that you work with. It was, there's you, become a close bond and it's you're all working together for the best interest of each child. And I can remember Norma one time telling us, we had Sister Norma as our scholastic director for three years, and she was having class first up here at Marian, a great big class all these novices must have had about sixty in there I don't know how many but it was a big class and a lot of people. And I can still remember her saying that the greatest thing that we can do or when people walk in a building or any place is, the greatest the hallmark of religious life is to see how they love one another. And I thought that is so true, and that is in every situation and especially too, in a school you can walk in to a school and you sense the atmosphere. You'd know if there's tension, or if they truly love and care for one another and that's, I just think that is the hallmark of any place, this hallmark of religious life, you know, any place that you work, so.

And that's truly been every place that I've been and so. People have worked together, they've had each other's backs, we're all in it together. We laughed together, we cry together, we worked together, you know. So that's so that's that's been you know just in every place. So anyway, so I loved it there at Richmond and it was too, it was a great experience. And the principal there was great and that time too, she had nominated me and I and I'm saying this with gratitude, and then thanks to God. I, she anyway at that time I received the NCEA which the National Education Teachers Association award for teaching one of the twelve, it was for this region, that would be one of the twelve in the United States and did a presentation in Chicago so that. But again it was attributed to Sister Shirley who did the application and got the people you know. But it's, it's everybody working together, it's teamwork. So that, that was good. Anyway, trying to think, and then then there have been you know other places like in Indianapolis here at St. Michael's, St. Gabriel and then I went to St. Mary's in, [unintelligible], too. And then

St. Mary's in New Albany, and I was asked to go into administration but I had just, I dragged my feet because I love teaching, I love kids and especially first grade. I mean you could just see how they grow and stuff.

But finally I did then start the process and when I went to IU Southeast for administration classes. I was in New Albany for a long period for several years and did that too in the evenings, and so after getting the license then it was a matter of working with the Archdiocese and took classes through the Archdiocese on leadership. And that was good, so then it was time to step out of the classroom and, not really, because you keep in a classroom. So so then I went to North Vernon and that's where I spent the last fourteen years in the Catholic schools I was there as principal and loved it. And probably prayed more for wisdom during that time than for anything, because you want to you know, a lot of decisions that have to be made and things. You want to do the right thing, and that was the first one I went to North Vernon, that was the first time too that I didn't live in a convent because they didn't have one anymore because the Sisters hadn't—were there but then they hadn't been there for a while and so, lived in an apartment which was nice, first time I lived alone, though. But it was real close to school, it all worked out. And then the North Vernon people too became my family, which was so good. The teachers were great, the children were, the parents were, the parish. You get close friends with everybody. And then you have you know, you have these little ladies of the parish that always come to church you know, every day. And I used to call them the holy ladies of the parish and so, this one whenever I had, special intentions, which could be quite often if there'd be problems that come up and I need wisdom or guidance and you know what to do or to God, pick please take care of this issue. I would call up, I called a couple of them or see them, I said we could pray for a special attention. And this one lady, Marie Frye, little old lady came to church every day, the closest school. She said, yes, she said, now she is she says now I want you to tell me when it's answered. Because what she would do at home, she was probably eighty-five years old. But anyway, she has her prayer table at home and so she has her list. When people ask her to pray she'd put down and then she knows what the intention is she put that, what I couldn't tell what the intentions were, it would just be a special intention. But anyway she'd write down on her paper and then when I would tell her, she wouldn't know when it was answered. So then I'd tell her and so she would cross it off. So I started kind of doing that too when people you know, good luck on people, always ask you to pray for different things when you have your own things to pray for. And so on my own prayer table I started doing that, only I just put a "TY", thank you, after the different intentions, you know.

But anyway but I used to do that because there are a lot of things they just think everybody has the things that pray for. And prayer too, always has been extremely important. I mean, I start today with prayer in the morning and that's kind of changed over the years. It's like, you—it was a lot of verbal a lot of prayers that you read and that when we first learned how to pray in the convent. I mean back growing up when I go back to childhood it was you know, the Mass at that time it was daily Mass and then you'd have your own prayers that you would say and then at that time too this is back pre-Vatican, they teach you that, novenas, different ones to pray if you had really



special intentions which I did, and you know. If when the family if it was going through a hard time you'd pray especially for that, you know, and so I'd have these novenas now and then that's changed. Now, in the morning it's, I call it, I don't know if it's the coffee club with God or what, but anyway I just sit with a coffee cup in the morning and it's just kind of more the Clare, St. Clare's contemplative gaze or whatever. I have this beautiful picture one of the parishioners in New Albany gave me. Had it framed. It's a picture of Jesus, a large one, and I've had it now for probably twenty years and there's just something about that picture and sitting there with the coffee cup with nothing said, it's just kind of the contemplative gaze before actually going into any kind of other prayer. So it's kind of just being present with God, a lot. And then comes the verbal prayers.

But anyway, New Albany, I mean North Vernon though was really really a special time special place. I mean with all the people. Students, teachers, parishioners, truly involved with them, truly loved them. They surprised me one year during Catholic schools [unintelligible] and gave me a, unbeknownst to me, took up a collection and sent me to Assisi, so which was totally awesome I mean just just wonderful. I mean they were so so so good. And I never, it was during that time too, I never wanted any child to go without a Catholic education there. I mean, there would be a need for—financial reasons, if they didn't want to go because the parents didn't want them to go that's one thing. But if finances stood in the way I felt like, there's a way that we should that they could come we had tuition assistance. And I thought if nothing else, I could go out and ask somebody and the people were always so generous. And there we had about ninety-five, ninety to ninety-five percent of the parish children did come to our schools. So I mean it was great, and even when we wanted to put anything extra in school, I know when accelerated math came out it was a matter of getting the new math libraries and which were quite costly, because it was all technology and that. I wrote to the different banks and different places so industries I thought might be interested in either math or technology, you know, and got donations. And it came down on you about three four, three or four thousand more dollars. I went to this one lady and told her and she says, well how much do you need? I said, I don't expect you give it all just you know, if you could give a little bit. She says, how much? And she wrote out the check for the rest, the four thousand dollars. But I mean the people would just come forth and they would, they were just they saw the need and would respond. And wonderful, it's just just good good people. So then I was there—

MEL: Oh. I'm sorry, Sister. You went to Assisi? You did.

SJK: I did go to Assisi, which was totally totally wonderful. I couldn't believe it and that's what I kept saying all the way going over there. I just kept saying I can't believe it, I can't believe it. I was, it was so wonderful and like I said it was a gift from the parish. I never dreamt of being able to go over there because I knew I wouldn't spend the money to go. And I didn't even, our community, you could put your name in the hat and have it drawn you know, they would draw it, used to be two people would be drawn out, and now in the later years we've gone to one person once a year to be drawn out, that the community would send, you know. And I didn't even want to do that. I thought, no, I mean somebody else can go, I just never. I wasn't going to use some money to go, so

this was just a complete gift from them and it was so many blessings came from that, we had a small group to go, Sister Rosie Miller and Barb [unintelligible] coordinated it, and there were thirteen of us I think that went. I can't find words to describe it, it was just totally wonderful to actually be walking the same footprint, footsteps of Francis and Clare, and to just sit, be there in the presence of all that. And from that too, came so many blessings. I mean close friendships and it's, it's wonderful it truly was a, it truly was a great great blessing.

And then, since then just last year a couple people from North Vernon asked me if I would go to, to the Holy Land, that they'd fund the whole trip. Father Meyer who used to be there in Maysville or in North Vernon was going to take a group and they said that they would, so I was blessed again. And that was totally awesome, I just totally totally wonderful. So in 2012 I, we had our election chapter, an election at Oldenburg and and lo and behold I was elected to the leadership team at Oldenburg, and so that's what I'm just finishing up the third year with that. And it's again that's a, I missed, it was hard it was missing the Catholic education and everything, but again God is full of surprises. And I'm completely dependent upon God for everything, so this is where I am and what I'm doing, just celebrating yesterday was the fiftieth anniversary and entrance into the convent, so this is the Golden Jubilee year so, anyway. So lots of lots of wonderful things, I feel like my life has been wanted by Magnificat because God has blessed me in so many ways. I'm a common, ordinary person, farm girl from Greensburg. You know, and I but anyway God is good, and it's all through the people I think that we meet along the journey that you know, that we touch, that they touch us, and together hopefully everything's been the glory of God. I, just so many wonderful things have happened.

I'm thinking, I was thinking about even some of the quotes of Francis you know, he said you know, speak the gospel always and when necessary these words, and here I am babbling on, but I think it's, you know, God presence you know in everybody. And, do you have any questions?

MEL: Thank you, Sister. I'm struck by your beautiful narrative of how much you talk about community. Community with the parish is that you have belonged to, with your school. And interested in your community with Sisters when you lived with different Sisters or even when you were such a young woman entering and afraid of being homesick. This idea of community is beautiful in your narrative.

SJK: It is, and it's, I mean we were so fortunate at the time, that we entered that there were so many, and I feel badly for the, now, that young ones we don't have that many. I wish we did have a lot of young ones coming in. We were blessed we were one of the second last, large classes, and so we did have each other when we came into the convent. The first two years we were together and like I said, we'd pray together, laugh, cry, everything together. We had a wonderful bond. And then going out though on the missions we weren't, today when people come into the convent they learn, they're taught a lot of that Franciscanism you know, and all that. And I guess we were talking some, but we learned it mostly just like their education, through living it, you know. That

communities that I lived in most of them were small, I would say between maybe for to six people except when I lived over here at Ritter, taught at St. Michael's and St. Gabriel's that was combined so that was a lot larger community there in the house. But we did a lot of fun things together, whether they be Halloween parties or picnics or whatever, but definitely the prayer times together, the Mass, the eating. Sister Mary Catherine and I would go out on bike rides, I learned that she was principal at St. Michael's. I learned that that she became a good friend, I learned a lot from her. She was a person that worked hard, played hard and prayed hard. I mean, she had a well-balanced life. And I was one that I could all get kind of focused over on the work and I would do it all day long, I'd bring the things home, I'd be making activities with respect to use for the kids. So, I can easily be a workaholic and still have to watch that very much today. But she was one that lived a good, balanced life. And so, you learned that from each other too, and you call each other to that. The, all the places that I lived I dearly loved the Sisters that I lived with. We just did things together, and worked together and supported one another. We'd have the priests over for supper, we shared a lot together, just so so grateful. And that's how you've got to know the other Sisters, too. I took Sister Joel's death hard because she was, she was so good. She was a good principal and she was also good to live with, that she was one that would be a trusted friend, too. She had good common sense, and she was just there as a support I think for everybody, you know. Extremely intelligent, but you wouldn't know it I mean, by the way she—I mean she never lorded it over anybody, or she was as common as an old shoe.

MEL: Friendship between Sisters.

SJK: Yeah, very much so. It was a, I mean they were they became family and then also because of that they also became family to my own biological family. I mean they would come to visit they would get to know them, and so you all got together became family. I know that when I was in New Albany there was Sister Edith Soergel, lived with her in [unintelligible] and New Albany both, and she was from New Albany so her family was right there. And I'm very close to the Soergel family now, just because you know they take you in and so your family is expanded, you know. It's just been wonderful.

MEL: Thank you. I well, Sister this is just beautiful, I don't want to keep asking you questions unless you would like to tell more stories, but I do want to just say I was just struck over and over again about how important prayer is to your everyday life and how—but one of your first letters home you're praying all the time. I'm curious about the young woman entering the convent and discovering the world of being a Sister after knowing you wanted it but then learning when it's like.

SJK: And that's, yeah. Back then it was a lot more formal, prayer I mean. We would get up really early in the morning for prayer and then you would have breakfast and do your jobs and pray at noontime. And again at four o'clock, and then there would be evening prayer [unintelligible] and. So yes, it was—praying all the time and then you also have the prayers that you put on crucifixes, a prayer for that, a prayer for the different pieces of the habit, that you would be praying. But it was, it was a new experience, I mean I'm grateful for it and appreciate it but now it's more the contemplative type prayer.

MEL: Like for your coffee clutch with God, right?

SJK: Yeah, that's right. Yes, but the importance though, is always there. I mean I could—somebody one time said that it was a—you can't be too busy, I forget how the saying goes, something about not being too busy, to pray. I forget how the saying goes, it was a little cliché or whatever. But it's true, I'm you know, that sets the tone for my day. I mean I have to have that or things get too harried, you know. Along with that too, I yearn for the time every year to get away for at least a week's retreat, so that too is a special time to set aside vacation time with God.

MEL: Beautiful, Sister. If you wanted to, would you talk on the Vatican II, and how that some Sisters have talked about how that changes, changed the classroom and changed your lives and changed what you wore.

SJK: Absolutely. Yeah it did, I was because I entered right before Vatican II and again like I said before, it was hard on my parents you know to leave home and know that you're not coming back again. And my mother, bless her heart, she made a lot of the—like the nightgowns that we wore, that I had to enter with and that kind of thing. And then and so then and one that hardest things I can remember Dad saying, well why can't you eat with us, you know. You've eaten at our table for eighteen years and now you and it just didn't make sense. And as a matter of fact, I wasn't that good either as a postulant because one visiting Sunday they came and brought, I was dying for a McDonald's hamburger or something. But anyway they so they picked one up and a coke and we were sitting in the car there at Oldenburg, and one of our older Sisters who used to go up and down the thing with her wheelbarrow was kind of a she was a little, but anyway she happened to look in and then she smiled she says, "don't worry honey I won't tell". So thank you.

So but anyway it after Vatican and then the idea of just of not going home and my dad would talk to Sister Estelle by that time I was a novice about that, and you just didn't do it. But it was shortly after that Vatican II happened and we could come home for three days, I think it was the first three days a year, and then it was extended, you go home again. And so that was wonderful, I mean you could and also and you could eat with them and so that lightened things. And then you found you know, more part of the family that was great.

And then when we changed habits it was first a modified habit and I know my mother did a lot of the sewing for the Sisters of Greensburg, and it was hard because you had to with our poverty you had to take their old habits and make the new habit out of that. And so she said I didn't realize there were so many different shades of black, but she was trying to make these jackets all match, I mean the different parts of the jacket were these different shades of black. But anyway, so yeah, things—that was nice to be able to to be in more with the people that way. And definitely with family, to be able to go home, and then just the whole everything else that happened. Everything in the church,

and being more part of the people. And now with Pope Francis it's just wonderful you know, and he's so Franciscan, so that's great.

MEL: I loved your description of the classroom and your first graders. Do you have any final descriptions of your first-grade classroom, even before you became a principal and why you love teaching so much?

SJK: They're so eager to learn, and I think it goes back I guess maybe to a saying that I learned from a Judaism class here at Marian hundred years ago, but in my classes and it was Rabbi Salzman, he says that the Jews believed the greatest moral thing we could do is help another person feel their worth. I guess that related in a classroom I mean with every one of those children, you know, when they feel their worth that they're the beautiful human being that they are, that God created them to be, and you have a chance to help them to grow and knowing themselves and to be using their gifts and talents, whatever, and for them to know that they are a beautiful human being that can learn, it's—look into their eyes and seeing all possibilities. And most importantly that they see it themselves. And they grow and learn and feel good about themselves.

MEL: Well thank you, Sister. Very much.

SJK: Well Thank you, Mary Ellen. I'm sorry I talked so long.