

John S. Cummins

VATICAN II BISHOP OF OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, 1977-2003

Interviews conducted 2014-2015 by Germaine LaBerge

A Donated Oral History

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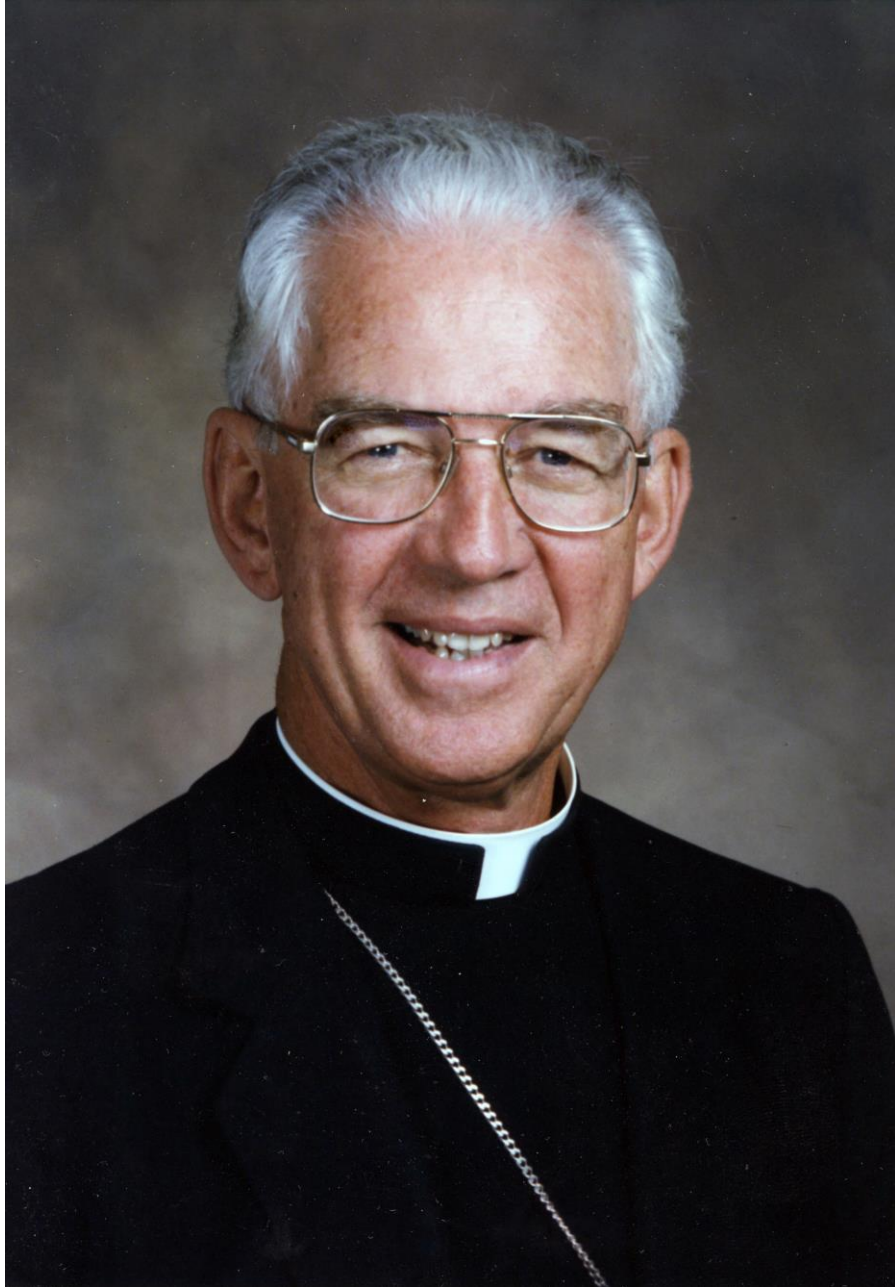
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John Paul II audience *ad limina* 1998



Bishop John Cummins circa 1995

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Interview History by Germaine LaBerge

John S. Cummins, retired bishop of the Diocese of Oakland, is one of the last living Americans who attended the Second Vatican Council. Carlo Busby, former pastor of Holy Spirit Parish/Newman Hall in Berkeley, California, with his keen interest in history, first suggested documenting the life of Bishop Cummins. At the time, the bishop was totally engrossed in writing a series of essays on the history of the diocese under the late Bishop Floyd Begin, the beginnings of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), the connections between UC Berkeley faculty, GTU and Newman Hall.

Once the bishop had completed his book and had spoken with friend and former Chancellor of the Diocese, the Reverend George Crespín, about his own interviews, he became interested in recording his memoir. As a retired oral historian, I became the lucky interviewer. Fostered by Karl Pister, Franciscan School Regent and former GTU Trustee, the planning session went well—over lunch at The Faculty Club on the Berkeley campus. We started recording our conversations on October 17, 2014.

The nine interviews were transcribed by Kathleen Zvanovec. I edited the transcript for clarity as did Bishop Cummins. We kept as close to the bishop's unique speaking style as possible and included some repeat stories as each added to the historical record in a different way. Please read this volume in conjunction with the oral history of Father George Crespín (*A Vatican II Priest's Faith Journey*), at the Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. (Available online.)

We met at the bishop's home in Oakland near Lake Merritt in a comfortable living room adjacent to his office and chapel. Ever gracious, he called ahead to inquire about what was needed in terms of a table, electrical outlets, noise, and even offered lunch. The bishop's warmth and thoughtfulness set the tone throughout.

John Cummins was born into a warm and loving Catholic family, both his mother and father Irish immigrants. Those who listen to the recordings can hear the occasional Irish turn of phrase and even a slight accent. What the reader or listener cannot experience, though, is the easy smile, the twinkle in the eye, the brightness and optimism, even in the face of difficult situations and momentous decisions.

The hallmark of the bishop's style has always been consultation, collaboration and inclusion. He is unafraid to ask advice and/or to listen to divergent points of view. Early on, he adopted the Vatican II concept of the People of God—evident in his outreach and decision-making. John Cummins is gregarious, appreciative of "his people," meaning not only his parishioners but also his staff whom he obviously cared for like the good shepherd he was, and still is.

The interviews that follow are casual conversations which paint a picture of a deeply spiritual, talented and humble human being who was thrust into positions of leadership at an early age. It does not pretend to be an all-encompassing biography but rather a peek into some aspects of this remarkable man and his experiences in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Researchers are advised to consult the archives at the Diocese of Oakland, and the book written by John S.

Cummins and Frank Maurovich, entitled *Vatican II: Berkeley and Beyond*. To quote from his introduction to the book: “Partly history and partly memoir there is no completion of either. My hope is that these recollections of a diocese that began the same year as the Second Vatican Council will serve historians in the future as some remembrance by my generation of the blessed times in which we served.” As for me, I and all in the Diocese of Oakland were blessed by his care, and I am grateful.

Many thanks to George Crespín, Carlo Busby, and Karl Pister who fostered this project. I am grateful to Kathleen Zvanovec, our transcriber and final typist, who is excellent beyond measure; she was able to find obscure names and spellings and make sense of some garbled portions of the recordings with skill and patience. Thanks, too, to David Dunham of the Oral History Center of The Bancroft Library for technical support, and for accepting this oral history into their collection and digitizing same for their archives. The subject matter fits well into their collection of the history of the university and of California.

Germaine LaBerge, Interviewer
October 2017

Interview 1: October 17, 2014

01-00:00:10

LaBerge: This is interview one, tape one, with Bishop John Cummins, October 17, 2014. So we thought today we would just start with your childhood and family background. I know you were born in Oakland but I don't know the year, where you fall in your family—so whatever you'd like to say about that.

01-00:00:36

Cummins: Well, the family house was Berkeley.

01-00:00:40

LaBerge: Oh, okay! Berkeley.

01-00:00:45

Cummins: My mother and dad are both Irish immigrants.

01-00:00:50

LaBerge: And what was your mother's name?

01-00:00:49

Cummins: Mary Connolly.

01-00:00:53

LaBerge: Okay, and your dad's?

01-00:00:53

Cummins: My dad was Michael. He had a confirmation name of Patrick but he didn't use it.

01-00:00:59

LaBerge: Okay, so Michael Cummins.

01-00:01:02

Cummins: Michael Cummins. They both came from Ireland the same year but did not know each other. He came in April, which was a week ahead of the *Titanic*.

01-00:01:14

LaBerge: Oh my goodness!

01-00:01:16

Cummins: And he did make a little effort to be on that, since that was very favored, but he came on the *Olympic*. He was in Texas on the train when he heard the news about the *Titanic*.

01-00:01:30

LaBerge: The *Titanic*! What city in Ireland?

- 01-00:01:35
Cummins: Near Castlebar in County Mayo. His was a little town Lahardane. And there's another one, Crossmolina, about eight miles away. Now, she came in October, I think landed in San Francisco October 22.
- 01-00:01:54
LaBerge: What year was this?
- 01-00:01:56
Cummins: Nineteen twelve.
- 01-00:01:54
LaBerge: Okay. That shows my ignorance about the *Titanic*. [laughter] Okay, so she came to San Francisco from—?
- 01-00:02:02
Cummins: Well, she was from Galway, five miles outside the city of Galway—more than five. Outside the town of Spiddal. Irish speaking.
- 01-00:02:19
LaBerge: Really!
- 01-00:02:19
Cummins: Yes. And she had two uncles in Berkeley. One was a carpenter and one was a cabinet maker, rather—what would we call him, an artiste—and lived right behind St. Mary's High School in Berkeley. She had two more uncles in San Francisco, one a carpenter—I forget what Martin was, but two aunts. So she was very well cared for. She was only seventeen years old and my dad was twenty-three. They met at Adams Springs, in Lake County, which was a frequented Irish country place and gathering [place].
- 01-00:03:15
LaBerge: How did your dad get here from Texas?
- 01-00:03:18
Cummins: Well, he had his—way all the way through. He had his route. He came to California because he was quite interested in California. There's a lengthy story here.
- 01-00:03:32
LaBerge: Oh, tell it! Tell it!
- 01-00:03:38
Cummins: He didn't have too much education. He only had really—I guess we'd call it grammar school and maybe a year of high school. But he was very curious and—well, he was bright. But he came to California—he had a first cousin here in Oakland and another one in Hollister, and he was very dutiful [in] going to see them every summer, whether we had a car or not. But he had his way paid to California on the train. When he got to Philadelphia—he told the

story very well—one of the village folks at home was there and met him and I guess brought a sandwich. I suppose they had an hour layover. And he said, “Michael, you should stay here. This is a wonderful place for a working man.” And my dad said, “Well, I have my ticket to California. Also, Uncle Tom, in Australia, is very interested in my coming there, and if California doesn’t work out—well, I may have that—a little closer.” My dad told the story very amusingly. The man stood up and said, “You’ve lived under the crown long enough. Now breathe the air of freedom!” [laughter]

01-00:05:11

LaBerge: Isn’t that great!

01-00:05:12

Cummins: He didn’t tell that story much, but he would tell it with great life. He came here, came to Oakland. There was a Mrs. White on Thirty-Fourth Street who had a boarding house for the Irish guys coming. He picked up work right away with PG&E. But he got a job within a year at the Pullman shops in Richmond. Gosh, I guess it was just within a year some friend of his lined up an opportunity to work with Standard Oil, which was an improvement. He told me the story that the boss at the Pullman shop said, “I hate to let you go, but this is an opportunity.” My dad worked there till 1919 and was very active in the parish at Point Richmond, Our Lady of Mercy.

But in 1919 there was—some kind of paper passed around to sign up to eliminate Catholic chaplains from the service. My dad took that and put it in his locker. He said he took a day off and went to see the president of Standard Oil in San Francisco. He said, “I don’t approve of this being passed around in your place.” The man said, “Well, I’m sorry you feel that way.” But he didn’t give my dad satisfaction, so my dad left Standard Oil. Then he worked for Union Oil in Rodeo and worked there till he retired at sixty-five.

01-00:07:14

LaBerge: So what did he do?

01-00:07:17

Cummins: He was a machinist, first class.

01-00:07:24

LaBerge: Okay, so he’s working there. Is that when he met your mother?

01-00:07:25

Cummins: Well, they met once, but Ma said she wasn’t very impressed. [laughter] But they met again at Adams [Springs]. My dad just—now, he would have been in his thirties. I remember he said once, “When I didn’t take the *Titanic*, I often thought well, maybe there’s some purpose for me.” But she didn’t want to move to Rodeo, which was a tiny place and he was living in a boarding house, so they compromised. I guess the adjustment was East Bay. But Berkeley

sounded very good because the—well, the parish was five blocks away, the school was there. The Holy Names Sisters had the whole area for schooling.

01-00:08:27

LaBerge: So which parish is this?

01-00:08:26

Cummins: St. Augustine's. That's Oakland, of course. But we were on Woolsey Street, which was the most southern street in Berkeley.

01-00:08:38

LaBerge: And that's where they lived when you were born?

01-00:08:43

Cummins: All of us were born in Oakland. My brother was born at Merritt Hospital and I was born at Providence. I'm the Catholic kid. My sister was born in East Oakland Hospital. We always considered ourselves Berkeley[ans], because that's where we grew up and that's where our life was. But when I became bishop of Oakland, the byline in the *Tribune* was, "Native appointed." And the two Hurley brothers from San Francisco, both bishops, the younger one who was just a year ahead of me in school—we were great friends and my mother really liked him—I wasn't going to share that story. Oh, he said, "That's going to be *noticed* in San Francisco." San Francisco has never had a native for archbishop, which is quite unusual given the history. To this day that's still true.

01-00:09:50

LaBerge: Yes. Wow, wow. So you were born in Oakland in Providence Hospital but your house was in Berkeley.

01-00:09:55

Cummins: Yes.

01-00:09:55

LaBerge: What year?

01-00:10:00

Cummins: Well, the folks were married in 1924, and that's when they moved to Berkeley, and I was born in 1928. My brother—

01-00:10:08

LaBerge: What's your birth date?

01-00:10:09

Cummins: March the third.

01-00:10:13

LaBerge: You're the middle child?

01-00:10:14

Cummins: Yes.

01-00:10:18

LaBerge: Your brother's name is—?

01-00:10:17

Cummins: Bernard. We called him Ben. He was born in 1925.

01-00:10:26

LaBerge: And your sister Mary?

01-00:10:28

Cummins: My sister Mary, she's McCarthy now, is still in the house.

01-00:10:35

LaBerge: In the house where you grew up? On Woolsey?

01-00:10:38

Cummins: Yes.

01-00:10:39

LaBerge: So tell me what you know about the circumstances of your birth and then where you went to school.

01-00:10:59

Cummins: Well, maybe I should say one more thing about my mother. She did this thing that Irish women did, housekeeping and taking care of kids. She was with a Catholic family when they got married. She was living at St. Vincent de Paul's in San Francisco and they were married there. There was a woman who had great connections with San Francisco society—she was [a] Dibble. That wasn't her married name, but she was very active and chair of the board at the Graduate Theological Union at one time. I remember we would tell the stories about my mother because—she wouldn't really have known my mother well. But my mother has another story. She worked with a Jewish family at one time, Honig.

01-00:12:01

LaBerge: Honig, like Bill Honig who was [State of California] superintendent of schools?

01-00:12:06

Cummins: She took Bill Honig's father on a walk one day. They were on Commonwealth/ Comm. Avenue area, and they were going to Stow Lake. He was six. They were going to Stow Lake to launch a little sailboat. They walked past St. Ignatius Church, so she went in. On the way out—they called him Billy—[he] said, "Mary, you think Jesus was the man?" She said, "Oh, yes." "No, no. *Moses* was the man." [laughter] She told that story to

Monsignor John Tracy Ellis, the church historian, and he used it with the American Jewish Committee in New York for a starter.

01-00:12:59

LaBerge: Well, isn't that great!

01-00:12:59

Cummins: But one of those—and I think it's the Honig family where she really learned to cook, and she was a masterful cook. That was her life, with the entertaining. My brother would bring—oh my goodness, John Tracy Ellis and Michael Novak, these famous people. Avery [Cardinal] Dulles came for dinner. That was a standard affair. And when we were both teaching we would bring the kids home, especially after [telephone ringing/brief interruption]—whoops.

01-00:13:42

LaBerge: So you would bring your students home to eat?

01-00:13:50

Cummins: Yes, and when I think of that—what a great privilege! When I meet them now, very grown up and becoming grandparents and all this, they remember going to the folks' home.

01-00:14:04

LaBerge: It was probably a delight for your mother to do that.

01-00:14:07

Cummins: Yes, she was skilled at it and she knew it.

01-00:14:12 ,

LaBerge: Well, describe what your home was like, what your home life was like.

01-00:14:20

Cummins: Well, we had a lot of attention from the folks—oh my! My mother never worked. And during the Depression, the Union Oil [Company], very enlightened, instead of diminishing the workforce, had them work four and a half days a week, and I guess, the unions had something to do with that too. My dad was a great union man. We had to go [on] Labor Day, to watch him march in downtown Oakland. But we had my dad home every Sunday and Monday, and every other week it would be Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday.

01-00:15:18

LaBerge: I see.

01-00:15:18

Cummins: He put in the backyard for us a high jump and we had a swing. But we just had so much time with him and we were his life. When he retired at sixty-five we were wondering what was going to happen to him, because the family was

everything and he really didn't have his own things that he was terribly interested in. He lived to be ninety-five!

01-00:15:49

LaBerge: My gosh!

01-00:15:50

Cummins: He was one month short of ninety-six. He led a very Catholic family. Mass was absolutely part of existence. You never questioned that. And we went as little kids to daily Mass very much, because St. Augustine's would have an 8:20 Mass, and of course, school would get organized at ten to nine, and so that was a very lovely thing.

01-00:16:26

LaBerge: And you all went to St. Augustine's grade school?

01-00:16:27

Cummins: Yes.

01-00:16:28

LaBerge: And then high school?

01-00:16:29

Cummins: Well, we'll get to that. I feel I want to say one more thing about the family. We went to Lake Merritt a lot. I remember that. We didn't have a car until 1937, but the Connollys in Berkeley—there were a big gang of them—would take us out. Went to San Francisco a lot on the ferry and watched the bridges being built, all that.

01-00:17:10

LaBerge: And so a lot of extended family gatherings on the holidays?

01-00:17:14

Cummins: Oh yes. But the difference was my father had a brother here who was in Rodeo, who raised just one son, and that son went on to be a lawyer and raised eight children in Danville. He's the most outstanding man!

01-00:17:33

LaBerge: So what's his name, your cousin?

01-00:17:34

Cummins: Bernard Cummins. That was his father's name. After grammar school—my brother went to St. Mary's High, and I went to the seminary when I graduated [from St. Augustine's].

01-00:17:52

LaBerge: Oh, I see. Okay.

- 01-00:17:52
Cummins: There were four of us out of the class who went to the seminary, and two of us got ordained.
- 01-00:17:59
LaBerge: My goodness! Who was the other one?
- 01-00:18:02
Cummins: Bill [William E.] Duggan. He was the youngest of a family of seven—six boys, one girl. The girl became a Holy Names Sister, and the three youngest boys all became priests.
- 01-00:18:22
LaBerge: Oh, my goodness!
- 01-00:18:24
Cummins: And one of them is still alive. He's a retired pastor from Sausalito. [Eugene "Bud" Duggan]
- 01-00:18:30
LaBerge: Oh! When you're talking about the seminary, you mean St. Patrick's in—?
- 01-00:18:37
Cummins: The minor seminary was St. Joseph's in Mountain View, and the major was St. Patrick's.
- 01-00:18:42
LaBerge: Okay, so St. Joseph's for high school, called the minor seminary.
- 01-00:18:46
Cummins: High school and two years of college.
- 01-00:18:50
LaBerge: Yes, okay. Before we get there, do you want to talk a bit about the religious training you had at home and how that propelled you then to decide to go to the seminary?
- 01-00:19:07
Cummins: We did the rosary sometimes. [laughing] But not regularly. I'll tell you what impressed me. My dad wasn't volubly religious. He was a man of principle and you knew what he thought was important. But after dinner each night he'd have these—he called them the scapular prayers. He'd go into his room and kneel at the bed and say the rosary by himself and read the prayers out of a book. My mother was more visibly devout. But he left quite an impression.
- 01-00:19:55
LaBerge: Well, it's something you observed and knew was important to him.

01-00:19:58

Cummins:

Oh yes. They were both really part of our lives. But my dad, oh my! When I got the letter about being the bishop in Sacramento, I happened to be home overnight, and I took the letter and I told my dad, “We have to go out and get gas.” I gave him the letter—we can talk about that later. But had he told me, “That’s not for you,” I’m sure that I would have turned that down.

01-00:20:35

LaBerge:

Wow. That’s how important his viewpoint was to you?

01-00:20:44

Cummins:

Yes, in those days you wouldn’t go through a Catholic school without being approached or asked about vocation.

01-00:20:55

LaBerge:

Vocation—you’re right, you’re right. [laughing]

01-00:20:56

Cummins:

So we had that side of it. And we were close to the priest. Billy Duggan and I counted the collection on Sundays when we were eighth graders. My pastor in Davis, Andy [Andrew V.] Coffey, thought that was a terrible thing, because we were subject to temptation. I don’t remember being tempted. But the other thing was the parish of St. Augustine’s, it wasn’t large but it was very active. A couple of years in a row the Bishop’s Relief collection, for the whole archdiocese, which was thirteen counties and the city of San Francisco, the largest amount came from St. Augustine’s.

01-00:21:39

LaBerge:

Really!

01-00:21:40

Cummins:

And remember the devotions of first Friday/first Saturday?

01-00:21:43

LaBerge:

Yes, yes.

01-00:21:45

Cummins:

You could hardly get into the church. It would be that crowded. But the pastor—

01-00:21:55

LaBerge:

Who was the pastor?

01-00:21:55

Cummins:

It was Thomas J. O’Connell, a Santa Clara graduate. He called himself a Bronco. He was rather close to us, although he suffered from being gassed in the First World War and his health was a little bit fragile.

01-00:22:19

LaBerge: Is he the person, for instance, who trained you to be an altar boy?

01-00:22:24

Cummins: It would have been the younger priests, and they were wonderful guys. James O'Shea, John [T.] McCracken, Pearse Donovan. They were very good. Mike O'Brien, who was a very popular priest, took care of the deaf; he lived at the parish. There was just a burst of seminarians in our time—Bud Duggan then Bill McGuire, who had been student body president of Santa Clara—and Bill Hughes, who preached at my first Mass. These were extraordinary personalities and very popular in the parish. They were really the large, large impact on me. Then I had two cousins, Berkeley natives, who were priests.

01-00:23:27

LaBerge: Oh really? What are their names?

01-00:23:27

Cummins: Nicholas Connolly. He was ordained in 1934. He ended up the pastor of St. Leo's, and then Matt [Matthew F.] Connolly.

01-00:23:37

LaBerge: I think I've heard George Crespín mention them, but I didn't realize they were your cousins.

01-00:23:41

Cummins: Oh yes, Matt was a navy chaplain during the war, all-American boy type. Handsome and strong and they were all tall. Nick was six five, Matt was six four, and they were on my first Mass. We had four guys on the altar—I was the shortest, at six two! But Matt ended up at the Apostleship of the Sea in San Francisco. He was a real figure in the San Francisco waterfront, especially with the unions and the seamen, and then he did a lot of entertaining at the building for the clergy of the diocese. He was a very popular priest, influential.

01-00:24:31

LaBerge: And any teachers who were especially influential?

01-00:24:34

Cummins: Well, the fifth-grade teacher, who was a native of Sacred Heart Parish in Oakland, took three of us aside—I don't know what part of the year it was, and she said, "I want you to say a Hail Mary for each other until you're ordained priests."

01-00:24:52

LaBerge: What was her name?

- 01-00:24:53
Cummins: Sister [Mary] Bernarda Gilfether. They were a famous family. Her brother [Cyril R. Gilfether] was a very important leader of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room that was set up.
- 01-00:25:14
LaBerge: Oh, okay. Even as you're talking, it's giving the picture of, I think, something that's not present today, of how the church—our whole lives revolved around school, the church, the feast days—that was the life!
- 01-00:25:40
Cummins: And the Boy Scout troop from the parish.
- 01-00:25:42
LaBerge: So were you in the Boy Scouts?
- 01-00:25:42
Cummins: Oh yes, we were in the Boy Scouts.
- 01-00:25:42
LaBerge: Okay, tell me about that.
- 01-00:25:45
Cummins: [laughing] Oh, I wasn't too serious about it. I enjoyed it, learning a little bit to cook and things like that, but the meetings we'd enjoy.
- 01-00:25:58
LaBerge: And that's what everybody was doing.
- 01-00:26:00
Cummins: Yes.
- 01-00:26:00
LaBerge: It wasn't—you wouldn't have joined it on your own.
- 01-00:26:04
Cummins: Well, I don't want to run down the Boy Scouts.
- 01-00:26:05
LaBerge: Yes, right, but it wasn't—
- 01-00:26:08
Cummins: And then I went to the seminary of course—so I was only in the Boy Scouts a couple of years. We didn't have the Cub Scouts.
- 01-00:26:16
LaBerge: What about sports or other activities?

01-00:26:19

Cummins:

Oh yes, we were into that. CYO [Catholic Youth Organization] was a little sporadic. We weren't a big parish, but we had our class teams. We'd always be playing Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's, which were big parishes and we couldn't handle them at all. Facilities around the East Bay were meager. The only gym available was St. Elizabeth's High School. And then—well St. Mary's too, but those were the only places.

01-00:26:54

LaBerge:

If you wanted to practice basketball or—

01-00:26:58

Cummins:

Yes, but we used Bushrod [Park]. We'd have our teams go down there. Berkeley High was a place to gather, too, both for playing [and] swimming. I learned to swim at Berkeley High.

01-00:27:15

LaBerge:

What would you do in the summers? Did you take vacations?

01-00:27:20

Cummins:

Nineteen thirty-six [1936] was the first time we went away. We went to Calistoga. There were a few families that we knew up there. We stayed at a Jewish place, and it was the synagogue on Saturdays, so that was our first exposure to their religious practice. In 1941, we went to Bass Lake. That was a marvelous vacation. The rest of the time—my uncle was in Rodeo, and believe it or not they had a beach and a little resort. We'd spend a lot of time down at the water and fishing. Of course the folks would be with us. I remember they took us out in a rowboat once, to go fishing, and the current was very strong that day and resort people had to come out and rescue us in a motorboat. [laughing] Neither my dad nor my uncle was very alert to boats. They were really landmen, you know.

01-00:28:40

LaBerge:

What about jobs growing up?

01-00:28:44

Cummins:

Oh, I'm going to have to think—well, I had a paper route when I was ten. My brother was into the paper, too. There was a *Call-Bulletin*, a San Francisco paper, but then Sacramento passed some law that you had to be twelve, so I lost that job. I picked up the *Oakland Tribune*, delivering that till I went to the seminary. We'd farm ourselves out to cut bushes and cut lawns and do a little gardening. People on vacation would have us water [around] the house. Yes, we kept pretty busy. [laughing]

01-00:29:25

LaBerge:

What were your favorite subjects in school?

01-00:29:33

Cummins: Oh gosh—well, I ended up in history, so I must have had that in my early days.

01-00:29:40

LaBerge: Yes, and obviously you like to read.

01-00:29:44

Cummins: Well, my brother was the teacher—he ended up as archdiocesan superintendent of schools in San Francisco. He went to school three years ahead of me. He taught me to read! I was three when I was reading.

01-00:30:02

LaBerge: Really?

01-00:30:02

Cummins: Yes. Well, the folks didn't fuss over that. Then in the first grade, at Christmas time, they put me in the second grade, which—well, it was good and bad. I grew up kind of slowly. We played a lot of basketball and I was pretty good at that, but it was a long time before I grew up to have any size.

01-00:30:38

LaBerge: And so you were always a touch younger than the other kids in your class.

01-00:30:42

Cummins: Pretty much. In high school it did make a difference. [laughing]

01-00:31:00

LaBerge: Obviously you looked up to your brother.

01-00:31:05

Cummins: Oh yes, we stayed very close. My folks directed us. There was a little library down the block on Adeline Street. I remember I took out—*Andy and Polly*, an old seaman and his parrot. I must have taken that book out six times. [laughter] We did a lot of reading, and then during the Depression days, the theater, at the matinees, gave out encyclopedias.

01-00:31:40

LaBerge: Oh! So you had a set?

01-00:31:40

Cummins: Yes, we had a set. Education was high in the house. It wasn't discussed, but you were going to go to college and dad was going to make sure we all got there. My sophomore year I got a job in a dish factory in El Cerrito. There were three of us from the seminary. It was pretty good, like a dollar an hour but it was hard, hard work.

01-00:32:16

LaBerge: What were you doing?

01-00:32:20

Cummins: Every day the staff would come in with a cylinder of clay. You would take that with your hand and either fold or flatten it out, put it on a form and push the lever to form the dish.

01-00:32:36

LaBerge: So you were making the dishes.

01-00:32:38

Cummins: Yes. I came home after three or four days and at dinner I said to my dad, "I'm a machine!" Without losing a stroke he said, "Now you realize why you need an education." That was his thought. He was so very encouraging. And he did his homework, I mean *our* homework—

01-00:33:07

LaBerge: With you.

01-00:33:06

Cummins: Yes, he enjoyed that just as much as we did. But I don't remember ever straining over doing homework, because—

01-00:33:18

LaBerge: It came easily.

01-00:33:18

Cummins: Everybody in the house did it! [laughing] That's interesting about him.

01-00:33:24

LaBerge: And then did you teach your sister how to read?

01-00:33:26

Cummins: No, I did not. She would have been four years behind—three years in age—and four years behind [in school].

01-00:33:36

LaBerge: Well, how did you decide to go to the seminary whereas your brother had gone to St. Mary's?

01-00:33:43

Cummins: I think there were so many of us, four of us, going from the class, and we palled around. We would visit each other's homes, and went to Cal games. And then we knew the seminarians so very, very well. I didn't go down to *try* it; I went because I wanted to be a priest. And that never varied. Unexciting, not like these people with a dramatic wrenching.

01-00:34:25

LaBerge: Yes, how soon did you know that that's what you wanted to do?

Cummins: When I went down to the seminary. I fit into the life easily. I wish they had given us a little more help with art and music, because they had us there around the clock. When I was chaplain at Mills College, I realized I had been left out of a few things.

01-00:34:58

LaBerge: Well, why don't you describe what the education was like, just in the minor seminary anyway.

01-00:35:04

Cummins: Looking back it was pretty rigid. Five to six in the morning the bell would ring, and quarter after six you'd be at morning prayer, and then Mass, then back up into your room and make the bed. But even in my college years I'd get up at five to six, shave, make the bed, and be down at six fifteen. [laughter] We were all pretty much that way. And classes were—well, all day, with some half-hour study periods in between.

01-00:35:48

LaBerge: But a classical curriculum.

01-00:35:48

Cummins: Oh yes. When I went to Cal Berkeley and I brought the transcript to Professor [William J.] Bouwsma—Harvard undergrad and Harvard doctorate—he looked over his glasses at me and said, “I envy you your classical education.”

01-00:36:10

LaBerge: Latin?

01-00:36:11

Cummins: Oh yes.

01-00:36:12

LaBerge: Greek too, or not?

01-00:36:13

Cummins: Yes, four years of Greek.

01-00:36:15

LaBerge: Latin, Greek, and then history, English, the regular.

01-00:36:20

Cummins: Plenty of English, and they really had us write a lot and do poetry. It was a classical education.

01-00:36:34

LaBerge: And what kind of theology did you have?

01-00:36:37

Cummins: In the minor seminary it was a kind of catechism. We didn't get too excited about it. When you got to St. Patrick's, oh! That's—whoo!

01-00:36:48

LaBerge: So what year was this that you started?

01-00:36:51

Cummins: I went 1941 to St. Joseph's and I graduated there in '47

01-00:36:57

LaBerge: That would have been after six years. So in that time, historywise, there was Pearl Harbor and World War II. So how did that affect—what were you doing Pearl Harbor Day? What are your memories of all of that?

01-00:37:22

Cummins: We were playing soccer and I came up to hear the news, and I don't think the impact of it hit us. But the older guys—they figured they'd be off to war.

01-00:37:39

LaBerge: Yes, yes.

01-00:37:41

Cummins: And so it was serious. We had the rationing and all of that, and then we had the dark windows. The war affected us as it did everybody else.

01-00:37:56

LaBerge: Did you have friends, Japanese friends, who were incarcerated?

01-00:38:04

Cummins: I don't remember friends, but Berkeley had a relatively large Japanese population, and they were all gone. One was up the street. One of them came back, oddly, Catholic, a Japanese family. My mother was not pleased at all with that removal of the Japanese. They'd come down to visit us on visiting Sunday, every third Sunday. I don't think they missed all those years, and my dad would save enough gas from the rationing so that they could drive down.

01-00:38:50

LaBerge: To see you.

01-00:38:51

Cummins: When I think about that, oh. But she said to me once that ever since they put the Japanese in the concentration camps, you can't get a decent strawberry in Santa Clara Valley. [laughter] But she was quite negative [about] that incarceration. I guess she knew enough Japanese people to be upset.

01-00:39:23

LaBerge: Yes, you were—

01-00:39:23

Cummins: We'd come home for Thanksgiving. That first year—we got home and of course the kids on the block—we'd play football in the street. When it got time to go back—oh, I was so homesick. That stayed with me. After Christmas, we wouldn't be back home until—

01-00:39:46

LaBerge: The summer?

01-00:39:46

Cummins: Summer, yes. They'd give us a few days off at Easter, but we'd have a track meet. We were busy and kept active, and so on.

01-00:39:59

LaBerge: So how long did that last, the homesickness?

01-00:40:03

Cummins: I would say until I was in college. Oh, maybe a senior in high school I was over it. I remember that first year we were sitting on the steps of the college, looking out on that Moffett Field dirigible hangar. It was a cold day looking out, and it was six months before we were off the property. That was pretty rigid. A lot of my classmates didn't like it. I didn't really object to it. Now, St. Patrick's Seminary I liked.

01-00:40:48

LaBerge: You really liked—okay.

01-00:40:51

Cummins: If there had been an option to join the Sulpician Fathers, who were the group that taught in the seminary, I would have considered that seriously.

01-00:41:07

LaBerge: Wow, okay. [interruption in recording] You were saying that if you'd had the chance to be in the Sulpicians you would have. So what was the difference at St. Patrick's seminary and the minor seminary?

01-00:42:17

Cummins: Well, St. Patrick's was a professional school. We were very close at St. Joseph's, too. You learned to be close because you lived with each other.

01-00:42:31

LaBerge: Yes, yes. But is it what you were studying?

01-00:42:34

Cummins: Oh yes. But at St. Patrick's there was more silence. In between classes you'd make a visit [to the chapel]. There was little time after breakfast and there was reading at the meals. We had that at the minor seminary, too. Looking back, that was hard. But I felt at St. Patrick's we were treated like men. Some of my classmates say no, but the faculty did not patrol us. They had the rule, there it

is, and you're supposed to follow it. But I thought—well, we were kind of grown up too.

01-00:43:19

LaBerge: Yes, and you were having more real theology rather than—

01-00:43:22

Cummins: Oh yes, yes, and the classes. Although I enjoyed the minor seminary classes—when we got to the third year, when we got to Greek, that first week I thought I'd never learn a new alphabet. I didn't have too much trouble in school. I liked geometry very much. I thought that was a great course. And then the English classes—we had imaginative teachers, and my sophomore year he gave us tests in grammar, and if you got to a certain level, he'd let you sit in the back of the class and read novels.

01-00:44:06

LaBerge: [laughing] Oh! Who was this?

01-00:44:07

Cummins: Henry Burke. Oh, he was imaginative. In the second semester, after Christmas, he gave us sixty-four short stories to read, and that's all we had to do. He gave us a test at the end, but it was just to [see] whether you read them or not. Oh gosh, that just created such a taste for reading! Oh, and then we met so many people, "The Lady or the Tiger," that famous short story. Oh, Willa Cather—and oh my goodness, O. Henry. But that was a great thing! You read in your class time and used your outside time.

01-00:45:11

LaBerge: Yes. What about prayer life? What was that like?

01-00:45:14

Cummins: Well, I just thought it was fine. We had Mass in the morning, well, morning prayer and then Mass. At lunch they'd call it the *particular examen* and it would be ten or fifteen minutes just before you went into lunch—there'd be a reading of scripture and a little meditation, which was very nice, because the church wasn't that much into scripture in those days. And then the evening had night prayer. Sunday would be High Mass. You'd have a Mass in the morning and then High Mass after. And the music, when I was in the choir—we got marched up to San Francisco once to sing for The Catholic Hour, three o'clock in the afternoon on Sundays, and the music was—oh, we really enjoyed it. It was classic stuff.

01-00:46:24

LaBerge: How did your folks—I think I know the answer to this, but I'd like to hear what you have to say—your folks feel about you entering the seminary?

01-00:46:33

Cummins:

I remember that first Thanksgiving when I was kind of falling apart. I remember my dad went into the back bedroom, and I was kind of leaning on the bed there. And he just came in beside me, you know. And he said, “Now, you made one decision to go to the seminary for high school. I would like you to take that seriously.” I thought he made it clear. “Now, you’re not getting pressed from here. I just want you to make the right choices for your life and do something you would like to do.” And I was trying to tell him it’s not that I don’t want to go back to the seminary, it’s just that I’d rather—

01-00:47:22

LaBerge:

I’d rather be home! [laughter]

01-00:47:29

Cummins:

Yes. Well, the fact that they came every single—

01-00:47:34

LaBerge:

That says—when there was rationing—and would the whole family come? Your brother, your sister?

01-00:47:37

Cummins:

Oh yes. My brother was in high school and there were four of them chosen, when he was just coming into the last part of his senior year before Christmas. Four of them were chosen to attend St. Mary’s College in January. The Navy had pre-flight training. Two of them ended up at Annapolis. But my brother turned it down and didn’t say anything to my folks.

01-00:48:19

LaBerge:

And so they never knew that he was offered entrance?

01-00:48:23

Cummins:

Oh no, they knew that.

01-00:48:24

LaBerge:

They knew that.

01-00:48:27

Cummins:

My mother got this young priest at the parish. She went to talk to him. We had family in East Oakland and one of them got killed in the Pacific, and then kids that I—Iwo Jima hadn’t taken place yet, but the death toll coming from St. Augustine was pretty large.

01-00:48:52

LaBerge:

Yes, I bet, because your brother was the right age to be drafted.

01-00:48:55

Cummins:

Oh yes, oh yes. But on Easter Sunday, I met her in the college corridor and she said to me, “Your brother signed up for St. Joseph’s.” [laughing] These were our lives. I was happy with what I did; he was happy with what he did.

But of course I think his going to high school had some advantages—because he became a sports writer for the *Berkeley Gazette* and he played varsity basketball.

01-00:49:33
LaBerge:

He had a different kind of a high school experience than you did.

01-00:49:36
Cummins:

Oh yes! And then he drove when he was only what, sixteen, eighteen years old, he drove for this Railway Express [Agency], which would be kind of a model of a what's it called, the postal—what do we call it, that special—?

01-00:49:52
LaBerge:

Like what, FedEx or UPS?

01-00:49:56
Cummins:

Well, it would be like that, but it was the Railway Express. They had a lot of confidence in him to give him a truck at sixteen or eighteen. I worked one Christmas with him on the truck. I learned a lot. But he told me that—at Christmas we would always play St. Mary's High in basketball. That was a very welcoming event. Gee, there was Tony Potts who just died—his daughter-in-law is the communications woman for the diocese here—very nice. But Tony Potts and I kept in touch all the years—the only time we saw each other was [when] we played basketball against each other twice. I was surprised he didn't go to the seminary. We'd play St. Mary's and then we'd all go to Woolsey Street for dinner, the whole class! Even when we played at night we'd come—we'd go to dinner first and then we played at St. Elizabeth's or went to St. Mary's. My brother said it was—the guys that came through the house, and I would have older guys. My brother found the group very attractive.

01-00:51:39
LaBerge:

So that influenced him then to go to St. Joe's?

01-00:51:40
Cummins:

Yes, yes.

01-00:51:43
LaBerge:

So were you there at the same time?

01-00:51:44
Cummins:

But just for a year, because he came in as a first-year college student. They moved the whole class over during the war. Those guys were eighteen years old. During the war they never had a summer off. They went to summer school and everybody got accelerated. So he was two years ahead of me but he got ordained three years ahead of me. We went to one summer school, but that was '45, because that was the year we had graduated as seniors. But we were not moved ahead in classes for ordination. We were the class of 1953.

- 01-00:52:34
LaBerge: What else—before we move on from there, anything else from your childhood of influences, uncles, aunts, other teachers?
- 01-00:52:49
Cummins: Well, the sixth grade teacher was very important. That picture I have—you can't see it, I don't think, below there? [pointing] It's of the resurrection.
- 01-00:52:58
LaBerge: Oh yes, I can see that one, yes.
- 01-00:53:04
Cummins: She became the superintendent of schools for elementary schools in Los Angeles. [Timothy] Cardinal Manning gave her that picture, and when I became the bishop *she* gave me that picture. It has his autograph on the back. She was a demanding teacher, but—
- 01-00:53:27
LaBerge: This is the one who pulled you and two others aside and had you say Hail Marys?
- 01-00:53:29
Cummins: No, that was the fifth grade teacher.
- 01-00:53:30
LaBerge: Okay, so what's the sixth grade teacher's name?
- 01-00:53:31
Cummins: This was Sister Mary Loretta Rose, also a Sacred Heart Oakland girl, and she really pushed us—oh boy.
- 01-00:53:45
LaBerge: Pushed you to write?
- 01-00:53:46
Cummins: Well, geography, I remember she told me that I made a mistake once because I put Lake Baikal in Siberia, and she said, “No, Russia is the correct [answer].” I argued with her. We kept in touch. Sister Bernarda lived to be ninety-five! She's only gone five or six years. And Loretta Rose the same. I was in touch with them all through the years.
- 01-00:54:23
LaBerge: They were probably so proud!
- 01-00:54:25
Cummins: I was down at their convent for Sister Bernarda's funeral. The provincial remarked, “And of course we have the crown jewel here.” [laughter]
- 01-00:54:49
LaBerge: Oh dear!

01-00:54:50

Cummins:

And of course they all were encouraging for the seminary. We had an Irish nun who was just the friendliest—she taught us both in the seventh *and* in the eighth. But by that time we were pretty well destined for the seminary.

01-00:55:12

LaBerge:

Yes, yes. Well, looking back at the seminary and that education, some time, like in the next ten years, it changed a little, didn't it?

01-00:55:21

Cummins:

Ooh, very much.

01-00:55:23

LaBerge:

So tell me something about that.

01-00:55:24

Cummins:

Well, the minor seminary, that is, a high school seminary, collapsed.

01-00:55:35

LaBerge:

So your training then, of what kind of theology you were learning or how you learned to preach—tell me about that and then how it has changed.

01-00:55:51

Cummins:

Well, we had textbooks, and we had textbooks for philosophy too, which was too bad because I think we should have read the originals. But philosophy—I didn't quite catch on with philosophy. Tony Valdivia, who lives with me, he really can speak to that subject—they had a wonderful philosophy teacher. The one we had was over the hill. He had us write a lot of papers. I have a brilliant classmate who is still alive, [J.] Warren Holleran. He was taken out of our class and sent to Rome. He was the first who went to Rome after the war. He came home here and taught at Holy Names, and then replaced me at San Francisco State as the Newman chaplain.

01-00:56:56

LaBerge:

Oh, okay. So he was sent to Rome to study philosophy?

01-00:57:01

Cummins:

No, to do theology. But in our philosophy classes—he would do essays and reports and they were brilliant. Occasionally the prof would have him read those. They were brighter than the professor's.

01-00:57:22

LaBerge:

The philosophers you were studying—I'm assuming Aquinas, and who else?

01-00:57:27

Cummins:

Well, that was practically—

01-00:57:28

LaBerge:

The whole thing was Aquinas.

01-00:57:28

Cummins:

Well, just about. A bit of existential philosophy, but not that serious then. I have one good memory—a book our professor loved—*The Meaning of Man* by a French philosopher Jean Mouroux. And the history of philosophy—of course we went through that. Although there was one course touching on philosophy I liked very much, and it was a Greek class. We read Plato in the original! The way the book was situated you'd have—part of a page would be English, then the next, the continuance, would be Greek. I became fascinated by that, as something really understandable. And then of course—well, to go back to the Latin, our third year we did Virgil, and the prof we had—again, I liked him very much—he wasn't into syntax or proper verbiage. [He'd say], *read*. And that was the first time I thought oh, these are stories! You weren't reading a page a day, you were tearing through it! He would just love us to get 110 lines a day. But I did enjoy that part of it very much. And then we did Homer in Greek, and Ovid in Latin. The farther we got into that, the more likable it was.

01-00:59:09

LaBerge:

And then as far as theology what was—did you do scripture?

01-00:59:17

Cummins:

Scripture was a zero. It was terrible. If you read the format—what do we call it—?

01-00:59:29

LaBerge:

Not the breviary.

01-00:59:33

Cummins:

No, it was a class in the afternoon twice a week. The syllabus would appear substantial, listing prophets and psalms, but the professor was still arguing against the rationalists of the nineteenth century. He had not caught up with Pope Pius XII who had opened Catholic scholars to contemporary research. We did know that much was going on and that we were going to miss out. The year after we finished our scripture courses, the Sulpicians brought in a new and well-trained teacher. Scripture had its place in the minor seminary. At lunch time we always had a brief reading. At St. Patrick's we were asked to read the bible twenty minutes a day. We had only the Douay-Rheims translation which was not very attractive. The two years before our class was ordained, Frank Lacey gave me as his going away present the translation of the scriptures by Monsignor Ronald Knox. That was revolutionary. I remember speaking of that with Professor Ray Sontag at Cal Berkeley who told me about the Knox translation: "I don't know if that's really what St. Paul said but it reads very well." Still, I feel very positive about our seminary education. There was great emphasis on theology. It was taught in the pattern of the day and it was thorough. In moral theology we had an unimaginative professor but he radiated common sense. I enjoyed the courses in history

because of so many books that he brought in as well as recommended reading. I appreciated the courses in homiletics. My confessor, to whom I was very partial, was the teacher. He allowed us to critique one another. It was a technique that my brother used at Marin Catholic to teach speech and drama, and I followed that as well at Bishop O’Dowd High School. As to liturgy, the class was once a week and mostly history. This was a decade before the Second Vatican Council.

01-01:01:14
LaBerge:

Yes, yes. And were you sort of aching to do something new and different?

01-01:01:21
Cummins:

Well, there was some restlessness. There had been liturgical changes, for example, dropping the fast from midnight. I remember at Mission Dolores one of the young women saying to me, “Oh, that’s a great change. A lot of really good parties were damaged by the fast from midnight.” And then Rome transferred Holy Saturday, putting the ceremony at night. That happened. And there were other developments. There was a liturgical conference, a national organization with scripture coming to the fore. Other possible developments were being discussed in those years. So when we heard the Vatican Council was coming—we were sensitive to the possibility of some change.

01-01:02:33
LaBerge:

Yes, well, what do you remember when John XXIII was elected?

01-01:02:40
Cummins:

I was teaching at Bishop O’Dowd High School and the news came over the loudspeaker. And of course the kids [said], “Who’s that?” I said, “I never heard of him.” He did what Francis did—just came out to be such a personality with that welcoming approach. Then from ’59 on, from the time the Council was announced, that’s when there was a burst of theological exploration with [Henri] de Lubac, and [Yves] Congar, and [Karl] Rahner—names that hadn’t been really familiar to us.

01-01:03:26
LaBerge:

Whom you’d never heard of.

01-01:03:27
Cummins:

Well, we had heard of some, but they really became famous. In our time as well, there was this Young Christian Workers movement: observe, judge, act—moving the church operating in society. We had the Christian Family Movement at Mission Dolores. There were six or eight couples—we met every month and did a lot of neighborhood services. I kept in touch with those people for a long time afterwards. But the Young Christian Workers—Young Christian Students, I thought that was kind of fomenting some—I guess—would you say agitation?

01-01:04:18
LaBerge:

Yes, was it college students?

01-01:04:22
Cummins:

Yes. But St. Mary's College, I remember, had a big week one summer—it must have been the year my brother was ordained. But gosh, we were excited about all these young people. The women who were involved, the sisters, were a step ahead of their time. They made a great impact on us.

01-01:04:46
LaBerge:

Let's go back—I want to come back to this, but let's go back to your ordination and that day, where your first Mass was, and then we'll go on from there.

01-01:04:58
Cummins:

All right.

01-01:05:01
LaBerge:

So you were ordained in what year?

01-01:05:05
Cummins:

January 24, 1953. After having said we weren't moved up, we *were* moved up. The archbishop did not want two full years between ordinations. So he moved us from the usual June date but the seminary didn't approve of that.

01-01:05:24
LaBerge:

Yes, but they did it.

01-01:06:56
LaBerge:

How long a training did you have in homiletics?

01-01:06:59
Cummins:

I guess about four years.

01-01:07:01
LaBerge:

Four years. So you were practicing preaching all that time.

01-01:07:06
Cummins:

Yes. We had only two classes a week but your turn would come up pretty regularly. And then our very last summer you had to prepare a homily that you would give during dinner, in the silence of dinner. In philosophy we had papers to deliver. We had a half hour they called spiritual direction, and you'd have to give that paper. But when you went to theology you had to do the homily.

01-01:07:47
LaBerge:

And was the basis always the gospel of the day?

01-01:07:52

Cummins: They would assign something to you for the summer. Although we weren't preaching on it the way we are now, in that the gospel has to be *preached*, your preaching could be quite catechetical.

01-01:08:07

LaBerge: How did you like that? How difficult was it to get into that—?

01-01:08:13

Cummins: I've never found preaching easy even to this day. It takes a lot of work. But I do like the change from the council, to really get at the word of God. But no, it's always work. [laughing]

01-01:08:37

LaBerge: That—it says something that even after all these years it's still work for you, that it's—

01-01:08:44

Cummins: I'm sure it's not for everybody else, but I don't find it easy.

01-01:08:52

LaBerge: So your ordination was at St. Patrick's?

01-01:08:58

Cummins: No, at the old St. Mary's Cathedral.

01-01:08:59

LaBerge: Okay, in San Francisco?

01-01:09:01

Cummins: Nine o'clock in the morning. And we drove up from the seminary in a 1947 Plymouth. There had been no cars during the war, but they had this one lent to them. Ralph Brennan, who was the president of our class, and I sat in the back seat with the president of the seminary between us, who was a most severe man.

01-01:09:28

LaBerge: What was his name?

01-01:09:30

Cummins: Thomas C. Mulligan. We all had our breviaries. I finished mine before he did his and I had to keep the book open. [laughter] I didn't want him to think I had rushed through the prayers. In those days you were obliged to read the breviary when you were made subdeacon. That's the year before you're ordained. We couldn't get breviaries because they were all from European publishing houses. One of the priests at the seminary gave me his breviary, and I used that for the summer. Ours didn't come until the fall.

- 01-01:10:25
LaBerge: That's so interesting, that there weren't publishing houses *here*.
- 01-01:10:32
Cummins: No, they were all in Europe—[Friedrich] Pustet and Malm—there were three big ones.
- 01-01:10:40
LaBerge: And just for the record, we're talking about Latin. It was not in English, it was in Latin.
- 01-01:10:46
Cummins: The whole thing, the whole thing, yes.
- 01-01:10:51
LaBerge: And why don't you explain what this is, for someone else who's reading this who has never heard that word *breviary*.
- 01-01:10:59
Cummins: Well, it's out of the monastic tradition. The Benedictine monks sang the hours, which were basically the psalms. The early morning hours were not just psalms but also lessons from scripture and lessons from the fathers of the church. That started off with morning prayers (lauds). Matins was the longer meditative—and then you had nine o'clock, twelve o'clock, three o'clock—terce, sext, none; then vespers, and compline would be the last. Now ideally those were to spread through the day. We often read them all at once. Matins could be read the day before. They called it *anticipating*. And, one of the guys in the seminary said, "Oh, I never anticipate, because I don't want to be in purgatory for the distractions I had the day before." [laughter] We were very faithful to the breviary. But oh, then it came into English and you could say it in a group often enough, which would make it very prayerful.
- 01-01:12:46
LaBerge: So the ordination date—how many others along with you?
- 01-01:12:50
Cummins: We had fifteen in the class and we had two Dominicans with us.
- 01-01:12:59
LaBerge: And who ordained you?
- 01-01:13:00
Cummins: The auxiliary bishop, Hugh A. Donohoe, because the archbishop was sick. He was in the hospital with a flu of some kind. Bishop Donohoe went to Stockton when it was established and later was appointed to Fresno. He was a great man for the economics, labor and the farm workers.
- 01-01:13:34
LaBerge: And your family was there—your extended family? Uncles, cousins?

01-01:13:38

Cummins:

Yes, but we didn't have that many tickets. Of course, my mom and dad were in the front row. They came up after the Mass for a blessing, and my mother said, "Well, how are you?" [laughter]

01-01:14:04

LaBerge:

I'm guessing your mom probably always had her brogue?

01-01:14:06

Cummins:

Oh yes. Oh, my dad too, although I never was aware of it till I was on the phone with her, and I thought oh, she talks Irish.

01-01:14:22

LaBerge:

And then the very next day your first Mass?

01-01:14:24

Cummins:

Yes, that was at St. Augustine's, in the old church. And then there was a reception at the house. I don't know how they took care of so many people who came.

01-01:14:42

LaBerge:

At the first Mass, you preach at the first Mass?

01-01:14:42

Cummins:

No, no. Bill Hughes preached. And then we had a dinner at St. Leo's and they asked my sister to say a word and she said, "Well, when we said Mass at home, with the dishcloths for the vestments, with their color in crayon, Ben was the priest and John was the altar boy—and I sang in the choir." And so she said, "I think tonight I will just sing in the choir." [laughter]

01-01:15:28

LaBerge:

That's very dear! Just because we're doing family, where did Mary end up going to high school and college?

01-01:15:44

Cummins:

She went to Holy Names High School. Oh, she blossomed there. She was student body president. Holy Names was a six-hundred-plus student body. She went on to Holy Names College.

01-01:15:58

LaBerge:

To the college, yes, okay.

01-01:16:00

Cummins:

So she's Holy Names all the way through.

01-01:16:05

LaBerge:

So what was your fist assignment?

01-01:16:08

Cummins:

Mission Dolores. And my mother found out about it before I did.

01-01:16:12

LaBerge: How did that happen?

01-01:16:18

Cummins: Because my cousin told her, Nick—

01-01:16:18

LaBerge: Your cousin Nick Connolly.

01-01:16:19

Cummins: Nick Connolly. I didn't look forward to San Francisco. Santa Rosa was in the diocese and I would have liked that part of the world. As seminarians we worked at a summer camp on the Russian River. I liked Sonoma County.

01-01:16:41

LaBerge: So what were you going to be doing, or what did you do at Mission Dolores?

01-01:16:44

Cummins: Well, we had three schools.

01-01:16:48

LaBerge: Really!

01-01:16:48

Cummins: Bishop [Merlin J.] Guilfoyle was the pastor but he was pretty absentee in a sense. He went to the chancery every day, and then his hobby was languages, so in the afternoon Fr. Dabovich would come in to teach him Italian and Croatian. He had two rooms of files. There were three associates, and then we had living with us, Walter [J.] Tappe, who was the editor of the [*Catholic*] *Monitor*. It was a colorful place.

01-01:17:29

LaBerge: And the *Monitor* was the San Francisco Archdiocese paper?

01-01:17:31

Cummins: Yes, yes.

01-01:17:32

LaBerge: Is it still called the *Monitor*?

01-01:17:33

Cummins: No, it's called *San Francisco Catholic*. George Meyer was the oldest assistant, and he was outstanding. Warren Holleran was with me for two of the years when he came back from Rome. Then there was a wonderful guy. He was in our class but got dropped out of the seminary. His pastor was a pretty persuasive man in San Jose and got him back into the seminary after he had graduated from Cal and had gone into the service, Kelly Canelo.

01-01:18:14

LaBerge: Can you spell the last name?

01-01:18:15

Cummins:

C-A-N-E-L-O [spells]. A most wonderful boy—he was close to our family. And even out of the seminary he kept in touch with my folks, and they went down for his first Mass. He got all emotional. He was a personable and capable priest. Sadly he went on an altar boy picnic in 1961 and contracted polio and died within a week.

01-01:18:53

LaBerge:

Oh my gosh.

01-01:18:54

Cummins:

His dad was a physician in San Jose. We had the three schools [at Mission Dolores]. I had the boys' school and George had the high school and Warren and Kelly were at the girls' grammar school.

01-01:19:14

LaBerge:

And was this—Bishop Guilfoyle was the bishop of San Francisco?

01-01:19:22

Cummins:

No, he was auxiliary.

01-01:19:24

LaBerge:

Auxiliary, okay. So this wasn't the archdiocesan center?

01-01:19:34

Cummins:

Well, it became that while I was there. Up in a corner of the property, surrounded by mission cemeteries, that area, had a little corner strip alongside the school yard which got the school yard off the tax roles because it was cemeteries. The corner was supposed to be a cemetery, but Bishop Guilfoyle, arranged to build a gymnasium there. And then on the piece still left, he engineered to build the chancery office there. So that happened in my time.

01-01:20:37

LaBerge:

All right, so you had the boys' school, and what did that mean? Were you teaching?

01-01:20:45

Cummins:

For the sixth, seventh, eighth grades, I would show up once a week. I'm still in touch with some of those students. One of them is a professor of religion at Stanford.

01-01:20:56

LaBerge:

Really!

01-01:20:56

Cummins:

Yes. And another one became a priest and left, and he's a law professor at Valparaiso.

01-01:21:12
LaBerge:

In Indiana, I think.

01-01:21:14
Cummins:

Yes. And he's still in touch. He was in to see me a couple of months ago. I brought him something about the Vatican Council. Now on the side, I had the Newman Club at San Francisco State, and the sisters, especially the principal, didn't want me to have that and Bishop Guilfoyle didn't want me to have that. But I succeeded Father Tom Murray who had that responsibility, and along with that went the chaplaincy of the Catholic [Professional] Women's Club of San Francisco. And the president of that is still alive and living in Pleasant Hill here.

01-01:22:02
LaBerge:

Really!

01-01:22:02
Cummins:

And she's a doctor, yes, wrote me a nice note a few months ago.

01-01:22:09
LaBerge:

What's her name?

01-01:22:09
Cummins:

Rosalie Reardon—oh she married—Rosalie Reardon Albers.

But San Francisco State—oh, I *loved* that work! They'd meet at the Helpers of the Holy Souls Convent, which was across the street from the old San Francisco State which was on Market Street and Dolores, right below the [U.S.] mint. It was the San Francisco State Teachers [College]—as San Jose was and Chico. My first year was the last year on Market Street. The second year they moved out to Nineteenth Avenue, where it is now. In one year the student body went from 880 to 9200.

01-01:23:18
LaBerge:

And what would you do for the Newman Club? Was it once a week or more often than that?

01-01:23:24
Cummins:

It wasn't every week. The only place we could meet was Mission Dolores—which was very nice. They'd have an occasional dance, but we'd have speakers. At a number of communion breakfasts we'd have people come to speak. They'd be delighted to come.

01-01:23:49
LaBerge:

So the students would come, but would you have to go to the campus to recruit them?

01-01:23:53
Cummins:

Well, we had six professors sponsoring us, including the vice president. There was a J. Fenton McKenna, after whom the creative arts building is named, who was outstanding, absolutely outstanding—he’s a man I’d love to have kept more in touch with. He came to Sacramento when I was ordained bishop, so we had a little correspondence.

01-01:24:29
LaBerge:

He was professor of—?

01-01:24:32
Cummins:

He had a law degree out of Santa Clara, but he got interested in drama, and so he created the whole Department of Drama at Santa Clara University. San Francisco State recruited him to set up the creative arts department.

01-01:24:54
LaBerge:

Oh, how interesting! I’m going to change [the tape].

01-01:25:04
Cummins:

When I was teaching high school, I had a junior, a young woman whom I’m still in touch with, who was just stagestruck! Oh, she wanted to be an actress in the worst way. I didn’t run the drama department at Bishop O’Dowd, but she was into speech, and she was good enough to go to the state finals in Santa Barbara. I didn’t know whether to encourage her, due to the state of the moral situation of that world. But I went over to see Dr. McKenna in 1958 and I told him the situation and he said, “Does she have *talent*?” And I said, “Well, you know it’s really hard for me to be the judge of that, but she made the state finals.” “Does she have character?” “Well, the family is really very good.” “Then you have to encourage her,” he said, “Pius XII, in some letter that he wrote,” I can’t remember the details. I wrote this up in my memoirs. “Pius XII said you have to get your best to go into art, drama, communications, labor, and economics.” Well, there were four things, and he said, “And we’re going to lose some, but this is where the Eucharist fits in. You bring that banner, all torn up, and put it on the altar and you get it refreshed and you’re back out.” Now, that is *way* ahead of the Vatican Council!

01-01:26:50
LaBerge:

That’s for sure! And this J. Fenton McKenna is the one who told you that?

01-01:26:55
Cummins:

Yes! And then he had every summer that Shakespeare week—and he’d send me enough tickets so I could bring the high school kids. We’d drive over there in the middle of July and oh, the Shakespeare drama—I remember the first summer I ever saw *Glass Menagerie*, I saw it at San Francisco State on an open stage—we were sitting on four sides. We got a lot of mileage out of San Francisco State.

01-01:27:35
LaBerge:

So he was one of the professors who was encouraging the Newman Club. And who else?

01-01:27:40
Cummins:

We had a Leo Doyle who was chair of radio and television, whose daughter Mary Doyle worked at Newman here in Berkeley.

01-01:27:52
LaBerge:

I didn't know that about her dad! So you had professors who were encouraging the Newman Club, but mainly—would you have special Masses for the students? Or just gatherings?

01-01:28:32
Cummins:

I felt that San Francisco State was so welcoming, I'd go out there to meet with the kids. You just really felt welcome! And then of course—I remember the principal of the grammar school at Mission Dolores, "Oh, you spend too much time out there." And I'd say, "No, I don't." But I'd have to be available—every other week they'd meet at Mission Dolores. That was my day off, and a couple of my priest friends disapproved, but I didn't find it a burden. I enjoyed it. And this very week I have a letter from one of them who's been in Arizona—a long letter—but still in touch after all these years!

01-01:29:24
LaBerge:

Still in touch with you, wow, wow. And so you had the school, you had the Newman Club, and then you had Sunday and everyday liturgies.

01-01:29:39
Cummins:

I'd two days a week go to the hospital. We had Franklin Hospital. We covered that very well. Each of us took a day, two days, and I'd say, "Let's stop the midnight calls." [laughing] And then the nurses, the Catholic nurses were delighted. They'd have the list for us.

01-01:30:12
LaBerge:

Yes, yes. Well, I'm wondering if we should stop there for today, and then pick up—how long were you at Mission Dolores? We could pick up from—

01-01:30:25
Cummins:

Four years.

01-01:30:25
LaBerge:

Four years, okay, unless you've got more to say on that.

01-01:30:32
Cummins:

Oh, I'd have to think about Mission Dolores, yes.

01-01:30:36
LaBerge:

And you might think over the week.

01-01:30:43

Cummins:

I was not disappointed to be in San Francisco. The pride of the people. And then—the Catholic school system was so strong in San Francisco. The Mission District had three girls' high schools in twenty blocks!

01-01:31:02

LaBerge:

It's incredible.

01-01:31:04

Cummins:

I bet you had that in Detroit.

Interview 2: October 24, 2014

02-00:10:11

LaBerge: [Editor's note: Beginning section of interview was moved to keep topics of conversation together.] Tell me about your first trip to Ireland, about the time that Mary made her vows at Maryknoll in New York.

02-00:10:14

Cummins: [It was] 1956. It was my brother who was the spark plug. "If we go to New York, let's go to Ireland! The folks haven't been back. And then if we're in Ireland, well—let's go to Rome!" [laughing] He was very good. My dad had a nephew in Queens, I guess Astoria, New York, and very entertaining. He returned the visit, because he came out here twice to visit my father, especially when he was older. But there was great hospitality. It was nice to come up with the Cummins relatives, because we had so many Connolly relatives [here]. But that was the first time the folks flew. My dad was very calm. We had one of those TWA [Trans World Airlines] constellations. And we did visit my mother's aunt in Boston. We started in Paris—did I go through this already?

02-00:11:37

LaBerge: It was after we turned the tape off.

02-00:11:40

Cummins: Oh, okay. We picked up an MG sedan, not that little sports thing, but with wood paneling. It was a lovely car. We drove up through Rheims and to Trier and down the Rhine. There was still damage left, like in Bonn, from the war [World War II], buildings that hadn't been rebuilt. That was a sharp reminder of things. And "oh, be sure you bring cigarettes so you can pay off tips"—Lucky Strike, or some of these I remember. The American dollar was worth a lot, oh my, and we traveled rather cheaply. But I'm trying to think what else—

02-00:12:33

LaBerge: What about going to Ireland, and your parents going back to their home places and meeting your relatives?

02-00:12:37

Cummins: Well, what happened was nobody told us any information on this. We came up through Paris, went to Lourdes, Paris, Notre Dame was a knockout. But we got to Boulogne-sur-Mer, we go across the [English] Channel.

We were just outside London with our hotel, and then we find out that we can't guarantee passage to Ireland, because it's the Bank Holiday. Nobody told us that. So the suggestion was that we would drive up to—Stranraer on the Scottish side—that we drive up there and get the ferry and come into Northern Ireland. Well, we didn't want to come into the north, because you have to drive all the way down, halfway through Ireland. But we decided we

would try to phone Ireland and tell them that we're sending the folks by air. We had a hard time getting through. It was a very slow process. And my mother, talking to her brother, the first thing she says is, "Well, how are you?" And so—"Ma, tell 'em you're coming over and here's the flight number and the landing." We weren't sure the information got through, because the operator cut them off in a very short time. We put them on the plane, off they went [to see their family in Ireland].

Then we took the car and drove up to Wales and we got the ship at Holyhead. Meanwhile, we had met a nurse and her niece in Paris, and they had warmly told us—"If you're coming through we'd like to show you around Wales." We got rid of the car at noontime and they took us all afternoon visiting Wales, took us to dinner, and then dropped us off on the ship.

But I remember going into Ireland. We had landed at Shannon on the way [to Paris], but we didn't see anything except green. But we decided no wonder it's green, because it rained every day—not all day, but it rained every day, the eighteen days that we were there.

02-00:15:07
LaBerge:

In a row, yes.

02-00:15:08
Cummins:

Yes, but we arrived and we don't know where the car is, and we have our suitcases. We meet this policeman, and he was a big man. He said, "Well, you're strapping young men,"—we are in our [Roman] collars—which was standard. "Oh, you're strapping young men, you have a block [to go]." Well, it was more than a block. It was a quarter mile, I think. But we went down and then we drove across Ireland. We were impressed—every place you went, because you had the collar see, and the car—they tipped their hat. We weren't used to *that!* [laughter] Well, we reached the city of Galway and drove out west. I said to Ben, "We'd better start asking some questions." We were saying we want to find John Connolly, which drew a blank. About the third time we asked— and this guy looked like a Notre Dame rooter, he had the knickers and the hat—he said, "Maybe it's Seán Ó Conghalaigh."

02-00:16:31
LaBerge:

And that was it!

02-00:16:30
Cummins:

Yes. And he said, "You just—straight down the road." It was a number of miles, but everybody knew everybody. We went down and found my uncle standing on a haystack with a pitchfork. My mother was standing talking to him. But everybody was talking Irish. And then my grandfather—we got there maybe two or three in the afternoon. My grandfather Stephen who was ninety at the time, and the only grandparent that we ever met, of course was talking

Irish. Later in the day, he went down and slaughtered a lamb for dinner. [laughing] This is pretty new stuff for us. But Ben and I were getting edgy, because we thought there's going to be three weeks of Irish! But they were all so warm and friendly and there was an abundance of English.

02-00:17:38

LaBerge:

But that must have been so emotional to meet all these relatives you'd never met.

02-00:17:44

Cummins:

Yes, oh yes! Well, we knew their pictures and of course they had ours. It was kind of cute because wearing the collar—my cousin was thirteen at the time. She's still alive. And just very lively, very involved in politics and all this, but we would dress in old shirts and a sweater. We walked down one day to the beach, and of course she was playing the little devilish—"Well, here's my cousin." And then of course they'd say, "Hello, Mister..." Then "Oh, no! They're priests!" But we picked up a hitchhiker, a young woman whom my cousin knew. They didn't tell her who we were, and of course I think the cousin was a little concerned that she would be proper. But I remember we were walking down to the water one day and she said, "You shouldn't be dressing like that." With the sweater. I remember that was so cute. But we stayed there the better part of a week, and then we went up to Mayo, again for the better part of a week.

02-00:19:07

LaBerge:

To see your father's folks?

02-00:19:09

Cummins:

Yes. And as we were coming in, he was saying—"That's [the] Barretts"—he was remembering all the houses. He was going down the list, and we got to his place and they had a brand new iron gate there for the cattle. He hesitated, and then we teased him—"Where were you really born, Dad?" And we drove in and oh, the family came out. Three of our first cousins were there. There was a half door. Right outside was a little barn for hay, and my dad looked at it and said, "That was the last thing we built before I went to America. I thought it was the Empire State Building. Now it looks like a chicken coop." [laughter] That night, Ben and I were reading our breviaries by a coal oil lamp. They had no electricity. Nineteen people came in the first hour and a half, and then I can remember they'd say, "And oh, Uncle Michael, who is this?" And Ben would look up from the breviary and say, "Mike Cummins, this is your life." The television movie. My dad recognized eighteen of the nineteen, all the names of the people that we had heard—of course, they were older by now. But oh, that was very moving.

02-00:20:57
LaBerge:

Oh my gosh, and for your parents—the fact that their sons brought them back. That must have been something.

02-00:21:05
Cummins:

My folks were very cool. They never made a fuss. That wasn't part of their make-up, to be parading their accomplishments or anything. No, they were just—they wanted us to get an education. That was really important.

We stayed up in that part of the world and we drove over to the Shrine of Knock. And we had been at Lourdes, where it's very relaxed piety. You say the rosary and then you go back for the evening procession and you sing the Lourdes hymn and you march around. Then we went to the baths. But everything about Irish piety was hard working. The first thing you would do, at Knock, as I remember, you'd walk around, fifteen decades of the rosary. My dad's older brother John at ninety-two, went with us. We were walking clockwise, but there was one group walking counter-clockwise. Rather odd. I remember when we got back home, the old uncle said, "Oh, those are the Clare people. They were walking contrary." He said, "The Clare people are great people in prayer." I've often used that in a talk about prayer. Nobody thinks they're good at prayer. And I said, "My uncle said the Clare people were good at prayer. I'll bet if you asked the Clare people they'd say, 'No, we're no good at prayer.'" But I remember we had to do Stations of the Cross, and then recite a litany before the Blessed Sacrament. Then we went for a cup of tea. I think by that time I was ready for a little drink of whisky! [laughter] But it was really a serious kind of work in terms of Lourdes. Lourdes was so much softer.

We went back to Galway and got the other uncle John, my mother's youngest. We went down through Dingle and Kerry and stopped in Cork. I don't remember her name—I was trying to think of it last night—but she was the queen of the St. Patrick's Day parade in San Francisco. Her house was right along the road as we came into Cork. The homes were built right to the sidewalk. I remember that we went in to have a little entertainment. It was very nice. And then we came up to Wexford and went to Glendalough. My uncle had never been there! And he was saying, "Well, I can understand why England wanted this lovely piece of territory." The farmland was just lovely. I think we went to Waterford, looked at the crystal, and then into Dublin, stayed a few days, went to the Abbey Theatre, needless to say. Oh, then my mother had a cousin, Lilly—I don't remember the last name—oh, an elegant crowd. She had a lot of education and was [our] guide through the city. We went to the post office, of course, where the Easter uprising took place. We didn't go to the Anglican cathedral—the next time I went I was certain to see that, but the Abbey was important.

02-00:25:24
LaBerge:

How about Guinness? [laughing]

02-00:25:24
Cummins:

Guinness—I didn't go to Guinness. I'm trying to think what else—there was something else of significance.

02-00:25:34
LaBerge:

Trinity College?

02-00:25:35
Cummins:

No, we didn't go that time, but I went the next time. Well, in 1956, it wasn't all that clear that Trinity was popular. Now it belongs, but I think the people felt that Catholics weren't welcome there. We must have gone to the Book of Kells. You wouldn't go to Ireland and not see the Book of Kells. Let's see if I wrote it down, but also I'm trying to think. [sounds of paper rustling] Oh yes! This is all part of it. We went to [St.] Stephen's Green and the university chapel, with John Henry Newman and imagined him with the frail voice, speaking in that part of the world, when he was doing *The Idea of the University*. Oh, my God, I remember that. That was important. We had three weeks in Ireland, and going with the folks was very, very special. So many of the Irish just dropped keeping in touch with the folks at home. My classmates don't know what part of Ireland they're from. But my folks never did [lose touch]. Now, they weren't sentimental. There was too much poverty, and my dad said, "The old days—hard work." But they always sent money and there was a lot of correspondence back and forth.

02-00:27:29
LaBerge:

And then from there did you go back to the Continent and to Rome?

02-00:27:34
Cummins:

No, we came back—we put the car in Dublin and flew out of Shannon and back to New York and spent a few more days at Maryknoll [to visit Mary], and then came home. I remember one of my first thoughts driving down Market Street at Castro was Ireland—*everybody* goes to Mass! And San Francisco, my goodness! The uncle, the ninety-two-year-old in Mayo, had said, "Well, no, that family is Protestant, but they're very good people and I think I could convert them if I worked at it." [laughter]

02-00:28:29
LaBerge:

Just in you telling these stories, it shows a different time period in people's viewpoint.

02-00:28:34
Cummins:

Oh yes.

02-00:28:35
LaBerge:

Because in Ireland, the culture is so different now.

02-00:28:37

Cummins:

Well, I was shocked that those country places had no electricity. But it was a lesson for me, because the next time we went back, not only electricity but television and the whole works. And later on, when I was writing up our first visit to Mongolia, which I thought was pretty primitive in many ways, and then went back two years later to marvel at the development that took place. When people are free and have their own responsibilities, it's just a boulevard to blossoming out.

02-00:29:23

LaBerge:

I'm going to turn this tape over. [interruption in recording]

02-00:29:42

Cummins:

Our whole family was terribly taken by Venice. My ma, when we were there for a symphony on the St. Mark's Square, said, "This is heavenly!"

02-00:29:59

LaBerge:

The music, all over, in Italy is—and what about Rome, particularly for you and your brother to go to Rome for the first time?

02-00:30:09

Cummins:

Well, I was really impressed with the popular culture. The doorman at the Hotel Savoy, where we stayed, in the Via Veneto area, humming operatic tunes to himself, so I just thought they were a class crowd. It was wonderful. Was Clare Boothe Luce the ambassador at that time?

02-00:30:35

LaBerge:

I think so.

02-00:30:38

Cummins:

We were close to the American embassy. I was disappointed with Rome. I thought it was very secular. I guess I expected it would be like Assisi—now, Assisi has an overlay of religion—and then Assisi is so classy compared to Lourdes. Lourdes is wonderful inside the gates, but—

02-00:31:08

LaBerge:

But the outside.

02-00:31:08

Cummins:

Outside—you get hassled. There was none of that in Assisi. But Rome—of course, there's so much to see. In the seminary we had heard about that statue of Moses in St. Peter in Chains [San Pietro in Vincoli]. And you just stare at it! It's just incredible beauty. Then our first look at St. Peter's was in the evening in the horse and carriage—you almost have to pinch yourself and say, are we really here? Of course, we said Mass all over. The first time, the convent was in Paris, then in one of the side chapels of Notre Dame.

02-00:32:02
LaBerge:

Really!

02-00:32:03
Cummins:

And I thought Thomas Aquinas might have said Mass here.

02-00:32:07
LaBerge:

That's right! How did you get permission? How do you go about that?

02-00:32:11
Cummins:

Well, we had our little *celebret* as it is called—the guarantee that you are priests in good standing. The last time I was in Paris for this was with the Delaneys [Holy Names Sisters Maureen and Rosemary] in 1988. It was the anniversary of their father's death. We went in and the priest in the sacristy said, "Do you want to concelebrate?" I said, "Well, our people are coming down. They're not here, and I'd rather say Mass separately." "Oh, no, you can't do that." There was one Mass in the morning and it was behind the main altar in the little chapel, and I thought oh, *sic transit gloria mundi*. This is a big change.

We said Mass in Cologne—and well, just about every place we could and they were very welcoming. And of course it was Latin, so you didn't have to look around for a book.

02-00:33:31
LaBerge:

Right. And the people there could understand it also.

02-00:33:36
Cummins:

In Rome we stumbled across a professor of ours, J. B. Quinn, He was cruising by himself. He was so happy to meet up with us. And it was fortunate that we came together with him. I remember that we didn't know that they shut the churches down at twelve and opened them at four. This big tall guy with that round hat—he was ushering us out of Santa Maria in Cosmedin—and my mother said, "He wasn't terribly pleasant. Was he an order man?" And J.B. Quinn said, "I think he's a disorder man!" [laughter] But we did get to see [Pope] Pius XII in St. Peter's. We had a great view, because as they had [later at] the Second Vatican Council, around the main altar those four large pillars, there were galleries—and we were in the gallery on the left side coming in, so we saw the pope from very close. That meant a lot. [laughing]

02-00:35:51
LaBerge:

For a Mass, or a blessing?

02-00:35:53
Cummins:

No, it was just an afternoon. It was later afternoon, and he came in—I forget whether he was in the chair. I don't think so. I think he walked in and gave a talk. Then he shook hands with all the people up close to him and he seemed very cheerful. [laughing]

02-00:36:22
LaBerge:

Wow, wow. So that was early on. You went to the Continent, then Ireland, and then home?

02-00:36:26
Cummins:

Yes, yes. We started in Paris, which was a good place to start.

02-00:36:36
LaBerge:

And what other special memories from that trip?

02-00:36:41
Cummins:

Well, this is an odd one. At home we had wine at Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas. It was a rare night that we didn't have wine at dinner throughout this trip—that was a radical transformation! Concannon Vineyard, in Livermore, became part of life when we arrived home. I felt there was more reverence for tradition and much more art and music, at least from my feelings.

The effects still remained from the war. We [the Americans] were spared that.

Oh yes! Florence—we went into the Uffizi Gallery, and of course you had to pay. My dad just walked through and nobody said anything to him! [laughter] In Rome we went to the Baths of Caracalla for the opera. We certainly saw our share of museums. The folks were so adaptable and so easy about everything. We went to Pisa on the way out of Rome, enjoyed that very much. And then Portofino, there was a magic about that. We stayed there overnight. We visited Fanjeaux, a great place for St. Dominic—and Carcassonne. I remember we were very fascinated by that. Just the venerable age of so much in Europe, and how far back one went. At least we were pretty familiar, with the education we had with European history.

02-00:40:43
LaBerge:

Should we go back to your ministry in the United States?

02-00:40:48
Cummins:

Yes, yes.

02-00:40:49
LaBerge:

Okay. So as I said, we had stopped—I think just when we were speaking about San Francisco State and your being the chaplain there, and you were still at Mission Dolores. Is that also when you were chaplain at Mills College?

02-00:41:08
Cummins:

No.

02-00:41:08
LaBerge:

That was later.

02-00:41:12

Cummins:

The first year we were ordained—we were ordained in January—I was invited over to the superintendent of schools, James Brown, a Berkeley native from St. Joseph’s Parish, a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley. He was very bright. So I went over and he said, “How would you like to teach?” [laughing] I’d been twelve years in school, you know. “Oh,” I said, “gosh, I would rather not sign up for that.” “Well, they’ll probably pick you up for something else,” which was rather threatening. But nothing came of that.

02-00:42:01

LaBerge:

And was he a priest?

02-00:42:01

Cummins:

Oh yes. And he was superintendent of schools. My brother was teaching at that time at Marin Catholic. But I just—gosh, I don’t know—you look forward to working in a parish. Well then, I remember we were on retreat a year later. The editor of the *Monitor*, our diocesan paper, whom we had met—both Ben and I knew him before—we were walking after dinner at the seminary when my brother walked by and said, “Leave him alone.” And then another one, Tommy Lacey and his assistant took me out to lunch, “How would you like to be working with the CYO [Catholic Youth Organization]?” I didn’t want that. I was an athlete, all hours of the day and night, when I was in school. I probably should have been reading more Shakespeare than playing basketball. But at Bishop O’Dowd, I wasn’t very interested in athletics. I had the speech and drama—I was much happier with that, which may have been surprising.

02-00:43:35

LaBerge:

So when did it come about that you went to O’Dowd?

02-00:43:41

Cummins:

Along the way, Bishop Guilfoyle who was my pastor at Mission Dolores, came to my room one afternoon. He said, “There is some discussion about making the Newman operation at San Francisco State full-time,” and there was kind of a suggestion, “Would you be interested in that?” “Yes! I would *love* that.” Then I didn’t hear a word. In June we went on retreat, and Thursday afternoon, a little note [arrived]. [The note read] “See the superintendent of schools, Monsignor Foudy,” in whatever room he was in. And we went—six of us. And he said, “The archbishop has been very good to us this year. You two are going to Serra High School. You two to Marin Catholic. You two to Bishop O’Dowd.” And that’s it. Jim Keeley and I were going to O’Dowd. I knew Keeley from the seminary and knew he was good company. But it was, “Okay. O’Donnell, you start at USF on Monday then” “Don Pyne, you and John Cummins start at Dominican College Monday.”

02-00:45:18

LaBerge:

Monday!

02-00:45:20

Cummins:

Can you imagine today trying to do something like that? [John T.] Foudy was my brother's boss later. But I said once to my mother, "Monsignor Foudy's not too much fun." And she said, "Well, his father wasn't too much fun, so I can imagine the son wouldn't be different." Foudy was just kind of mechanical about the news. And I said afterwards, "Does my pastor know that I'm going teaching?" And he says, "Oh, yes." "Does he know I'm going *Monday*?" Can you imagine all that was on your desk—weddings and all of that—yet off you went. But then Warren Holleran was my classmate, and he was in the process of getting a master's in philosophy out of Cal Berkeley, on his own time!

02-00:46:36

LaBerge:

Okay, so he wasn't told to go there. He figured it out and was doing it on his own time.

02-00:46:40

Cummins:

Yes, but it must have been the next day he said, "Listen, come with me to Cal!" And I thought that was a great idea! So I went in to see Monsignor Foudy Monday morning. And I said, "What would be the possibility of my going to Cal Berkeley?" "Well, the archbishop has allowed that, if you want to go up to see him." That wasn't my place. That was his place to do that.

02-00:47:29

LaBerge:

Yes.

02-00:47:32

Cummins:

He said, "Well, you'll have a required course at Dominican, but that's Catholic University Extension on the West Coast, and later we can send you back to Catholic U." But that had changed, because Archbishop [John Joseph] Mitty, who was very careful about educating his priests—he had sent them all over—University of Chicago, Columbia, not just to Rome. And we figured that that era was closing. He said, "Is there a course you'd like?" I said, "Yes. American intellectual history with Colman [J.] Barry," who was a Benedictine—he was a great friend of John Tracy Ellis. He was from St. John's in Collegeville. But then Foudy said, "And I'd recommend you take the course in statistics from Sister Mary Dominic Engelhard. She's teaching this summer."

So I went over and I went to the first class—the required course with Monsignor James Campbell. I signed in for the second class, Colman Barry. And then I thought—I don't think I can handle three classes. I'd been out of school for four years. So I went in to Mother Mary Dominic Engelhard—I stayed for the first class, but afterwards I said, "Sister, I don't think I can handle this. I'm going to stay with two classes." "All right," she was very nice. Now, this is 1957. By 1960 she becomes the prioress general of Mission

San Jose Dominicans. In 1962 I become the chancellor, and I'm appointed the "extraordinary confessor," not really for confessions but three times a year I would have to give a lecture to the sisters, and she is the mother general! And she's still the mother general when I became bishop. [laughing]

02-00:50:01

LaBerge: Isn't that something?

02-00:50:06

Cummins: She was most amiable, but she never forgot that I walked out of her class. [laughter]

02-00:50:10

LaBerge: Well, so you *did* go to Dominican.

02-00:50:14

Cummins: Yes.

02-00:50:16

LaBerge: And then how did it happen that you went to Cal?

02-00:50:19

Cummins: Well, my going to teaching really was a providential factor in things that happened later, like the GTU. Because that first summer I stayed with my brother at Marin Catholic and went to Dominican. I went back to Mission Dolores for Sunday Mass. I can't imagine I did anything else even though they had replaced me at Mission Dolores. But the middle of summer I got this letter that I was to be chaplain at Mills College. Now, growing up here, I knew something about Mills. And Mills had a Newman group because I'd met them. There was a Mary Stuart from Stockton I remember. We'd have annual regional meetings of the Newman [clubs]. In those days it took all of California and all of Nevada. So it was pretty pioneering work. It was pretty primitive in those days.

But I receive the letter, you're chaplain at Mills. Mills hadn't had anybody for six months, and I think my first reaction was, "Oh, they want to give the little boy a nice job. Maybe he's disappointed he didn't go to San Francisco State." But I decided—this is going to be a long story—that I was going to wait till Christmas and then go up to see Mills and talk to somebody. But I wasn't going to get involved early in Mills. I was living in St. Paschal's Parish, which had really basic facilities. The school was built, but we said Mass in the eighth-grade classroom, with iron chairs. Imagine coming from Mission Dolores Basilica to that. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I came home one Sunday night just after school had started. A note read, "Phone Harriet Haynes, up till midnight, Mills College." It was early in the evening, so I called her. "Oh, Father Cummins, we understand you are our

chaplain.” “Yes.” I thought, I didn’t expect to get into this. I said, “You’re not in school yet are you?” “Oh no, no. We’re having a meeting next Sunday night and we’d just love to have you come.” And I said, “Well, school hasn’t opened yet.” “No, but we have a desk to meet the freshmen as they come in.” And then she said, “I’m a convert.” And I thought oh, that’s *all* I need. I think I told you this story already.

02-00:53:50

LaBerge: Yes, yes, that’s right.

02-00:53:53

Cummins: I apologize for that. Harriet Haynes went on, “I’m the president of our club.” I said, “Well, I would like to meet you before our meeting of the group.” And she said, “Why don’t you come up Wednesday night for dinner?” So I did. There were two impressions I had right away of Mills College. One was broad outreach. The woman president was from Seattle, Janet DeNeff was from Spokane, who eventually went to the Holy Names sisters. Another was from Chicago, one from Hong Kong, and one from Carmel whom I’m in touch with—

02-00:54:43

LaBerge: Still.

02-00:54:47

Cummins: She’s widowed now. She had gone to Dominican for two years but then couldn’t get the pharmaceutical courses and transferred into Mills. We had a great routine about—“Well, that’s the work of the Holy Spirit.” “And the Blessed Mother,” she’d add. And her mother, the mother of seven from Carmel, when the oldest got on and she was widowed, became a Carmelite at the convent.

Besides being international, Mills women are *really* educated. At table I said, “What’s the philosophy of Mills?” “Do you mean the philosophy department or the general atmosphere?” was the sharp response. But all of them came from families whose parents had gone to college. And everyone who came into the church while I was at Mills, and there were always a couple, two or three every year—there was always conflict with the family. That one who went into the convent had gone to Catholic high school in Spokane. She wanted to become a Catholic and the family said no, you wait until you get out of school, when you’re twenty-one. So she came down to Mills, and I guess her junior year she said, I really want to join the church, and they said no. And she said, “Well, I happen to be twenty-one,” so she came down, got baptized, went home for Christmas, didn’t go to Mass, but went back after Christmas and wrote—the father was an architect, and wrote a letter and said “I’ve been baptized.” He wrote a note on his scratch pad, “Don’t contact us again.”

02-00:57:25
LaBerge:

Oh!

02-00:57:28
Cummins:

She had to work her way [through] and at graduation she had a debt. She got a job at St. Paschal's School, teaching for two years. There was one time she needed \$130, I think, and I had just gotten a refund on my station wagon, because the transmission had gone out twice. She called, she needed \$130. I said perfect, I have \$130. And I told her that I had this fund but she paid me back before she went in the convent. The pastor of St. Paschal's, her grandmother, and my folks and I went up for her vows. It was great. The Holy Names Sisters sent her off—she was a wonderful pianist. They sent her to Albany, New York, for further training. They should have left her here. She didn't stay long. I think that was too much transition.

02-00:59:04
LaBerge:

Any more about the philosophy at Mills?

02-00:59:09
Cummins:

In those days they sang the hundredth psalm for grace before meals and the resident chaplain, George Hedley, who in 1957—this is before [Pope] John XXIII—worked around to have Mass on the campus. I went over to see Monsignor Foudy. I had written to him and I didn't hear for three months about permission for Mass—on campus and outside of a church building. He asked, "Is this the same as Stanford?" I didn't know anything about Stanford. I thought, I think the answer should be no. So I said, "Oh no." They had a chapel at Mills, but it was the gatekeeper's house that they had refashioned at the old main gate there. I became edgy about using the chapel, because we didn't do that in those days. So I said Mass in—

02-01:00:14
LaBerge:

You didn't share chapels with other religions.

02-01:00:16
Cummins:

No, I said that first Mass in the student union, which led to further Masses. We started with the Holy Days of Obligation. And that was very servicing. We had a few Catholic faculty who were very, very supportive and grateful. By the time I left Mills they had built a new chapel. We had Mass every Sunday. I would do the first Sunday, and Mike Norkett, who was at St. Cyril's, would do the second. For the others I would get somebody from Berkeley—Jesuits more than anybody else. I thought that was a great variety in liturgical service. I was fourteen years at Mills College.

02-01:01:07
LaBerge:

Really! Okay.

02-01:01:09

Cummins:

With my appointment as chancellor of the new diocese in 1962, I presumed I would leave Mills College. So did the professor of French literature, Dr. Yvette Fallandy, a most exemplary Catholic faculty member. Bishop [Floyd L.] Begin thought I ought to stay. So I stayed until '71, till I moved to Sacramento. And it just got better and better. They gave me an office. I'd go there Thursday afternoons and take my reading. Students would come by and talk to me. Oh, about fifteen years ago, they asked me to come back for the baccalaureate. I didn't tell you this story?

02-01:01:59

LaBerge:

No.

02-01:02:03

Cummins:

With all the good memories, I said fine. But I called the chaplain by this time, Dr. McCoy, who since has moved to Mount St. Mary's in L.A. as a dean of studies. (And I've sent a recommendation for her.) I phoned her. I said, "What am I getting myself into?" She said, "Big change. Half the students are returning students. We closed down the Mary Atkins Residence because we don't have that many on campus." And I forget what else. But then I said, "What do I wear?" She says, "Everything you've got." [laughter] Well, you know, I was coming back from L.A. the day before and I thought I'm not ready for this. And I didn't know the students. One of my converts, a Phi Beta Kappa, was sitting with Roussel Sargent, an English professor, British, very Episcopalian, a lovely woman—tall, up straight. President Janet [L.] Holmgren got up and said, "This man who's your speaker tonight has a longer relationship with Mills College than anybody in the chapel." And Roussel said to Meg, "That's not true." And Meg says, "He came in 1957. What year did you come?" "I came in 1958."

02-01:04:04

LaBerge:

Were you in your vestments, or in academic robes?

02-01:04:10

Cummins:

No, I was in my red and—no, it would have been the academic robes, but it was dolled up! [laughter] I remember at the beginning I said, "You know, I always felt so welcome here, [feeling I] was part of the school. People came to all our gatherings. That was true because we had wonderful speakers. Nobody ever refused to come to Mills." Bishop Begin allowed us a small stipend. You could give \$10 or \$15, which was really—

02-01:04:46

LaBerge:

For instance, who would you have come to speak?

02-01:04:50

Cummins:

Oh, [Professor of Law] John [T.] Noonan, [Jr.].

02-01:04:52
LaBerge:

Oh, really! Okay.

02-01:04:53
Cummins:

Eugene Bianchi, Brother Antoninus. Yvette Fallandy would always have them over to her house afterwards. I remember Brother Antoninus, in his Dominican robes, but he had changed by that time—"Brother, what can I get you?" "Scotch on the rocks." And then we sat down, Yvette started off, "Brother, is Dorothy Day on the level?" remembering that Brother Antoninus had some involvement with the Catholic Worker movement. Well, that was a striking evening.

02-01:05:52
LaBerge:

[Editor's note: earlier conversation has been moved here for clarity, therefore time stamping isn't sequential.] [Can you say] more about what you said when you went back?

02-01:05:52
Cummins:

I remember very well what I said that night, offering high compliments for the continuance of New England in liberal arts. That was a rich heritage at Mills. Secondly, the strength of community, the very strong personal connection and support that faculty gave to their students. Thirdly, Mills students were open to a very broad international as well as historical perspective. I spoke of how ecumenical our gatherings were.

One woman in particular from New England attended regularly but we never got involved in any conversation about religion. But I thought something was happening when, after graduating here, Patty went to graduate school in Paris and got a job as secretary to the Jesuits. Well, the place collapsed, and I thought—I am home free for the rest of the evening. [laughter]

Of course another item—when Mills had the issue about going coed, I was opposed to that. Because I remember early on the principal, Jim Maher, at Bishop O'Dowd, was a little concerned that I was spending too much time at Mills. I'd only go one night a week, because remember in those days you had no Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. You had to stay with the catechism—that was so inadequate. But the Mills students would read a book a week! It was impressive.

Marilyn Schuster, who later became the dean of faculty at Smith College and is still there, I just couldn't keep her in books. I should tell the story of the first time I sat with her. We skipped the first catechism chapter, and I go into the next. By the time I get to creation, I said, "the evolutionary question comes in here. " "Oh," she said, "I've read all about that. I'm familiar with Augustine." I wanted to say, "Well, if you give me the bibliography I'll come back next week." [laughter] But Jim [my principal] said to me, "You're

impressed with the Mills women.” And I said, “Yes. Well, they come out with such confidence. Any one of them thinks she could be secretary general of the United Nations.” And it’s true, the Mills [graduates]—[U.S. Congresswoman] Barbara Lee—how many you meet that are really in very substantial positions.

But I thought Mills would lose its distinctive identity if it were coed, and what would it have to offer beyond—listen, even this week, the bishop [Michael Barber] drove me to San Francisco on Tuesday for the province meeting, and he said, “Mills is the west coast for Middlebury [College in Vermont] Language Schools.”

02-00:02:53

LaBerge: Oh, that’s right!

02-00:02:55

Cummins: I said, no, I didn’t know anything about that. But he knew about it. So the institution is still roaring along. One little touch for the baccalaureate evening—when I went outside these two older [women] holding hands came up to me and said, “Listen, give us your blessing.” I wasn’t ready for that. I just wasn’t ready. [laughing] But I did something. And then following that, two others came up and said, “They’re not even Catholic! Give *us* a blessing.” After a moment I turned around and there was Roussel Sargent, and she said, “It is wonderful to have you here tonight. And if it were not inappropriate, I would hug you.” [laughter]

[Mills President] Mary [S.] Metz, whom I was very fond of, would have me out every Advent for Mass and a reception. I really did appreciate that connection, yes. When I went to Sacramento, they had a lunch for me. By this time they had stopped giving out bachelor’s of science degrees. Everybody got a B.A. You could have your major but—

02-00:04:25

LaBerge: But it was a B.A.

02-00:04:26

Cummins: And the thesis was: women pass on the culture of the civilization, and they are *going to be properly taught*. [with emphasis] It was New England liberal arts. It was a great education.

02-00:04:45

LaBerge: Well, so at the same time you’re teaching speech and drama at Bishop O’Dowd?

02-00:04:49

Cummins: Yes, yes. One more little adventure.

02-00:04:52
LaBerge:

Okay, go on.

02-00:04:54
Cummins:

George [P.] Hedley, who was the chaplain [at Mills College], was a Methodist. And along the way an annual Mills event was World Affairs Conference. The 1958 speaker was Dean James A. Pike, who was in New York at St. John the Divine. He was dazzling, jokes and stories and everything else. Mary Stuart, from Stockton, said as I came in, “Oh, I’m so glad you’re here.” Those were the pre-ecumenical days. But we would say Mass first Friday in the chapel. We would follow a Jewish Sabbath, and George Hedley would come out with his yarmulke on, and in those days we had to move everything, including an altar, and bring wine, three altar cloths, an altar stone. He was a little bit much for me. But he really did open me up to the ecumenical picture—that was a good experience.

02-00:06:14
LaBerge:

And George Hedley was also a chaplain there? The Jewish—

02-00:06:19
Cummins:

He was *the* chaplain there. No, he wasn’t Jewish. He was Methodist. But he was so broad. James Pike, as Bishop of California, ordained him also as an Episcopal priest. A student, Mona Monroe, who was Anglo-Catholic, wasn’t excited about that at all. That wasn’t well received by the high Anglican types.

I really was part of Mills College, even with international connections. They had a significant Hong Kong crowd. The last time I was in Hong Kong I picked up with the younger of two who had gone [to Mills] in this one family, the Swindon Book [Company] family from Hong Kong. [laughter] Oh, and one Christmas there were three of them! The oldest was at San Jose State [for] graduate work, and the two at Mills. Well, I found out that they had no place to go for Christmas, so I brought them home to my folks.

02-00:08:10
LaBerge:

Oh, great!

02-00:08:10
Cummins:

Oh, the dad, when we went to Hong Kong, talk about the red carpet!
[laughing]

LaBerge:

Okay, now back to O’Dowd.

02-00:08:26
Cummins:

All right.

02-00:08:27
LaBerge:

So you and six others were given that mission, and you went to Dominican [College] for the summer and then you started teaching in the fall.

02-00:08:38

Cummins: At O’Dowd, yes. The day after Labor Day we started.

02-00:08:41

LaBerge: The day after Labor Day, okay. And had you ever taught? You’d never done speech and drama.

02-00:08:52

Cummins: I was assigned English more than anything else. My brother without—he had no great training but just kind of bold and adaptable. The Bay Area had competitive speech days, and Lowell High School, of course, was very important. Fremont [High School] in Sunnyvale was very important. Oh gosh—well, the Jesuit schools were good, Bellarmine and St. Ignatius could hold their own. O’Dowd really had nothing. But my brother was Marin Catholic, and they were at the top of the line! They were in the top five. Mark Hurley, our principal, said, “Well, since your brother is so good, you must be okay.” I had no experience in that at all.

The year before I arrived at O’Dowd there had been a Voice of America or some name like that. But it was a national competition and an O’Dowd student, Judy Buonaccorsi, won. O’Dowd had practically no team. Well, I followed my brother’s pattern that we’d get a team. We were not going to have just a few, because it would shut out the kids with moderate talent. Mark Hurley declared—there’s no pressure, but he wanted to *win!* [laughing] But I just took my time—well, at O’Dowd there’s a lot of talent. I didn’t have the debate. That was Sister Helene, but what I did have—I had the car and I would follow my brother’s pattern. Not only would you go to the speech tournament, but would go to the folks in Berkeley for dinner, and the following Saturday there was water-skiing. It was a terrible advantage we had as priests to take those kids around.

02-01:08:01

LaBerge: So when did you start going to Cal Berkeley then?

02-01:08:03

Cummins: Well, this was part of the advantage of my going to Bishop O’Dowd, which really had good consequence. I had the Mills College responsibility. But I had never been outside a Catholic school. And I had reasons to go to Berkeley. One was I was going to work pretty hard at the Catholic University. That summer—gee, I don’t know how many papers we wrote. And I said Cal is not going to be tougher than that. Also, I could stay home for the summer instead of moving over to Marin Catholic.

Probably January I spoke with Mark Hurley. “Listen, I’d like to go to Cal.” Well, Warren Holleran was still going, because he had to go in the summers. And Mark said, “Go up and talk to Professor [Raymond J.] Sontag.” Now, I knew who Sontag was. I’d never met him. So I made a date, went up to see

him, and he was on that top floor of—it was either Wheeler Hall or—I can't quite remember. Well, the room was nothing fancy. He was sitting there behind the desk, and oh, he wasn't outreaching terribly to me. At one point he said, "Well, I don't know if you have any brains." And he followed me, "You go down to see [Professor William J.] Bouwsma." I forget what else he said. But he said, "You people ought to be here. There are thirty-two Catholics in a faculty of twelve hundred. It's very nice if you guys show up around here for something."

I guess it was about as satisfactory as could be, but I thought he's been put on by too many religious, too many priests, and I guess how do you smooth your way in here? I went down to see Professor Bouwsma, who was very professional. I showed him the transcript we had from the seminary, and he looked over his glasses and said—you know, he's Harvard all the way—and he said, "I envy you your classical education." Well, that was very touching. I think I told you—four years of Greek, six years of Latin, and all the English we had—it was a great education.

Sontag would see me at lunch because there were a group of Jewish kids from New York going to Cal for the summer—and we were dressed in our collars! But they picked me up for lunch almost every day. He thought that they were a bunch of kids I knew from San Francisco. I enjoyed them. At the close of summer I went up to thank him for encouraging me, and by this time we were getting a little familiar. And so then I don't know if we kept in touch through the year, but I did go to school—I took a course at night. That was a reading course. That was brutal, because I think I was the dean by that time and you're teaching the classes.

02-01:12:04
LaBerge:

Yes. So what were you taking?

02-01:12:08
Cummins:

I was taking—well, I took Bouwsma—Renaissance history. I loved that class. But people told me you're going to get frightened the first day, because he'll do everything he can to cut the class from twenty-four down [to]—he cut from twenty-four to twelve. He gave us a bibliography—six languages, no translation, just spelling corrections. Oh, I enjoyed the class very much. And it was a very different thing from the seminary. I was saying to myself—I don't know if I'd want to be here when I was seventeen, but it was great to be here at twenty-nine. And then I thought Cal really moves in breadth, where the seminary moved in depth. Like theology—they took plenty of time to get you through the deep water. Well, in that way the seminary was a professional school and that's really what they were about. But I felt as welcome at Cal as I ever felt anyplace.

02-01:13:15
LaBerge:

Oh, good.

02-01:13:18
Cummins:

They were all accommodating, and whoever was the dean for the summer—a Latin American historian told me, “Your credits from the seminary are accepted.” That put me on a track, you know. Bouwsma’s class was very satisfying. I had [Robert J.] Brentano. I didn’t enjoy him nearly so much. He was—I had contact with him later because he was very active with SPRED [Special Religious Development]. He had a developmentally disabled child.

02-01:13:59
LaBerge:

Yes, who is still alive. Robert is.

02-01:14:03
Cummins:

Robert, yes.

Well, the second summer at Cal—I didn’t get permission to go. So I just thought well, I didn’t get permission to go, so I went on retreat. And in the middle of retreat, John Foudy comes along and we walk after lunch. “You know, I think it’s probably a good thing to have people at Cal Berkeley.” And I was thinking, I’m missing a week of school. I didn’t say that.

02-01:14:43
LaBerge:

Yes, but you’re thinking that.

02-01:14:46
Cummins:

Henry [F.] May had a course in American intellectual history, a second course from a visiting professor from Elmira, New York, did not suit me. I was allowed a reading course. I had a priest one year, on the Restoration period in France, and had him down for a dinner at Bishop O’Dowd. And I said to him, “What do you think of American education?” And he said, “Well, if you’re in a country a week, you write a book. If you’re a month, you write an article. If you’re a year, you don’t write anything.” [laughing] That was pretty smart. Oh, he was a very elegant guy. But I had to go in to see Henry May. Though I was a week late, he told me to come in.

For the midterm—I couldn’t find the book on the reserve shelf. I did all the other reading, but I couldn’t get the book. The exam was on that book, and I had to make my own estimate. The assistant guy gave me a B- on the exam. But at summer’s close again I went in to—I liked Henry May. And he went to school at the University High School here in Oakland, which has been closed now. But we were very involved with that and Bushrod Park and athletics and so forth. But that was a feeder school for Cal Berkeley, University High. I went in to see him at the end to thank him for letting me in, you know, and there must have been eight people outside, and he kept me forty-five minutes and I was uncomfortable with other people waiting. I told him how much I

enjoyed the course. And he said, “Well, I have to apologize. I hardly said anything about the Catholic Church, but you just weren’t prominent in the intellectual life in those days.” And then he said, “Now, why don’t you get your St. Mary’s College to have more interchange with this place?” I felt honored. Then he said, “You didn’t do so well in the midterm.” And I said, “Well, I couldn’t get the book.” And he said—give me the blue book. When I got the report it was an A. [laughter]

And then years and years later, when Bill Bouwsma had gotten very friendly—did I tell you that story? I went to [UC Berkeley Law School] Boalt Hall, because Garret FitzGerald, the retired prime minister of Ireland, came to talk on the church and state and religious freedom from an Irish perspective. At dinner beforehand, I was standing with Bill Bouwsma. Somebody came up and Bill said, “Oh, this is one of my students, and he went on to be the secretary to the bishops in Sacramento, then he became auxiliary bishop until he came back here.” I didn’t invite him to the installation—I didn’t—I had no idea.

02-01:18:24

LaBerge:

You didn’t know that you were on his radar.

02-01:18:29

Cummins:

Well, he was so professional and there was a professional distance, but he was so engaging. Well, then I had him come down to dinner with his wife Beverly. He brought Henry May one night, and Henry said, “I don’t remember you at all.” I said, “If you told me you remembered me, I would say, ‘This man has little authenticity to invest in.’” [laughter] But we had a wonderful time. Bill came a number of times with the wife. It wasn’t frequent. Oh, I just loved him, and then he was very tied into the GTU.

02-01:19:16

LaBerge:

Yes. When we get to GTU, let’s talk about that.

02-01:19:23

Cummins:

This is my going to O’Dowd and my going to Cal. If I can give you more, briefly, on Sontag. Again, my folks—he and the wife would come down for dinner.

02-01:19:39

LaBerge:

To your parents’ house?

02-01:19:41

Cummins:

Yes. He loved my ma—he couldn’t figure my dad quite, but he just loved my mom. I remember the wife died just when he retired, which was terribly sad. Well, then he would come more frequently, because he moved out of the house in Thousand Oaks and lived up right across from—oh, it used to be the California School for the Deaf. It’s called Clark—

02-01:20:17

LaBerge: Yes, Clark Kerr campus.

02-01:20:16

Cummins: Clark Kerr, yes. And he'd have Frank Maurovich and Keeley and myself up for dinner. He really became a mentor. Well, especially to me, because I sat at the feet—he had so much wisdom. But he'd come down for dinner. My mother would phone him when John Tracy Ellis [was] coming over, because they knew each other from way back. And she'd phone him at four o'clock and say, "Listen, Tracy's coming over. You come down." So he did. He came down once because my mother phoned him in the late afternoon. Usually we planned ahead, and he said, "Oh, my son Jack is coming in from Paris tonight." He came down and left a note for Jack—he told him to come. And so Jack arrived about seven o'clock, seven thirty, and my mom fed Jack. Oh, we had wonderful times.

Dr. Sontag was the main speaker at the banquet welcoming Bishop Begin. He talked about race, in 1962, that empires had been taken down by racial issues. It was a strong speech. When I was asked to go to Sacramento—I didn't want to go to Sacramento—I went up to the Faculty Club to have lunch with him. I would do that oh, just about every month, and he'd be at our house for dinner. Oh gee, he was very wonderfully bright. But he's the one that kind of told me, "You're going to Sacramento" with the luncheon conversation.

02-01:22:13

LaBerge: How did that come about, the going to Sacramento? And what year was this?

02-01:22:19

Cummins: Nineteen seventy-one. After the council there was much more—well, you had the *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World].

02-01:22:31

LaBerge: Oh, I'm getting ahead of myself, aren't I? So it's after the council.

02-01:22:36

Cummins: After the council, yes.

02-01:22:36

LaBerge: Let's leave that until later. I forgot—so you were chancellor [of the Oakland Diocese] first and then went up to Sacramento.

02-01:22:51

Cummins: Yes, but if I can just finish off on Cal in a few moments. Up until April of '62, I'm the dean of boys at Bishop O'Dowd. That's my life! That was really *our life*. It was weekends with the kids, and breakfast, lunch, dinner you're talking about the kids. Oh! It was just the focus.

In April I become chancellor of the new diocese. The following January, Bishop Begin sent me on very short notice to Chicago for the National Conference on Religion and Race. The featured speakers were Abraham Heschel, William Stringfellow, and Martin Luther King, Jr. It's where I first met George [G.] Higgins, the social action priest from Washington. There was Jack Egan, a monsignor from Chicago, very important in the social action field. I remember Archbishop [Paul John] Hallinan was there, whom I had met through Newman work. But we were sent home to start a Conference on Religion and Race in the area here, which we did. And gee, it lasted oh, several years, and I met some great black ministers. We got to be real friends. But what happened was that within a couple of weeks the bishop received an invitation from the Carnegie Institute, to Lake County here, on international affairs. James Finn, who had been editor of *Commonweal* was on the program. James Schall, a Jesuit from Georgetown, conservative, participated.

But the name John Cogley was on the committee proposing the conference. But Cogley was, I think editor of *Commonweal* at one time, and was considered very liberal. So Begin sends me up there to, I guess, see what's new with Cogley. I guess he felt the West Coast was being invaded. And I went. We had been on vacation up there when we were much younger, so I took the folks and we had a lovely time.

Well, at the end, Philip Adams, whom I didn't know, was one of the participants. "Would you people be interested in a graduate theological education in Berkeley?" And I said, "Oh yes." I thought he was talking about the year before, when a group attempted to put together a department of religion at the university. It was interdisciplinary, and there was a pretty strong push from certain quarters. I'm sure it was 1961. Chancellor [Edward W.] Strong was so opposed, so opposed. I heard that he declared that we have the Bible taught as literature, and that should be sufficient.

Well, we're having a drink downstairs, and I get a call as soon as I get home, all right, to come over to the University Club on Nob Hill. [John] Dillenberger was there. There were about five of us. I can't remember the other—who else was there. But Philip Adams was the chairman of the board of the newly incorporated Graduate Theological Union.

02-01:27:20

LaBerge:

Of GTU, yes.

02-01:27:22

Cummins:

And they had just incorporated in '62, a lawyer, Episcopalian, San Francisco. Well, we weren't long into lunch and I said, "This is not a department of religion, this is an international theological center." And from Dillenberger I got this laconic, "Yes." And then—what do I do with that? There were plenty

of Catholic connections already, because [Dominican] Kevin Wall was an adjunct—well, they weren't adjunct, visiting teachers. And [Jesuit Father] Dan O'Hanlon from Alma [College] because he was so wonderful with ecumenical activities. Frank Norris from the seminary, the Sulpician. But they wanted full membership of the institutions. Well, for the Jesuits that meant moving. [laughing] That was really—oh, I should get you the paper I wrote on this.

02-01:28:53

LaBerge: I think I have the paper, because there was a problem with USF [University of San Francisco] plus—

02-01:28:59

Cummins: Oh, do you? Yes, but it took four years. I wrote it—it's in the *U.S. Catholic Historian*. I could probably find a copy. I'll get it for you. Oh yes gee, [Franciscan Father Joseph] Joe Chinnici and—what's the matter with me? Jeff—

02-01:29:31

LaBerge: Burns?

02-01:29:33

Cummins: Jeff [Jeffrey M.] Burns. Oh! They wanted that printed, you know? They told me to make it a memoir, not a history, so it was poorly written. It wanders all over the place. But they said, "Let the historian pick it up—"

02-01:29:50

LaBerge: And do something with it.

02-01:29:49

Cummins: "You'll add something that won't be in the history books." Oh, I enjoyed doing it. That's responsible for everything else I'm doing.

02-01:30:01

LaBerge: I can tell that that started it.

02-01:30:03

Cummins: Oh, well—I felt that it just isn't right that people didn't know a thing about his [Bishop Floyd Begin's] role. Because had he not pushed that and really covered Rome and the Washington office, there wouldn't be a GTU. It would be an enlarged Pacific School of Religion, but it wouldn't be GTU. But my connection with Cal Berkeley—the two that Bishop Begin had absolute confidence in [were] Raymond Sontag and David Louisell. Had I not gone to Cal, I wouldn't have known them, and I could really feed Bishop Begin wonderful advice and cautions, and thus knowing them was just a great blessing.

02-01:30:57

LaBerge: How did you get to know David Louisell?

02-01:31:02

Cummins: Because he was very active in the pro-life issues and very well known at Newman. He was just—well, Sontag was considered a giant all by himself. Well, so was Louisell, yes. And the bishop made both of them Knights of St. Gregory. [laughing] But then the law school was full of Catholics at this time. But I sure had contact with others! Of course, John Noonan.

02-01:32:38

LaBerge: Let's just go back a touch—how did you make the transition from O'Dowd to the diocese?

02-01:32:52

Cummins: Pearse Donovan came up to my office—I was a dean.

02-01:32:54

LaBerge: Okay, and Pearse Donovan was the principal?

02-01:32:56

Cummins: He was the principal. He knocked on the door, second period. Whenever I was called out, it was trouble. And he said, "The new bishop called and he sounds nice." You know, small talk. And he said, "He wants you to be chancellor." And I said, "Now, what does that involve?" And he said, "I don't know, but it's going to be good for Bishop O'Dowd High School." [laughter] And then, "He wanted you for dinner tonight but I told him you were busy." Well, by this time—I think becoming a new diocese hadn't done much. Bishops were just not part of our life. They were there, they assigned you assignments, but gee—

02-01:33:54

LaBerge: It was kind of far away, too, across the bridge.

02-01:33:56

Cummins: You didn't go have dinner with them. And I remember the second year that I was chancellor, and one of the newly ordained priests came in to see me. "We want to talk to the bishop." "What do you want to talk to the bishop for?" That's where our generation was. But Pearse said—because I was preaching—it was Lent and I was preaching in St. Augustine's. We all did that, pretty much. You did the Lenten series. And I said, "I would have gone to dinner tonight." And then something—how did he say it—whatever happened, the bishop was living in Providence Hospital, and I thought I could get down there before nine o'clock. So oh yes, I got the okay on that, so I went down to Providence Hospital.

02-01:35:05

LaBerge: So the bishop was living in Providence Hospital?

02-01:35:10

Cummins:

Yes. This is relevant to the scene. The two people that he had appointed vicar generals, they were both veterans of the San Francisco chancery, both canon lawyers. Now, we also had two deans who were different types. One was the pastor of St. Jarlath's, the other pastor of Professor Sontag at St. Jerome's. [James] Rohan was his name. They didn't have as much influence as we would have liked. We thought they were very strong pastoral leaders, but here are the two Connollys.

02-01:35:51

LaBerge:

So the two Connollys, your cousins?

02-01:35:54

Cummins:

The one was. Nick was my mother's first cousin. The other one, John, was not related. But I went in—Bishop Begin is in his cassock, sash, pectoral cross, and zucchetto. Just relaxing at home. [laughter] That was the era. And I went in and dutifully kissed his ring, the first time we met, and I had nothing to say. I'm sitting there—they were talking about marriage forms, and these canonical things. And I thought this was not the mission when you're starting a new diocese somehow. I didn't stay late because I had to teach the next day. Except before I left, "You come down tomorrow. You're driving him to the city." And I forget what the event was. It might have been an ordination for all I can remember. And I was in charge of driving a brand new Lincoln Continental. [laughing]

02-01:37:19

LaBerge:

I'm going to turn this tape over. [brief interruption] Okay, so you're taking the bishop to San Francisco.

02-01:37:35

Cummins:

I think it was maybe Leo Maher's ordination as bishop of Santa Rosa. Would it have been that early? I'm trying to remember. Well, yes, I do believe, because I think within the same week I had to drive him to Stockton for the installation of Bishop Donohoe as bishop of Stockton.

But I'll tell you one very nice thing. When I drove the bishop to the city for the event and drove back and came home to O'Dowd, I got home about four thirty. The kids were walking—they dropped their books and clapped.

02-01:38:25

LaBerge:

Isn't that great!

02-01:38:29

Cummins:

Yes. And then I went upstairs. Of course, we'd always have a drink before dinner. They had all my classes covered, because they figured I would not be available that week.

02-01:38:41

LaBerge: You wouldn't be coming back. Well, what does a chancellor do?

02-01:38:46

Cummins: Well, it's really what the bishop wants him to do. He's got an official role. He has to sign/countersign certain documents. But in Sacramento he was the finance man. I was much more involved with personnel, and then don't forget I was really Mr. Outside, because that was the beginning of civil rights. And talk about having to learn quickly—because being in the outside world like that—we had no experience with that at all.

02-01:39:39

LaBerge: So were you kind of—at the time—you were the first chancellor of the Oakland Diocese, so you were making the job, so to speak.

02-01:39:49

Cummins: Yes, yes.

02-01:39:50

LaBerge: You're kind of his right-hand person?

02-01:39:53

Cummins: For an awful lot of stuff, yes. I wasn't the main advisor. That was the Connollys, and especially John Connolly. Well, I drove him to all the events, because he didn't have a secretary for a couple of months. I went with him to the confirmations, and then—I knew my way around and knew a lot of people.

02-01:40:25

LaBerge: You would represent him in different meetings, right?

02-01:40:26

Cummins: A bit, yes. Well, the Conference on Religion and Race got serious, and I was really a public figure on that one, yes. And then he paid the whole bill for it. He financed it, which was a very great thing.

02-01:40:52

LaBerge: What did you know about how you were appointed? The fact that he had not met you or anything.

02-01:40:57

Cummins: Not that I know—I suspect Leo Maher. Well, I'm trying to think—my brother, well, we were both well known. But my brother was well thought of, because the same year that I was made chancellor, they took him out of schools and put him in the office as assistant superintendent—he only stayed there a year or two and became superintendent. It must have been Leo Maher. [telephone ringing] But it could have been a number who were good. I had a

classmate, Ralph Brennan, who could very well have done that job. He was pastor here at St. Louis Bertrand's eventually.

02-01:41:59

LaBerge: But essentially, once you got the call, that was the end of O'Dowd for you, and you started right in?

02-01:42:07

Cummins: Oh yes.

02-01:42:10

LaBerge: Wow, wow!

02-01:42:12

Cummins: I'll tell another awful story. We can figure whether to leave it in or not. I was teaching a sociology class, and I was a chapter ahead of the kids, and they were juniors. They were a nice bunch. Paul [R.] Vassar—he was a junior—became our vicar general under me. We had two guys go to the seminary from my English class. They were so bright! They wrote sonnets and you could entertain with Shakespeare; I never had a class that I had so much fun with. There was a Neil [J.] Kennedy and Paul Suter, Jim McFarlane. But the sociology class—I didn't know anything about sociology. The folks would come, and there was a Mrs. Mary McGuire who had kids—one of the kids—she just loved that class!

02-01:43:18

LaBerge: You mean your folks would come and sit in on it?

02-01:43:23

Cummins: No, no, but they'd come on parents' night. Before I left I had to give the sociology class an exam, as I had to give a mark. It was Easter. I did get back into the classroom, except for that first week where I was squiring the bishop around. After starting the exam, I turn around and there's a waste basket upside down on the desk. In removing the waste basket, I knocked over a bottle of Canadian Club. [laughter] That says something about the times. Can you imagine what would happen today? I remember I said, "Mareais, go down and get twenty-eight glasses." I didn't even know that Canadian Club was Canadian whisky. One of the fathers of the kids was a wholesale liquor distributor. And he would get us all these—according to the prices, not by famous names. But you never heard of them. Farm Hill and Old Creek—but we never heard of Canadian whisky.

02-01:45:08

LaBerge: So this was from the kids?

02-01:45:07

Cummins: It was from the kids.

02-01:45:14
LaBerge:

Okay, well why don't we stop there.

02-01:45:15
Cummins:

Can I tell one more story?

02-01:45:17
LaBerge:

Oh yes, I didn't know if that was the story. Please.

02-01:45:22
Cummins:

We were a very tight-knit group. Gosh, talk about community—we never knew the word or talked about it.

02-01:45:32
LaBerge:

You mean you and the students?

02-01:45:34
Cummins:

No, this was the eight of us lived in the house.

02-01:45:39
LaBerge:

Oh, okay. And you were living at St. Paschal's, or where were you at this point?

02-01:45:42
Cummins:

No, I was at St. Paschal's for two years, and Jim Keeley, who came with me, was at St. Leander's for two years. There was a very tough part of that. We got paid \$105 a month and we had nothing beyond that. You never had offerings or stipends. That was tight living. That impressed me—don't put priests where they don't have enough money, [rather] where they don't have to worry about money.

02-01:46:25
LaBerge:

But the eight of you who were a tight-knit group, where were you?

02-01:46:28
Cummins:

We lived at the faculty house, the first building as you drove into campus—there were eight of us in the house. Keeley had the guest room, which was right inside the door to the right. I had the next room, and we had a bathroom together. [laughter] So we were very friendly with each other. And it was Keeley who came in at quarter to six, a January morning, and opened my door and said, "We're a new diocese," which did not cause an awful lot of excitement at that time.

But I was going to say about the—what was the one more thing I was going to add about the—?

02-01:47:16
LaBerge:

The fact that you were a tight-knit group and—

02-01:47:18

Cummins:

Oh yes. That kind of got my attention when he told me, “You’re going to be chancellor.” I always patrolled the cafeteria at lunchtime, so I’d be the last one to eat. But Jim Keeley was coming up the steps as I was coming down, and I said, “The bishop called Pearse, and they want me to be chancellor.” And Keeley’s face just dropped, because we played ball in the afternoons with the kids; we went water-skiing; we went to Pops concerts. And I thought oh boy, the breakup of the old gang. There was a lot of sentiment involved.

02-01:48:19

LaBerge:

Oh, I bet. Who else was in that group?

02-01:48:23

Cummins:

I can go down—Joe [Joseph F.] Keaveny, who ended up as pastor of St. Stephen’s. Bishop Begin wanted to take them out because he felt we were real short of priests. In Cleveland, the bishop was pastor of a parish that had *six* assistant priests! We never heard of that on the West Coast. But he thought it was fairly short. Now, Wes Bradshaw was one of the younger crowd. Jim Keane was a very bright and thoughtful man, a product of Sacred Heart Parish here in Oakland. He eventually became pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel in San Leandro. Who else was in the group? Keane went to take over the orphanage of St. Vincent’s in San Rafael. Gosh, I can’t think of all the people who were in that house.

02-01:50:15

LaBerge:

But it’s the kind of—you ate dinner together, you taught together. Everything was—it was a community.

02-01:50:20

Cummins:

Our whole life was focused on that. Always was.

02-01:50:25

LaBerge:

So this was the beginning of the end of that.

02-01:50:32

Cummins:

Yes, but Keeley—Keeley took over my job as dean. He would have been very good at that, yes. He was very creative with the kids. He was into sports. They had the PE classes, and he’d oversee those. And then at the end of the semester you’d have the All-Americans, all upper field, and those kids would get an award, and then all lower field—they’d get an award. And he really reached out to the kids on the margin. I don’t think anybody—and I don’t think he did it very self-consciously. He just had a sense that the weaker kids need a little attention, so he was really good with them.

02-01:51:38

LaBerge:

Any more stories? [laughter] We could start—we will start with the diocese beginning—you being chancellor and whatever that includes, including the GTU, and more on civil rights and the [Conference] on [Religion and] Race.

02-01:51:59

Cummins: Oh yes, that was big.

02-01:51:59

LaBerge: Okay, I'm going to turn this off now.

Interview 3: November 6, 2014

03-00:00:00

LaBerge: This is interview number three with Bishop John Cummins, November 6, 2014. Today I thought we would go back a little bit before the beginning of the Oakland Diocese and start with 1958, when Pope John XXIII was elected. So tell me about your reaction. Where were you when this happened?

03-00:00:31

Cummins: I was teaching an English class at the second period at Bishop O’Dowd, and the word came over the public address that we have a new pope, Angelo Roncalli, and he has taken the name John XXIII, and of course the kids were—“Oh, who is that?” I say, “I never heard of him.” And he was the patriarch of Venice, we found out. We knew it was a change right away, because Pius XII, who was admirable in so many ways, was a scholarly type and friendly, but here was somebody with such ease with people, that caught on very, very quickly. The humor—but the humanity of it. But then, that first encyclical, *Mater et Magistra* [Mother and Teacher], was very significant. It wasn’t as impacting as *Pacem in Terris* [Peace on Earth], in 1963, but it was a new and different style. It really was an addressing-the-world kind of thing. And then his ecumenical outreach was just—we had all those other bits going on ecumenically. Maybe I should mention that, too.

03-00:02:02

LaBerge: Yes, please do.

03-00:02:03

Cummins: Berkeley, in 1958, held the gathering of campus ministry—we used to call it the Newman work years ago. It was a national gathering at the Hotel Shattuck. One of the panels was Father Gustav [A.] Weigel, a Jesuit from Woodstock, who had established himself very well as an ecumenical resource—somebody who has something to say in that field. He was with the Old Testament professor, Victor [R.] Gold, from the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. It was an intelligent interchange. I brought Victor Gold to Mills College a few months later. He opened up the evening, sitting with the young women, “I’ve come a long way in ten years. I think there *are* some Roman Catholics who are Christian.” [laughter] The women didn’t know how to take that! But I thought it was so humorous. Victor and I, we just kept in touch. I remember when I was at O’Dowd, I was invited to a Presbyterian parish school in Hayward, and the young associate pastor there kept interrupting me. I think he was terribly afraid that I was going to influence these young people that I was talking to. We also had the Prayer for Christian Unity, the octave, every January, but we hadn’t developed too far.

But immediately, Pope John XXIII, 1960, set up the Secretariat for [Promoting] Christian Unity, and brought in the German Jesuit, who was just

the man for the job, Augustin Bea. By that time, the [Second Vatican] Council was being prepared, and those years were very significant. They turned us all into doing homework about what are we going to get into? We didn't know—

03-00:04:21

LaBerge: So did you know the council was being prepared? Or when was it announced?

03-00:04:27

Cummins: January of 1959.

03-00:04:29

LaBerge: Oh! That soon. Okay.

03-00:04:33

Cummins: An absolute surprise! And it was a big surprise for most of the curial officials in Rome. Of course they took charge of the preparation, but the bishops, especially the German and some of the French and the Belgians, dismissed a good number of those papers and started all over again. But I'm sure John didn't know what the outcome was going to be. But what he had the sense of is that we cannot keep going with the Counter-Reformation kind of defensive posture. There has to be an opening to the world, so that we—well, I guess we were talking about evangelization, which we're talking about today. How do you bring the Christian message on the dignity of [the] human person into this world? He had that very, very sharply.

Pacem in Terris was a monumental achievement, and that was picked up in many secular arenas. That was 1963, and the Council was underway. But Joseph Alioto sponsored, at UC San Francisco, a whole weekend on *Pacem in Terris*, and it was an international gathering.

03-00:05:59

LaBerge: Wow. Joseph Alioto the mayor?

03-00:06:01

Cummins: The mayor, oh yes.

03-00:06:06

LaBerge: Going back to the ecumenical meeting you had at the Hotel Shattuck, who organized that and put it on?

03-00:06:16

Cummins: Holy Spirit/Newman Hall were the hosts. It was an annual event, and it was a national gathering of all the people who were in campus ministry at the time. The first one I went to was in Albuquerque, and Father Bernie [Bernard J.] Moran, who ended up in this diocese, was at UC San Francisco in those days, and Warren Holleran, my classmate, was at San Francisco State, and I was at Mills. And we flew down to—oh, it was awe-inspiring! The Dominicans had a big operation in Albuquerque. I remember there was a woman who was

teaching at O'Dowd, one of the Dominican sisters, who was a Southwest native. I said, "I'm going down to Albuquerque. It's going to be hot." "Oh," she said, "in September no, no, 106° and it's dry heat." [laughter] I said, "It's *hot*, dry or not."

03-00:07:14

LaBerge:

Well, I'm wondering how you knew, early on, or you felt the freedom early on, to "work with the Protestants." I'm putting that in quotes. Because I, as a child at that time, we weren't allowed to go to Protestant churches.

03-00:07:34

Cummins:

Oh no. Well, we were the same.

03-00:07:38

LaBerge:

But somehow you saw that there was a bigger picture and felt free to do that.

03-00:07:49

Cummins:

Well, the church moved rather slowly, but in 1948—there was that large gathering in Geneva, that produced the World Council of Churches. Rome sent observers. They made that distinction, that these are not participants.

03-00:08:12

LaBerge:

Right, just observers.

03-00:08:14

Cummins:

Big difference, you know. But what came out of that was the recommendation from Rome, to bishops, to "train some of your priests in ecumenical theology." That would have been 1948. We would have still been seminarians.

03-00:08:33

LaBerge:

And how would the training have—what kind of training was that?

03-00:08:41

Cummins:

[laughing] Well, it probably wasn't too developed, but it probably was "prepare for the dialogue." With the Lutherans, "What does it mean, justification by faith alone?" And I suppose with the Anglicans, "How do you have a high church and a low church? What do bishops mean?" It was rather—but I believe that the Orthodox were at Geneva, and they were like us. They were standing a little aloof, but they were there.

03-00:09:20

LaBerge:

So the Council was announced in '59 and then people were preparing for it, writing papers. Who were the prime movers?

03-00:09:33

Cummins:

There had been an encyclical, I think it was 1950, *Humani Generis*, and it was really a very cautionary tale about trying to harmonize the whole tradition of the church with certain things of modernity. In the air existed a condemnation

of “modernism” from Pius X in 1910—it was a very cautionary tale and by that time a good number of people had been silenced. John Courtney Murray—he was a little bit later, it would have been the mid-fifties. He was told to cease publication on adjusting to the American scene, the church, and religious freedom. It wasn’t the tradition. Where am I going with that—[Henri] de Lubac was a famous French Jesuit and he was told to quiet down. And Yves Congar—I think that you would call him one of the great structural people for the whole Vatican Council. He was told to quiet down.

John XXIII really brought all those people back in, so you had what they called the new theology, [*la*] *nouvelle théologie*, back in the ball game, back in the dialogue. They became powerful influences at the Vatican Council. So it was really an opening of the contemporary theologian to the traditional theologians, and that was very much in evidence in those years preparing for the council.

03-00:11:35

LaBerge:

And what were you doing in Oakland? What were you hearing during those times?

03-00:11:43

Cummins:

Well, I don’t think there was very much, but we started reading those authors. Congar, we knew his name because he had a lot of popular books. But I forget whether it was before the council or right at the opening, I read his very thick volume, *Lay People in the Church: [A Study for a Theology of Laity]* that was revolutionary in its thinking for me. It wasn’t about lay people attached to a clerical spirituality, it was “your sanctification is your work.”

Also, it was the prelude to—you get the benefit of the church through sacraments, you have responsibility for the life and health of the church, and we didn’t realize it at the time, but there’s kind of an equal playing field here about who’s in charge and who’s responsible, and that was brought out with clarity at the council. But that was not entirely a surprise.

But I know that book—oh my! And that he quoted somebody that I met in Berkeley once, with the Cal professors at lunch, Étienne Gilson. And Gilson is quoted by Congar—the façade of Notre Dame cathedral is an act of faith. Gilson says well, it wouldn’t be anything without geometry and architects. That there’s a sanctification in work, especially in—well, in art, and he put a high regard on that. And his point was, whatever you choose, you’re free to choose your own vocation, but if you choose it, you have to be good at it and you have to put yourself into it, and you have to be some kind of an illustration of what it means to be inspired by the gospel in your own daily work. Oh, it was a powerhouse book.

Now, a lot of it is hindsight. We knew those things were happening, but we didn't associate that with the whole revolution in church life.

03-00:14:08

LaBerge: Right, right. What about Teilhard [de Chardin]? Was he silenced again or was he invited to—?

03-00:14:16

Cummins: Well, he was silenced earlier, as I recall. And then when—there was a wonderful woman from Mills College [Yvette Fallandy] who ended up her days as a vice president at Sonoma State University. She had a take on that, she said, like Courtney Murray, “Well, those people were very obedient. They accepted the silencing.” And Teilhard also. But then when his books got published, that would have been the 1960s, I think.

03-00:14:52

LaBerge: Yes.

03-00:14:53

Cummins: Yvette felt that they had such enormous impact. A decade earlier they would not have had that, because the dialogue between science and religion, or faith and reason, had to come along. But he was really—he made an explosive impact. And then a little warning from John XXIII; I remember they called it a *monitum*, a warning. But it wasn't a condemnation, and I think that was—

03-00:15:33

LaBerge: So he gave a monitum to Teilhard, or to whom?

03-00:15:35

Cummins: Well, it was to the whole church about Teilhard, yes. “You can read him, but be careful.”

03-00:15:39

LaBerge: Okay, okay. I've never heard that term, *a monitum*. [laughter]. [telephone ringing] [brief interruption]. You mentioned John XXIII's first two encyclicals. Do you want to say something about them?

03-00:16:03

Cummins: *Mater et Magistra* was really development from what had taken place with Leo XIII a half a century before, and Pius XII had much to say, too, but it was really the lead-in to *Pacem in Terris*, I guess you could say. The whole matter of questioning unbridled capitalism. The unity of the human family and what economic structures serve that. Now, the conservative Catholics—William Buckley was so famous for “Mater Si,” he said, “Magister No.” [laughter] That was kind of a headline of the *National Review*.

03-00:17:02

LaBerge: Oh, really!

03-00:17:09

Cummins: Oh yes, that was—it has always been that within the church—conservative/liberal.

03-00:17:16

LaBerge: Yes, and what was then the reaction to *Pacem in Terris*?

03-00:17:22

Cummins: *Pacem in Terris* was a very different—it was written in language that was informal. It was clear, and it was purposely written for anyone, and the pope said that, “I want this to be read by people of goodwill, whatever your background is.” And I do think that was a breakthrough. Encyclicals were written for the church people. This one was written for the world, and it was read by the world.

03-00:18:02

LaBerge: So here you are, just as the Oakland Diocese is being formed, 1962—and you were appointed chancellor. What was your role either in helping the bishop [Bishop Floyd L. Begin] prepare for the council or—?

03-00:18:18

Cummins: Well, it was really too quick, because he came here April 28, 1962; that’s when he was installed. And the council opened October 11 of the same year. So whatever we were doing, it wasn’t preparing for the council. We were *way* too busy. Yes.

03-00:18:35

LaBerge: That’s right, okay. And that year you did not go with the bishop?

03-00:18:44

Cummins: No, I went the second year.

03-00:18:46

LaBerge: So what were you doing while he was gone? Were you taking his place at meetings?

03-00:18:56

Cummins: Let me go back to what I was doing, period. I had no preparation for this.

03-00:19:01

LaBerge: Right. [laughing]

03-00:19:03

Cummins: There was one aspect of it that was a little bit new for me, because Monsignor John Connolly, who was a very important figure in the diocese, and served very, very well—the evening that I went down to meet the bishop—have I told you about that?

03-00:19:27

LaBerge: Yes, yes.

03-00:19:30

Cummins: Well, the next day I had to drive him to San Francisco. I believe it was for the ordination of Bishop Leo Maher. I drove down to St. Anthony's, where Monsignor was the pastor. He came out and oh, he was kind of riled up a little bit. He said, "The right is in charge." That's church politics. I was very removed from that and I didn't quite understand. But he and Monsignor Nick Connolly, both veterans of the archdiocesan chancery—both canon lawyers—had moved into position in the diocese rather than the two deans on this side of the bay. Popular priests—Monsignors Tom Scahill in Alameda County and James Rohan in Contra Costa County.

It was Saturday, April 28, Bishop Begin was installed at St. Francis de Sales. On Monday we started with the chancery office down on West Grand and Telegraph. What my role was was just not very clear. Now, in canon law, the chancellor is not terribly important. He signs documents to make them official, co-signs them with the bishop, you know. In the United States he's an important player but he has varying jobs. The chancellor in San Francisco, I believe, was largely personnel, under Archbishop Mitty. But he might very often [be] the conveyor of wishes or appointments; letter writing was a big thing in those days. Now, when I was in Sacramento, the chancellor there was really kind of office manager, but the finance man. So it varies. The chancellor here—Bishop Begin had some role with religious and with canon law in Cleveland, but he had not been at the center stage there. One of the frequent directions to me was, "Pay this bill," or "Get this..." Well, I had not seen a checkbook. I had to go into Monsignor John Connolly to say, "Now, the bishop's asking me to—I haven't seen a check[book]." I was really a little concerned about the bishop's expectations.

03-00:22:25

LaBerge: Do you mean you'd never written a check, or that there weren't checks printed for the diocese?

03-00:22:32

Cummins: [laughter] I guess either.

03-00:22:33

LaBerge: Both?

03-00:22:33

Cummins: The case is both. [laughing] But he told me that—well, he just wanted to get things in shape. But I do think he realized that whoever controls the money is going to have a lot of influence. Now, before I run him down, he was good at that and he was terribly interested in that. I wasn't interested at all in that. I had no experience with that sort of thing. But I ended up as the insurance man.

I had to learn a few things. I took care of the bills at O'Dowd for the rectory where the priests lived, but I had no great experience with finance.

But I did a little something good, because the first year in the diocese, St. Mary's Cathedral burnt to the ground. Do you remember?

03-00:23:26
LaBerge:

Oh, I wasn't living here then. St. Mary's Cathedral in Oakland?

03-00:23:31
Cummins:

In San Francisco—September of '62, yes. Archbishop [Joseph T.] McGucken said, "We will rebuild." At the same time, if it weren't the same month, the Samoan people in San Francisco were at—I forget if it was St. Paul of the Shipwreck or what parish, but they were having a dance in the hall and the place caught on fire, and a good number of people lost their lives. So I guess in the early part of 1963, this Marsh and McLennan, the San Francisco insurers, had become our insurers as well. The gentleman came in, a nice man, and he said, "Gee, we have to raise your rates." And also, the deductible doubled. And I said, "Now, is that because of the San Francisco fire? Ours is separate from that." "Oh no," was the response. "Well, listen, get a two-month extension," because I thought there's something wrong here.

Frank Heffernan, whom I had known, had worked for that company and was the agent for them. I called him because he had just left them to start his own company. He worked out an arrangement where there was *very* little change. There was no change in the deductible, and he farmed out the other costs. He saved us a lot of money.

03-00:25:18
LaBerge:

Oh, good!

03-00:25:19
Cummins:

We were his first clients. And he went on to a successful career. But my position was really Mr. Outside. And I was much happier with that. The priests I knew—that was where they went, to civil rights, which was very, very big, and the ecumenical affairs—very big. One year I was dean of boys at Bishop O'Dowd. I become chancellor in April of '62. January of '63 the bishop sends me to Lake County for this Carnegie Institute on International Affairs Conference.

03-00:26:23
LaBerge:

Okay. Hang on one second. [brief interruption in recording] [tape change] The bishop sent you to Lake County to this meeting put on by the Carnegie Institute.

03-00:26:40

Cummins:

At the end, Philip Adams, who was—I didn't know it at the time—the chair of the newly incorporated Graduate Theological Union, approached me, “Would you people be interested in graduate theological education in Berkeley?” I thought he was talking about an effort in 1961 that I believe John Noonan was involved with, to have an interdisciplinary department of religious studies, that [UC Berkeley] Chancellor [Edward] Strong opposed very strongly. Bishop [James A.] Pike in San Francisco was for it, but nothing happened.

03-00:27:24

LaBerge:

Bishop Pike of the Episcopal Diocese.

03-00:27:24

Cummins:

Yes. Philip Adams called me after we got home and invited me to the University Club on Nob Hill, and John Dillenberger, who was the spirit and the mind of the GTU, was there. I think that there were maybe two others. And of course in the middle of lunch I said, “You're not talking about a department. You're talking about an international center for theology.” And I always describe Dillenberger's response as “a laconic, Yes.” I thought oh wow, this is big! They had already engaged—well, Frank Norris, a Sulpician from St. Patrick's, to give lectures there, and Kevin Wall, the Dominican from St. Albert's, Chabot Road, and a number of the Jesuits, especially Dan O'Hanlon, who by that time was a very leading ecumenical officer kind. But they wanted the institutions to move, to become part [of GTU]. That was a very different game. Well, I had to get my head straight on that one.

But in time, I guess I realized the world is a little different from when we went to school. My brother had a pastor in San Francisco who had once said to me, “You know, you people living a mile from Stanford University (at St. Patrick's Seminary), it's too bad you didn't take advantage of some of the educational opportunities that that offered.” And then my classmate Warren Holleran did his theology in Rome. And in theology in Rome you're not off in a corner in the middle of the country—you live right in the middle of the city!

03-00:29:36

LaBerge:

So you're more a part of the world.

03-00:29:39

Cummins:

Yes. But anyhow, I thought the Berkeley proposal was a good idea.

03-00:29:44

LaBerge:

And what was the bishop's reaction?

03-00:29:50

Cummins:

All of this is the middle of January. But on March 17, St. Patrick's Day, he's walking about the office at four o'clock in the afternoon with his hands in his pockets. We all wanted to go home. We weren't used to working much on St.

Patrick's Day. He came in to my windowless office and sat down. I was going up that night for an ecumenical dialogue with Keith Bridston, who was from the Lutheran seminary. We had become good friends. But the *Berkeley Gazette*, the newspaper, had his picture—Bridston, Cummins. Well, I knew the bishop was big on ecumenism. "Bridston," it said, "Yale University undergraduate, University of Edinburgh doctorate, and he worked for the Lutheran [World] Missions for a number of years in Thailand." And I said, "John Cummins, St Augustine's Grammar School," which I thought was very funny. Oh, I knew he'd react that way. [imitating a gruff voice] "Oh, you have the priesthood now. You have the grace of your office."

And then for some reason I thought this may be the time. I said to him, "Do you know we have more theology students in the Bay Area than Boston or New York?" Now, somebody said that to me, and I never checked it out because it was too good a story. But we could have had, because we had so many minor seminaries. The Marists had a seminary in Marin County, the Redemptorists had one in East Oakland, and we had a sizeable one in Mountain View. And the bishop said—*oh!* And then I said to him, "You know, they're interested in providing graduate theological education, ecumenically, in Berkeley." He didn't hesitate, "That's the work of the Holy Spirit. That level of dialogue could not be brought about by just human ingenuity." For the next four years he went up and down, but at the two crucial moments that were very decisive he said exactly that same thing. It was very helpful.

03-00:32:38

LaBerge:

Wow. How did you know when to approach him and—because that was the work of the Holy Spirit, too. You didn't just waltz in Monday morning.

03-00:32:53

Cummins:

Well, I had to be very sure of my own thoughts. It had to be clear. And then—well, I think I did tell you I went to Cal and became the oldest master's candidate for years.

03-00:33:10

LaBerge:

Yes, we talked about that. So you had these connections.

03-00:33:13

Cummins:

I had a very good experience at Cal—and growing up in Berkeley, too. I had really made great friends with—oh, Sontag especially. But David Louisell—these were men of international reputation. You just could get very good advice from them, and I'm sure I had checked with them about that notion, and they probably didn't see any problem at all about that. Especially Louisell was very thoughtful about—you cannot run a university without theological presence. The whole tradition of the university as a university, is that it covers

all the fields. And he said that there was an outcry for theological learning—that's the way he described it, in American higher education.

Now you asked me that question, how did I know? Well, ecumenically I knew he was very forward, because did I mention to you, in September 1962, four months after his installation and before he went to the Vatican Council, he invited a hundred and fifty Protestant ministers and their spouses to the Claremont Hotel for a dinner?

03-00:34:33

LaBerge: No!

03-00:34:35

Cummins: For us it was a command performance. All the priests had to come. I don't think any of his priests, even his consultants, thought it was a good idea. Robert McAfee Brown was the main speaker, and there was a John Donovan, very active layman from St. Theresa's Parish here, very large in the Knights of Malta there. My classmate, Father Ralph Brennan, was the master of ceremonies for the evening. Robert McAfee Brown was well known by that time and he had a book out by then, as I remember. He was very good and he was very amusing. And in that book [*The Ecumenical Revolution: An Interpretation of the Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*] he encouraged people to move from diatribe to dialogue. He said, "As we gather here tonight, New York does not have a Cardinal Cooke Parkway. And Boston does not have a Cardinal Cushing Concourse. But all over this area you have Begin Freeway." [laughter] That was captivating.

03-00:35:58

LaBerge: Very, very.

03-00:36:00

Cummins: Bishop Begin got up and he—he rarely prepared. But he said, "I don't know why I called you here except I wanted to say I love you." That was quoted all the way through the rest of the century. People remembered that. And he developed a bit of a reputation ecumenically, because 1963, when I was at the council, the American bishops had established an ad hoc committee on ecumenism and he was the chair.

03-00:36:41

LaBerge: So he always had that in him.

03-00:36:47

Cummins: Oh yes. Well, he had had an unusual experience in Cleveland with the Presbyterian minister down the street on the same block. That minister came out and stayed three or four days here. He had a prominent place at the installation. And in those days that just—

03-00:37:06
LaBerge:

That wasn't done.

03-00:37:06
Cummins:

Yes, you didn't even go in a Protestant church. So he was good that way. And I'm spending too much time on that. A second thing that happened: on very short notice, he received a letter through the National Conference on Religion and Race—didn't I bring it up to you? We have not talked about that?

03-00:37:32
LaBerge:

Did it happen in Chicago?

03-00:37:33
Cummins:

Yes.

03-00:37:33
LaBerge:

You did bring it up, but say it again, because I'm not sure if it's in context.

03-00:37:39
Cummins:

Well, on very short notice. It was organized by Monsignor Jack Egan, who had a very important role to play. There was an Episcopalian lawyer who was very active and very prominent in the social action things, William Stringfellow. He also gave a talk. But the opening was Rabbi Abraham Heschel, and it was just a powerful statement, a recording of that. And Cardinal Albert Meyer was around for the whole session and was very available. I was very impressed with him. But the final was Martin Luther King, Jr. All of us at the table stood up and locked arms and sang, "We Shall Overcome." But the order was: you go home and start a local conference on religion and race. So I came back and told the bishop that. "Okay, fine." And I don't know how we pulled it off so well, but it was very easy to get going.

03-00:38:52
LaBerge:

Who did you call on to help you?

03-00:38:55
Cummins:

Robert Hill, the Methodist minister of Taylor Memorial [United] Methodist Church in West Oakland, who is an absolute gentleman and had a most wonderful wife, who when she retired from whatever work she had—I don't remember now—volunteered to teach English at McClymonds High School. Robert was just a splendid guy and got in touch with a rabbi—I did not know him—John Zucker, from San Leandro. Robert was African American. Through him we picked up with the Ebenezer Baptist Church and we had contact with the black ministers part of it. And of course we came together because of the upset in so many cities. Oakland was tagged as destined to have big troubles, so we will get into the act. Now, none of us knows whether we had a great influence or not, but I think that we *were* influential. We went down and met with William [F.] Knowland, the publisher of the [*Oakland Tribune*], a candidate for governor at that time. It wasn't confrontational, but it

was heavy dialogue, urging that the *Tribune* has to get on *board* with this. They're so influential in the city and the East Bay, and so on.

I remember Jesse Jackson came and addressed us, and I didn't know much about him at the time, but I remember one of the things he said was that the way we operate these days, with the segregation and all this, and what our seminaries are about, that Jesus Christ would not feel at home in them. There's something there. [laughing] Or Jesus Christ wouldn't be *admitted* into our seminaries, or something like that. But I just remember that.

But we were very faithful, and Bishop Begin funded the operation because of its ecumenical activity.

03-00:41:25
LaBerge:

But you were the one who came home and had to make the outreach and find people who would be willing to work with you?

03-00:41:30
Cummins:

Oh yes. Well, I guess we knew enough people that I could talk to. The response was quick. It lasted till I went to Sacramento. I was never the chair. We rotated that around, but I was rather in the background. But when we broke it up—well, we had a [W.] Hazaiah Williams, who was an ordained minister. He became our executive secretary. But with the death of Martin Luther King, the picture changed, and it just got very difficult to oversee anybody if you were white and they were African American.

But we had to close the books, and I had to do that. I remember when I got to Sacramento, I got a phone call, "Oh yes, Father Cummins, this is the IRS [Internal Revenue Service]. I'd like to talk to you about your taxes from the East Bay Conference on Religion and Race." And I said, "Listen—I phoned your office, and they wouldn't put it in writing, but they told me that everything was secured. I want to talk to your supervisor." Then he got a little bit cautious. I phoned our Phil Quittman, who had been the advisor for the bishop on finance and had structured the office. And Phil Quittman said, "I'll take care of it." I never heard of it again. [laughter]

03-00:43:19
LaBerge:

What did they think, that you owed back taxes, or that you weren't really a nonprofit?

03-00:43:31
Cummins:

I can't remember. Oh no, there had been things that were taxable, and we paid! But at the end I attempted to be sure we owed nothing. Oh, I had a strong reaction.

03-00:43:58
LaBerge:

Well, anytime you get a call from the IRS! [laughter]

03-00:44:03

Cummins: Now, I'm trying to think of what else we did—

03-00:44:06

LaBerge: I remember [Father] George Crespín talked about going downtown Oakland—I can't remember where—but just to be a presence at some gathering protesting the Vietnam draft at the Oakland Induction Center. And either his picture was taken or the bishop got wind of it. Were you part of that? The bishop didn't know that priests were going to go down and be a presence, and he was quite upset.

03-00:44:37

Cummins: Well, I was in a position to tell the bishop everything I was doing. There's a picture of me on the front steps of city hall reading a prayer. I forget what that one was. There were a lot of meetings.

The ecumenical part grew as we moved along. We had the Black Panthers and then we had the Flatland Fathers. The priests got very involved in social justice, and that was all the way from East Oakland into North Oakland. George would have been very close to that. But I remember the Black Panthers—Bishop Begin was really cautious on that point. They provided breakfasts for school kids, and so on. We went along with that, and pastors were easy with the Black Panthers.

Sister Madeleine Rita [Murphy], a Holy Names sister who was a pretty severe type of person, but also a very professional teacher, came in as assistant superintendent of schools, much admired and much liked—some vague cousin of mine, which she never brought up, so I never brought it up either. She phoned one day, to me, or maybe she came upstairs. “Well, I have a phone call and it's from the Black Panthers.” And I said, “Now, just refer those calls up here.” She was a bit tense with me, but from that time on she was very cordial. I never had another phone call about the Black Panthers. [laughter]

03-00:46:42

LaBerge: But did you meet with the Black Panthers or have any—?

03-00:46:45

Cummins: I did not.

But I want to go in another direction. Raymond Sontag was the speaker at the dinner, after the installation of Bishop Begin. He spoke to the issue of race, and his point was: empires have been brought down because of racial conflict. He was laying it in the bishop's hands.

Bishop Begin had a reputation—it was in his *New York Times* obituary when he died—from criticizing the Knights of Columbus in Cleveland for restricting black membership, and I think he was quoted as saying, “Jesus

Christ did not die for white people alone.” He had that reputation. But he was slow to move with the ethnic mix we had here, and I think it was from the background of Cleveland and so much of the Midwest, that the church had so many—well, you’d have, from Detroit, national parishes. We did not have much of that out here. I think he dreaded going back into that, and it was especially true of the Hispanics. But he went to St. Elizabeth’s—oh, it was within the first year, and the Cursillo group had gathered. Well, the church, which seats a thousand or eleven hundred was standing room [only]. He just did a U-turn and set up these vicariates for Hispanics, for African Americans, Portuguese, Italians, Chinese—we had one Chinese priest. It was a good thing to do.

03-00:49:12

LaBerge:

How did he know to go to St. Elizabeth’s? Are you the one who would give him some of these ideas?

03-00:49:20

Cummins:

Oh no, I think—well, Oliver Lynch was the pastor there who was terribly important, and he was a kind of patriarch of all the young priests. He was the bishop’s confessor. But I think it was December of 1962 that—we were up in a Sunday dinner at the Newman Center—and this would be, I guess, the old Newman Center, and Ray Sontag sat next to Bishop Begin.

03-00:49:59

LaBerge:

Say something else about this, was it the Catholic faculty and priests? Or just an informal—?

03-00:50:07

Cummins:

No, it was the Newman Center people but a rather big dinner. Ray Sontag persuaded Bishop Begin to sponsor the Catholic Interracial Council. This was a program of Father John LaFarge from New York, who predicted that there would be an exodus out of the South of the African American people, because there would be jobs available. And that happened here. We always had black people, many of them middle class, because of being Pullman porters and other positions. Well, then we set up the Catholic Interracial Council and we had districts. One was Oakland, Father Bill O’Donnell was the associate at Corpus Christi and a friend from seminary days. I knew he wasn’t terribly busy, so he became the chaplain. Thom McGowan, who is now the deacon that does the ecumenical work in the diocese here—he was very important. And there was a Herb [C. Herbert] Clemens, a mathematics doctoral student at Berkeley who really got into this very deeply. With the Catholic Interracial Council we could bring the racial issue to the fore in the diocese.

Now, the interracial council was a voluntary group. But after maybe a couple of years the bishop came into the office with hands in his pockets and he said, [telephone ringing] “I’ve been delaying on this. We have to have a social

justice committee at the diocese and I want you to develop that.” Well, Sontag was around and available, so he was very helpful on that score. But I must have had this by instinct, I can’t remember where I got it—I thought the best thing we could do was to consult with groups. And one—we went to Mary Help of Christians here, which was the mission of St. Elizabeth’s at that time—very Hispanic. It was a little pocket in East Oakland on Twenty-Ninth Avenue. I had some Spanish from the seminary days, and I used it a good bit at Mission Dolores. I remember I started trying to talk in Spanish, and the one who was the host of the evening, a layman, said to me, “Father, talk English.”

I want to tell this story. I went down to St. Patrick’s in West Oakland, which at that time was far more African American than it is now. We met in a home on Wood Street, and it was such a lovely group of people. I said, “What should we be doing with a Committee on Social Justice?” And there was one kind of a burly guy there. I just remember he said, “We have to develop opportunity for our young people. It’s not easy. I was on the Oakland-Seattle run, as a Pullman porter.” And he said, “My daughter wanted to go to Mills College. I didn’t want to tell her no.” But he said—I can’t tell the story. [showing emotion]

03-00:54:13

LaBerge: *Oh.*

03-00:54:16

Cummins: He said, “I had a Quaker Oats box, and I cut a little hole in the top. Whenever I got a dollar tip, I always put it in the box.” And he said, “Whenever the bill came for tuition, I always had enough.” That’s the story I wanted to tell.

03-00:54:39

LaBerge: Oh, oh, wow!

03-00:54:40

Cummins: And I said to him afterwards, “What is your daughter doing?” “She’s the vice principal of Edison High School in Stockton.” My quick remark was, “My brother was in Stockton as his first assignment as a priest, and he had much connection with Edison High School. I think he probably was a little too early for your daughter.” But the West Oakland man knew the principal and he knew several of the teachers. What a small world. But what a conversation. Gee, I thought I ought to bring that up. What else would I say about the social justice committee?

03-00:55:31

LaBerge: So when you’d meet, was it just dialogue? Or then would you have activities and people would go out and—?

03-00:55:40

Cummins:

Well, it was a mix of anything and we certainly participated in demonstrations. I don't think we were taking the lead so much in that, but the priests would be involved. Much initiative was taken at the local parishes, too, with pretty strong leadership. But in the summertime, the College of St. Elizabeth in New Jersey had a program, and I forget who sponsored it or whether it was the national Catholic Interracial Council. But we brought them out and there was a lovely nun—are they Franciscans?

03-00:56:25

LaBerge:

I don't know what they are.

03-00:56:27

Cummins:

I don't either. Oh, she was just a pleasure. She was professional, but easy. She brought a team—oh, it cost us some money. Sister Miriam Thomas in the office went from place to place and set up weekends and programs.

03-00:56:43

LaBerge:

So sort of like a parish mission, on that order?

03-00:56:47

Cummins:

Yes, kind of—

03-00:56:48

LaBerge:

To train people, or—?

03-00:56:50

Cummins:

What you do to move with the movement of civil rights. It was beneficial. I guess I might add one thing of importance—when you get a bishop's committee, you realize the importance of institution. The Catholic Interracial Council was a voluntary group. We had four or five of these groups. It was okay, but if you wanted to go to a parish, you had to knock on the door, "We'd like to do this..." And the suburbs weren't all that—

03-00:57:31

LaBerge:

Open to it?

03-00:57:35

Cummins:

Yes. But when you got the diocesan commission and you went "as the chancellor" to a talk or phoned the pastor, the door was so open! Castro Valley, I remember a specific time. And Christ the King in Pleasant Hill with Sister Toinette Eugene—she was a Presentation Sister at that time. The two of us went out to explain what role we were playing in all of this, and we were well received. Oh, it was great to have a social justice committee.

03-00:58:14

LaBerge:

Wow. [brief interruption]

03-00:58:23

Cummins: Was there anything else I wanted to say here?

03-00:58:28

LaBerge: Well, speaking about Sister Toinette—how were the women religious involved?

03-00:58:38

Cummins: Well, there were various ways, but it became evident in the resuscitation of the schools in the city—that took place. Father Mel Hary helped early on at St. Francis de Sales. One summer he organized the Legion of Mary to go from door to door and doubled the number of students in one year. Then he came in to see me and said, “Where do we go from here?” Without access to funding it was kind of a touchy thing, encouraging all these guys when you couldn’t back them up and you weren’t sure of the bishop and finance people all the time, whether he was going to be that strong.

But there were—I call them the Magnificent Seven, and they ran from East Oakland St. Louis Bertrand’s all the way to St. Patrick’s in the West. They were all religious and they were principals. They set themselves to get all the federal money that was available to them. They got into dialogue with the Oakland School Department, which would be inclined not to give them full-time—

03-01:00:11

LaBerge: And this was new, for Catholic schools to get federal money.

03-01:00:15

Cummins: Oh yes, oh yes. Yes, Title IX I think was the big one, or was it Title X? [Title I in the sixties—Ed.]

But then the group was not letting things die in the city. It was really a revival. And then of course it was Sister Sebastian [Adza] and Barbara Morrill, who very early in my time came in and said, “We want to develop a scholarship program.” That’s how FACE came about.

03-01:00:47

LaBerge: FACE came about, yes.

03-01:00:47

Cummins: Family Aid to Catholic Education. Inner-city schooling remained long in people’s minds. When we later started the Bishop’s Appeal for special funding every year, we listed many things the diocese was servicing. If you want your money to go to that, you can note that. Very few—I don’t know if it was even 10 percent—put down where the money ought to go. But of that 10 percent, almost all of it was inner-city schools. So there was great support. It was really a wonderful community effort. And then the first secretary for the

Social Justice Committee was Sr. Miriam Thomas McManus, who had been the principal at St. Mary's in West Oakland. Maybe I told the story about her.

03-01:01:46

LaBerge: No, I don't think you did.

03-01:01:49

Cummins: The War on Poverty arose in the 1960s. An agent for it came for a visit. He had formerly worked with the bishops' office. I organized a group, the Magnificent Seven and Don [Osuna], and he explained the plan and asked, "Do you have any questions, questions, questions?" Oh, they were saying, "Yes, we're glad to have this help." But Sister Miriam Thomas said, "This is burdensome, and the sooner we get these [regulations] out of our schools the better off we're going to be." "Thank you, sister." [laughter] But she was good at outreach and kept in touch with people. It was a comfortable place to be in the diocese, Bishop Begin, especially with education he was comfortable enough. But we came out with various things.

Some schools decided they would run summer programs, a good number of them. And then Newman Hall in Berkeley—and I can't remember the name of the young priest—decided that they would sponsor a summer program for kids.

03-01:03:18

LaBerge: For kids.

03-01:03:20

Cummins: And, of course, the bill came to the office, you know. So I went in to see the bishop, and I said I talked with the priests' group. It was a very mixed group, because we always kept that—you didn't allow just the activists in. You got the opposition, too. But I went in to see the bishop, I remember he took a pile of papers he had and slammed them on the desk and he said something about, "Do you think I'm made of money?" I wasn't aware of what had gone on in the morning with his schedule. Something had happened. I was living with him at the time. That would have been after 1966. I got home for dinner. We were having a drink beforehand; he was reading the paper. Oh, he was upset and he said, "Now, you're just coming at me with all this." Oh, I guess I told him, "I'll go back and tell these people no, but the issue is not going to go away, and if you look down East Fourteenth Street—this is really an issue in the city of Oakland." At dinner that evening he continued, "You're devious. You came at me and I'm surprised." By the end of dinner he had softened, as usual. He got over his upsets. He was easy to live with. I lived with him in Piedmont about six months when I got dropped out of Margaret Mary's.

But the next day there was a meeting of the consultants, and two of the most conservative, Monsignor [Alvin P.] Wagner from Alameda and Rohan from

El Cerrito came in to me and said, “How did you make out?” And I said, “Ooh, no. I didn’t get to first base.” And they took it on themselves to go in to see the bishop. And within the hour he came back and said, “Write a check for the summer schools.” [laughing] Lots of amusing things.

03-01:05:45

LaBerge:

Wow, wow. But you just stuck at it even when you were afraid he was going to say no or get upset?

03-01:05:56

Cummins:

Well, we didn’t live with much confrontation. I think maybe four times in the eight years/nine years I said, “I think you’re wrong on this, Bishop.” Oh, there was one time—oh boy—I think that doesn’t fit in here—where I was afraid he was going to make a public statement about *The Catcher in the Rye*, the famous story.

03-01:06:19

LaBerge:

Oh! Tell that story.

03-01:06:21

Cummins:

Well, this was very early on. Monsignor Wagner, from St. Joe’s in Alameda, came in—and it was a meeting of pastors. I forget who was there. He brought in *Catcher in the Rye* in a paper bag and gave it to the bishop and said, “This is the kind of reading that’s being recommended in our high schools.” Later that day the bishop had a meeting of the Spanish-speaking priests. Few operating in that day. But one Eddie [Edmund] Hayburn, dropped by, “Oh gee, the bishop was all upset about *Catcher in the Rye*. Oh, he said it was a terrible book for high schools.” Well, my last year teaching at O’Dowd, Sister Mary Xavier and the group teaching English brought me to Asilomar on the Easter vacation days. Sister Mary Xavier was going to make an English teacher out of me if she had to beat me up! But we went down to Asilomar—well, the theme was *The Catcher in the Rye*. So I went in to George Crespin and I said, “The bishop is going to make an awful mistake.” And I remember I said to George, “Well, instead of talking about him I really have to go in and see him.” So I went in—and in those days the bishop was really a very awesome kind of—

03-01:08:03

LaBerge:

I know!

03-01:08:03

Cummins:

Well, I walk in, and my knees were holding up all right. I said, “Bishop, now *The Catcher in the Rye*—if you’re going to say anything about that, do that through Pearse Donovan, the superintendent, or me. You don’t want to be involved in that.” I said, “Last year we were at Asilomar and that was the feature of the whole gathering.” He had a habit of fooling with his pencil, like this you know [demonstrating]. And he said, “Well, maybe you’re not so

concerned about the morality of the people, but I'm responsible for every soul in this diocese." I said, "Bishop, I hope I'm free to come in and tell you when I have misgivings." But I was trembling. So I just walked out. I didn't hear about *Catcher in the Rye* from that time on.

03-01:09:12
LaBerge:

And no one—he didn't say anything?

03-01:09:12
Cummins:

No, he didn't and there was no public comment. But let me tell you just the most amusing story. Within a few months there was a gathering at St. Augustine's, our parish. I don't know whether it was the new church or whether it was the pastor's anniversary or something. We had a good number of priests who were ordained from that parish. Gosh, it was twelve years in a row we had somebody. We were all invited to dinner, and the bishop was at one end. Billy Duggan and I, classmates and the youngest, were down at the other end. There may have been fourteen or more people at the table. The bishop liked to keep the conversation going, but you couldn't always do that so gracefully. There was a kind of lull, and he calls down to Billy Duggan, "Duggan—you were in school with Cummins from the first grade. Tell us about him." I said, "Bishop, there's no need. My life is an open book." And Billy Duggan says, "Yes, *The Catcher in the Rye*." [laughter] When we went to pick up our jackets after dinner, I said, "Uh, Billy—there are twenty-five million books that have been published in this earth, and you pick out *The Catcher in the Rye*." But no word—never heard a word since.

I did defend the cathedral once.

03-01:10:56
LaBerge:

This is when Don Osuna was having liturgies.

03-01:11:01
Cummins:

Yes, yes. I'll hold that one out.

03-01:11:06
LaBerge:

So why don't you give a little history of what you're talking about, other people?

03-01:11:08
Cummins:

The bishop was marvelous in this regard. He did not entertain any idea of building a cathedral, even though we had these small churches over here. From San Francisco, of course, St. Francis de Sales was appointed as the cathedral. Some people were saying, "Why didn't you do Lourdes instead of that part of the town?" Well, freeways had cut the parish up and commerce had come all the way to the front door, and it was really a declining area. But he was going to go with it. Whatever the council directed, he was faithful. We were not ambiguous about the Vatican Council in this diocese. So he got

[Robert] Rambusch, the great liturgical artist from New York, to modernize the cathedral.

On top of that he put in three very talented people—Don Osuna, the genius liturgically, and Mike Lucid, as the pastor, who was a talented administrator and very well read, up to date. And Jim Keeley, who would be just the honey that would glue the thing together—just an outstanding parish priest. That was a huge investment of talent. Well, between the three of them, the liturgy became number one, but the school got terrific development. And then the elderly! They made this last a real priority, because Satellite [Housing] had built a home or two down there. And eventually St. Francis de Sales got into a full-blown parish, with every kind of ministry.

Liturgy was experimental in many ways. The Liturgy of the Word was emphasized. The Eucharistic part of the Mass was always very steady. Also, the music was songs that people could sing. But one day the bishop said to me, “Are they showing *slides* down there?” I said, “Well, yes, they do things like that.” “Well, we’re not supposed to do that.” I said, “Tom Gallagher does it when he goes to a parish, to promote tithing.” I spoke softly because the bishop was really high on tithing. He spoke on it from the Vatican Council. Tom was the one that the bishop tagged to promote tithing in the diocese. He’d go to a parish using slides at the end of Mass to instruct the practice. The bishop said to me, “That’s different.” And I said, “Bishop, don’t go after those guys. They plan those liturgies months in advance! Advent is done by September. Every Monday they get together to appraise Sunday. You’ve got the church next door here. The only thing they’ve done is translate into English. It’s just a dry kind of change. You know, the cathedral is like a Rembrandt painting, but there’s a tear on the corner that you see. Well, you can’t go after the painting!” Nothing came after that happily. The pastor was a friend. I was aware that he might turn in his resignation if the bishop stopped their work. It was one of the few times I spoke up. I never revealed the misgivings of the bishop to any of the cathedral staff.

03-01:14:40
LaBerge:

Wow. What a great image for you to give him—the Rembrandt painting.

03-01:14:48
Cummins:

He was actually proud of his cathedral. While I was in Sacramento there was a national gathering of liturgical directors in San Francisco. The last night they came to Oakland for their closing Mass. And of course, he presided. He was just so proud of his people. But that was true all the time. The Oakland fire chief came in one day and told him, “You can’t have so many people in your cathedral.” And he said, “What am I supposed to do, tell people not to come to Mass? That’s your problem, not mine.” Three weeks in a row the fire chief

sent people out to clock the attendance. And then when it got filled, close the doors. But by law you couldn't close the side doors, because you had—

03-01:15:51

LaBerge: You had to have an exit.

03-01:15:52

Cummins: You had to have access. And after three weeks they just forgot about that. But the bishop was strong in defending the cathedral.

03-01:16:03

LaBerge: But isn't that great, too, to have it so full?

03-01:16:05

Cummins: Oh, oh! And it was, for two Masses. You'd have to go early to get a seat, yes. But the music—and oh, the planning was so careful and the preaching was excellent. If you were a guest preacher and were not very good or talked too long—that was the last time *you'd* be at the cathedral. [laughter] Everything was planned and then reviewed. There was wonderful hospitality and wonderful participation.

03-01:16:42

LaBerge: What about you? When you were chancellor, did you preach at Masses?

03-01:16:49

Cummins: I was stationed at St. Leo's in Oakland, and then I moved to Margaret Mary's, and that was really fun. The pastor, Emmet O'Connor, was eighty and I was thirty-five. We just got along so well. It was a small parish, and the freeway had cut it in two. But oh, he was just glorious. I had a wonderful two years with him.

03-01:17:14

LaBerge: So all of the time you were chancellor, you were still at a parish and helping out on Sundays?

03-01:17:19

Cummins: Yes, yes. The other part of my job as chancellor had to do with personnel.

Before we get off the ecumenical thing—I was really the connection with the GTU, because the bishop was in Rome every fall for four years. I knew his mind pretty well by that time. It was a good connection. He did an awful lot of the ecumenical activities himself. He made those contacts, and he had a friendly relationship with Rabbi William Stern at Temple [Sinai]. But I guess I had an awful lot of personnel—priests who would come in part-time to work.

Of course, before the council, we had to get permissions from the nuncio or from Rome for things like saying Mass on a ship. You had to apply for those

permissions and then renew them. We had a priest who was from Croatia, who had been in Italy when the war was over, who couldn't go back home. Every three years we'd have to write to the nuncio and get permission for him to stay three more years and send a five dollar check, and so forth. A lot of detail. We ran interference for the bishop, too, warning him when things were coming. I wasn't involved in the decisions about appointments. That was really the two Connollys—the vicars and the bishop. They did all that.

03-01:19:01

LaBerge: But did you deliver the message, or—?

03-01:19:03

Cummins: Yes, often yes. And then if guys had some trouble, if there was some financial thing—they'd probably go to me. I had access to the bishop.

03-01:19:17

LaBerge: Yes.

03-01:19:15

Cummins: Also they all knew me. I went to school with half of them.

03-01:19:22

LaBerge: Right, you must have known everybody!

03-01:19:23

Cummins: Oh yes, from that point of view, it was an easy job. [laughter]

03-01:19:34

LaBerge: Do you want to start on the GTU, or should we go toward Vatican II?

03-01:19:41

Cummins: I'd say either way. There was one thing more I was going to add to—oh gosh, let's see if I can check my notes. [sound of paper rustling]. Well, yes, there was one thing I guess I should put down. You know, *Humanae Vitae* [Of Human Life], in 1968, six of us happened to be in Hong Kong or Taiwan when that happened.

03-01:20:16

LaBerge: On vacation or on work?

03-01:20:23

Cummins: Well, the year before there had been some kind of low-cost advertisement, but we couldn't get free. World Airways, which was based in Oakland, you know, provided a roundtrip charter, L.A. to Tokyo, for \$345! So my brother was always big on this kind of thing, so six of us went. We were in Hong Kong when *Humanae Vitae*—

03-01:20:51

LaBerge: So you, your brother, and four other priests?

03-01:20:53

Cummins:

Yes, we were all in the seminary together. Joe O'Connell; a classmate of mine, John [P.] Heaney, who was chaplain of the police in San Francisco and Apostleship of the Sea; and Frank [Francis] Lacey, who became—he was principal at Marin Catholic, but Archbishop [John R.] Quinn made him moderator of the curia, the vicar general, second in command in San Francisco. He was very bright. And John [J.] Murphy, who was treasurer of the school department and later pastor in Burlingame.

I came back. By that time, there was a lot of trouble with Washington, D.C., Charlie [Charles E.] Curran [from Catholic University] had a group that were protesting this. The cardinal in Washington, D.C. had suspended priests, and so forth. The years during the council, from the time that they built the new Newman Center in Berkeley, Sunday night there'd be a welcome for local priests to talk about developments in the Vatican Council. They were mostly young, but not all. I remember one night when there was a young Dominican, who said, "I'm going to preach against this. This should not ever have been done this way."

Rocco Caporale, an Italian Jesuit, who would teach in Peru, I think, one semester, and then he would teach in the Sociology Department here at Cal Berkeley for another semester. That went on for a number of years. Very forward Vatican II—was opposed to the GTU. He thought that Alma College from Los Gatos should go to the University of San Francisco with the Jesuits. He felt that the GTU would just be a satellite, that the university would swing around but would never give full recognition to [it].

But I remember that night [at Newman Hall] he said, "You cannot do that. Your responsibility is to unite the community. You're the shepherds, and you can't be divisive." Well, I remember—whether that was the same young priest, he phoned me one day and he said, "I want to register a protest." I remember I said to him, "Why don't you wait till the smoke clears and just be quiet."

But just about that time—it was within the month, I think, Piet Fransen, who was a theologian from Louvain, whom I had met at the council, and I'd met him enough that we'd know each other, gave a talk at Holy Names College. Our colleges in those days, especially in the summers, had all kinds of speakers following up the Vatican Council. USF was magnificent! They were really a university of the council. I waited in line to talk to Piet Fransen, to ask, "Any advice on *Humanae Vitae*?" And he said—he was just thoughtful, "You really have to protect and support the frontline people, and those are your pastors and your secondary school teachers." He didn't say much more than that, but make sure that you give them plenty of support. Well, I guess

within the month again, the bishop came in with this letter that you are to enforce this, and the priest—

03-01:25:11

LaBerge: And read it at all the Masses?

03-01:25:12

Cummins: Yes, and it was to be signed by me. And I told him, “Bishop, I think that’s the wrong way to go. I think that we need more discussion and give it a little time.” And he was disappointed, because—I didn’t—I really wasn’t a problem child for him. But he didn’t pursue that.

03-01:25:40

LaBerge: Right. So he listened to you.

03-01:25:43

Cummins: Yes, yes. And well, he didn’t want to really be in conflict. But it was clear where he was. But I think he felt the priests were behind him. We never had big divisions in this diocese with the priests. It was a good move. I told that to Ray Sontag, and Ray thought well, that’s very good that the two of you came to a mind on this.

03-01:26:20

LaBerge: I’m just going to turn this off.

Interview 4: November 20, 2014

04-00:00:01

LaBerge: This is interview number four, November 20, 2014, with Bishop John Cummins. We're trying out a new recorder today, so we'll see. [laughter] Today we're going to talk about Vatican II. So do you want to start with how you ended up going? Because you were not a bishop; you were young.

04-00:00:30

Cummins: It's a very unexpected incident. It was January of 1963. I was the bishop's chancellor, and I was invited out by the vicar general, who was the pastor here in East Oakland at St. Anthony's Church. There were six or eight of us at dinner. I can't remember who all were there. But in the course of the evening Monsignor [Jack] Connolly, who had been with the bishop at the first session of the council, raised an issue about the misinformation about what was scripture and what was tradition in the church. We inherited that there were two fonts of divine revelation: one was the word of God as written and then the tradition of the church, which led to growth in understanding, and so forth. I said, "You know, Monsignor, last year when I was still at Bishop O'Dowd High School, during Lent—well, there were ten of us on the faculty—nine of us, every Wednesday, went out to St. Mary's College to hear Father Frank Norris from St. Patrick's Seminary, bring us up to date on what was developing in scripture studies and research and understanding." And I said, "You know, our generation now has more knowledge of the scriptures and more insight than anyone before us." From the corner of the room, in his ominous bishop's voice—we had talked about how reverentially we treated the bishops and their presence and their words, and it just kind of zoomed out, "You took an oath as chancellor that you would interpret scripture *sensu stricto*—nothing less, and if you can't uphold that oath, you should resign your position." Now, that's a shattering piece to get from the bishop.

04-00:02:50

LaBerge: Yes!

04-00:02:51

Cummins: But Father Nick Connolly was there. Nobody said anything, including Father Oliver Lynch, who was our resident saint, the Franciscan pastor of—

04-00:03:02

LaBerge: St. Elizabeth's.

04-00:03:05

Cummins: St. Elizabeth's, yes. Well, the conversation went on, but one really feels a little chagrined or a little corrected when the bishop does that. And then we moved on to other things. The bishop said something expected. Dr. Ray Sontag earlier had told me don't worry about studying history at Cal. You're going to have to go for canon law to be a chancellor. So as expected, the

bishop said, “I’m going to send John to canon law,” and Monsignor Jack Connolly reacted, with very great strength—now, he was close to the bishop. They had background—both Roman students, spoke Italian. And he said, “You can’t *do* that! You’ll leave me alone in the chancery office with nobody else there!” The bishop could change temperament, and changed moods very quickly, you know? He appeared intimidated by Monsignor’s strong reaction. He said rather quietly, “Okay, all right. I won’t send him.” And then I guess to console me from this terrible disappointment—which was *not* a disappointment—he said, “I will take you to the council.” That evening—the other Monsignor Connolly with whom I was living, walked into my room to see how I was feeling after being slapped by the bishop. I said, “I’m fine.” But by that time I was—I hadn’t even quite caught—this is *really* an opportunity to go to the council with the bishop. So that’s how I got to go. [laughing]

04-00:04:52

LaBerge:

Wow. It sounds off the cuff, that it was his last minute thought—but you don’t know.

04-00:04:56

Cummins:

Yes. Well, it certainly wasn’t planned.

04-00:04:59

LaBerge:

Yes, yes.

04-00:05:02

Cummins:

Well, I took off—I arrived in Rome on October 31. I didn’t go for the first four weeks because Monsignor Nick Connolly was there. But I was there from that time on until December 8. And what was wonderful—the bishop had all these friends from his Roman days, and I had the pass to get into the council as an expert, a *peritus*, with my own picture in the passport, asking that I get full hospitality from the Swiss Guards, and all of this. And then I had my assigned place every day in the second tribune. They had these porches built up looking down over the group, between the arches of St. Peter’s, and I was in the second one. I was in the company of the two Rahners—

04-00:06:03

LaBerge:

Karl, and who’s the other?

04-00:06:05

Cummins:

Hugo.

04-00:06:06

LaBerge:

Hugo, okay.

04-00:06:06

Cummins:

I don’t think I told you the story about the—there was a very friendly man who was there, a small guy, Italian but his English was good. And one day, it wasn’t very long into the council, Father Mark Hurley, who became bishop,

was in the opposite side on that tribunal. He was waving his hands to me, and I made a motion—come downstairs and I’ll meet you. I couldn’t get the direction. And he said, “Do you know who you’re sitting next to?” And I said, “Yes, he’s very nice.” Mark almost shouted, “He wrote *Pacem in Terris*.”

04-00:06:44

LaBerge:

The encyclical.

04-00:06:46

Cummins:

That big encyclical of John XXIII. So I went back upstairs and sat down beside the priest and I said, “Did you write *Pacem in Terris*?” He just smiled, a very little wistful, kind of cute, you know, and just went like that. He also was a major contributor to *Gaudium et Spes*, [Joy and Hope] the [Pastoral Constitution on the] Church in the Modern World.

04-00:07:08

LaBerge:

What’s his name?

04-00:07:11

Cummins:

Pietro [Cardinal] Pavan. And two things about him—he came in 1975 to Washington to the bishops’ meeting, and the day before we started there was a seminar on the unfinished business of the Second Vatican Council. He spoke and then Monsignor James [S.] Rausch, who was the general secretary for the bishops, spoke. And the third one was Manfred Vogel, a Jewish professor from Northwestern University, who spoke on the upcoming conflicts of church and state that would take place in the United States in the last quarter of the century. But Pavan—it was just a nice reunion, because he saw me and we had so much time together. That was a marvelous experience. But my name appears in this list of *periti*, between John Courtney Murray and Jean Daniélou, the French cardinal—oh, that’s a very impressive thing. [laughing] I saved both the book and the passbook.

Now, every day it was all in Latin, except the patriarch from Damascus, Maximos [IV] Saïgh. He spoke in French as a little protest against the Latin imperialism of the whole church. They had ten-minute presentations and there was no debate. They weren’t tying on to a single aspect of some issue. It was just—you signed up two days beforehand, got your place in line. The Latin was hard for me to follow, except in time I could really get the gist, especially if they were English speakers. I suppose they’d write in English and translate it back, and that would be a familiar syntactical opportunity. But one little weakness I never caught—the one who would announce the morning was the secretary of the whole operation, [Pericle] Felici. He would tell funny stories or make jokes and the place would laugh. I never caught one of the jokes in Latin. But the compensation was that every afternoon at three o’clock there was an English-speaking press conference sponsored by the American bishops, and twice a week there was a British press conference. These would

report very much everything that happened, in a language that I could get, with commentary, which would—those were very helpful experiences.

04-00:10:15

LaBerge: Oh wonderful. So where did that happen?

04-00:10:19

Cummins: The American conference was at the USO office on the Via della Conciliazione, just about the second block going towards St. Peter's.

04-00:10:36

LaBerge: And anyone could come.

04-00:10:36

Cummins: Any could come. Yes, it was good.

04-00:10:40

LaBerge: I think you told me earlier *you* went but the bishop didn't go.

04-00:10:40

Cummins: No, he didn't go. No.

04-00:10:42

LaBerge: But you went to all of them.

04-00:10:44

Cummins: Well, because I wanted to catch up and I didn't need a nap. Taking a siesta was just a waste of time. We were forty-five minutes away by walking. I would get the cab periodically, but I didn't have much money. I didn't want to be begging money from him to have a cab. But I'd walk and I'd take the cab. But additionally—and I found out the first day I went to a press conference. I don't know if I told you this story—that Bob [Robert F.] Quinn, a Paulist from Boston whose brother was the pastor at our Newman Center here, Joseph [L.] Quinn, said to me, “Are you going to hear Piet Fransen this afternoon?” And of course I knew nothing about that, and there was no advertising of these events. You had to find out by word of mouth. He said, “It's five o'clock at the North American College.” Well, I had known Fransen from writings—well, of course we got acquainted with a lot of people in those three years—and this was four years after the council was announced.

04-00:11:55

LaBerge: Is he a reporter? Or who is he?

04-00:11:59

Cummins: Fransen was a professor of theology from [Catholic University of] Louvain. And he gave a talk that I still remember, what is it, fifty years later? It was on: The church as mission? Or the church as sacrament? And it really was a prelude to Avery Dulles's book, *Models of the Church*, which was a very

popular and prominent book following the council. Basically Fransen said the church is both. It's mission from one viewpoint; it's sacrament from another viewpoint. Now, that made quite an impression on me.

I had to phone the bishop at four o'clock or four thirty, and tried to work out that Italian phone system of dropping the coins in. But I finally got through to him. I said, "Gee, I'd like to stay down here." His response was, "Oh, okay." I didn't know whether it was a grumpy okay or what. But that night we had a student priest from here, who came over for dinner at the hotel. We were staying at the Savoy up near the Olympic village. I was so full of conversation! I told the bishop, "You have to go to these things! This is a banquet, or a smorgasbord, of theology." What happened a number of times in my life with him, he said, "Johnny, I want you to go all the way with this." [laughter] Well, that was better than written permission!

04-00:13:37

LaBerge: Wow!

04-00:13:38

Cummins: There was always something doing in the afternoon, and in the evening as well. The bishop was very tolerant of my running around Rome. There was a talk on religious liberty by Thomas Holland, at the time coadjutor bishop of Portsmouth, England. That was the same week as Fransen! He offered a British perspective on religious liberty as compared to the American; it was markedly different but it was worth listening to.

04-00:14:14

LaBerge: How different?

04-00:14:17

Cummins: I can hardly remember now, but the American scene is much clearer in the separation. England has the Church of England as the official church.

04-00:14:28

LaBerge: That's true, yes.

04-00:14:31

Cummins: It's much more complex, and a lot of subtleties that we don't have to worry about in the American scene. I found out about British press conferences through Father Jim Gaffey, who was working on a doctorate, from Catholic University, on the life of Archbishop [Patrick] Riordan from San Francisco. He had access to the Propagation of the Faith files in Rome for his doctoral thesis. He discovered British press conferences over on the left side of St. Peter's, a place called the Four Cs—was the building. And that was a marvelous operation. We went to those as well as the American [press conferences].

04-00:15:23

LaBerge: And who was it giving these commentaries?

04-00:15:25

Cummins: It would be a mix of people. The American scene—Archbishop [Joseph T.] McGucken from San Francisco as chair of the communications committee, would be the moderator. There was a Robert [F.] Trisco, a historian from Catholic University—he was there very regularly. Gustave Weigel, the Jesuit from Maryland’s Woodstock [College]—he was very prominent in ecumenical affairs—attended a national Newman Convention in Berkeley in 1958. That’s where I first met him. He could be biting at times. Somebody asked him in one of those sessions, “Are you looking forward to Vatican III?” He said, “No. All human activity, given enough time, turns out badly.”
[laughter]

04-00:16:18

LaBerge: A little bit of a pessimist.

04-00:16:21

Cummins: But he was pretty standard fare. And Bernard Häring, the German moral theologian, would be frequent. Our Mark Hurley—he was in Stockton in those days, later the bishop of Santa Rosa, would be there frequently enough. I’m trying to think—

04-00:16:43

LaBerge: And could you ask questions?

04-00:16:44

Cummins: Oh yes.

04-00:16:46

LaBerge: Did you take notes? Or how did you—

04-00:16:47

Cummins: Oh, I did. Yes, oh yes. I sent a report home each week to the diocesan paper, and unhappily, those weren’t saved. They’re not in the archives. I would love to get my memory refreshed on—just how many things. But I’ll give one comparison. Early on, the first or second week, there was a Henry Cosgrove, a priest from Brooklyn, who worked for the Holy Office, who was the speaker. The bishops in the Council were addressing the topic of collegiality. The Roman Curia were on one side, and the Belgian and the German bishops were way on the other side—it was a very argumentative kind of thing. But he was there to explain perhaps the working of the Holy Office in relation to the positions being taken. He went out of his way at the beginning to say, “I have very much that’s confidential. I just can’t speak of it.” Well, of course that was fodder for the journalists!

04-00:17:57

LaBerge: Of course!

04-00:17:59

Cummins: The poor man, he just got lacerated by them and he had to stop several times. “Well, I can’t speak to that. I can’t speak to that,” which I thought he had covered at the beginning very well.

The next day Jim Gaffey and I went to the British press conference, chaired by Archbishop John Carmel Heenan from Westminster, from London—he became cardinal. He introduced himself, and very jovially said, “Well, today I have two experts from Britain. One is Father Charles Davis from Heythrop College,” and he gives the curriculum vitae, “and the other is Father Henry Davis, a moral theologian.” Then at the end of this [introduction] he says, “And they have in common that they are British, Roman Catholic, and very intelligent.” [laughter] Well, the second question came from a Dutch journalist, very forthright and presented rather strongly, you know. “The Orthodox bishops are validly ordained bishops and they should be here—is that correct?” “Well, I’ll turn that over to Father Charles Davis.” “We’ve got jurisdiction and order and community,” and so forth, followed by Henry Davis. And it was the same abstruse attempt, and Archbishop Heenan said, “Thank you very much. Next question.” And the Dutch man jumped up, and whereas he was straightforward the first time, he was vehement the second time, “You did *not* answer my question. They have a *right* to be here. Is that not correct?” And Heenan, instead of backing down, he said, “My dear man—I think it’s evident that we do not know the answer to your question. We have to live with that. Why can’t *you* live with that? Next question.” And I thought—oh, he’s clever. I don’t know if he’s bright, but he is clever. And that was a very different flavor from the day before—and that continued throughout.

04-00:20:16

LaBerge: So in answer to that question, *were* there orthodox priests there or bishops?

04-00:20:19

Cummins: No—I think they would have been there as observers, but they would have been in the same category as Robert McAfee Brown and the external visitors. In fact, they were there, because they had a lot of influence on the Document on Ecumenism, the Orthodox.

04-00:20:44

LaBerge: Well, which sessions were you there for? What was being discussed?

04-00:20:49

Cummins: The early days pointed to ecumenism. There was something before that—I’ll have to refresh my memory—several aspects of tidying up the Document on the Church, and those were there. In the first week of November came the first

document to be voted on by the council, namely the Document on Liturgy. I'd have to look up the figure on that, but—oh, I could find it here. And I think 2,149 to 8 or something was the vote! That's a remarkable thing looking back. That document was passed in November, and it was effective in one year, on the first Sunday of Advent, in November of '64. The pope did not wait until the end of the council and did not wait till the whole process was developed—he developed that whole process.

Looking back, the German church and the Belgian church, the French church, had moved far ahead on the whole theory of liturgy and expectations. We thought the vernacular seemed awfully far off. Yet we were on the brink! And another issue I remember—we were at dinner—in Rome with Godfrey Diekmann, an expert of the council and a very well-known Benedictine from St. John's in Minnesota and an outstanding liturgist. I remember he said, "Oh, St. Mary's Cathedral, they have to be careful. They have to build that altar out from the wall," this was 1963, "because concelebration is certainly coming." Well, that seemed still very far off! The change came in one *year*! And the vernacular Mass, turning the altar around, participation of the people, and all that training. Many feel that it came too fast, and people weren't ready. I think the pope was ready, and I think it was a good thing he went ahead, because the plan was very clear when it came out. It was unfamiliar but it was clear.

04-00:23:29

LaBerge:

Right, right.

04-00:23:30

Cummins:

And very well received by the people.

04-00:23:35

LaBerge:

How did it come about that all the translations—had it already been in the works do you think? Someone was translating—well, I guess we had translations in the missal, but that wasn't maybe an official—?

04-00:23:51

Cummins:

Well, the translation operated through a newly formed committee, the International Committee for English in the Liturgy (ICEL). They didn't pick up anything that had gone before. Ours, I thought, the American one, was a little prosaic in some places, somewhat pedestrian. I have through our heritage from our bishop, the English-Irish translation of the breviary, or Liturgy of the Hours, which you would expect has a much more lyrical quality to the prayers. Oh yes. It's very good. What else would I say about it? Our people were 80 percent-plus for the change. Now, I think it was a little slower about music and singing, whereas Filipinos and the Mexicans are great, and the Germans, I would say. The American scene—we weren't—we're not there *yet* [in 2014].

04-00:24:47

LaBerge: Yes, yes. But that is amazing, that it passed and it started in—

04-00:24:51

Cummins: Can we go back to the council for a moment?

04-00:24:54

LaBerge: Yes.

04-00:24:54

Cummins: The issue of collegiality—that was in the Document on the Bishops, but that was also in the Document on the Church. That the pope is *in* the College of Bishops, and the bishops, on the other hand, are responsible for the universal church *with* the pope, not just for their own diocese. And therefore there has to be consultation and unity of approach and all this. That was severely debated.

04-00:25:24

LaBerge: And were you there for that?

04-00:25:26

Cummins: Oh yes.

04-00:25:29

LaBerge: So what do you remember? The highlights.

04-00:25:32

Cummins: That [Alfredo] Cardinal Ottaviani, who had the reputation of being very—a reactionary—I think he was better than that. He was a good man. He wasn't a diabolical influence. But oh, he took great offense about the Roman Curia being more important than the bishops, because that *did* change the authority scene. That it wasn't the pope and the curia, it was the pope and the bishops, and the curia were at the service of that College of Bishops. And what they made very clear, that this is the heritage of the college of apostles—there were twelve of them, not one. And I think [Pope] Paul VI was very favorable toward the collegial point of view. But there were—oh, *strong* voices. There was a bishop from Corpus Christi, Texas—gosh, he just kind of talked against the Roman Curia. It was a tense conflict really, but the collegial aspect won out.

Looking back over the years, part of the collegial issue was a synod of bishops, an example of which we just finished two weeks ago. That was really destined to be more than just a commentary by bishops of the world on documents that the curia presented. That was to be rather a deliberative body that would set policy and practice in the church. I think Paul VI was strong on that. I don't think people would give too much credit to—how do I say this gracefully? [laughter] [Popes] John Paul II and Benedict XVI really weren't into that sharing of authority as clearly. Now, the present scene with the opposition to the practice of Pope Francis has reached the report stage for

journalism. Pope Francis is calling for open conversation and very collegial directions: speak your mind without fearing any retaliation from anybody, so that we develop consensus and get the gifts of the spirit coming together. He is strong on that. I think he absolutely used the example of the Vatican Council for what he wants in those synods. So something to look forward to next October [a synod on the family in Fall 2015].

04-00:28:26
LaBerge:

That's for sure. Wow. So were you there for the vote on that Document on the Church?

04-00:28:34
Cummins:

No, that came—it wasn't the next year. Most of them came in '65 at the last session.

04-00:28:43
LaBerge:

Okay. How did Bishop Begin feel about that, or didn't he express his opinion?

04-00:28:50
Cummins:

I would say with the ecumenical items, anything moving ecumenically he was very *for*. During that session of the council, the American bishops established an ad hoc committee on ecumenism, hopefully to have some base as to what the American bishops thought of the document as it was presented. Bishop Begin was chair, and I was secretary to his committee.

04-00:29:14
LaBerge:

Good!

04-00:29:14
Cummins:

There were some very good people on that—Charles [H.] Helmsing from Kansas City—the diocese that promoted or developed the *National Catholic Reporter*.

04-00:29:27
LaBerge:

Oh, that's right! Yes.

04-00:29:30
Cummins:

He was very into the ecumenical picture. And then there were a lot of people who really were familiar—there was a canon lawyer from Boston, Dr. Fred [Frederick R.] McManus. He was quite active in this. The movement was far along, because John XXIII had set up the Secretariat for [Promoting] Christian Unity with Cardinal Augustin Bea, and Willebrands, Jan [Johannes] Willebrands from Holland, so very much had been done by tilling the soil before that document.

There was one other piece that came out before the close of the second session, and that was religious liberty, which had been a part of the Document on Ecumenism at the beginning, but was separated out as a special document.

04-00:30:28
LaBerge:

And how did that happen?

04-00:30:28
Cummins:

Well, [Francis] Cardinal Spellman brought John Courtney Murray, who had been told to cease publication on this subject. He brought him along as his expert, and Courtney Murray was very available to the people who were developing that Document on Religious Liberty. It was strongly supported by Belgians and the Germans. Cardinal Josef Beran of Prague spoke very strongly about the document. It has to be pointed out, that he was coming not from the mild problems that we would have in the West, but from the Czech Republic. Oh, that presentation was a powerful statement.

But the night the document was accepted for discussion, I had a date with this Monsignor Jack Egan from Chicago, whom I had met at the Conference on Religion and Race the January before. We went to dinner and he said, "Let's not delay, because the boys are gathering at Villanova House." And staying there were John Courtney Murray, Mark Hurley, Bill [William Wakefield later Cardinal] Baum, who became the cardinal for education in Rome—who else? Joe Baker from—let's see, I'm trying to think. Oh! George [G.] Higgins lived there.

04-00:32:06
LaBerge:

Okay, so all English speakers?

04-00:32:06
Cummins:

Oh yes, they were all Americans. We went back to Villanova House and the seminar was under way, with John Courtney Murray in the center stage in this circle of seats. When I came in with Jack Egan, Father Murray stopped talking. Jack just nodded his head and says, "He's all right." [laughter] About me!

04-00:32:35
LaBerge:

About you.

04-00:32:36
Cummins:

And on went the evening. We had been opened to that subject by our theology professor in the seminary. We must have spent a couple of weeks on that, a debate that was in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, a defunct journal now. Monsignor Joseph Fenton, from the Catholic University, stood on the opposite side of John Courtney Murray. We went through those essays and those debates pretty carefully. So it wasn't a brand-new topic. I was really familiar enough.

04-00:33:19
LaBerge:

Who was that professor in seminary who did that?

04-00:33:23

Cummins:

Edward [J.] Wagner. He was our theology, or our dogma professor we used to call him. Most people in our time didn't bring that kind of familiarity to that topic. And then of course in John Courtney Murray's books—I think especially *We Hold These Truths: [Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition]*—those explicated it quite well. I'm sure I would have written home about that evening. I was aware that it was an historic moment. I can't find any report in the files of our diocesan paper.

04-00:34:02

LaBerge:

You think it's in the archives someplace?

04-00:34:04

Cummins:

I'm afraid it's lost. But I would like to know what was my thinking about that, and what struck me. There was much debate that ensued. Only in 1965 the document was passed. Many people like—well, George Higgins and Monsignor John Tracy Ellis—so many have said that was *the* American contribution to the Vatican Council.

04-00:34:35

LaBerge:

Going back to that meeting when they stopped talking when you walked in, was this all a part of having to be careful so that, say, John Courtney Murray wouldn't be silenced, or saying something that was subject to—?

04-00:34:54

Cummins:

Well, I think the debate was yet to come, so if I thought—

04-00:35:00

LaBerge:

It was a confidential gathering.

04-00:35:02

Cummins:

Yes, but if I were the enemy he'd like to know it, because I'm sure Murray would not want to be quoted. It wasn't a long silence, he just stopped when I came in, and Egan qualified it very quickly just with a nod. I felt very privileged to be at that gathering.

04-00:35:28

LaBerge:

What other—so there was the debate, then it was voted on the next year when you were back in Oakland.

04-00:35:36

Cummins:

Yes.

04-00:35:36

LaBerge:

Yes. Why was it the Americans' contribution, do you think? What particularly—?

04-00:35:43

Cummins:

In my Newman days, in the fifties, I remember being on a panel at San Francisco State with—gee, I should remember his name. He was a chemistry prof who ironically started his career at Santa Clara. He was taking an atheistic position, and I was taking the other side, of course. The topic reached to religious liberty. I remember—I was quoting John [T.] McNicholas, that there's no conflict over the separation of church and state. McNicholas was a Dominican archbishop of Cincinnati. I remember I leaned heavily on him. Other people as well had spoken to that—the list escapes me—but Archbishop McNicholas was a pretty weak commentary or a pretty unauthoritative commentary compared to Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors, the declaration against separation of religion from state. That was the heritage, and that was a big pattern to overcome.

By the time of the Council the sense in the American church was that the separation of church and state is something that has developed in our thinking. And the primacy of conscience was something that had become clear. From the secular experience of the separation of church and state, the freedom of the church and also the freedom in an individual conscience to make its own decisions about religious commitment—that had been realized as the tradition of the church. The experience of both church and political had gotten us to the point, I guess.

[laughing] When you think about it, I read something by [M.] Cathleen Kaveny, very recently —the seventies got it right on catechetics. She says there were so many sweeping things that it was hard for the church, as an institution, to catch up. One issue was, you make up your own mind and conscience on your freedom to believe—well, that's a very different question from “your responsibility is to obey.”

I should tell the story about George Crespin. He was trained in that understanding. But I remember once the matter came up. I said to George—I remember the basic line, “You mean to tell me, if the bishop told you by name to go to this parish, by name, you wouldn't go?” And he said, “No, no. You don't understand. I would have to take that into *consideration*.” That was revolutionary thinking from the way we were trained!

04-00:39:17

LaBerge:

Yes, yes. Well, he talks about going into Bishop Begin over and over and saying, “I don't want to do this. I don't want to be here in the chancery. Please let me out of it,” and the many times that happened.

04-00:39:34

Cummins:

Well, when I came down to Oakland as bishop I wanted him in the chancery office. We had worked together and I knew him well. He was bilingual, and I thought—that's going to be very important. He was scheduled to go to Notre

Dame for a whole year [for sabbatical]. When he heard I was coming [as bishop of Oakland] he called and said, “Listen, I’m available for whatever you want.” But he was all set for Notre Dame. I wasn’t going to interfere with *that*. I remember we got a sandwich and went and sat on a bench at Lake Merritt, which I liked to do. It was a lovely way to spend lunch. And he said, “I want to—” I said, “George, I’m not going to interfere with that.” But I said, “You know, I’m really interested in your being in the office.” Now, that was a hard invitation for me, because I knew his life was the parish, and so many years he had to wait until he could *get* a parish. In fact, he wasn’t a pastor until I was in Sacramento. He worked with me all those years and just—well, I realize it was a very personal—I don’t know if could say compliment, but—

04-00:41:02

LaBerge:

Yes, he did it for you.

04-00:41:04

Cummins:

Yes! Oh yes! We worked [together]—and then he wanted out. Well, so did the vicar general.

04-00:41:16

LaBerge:

Who was the vicar general?

04-00:41:14

Cummins:

That was Bill Macchi. He came in—he was a vicar general at thirty-nine. This is part of the youth movement. I did write an essay about that for the archives. [laughter] We were all young. Bill was the first to be appointed. George later became chancellor. Then I moved George from chancellor to vicar general to delay him even longer. I’m very greatly indebted and deeply appreciative of George Crespin. He worked well with me. He didn’t tell me everything he was doing and everything going on. He didn’t bother me with a lot of stuff, but he was always bright, always insightful.

04-00:42:06

LaBerge:

Well, back to the council—what other discussions were you in on besides—say ecumenism, religious liberty—what about the church in the modern world?

04-00:42:20

Cummins:

That wasn’t prominent in my time at the council. In fact, many people were doubtful that that ever would come up. We would have been *for* it. That was the mood of the times, yes. This isn’t quite to your point, but in December of ’63 I wrote an article for the [*Catholic*] *Voice*. At the end of the article I had asked [reading]—“Would it be described as a success? Is change coming too quickly? Is the uniqueness of the Roman Catholic Church assured?”

There’s a little sideline on that—some people feeling oh, you’re watering down the church and we’re all the same, and so on. But in the development of

the Graduate Theological Union, it was so clear that you come here immersed in your own tradition or you don't come here, because you're not going to serve this place at all. We expect that your faith is not going to be diminished when you come here—it's going to be more intense. My conclusion came from Yves Congar, that the council operates within the church, that the Council of Chalcedon was an example of the proper speed of change. Congar had stated that the work of the Vatican Council was to aid us, not to disturb us. And I said we can only guess the developments—the need to learn dialogue, the implications of collegiality, for the entire church. The lay people grabbed it quicker than some bishops did, I think. Another issue was the place of justice in our piety. Finally there was much wind in our sails, as somebody put it very well.

04-00:44:33

LaBerge:

And this was before you'd been to the council? This was just from what you were hearing about the council?

04-00:44:37

Cummins:

No, no. This was 1963, December. This was coming back. Where are we in this maelstrom of activity and development?

04-00:44:48

LaBerge:

Oh, I forgot—you were there in 1963.

04-00:44:48

Cummins:

Yes, October to December.

04-00:44:55

LaBerge:

Well, tell me about the place where you were staying, at the Savoy. Is that where everyone was gathered?

04-00:45:01

Cummins:

Oh no. They were all over the place. I'd say it was a forty-five minute walk. Well, the bishop and I stayed together.

04-00:45:14

LaBerge:

Like ate breakfast together?

04-00:45:17

Cummins:

Yes. We'd have Mass. I told the Camaldolese priests this story. I said, "Well, I would serve his Mass, and then he would serve *my* Mass." And a young priest said, "That doesn't make sense." I said, "That's why we have the Document on Liturgy." My goodness. Then we'd have breakfast, and the bus would pick us up and we'd be at St. Peter's before eight-thirty. The council would be in session till twelve-thirty. Then we'd go back on the bus and have lunch and siesta, and then you were free the rest of the afternoon. We went to dinner a lot, outside.

04-00:46:24
LaBerge:

Outside with different people.

04-00:46:25
Cummins:

Oh yes! The bishop had many friends, and I was just happy to be with them. I remember the American Maryknoller who started the Guadalupanos, which was the Mexican version of foreign missions; he was a friend of the bishop. We were with him a number of times. And then [John] Cardinal Krol, from Cleveland, we had dinner with him. I'm trying to think of who else—and then I was by myself. I went out with my classmate Warren Holleran whenever I felt like it. You know the bishop was fine about that.

04-00:47:09
LaBerge:

And you were going to all these press conferences?

04-00:47:12
Cummins:

Oh yes, oh yes. The afternoon was—I can't remember all the talks we went to. Had I learned more languages I could have gone to two every day. Well, even the first day when I got off the bus, the bishop from Fall River, Massachusetts, James [L.] Connolly, was in our hotel. His secretary was Humberto [S.] Medeiros, who became the bishop of Brownsville, Texas.

04-00:47:39
LaBerge:

Oh! Okay!

04-00:47:40
Cummins:

And then the cardinal archbishop of Boston, if you remember.

04-00:47:42
LaBerge:

Yes.

04-00:47:46
Cummins:

Monsignor Medeiros waited for me, "Bishop Begin asked me to introduce you to the council." Well, I had made the date with Mark Hurley. I don't regret that to this day, but I think it was [Frank] Maurovich who said, "You never had good political judgment." Mark took me around. We met Albert [C.] Outler, the Southern Methodist man, in the middle of the corridor behind the left side of St. Peter's. Hans Küng, and his beautiful red hair. And Mark said something that stirred him up—I thought Mark was kind of devilish with that one. Then we went in to have a cup of coffee, and Mark introduced me to Yves Congar. By that time I had three or four of his books. I was just awed by him—in a Dominican habit and very gentle. I was so sorry I didn't speak French.

Now I'll tell the story—there's a ninety-year-old nun from Mission San Jose, a Dominican sister who's still very alive, and she was at St. Mary Magdalene's when I first met her, taking care of disturbed teenage boys. She was a marvel and very tough with me, baiting me a bit about being *your*

excellency, and so forth. Then I ran into her once someplace, and she said, “Where have you been? You haven’t been up to our place for a couple of months.” And I thought, my goodness, I didn’t know I was so warmly—what seemed—we were *really* good friends. And she—

04-00:49:33

LaBerge:

What’s her name?

04-00:49:34

Cummins:

Sister Claudine [Hammer]. A number of months ago I was down for some event. She was at the table, six of us, and calls across, “What have you been reading lately?” And I said, “Well, I’m trying to manage *The Last Lion*, Churchill, but I don’t like nine-hundred-page books anymore.” “Did you read Yves Congar’s memoirs?” And I said, “No, it’s nine hundred pages.” “He was a hypochondriac, you know.” And I said, “Well, I didn’t really know that.” Now, to tell you the truth, I had looked in Congar’s book to read of the week that I met him at the council. I told her that. She said, “Was he sick?” I said, “Yes, as a matter of fact, he was. He went home that afternoon.” I said to her, “I was really surprised, because I thought his meeting me would have uplifted his spirits, he would have been so...” She thought that was very funny and then she recommended I finish the book. But when I was leaving she said, “Why don’t you come down sometime when we have time to talk instead of [in] a big crowd, and we can talk about all of the books you haven’t read.” [laughter] My Yves Congar story.

But I think I have about a hundred pages of Yves Congar I haven’t finished, but I wouldn’t want to miss that book, because I know so many of the players. Surprising he was so uncertain about the influence he was going to have on the council. Now, isn’t that interesting, that even those looking back, the giants, had a lot of misgivings about whether they were going to make any impact.

04-00:51:42

LaBerge:

What about the former Pope Benedict. Did you meet him there?

04-00:51:50

Cummins:

No. Well, I knew of him, but no, I wasn’t in any position to be with him.

04-00:52:01

LaBerge:

Was he also a *peritus*?

04-00:52:04

Cummins:

Oh yes, oh yes. I met him once in Dallas. Knights of Columbus, for years, have sponsored a gathering for bishops in Dallas, American bishops and some Latin Americans and Caribbean. I was part of that group. It was Pope John XXIII Center when I was attached to it. It’s now the National Catholic Bioethics Center. I ended up sitting with Cardinal Ratzinger [later Pope

Benedict XV] for dinner, and I invited him to Berkeley as an illustration of how well a diocese can get along with religious. I was serious about the invitation, but I wasn't pressing. I found him a quiet and an easy listener. That's my only connection with the cardinal.

04-00:53:15

LaBerge:

And what about Avery Dulles? Did you have time with him at the council?

04-00:53:20

Cummins:

No, I did not at the council, but George Crespin and I took a course of his when he was here one summer. It was on ecclesiology. Neither of us did the writing. We didn't take it for credit; we just audited.

04-00:53:39

LaBerge:

At GTU or someplace else?

04-00:53:41

Cummins:

GTU, yes. In the course of things—well, my brother would bring home such marvelous people. I'd bring home Ray Sontag to [the Cummins family home on] Woolsey Street, so I invited Avery Dulles and I told Ray Sontag about that. I said, "But he doesn't seem very exciting." Oh, I shouldn't put this down. But Ray said, "Well, his father wasn't very exciting. I can't imagine *he* would be." But Ray came down, and oh, it was a delightful evening! They had much to talk about.

04-00:54:20

LaBerge:

Oh, I bet.

04-00:54:20

Cummins:

That was the late 1960s. George and I were together then. We took the course for three weeks. He never forgot that we didn't do the writing. [laughter] And when I became bishop in Sacramento I remember he did write to me and say, "I remember having dinner at your house."

04-00:54:54

LaBerge:

Well, then when you came home from the council, how were you instructed by the bishop to implement—or what were you to do with—?

04-00:55:08

Cummins:

I wouldn't remember it quite that way. We got introduced to the variety of issues. We were immersed in everything for six weeks, you know. People that you wouldn't have paid much attention to—Bishop [Emiel-Jozef] De Smedt from Bruges, in Belgium, and his interventions were really worth listening to always. Everything was threaded. If you picked up on one topic, you'd find yourself into another. And even though I was asking those questions about where we were, I really—well, all of us were the same. We bought into the council, because we had been conditioned by enough change and openness from the seminary, I believe, to be ready for that. And the bishop was, from

the beginning, whatever the council issued, that's what we were going to do. Ecumenism was the apt illustration. He was far ahead of the general run of the American bishops on that score.

04-00:56:11

LaBerge:

Well, you talked about, already, that dinner he gave at the Claremont, which—that says a lot, that he did that.

04-00:56:17

Cummins:

But the connections too, that came out of the council meeting—Bill Baum at the council became the secretary of the Committee on Ecumenism from the American bishops—and very early on he invited me to be on the American Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue. That went on for five or six years, and that for me was a great experience. We had a professor from General Theological Seminary—oh my goodness, what was his name—gee, he was awfully good. The American Baptists were not only well educated, but held various leadership positions in ecumenism in the American church scene. We became such good friends. And then the [St. Francis de Sales] Cathedral organized, with Michael Lucid and Fathers Keeley and Osuna, the connection with the American Baptist church up on the corner [First Baptist Church of Oakland]. Whenever I'd come back from a gathering—it was at least once a year, maybe twice a year—I'd go to report to the Baptist church what was happening. They once introduced me—I think I told you this—as John the Baptist. [laughter] But Boyce Van Osdel, the pastor, was so congenial and friendly with the cathedral people. He preached at the cathedral once in my presence. He said, “This is Reformation Sunday. It's the day that Protestants go to church to thank God that they're not Roman Catholics.” [laughter]

There was another follow-up because of the relationship of Archbishop Krol, Cardinal Krol, to our bishop. Krol would come out here for his vacations to go down to Monterey. Harry [Anselm] Clinch had a membership at Pebble Beach, where they'd play golf.

When the American bishops set up the National Advisory Council—this was a group of bishops, priests, and especially—it was a lay group really—to look over the agenda for bishops' meetings in advance and then make a report on what this committee saw about these documents. They were very representative and a cross-section of the American church; just maybe forty people. I was on it for one session as chair of the Committee of the Laity. Our Sister Felicia Sarati served a term. Gesine Laufenberg, the first chair of our diocesan pastoral council, also served. She was the vice chair of the thing. The bishop who was the main advisor, Tom Costello, thought she would rise to the top to be the boss of it.

While I was chancellor I was called back to Washington, invited by Cardinal Krol. Cardinal John Francis Dearden was there from Detroit, two other priests besides and Bishop [Bernard Joseph] Flanagan from Worcester, Massachusetts, who had a reputation for engaging much with lay people. I'm not sure we were that good at that time. I remember that Cardinal Krol said, "Do you want to come back tonight with me to Philly?" And I said, "Oh I'm sorry, but Frank Maurovich is coming into town." When Maurovich came, we went to dinner. I told him the story—"Oh Cummins, you have no *sense!*" [laughter] You get an invitation to go back with the cardinal [and you turn it down]."

That was my first real close look at Cardinal Dearden. I came to admire him very much. At bishops' meetings he was so available for—just conversation. Early on, after I was bishop, a committee was preparing a document on moral theology. The Canadian bishops had done a similar paper some weeks before, and theirs was a flowing essay. I thought it the suitable style. I went to Cardinal Dearden remarking that "our document is coming out like a catechism. The Canadian style..." And he said, "Well, if you have that qualm, you should express it, because there will be people in the room who have the same sense as you."

04-01:02:27

LaBerge:

So did you speak it?

04-01:02:29

Cummins:

Yes, I did. I was soft about it. This had been about the third revision of the document, so you had to be kind, because the bishop in charge was an auxiliary in Pittsburgh and a gentle man. I didn't want to hurt him. Also about Cardinal Dearden—his fiftieth anniversary as a priest coincided with a trip I was making to Washington. I moved my travels up a day to attend his celebration. He was gracious on my arrival—"I really appreciate," I guess he thought I made it straight to Detroit.

04-01:03:13

LaBerge:

Just for that, yes.

04-01:03:16

Cummins:

But it was a side trip. That's all it was. I remain admiring of him. He put us on a wonderful course as the first president of the American Bishops' Conference.

04-01:03:32

LaBerge:

Let's talk about some of the other documents, even if you weren't at the council.

04-01:03:35

Cummins:

Sure.

04-01:03:39
LaBerge:

The Document on Religious Life, for instance. I know you haven't prepared this, but just something off the top of your head or any other one that you have something—

04-01:03:50
Cummins:

As to the Document on Religious Life, some people didn't think it was sensational, but it followed in a pattern. In 1950 Pius XII put out a document on religious life, the need of updating, mentioning specifically the updating of dress, the identity of their charism, how they should adapt their rule of life according to contemporary times. People like [IHM Sister] Sandra Schneiders have spoken that they were absolutely in an active life, full-blown professionals in teaching and in meetings, and yet they had a monastic existence to attend to, to be home for the prayers. It was a heavy mix. The pope spoke also of professionalism; he echoed Étienne Gilson—if you're going to serve, you've got to be good at it. It can't be amateur hour. What did somebody say—goodwill is not enough!

In response, the U.S. sisters established in 1955 the Sisters' Formation Conference. Some leadership came from here. The president of Holy Names College, Sister Rose Emmanuella Brennan, was the first staffperson for what led to the LCWR [Leadership Conference of Women Religious] eventually. At that time [Léon Joseph] Cardinal Suenens had written a book, *The Nun in the World*, probing how religious become contemporary women to serve both humanity and the church. American religious women served the interior life of the church. They developed the strength of the church with schools and the hospitals. But the next step was moving out into the whole human family, which they've done very well. To change all their constitutions and bring them up-to-date, that was a huge enterprise.

04-01:06:30
LaBerge:

Yes, but that wasn't controversial at the council at all?

04-01:06:32
Cummins:

I don't think so.

04-01:06:33
LaBerge:

I didn't realize that Pius XII had set that in motion.

04-01:06:37
Cummins:

Oh yes, there was much underway. Oh, I imagine there was some—there'd be always the non-moving people, but it was a forward document, yes.

The document on the priesthood wasn't even in the original subjects to be treated, but [Albert] Cardinal Meyer from Chicago said, "Well, you can't have a council and not attend to the priests." [laughing] Many feel that document could have been more revolutionary and groundbreaking, but I think we've all

found enough in there for a blueprint for what it means to be a priest in the contemporary church. Yes.

One thing the council did was just to spark enormous conversation in the academic world. At the USF summer programs, the faculty was richly international. Karl Rahner was there for a session, Raymond [E.] Brown and Max Zerwick, the scripture man. People came from all over the country for the whole summer. Great complaints about coming out to sunny California in July, at USF on the top of the hill with the wind blowing, and oh my! St. Mary's College would have a seminar almost every June with Richard McCormick, Charlie Curran—I think Piet Fransen was there, and Piet Fransen was at Holy Names University again, in a summer session. Berkeley too was a center for ecumenical activity. It was one gathering after another. And John Dillenberger, getting up at the Pacific School of Religion chapel one day and saying, "The Vatican Council has removed the rationale for Protestantism." He says that at the PSR chapel. [laughter]

04-01:09:37

LaBerge:

Well, when you came back, how did you go about implementing—or did you go back to your regular job and just—that was part of the spirit of—?

04-01:09:46

Cummins:

Well, I really was oriented by the time I came back. We all were. We had plenty of time—four years.

04-01:09:51

LaBerge:

It sounds like it. Yes. You already talked about being at the Congress on Racial Equality.

04-01:10:01

Cummins:

Yes, we were moving. You know that sense of being a part of the world, yes, that was coming—that was pretty strong, that current and that wave. I can't remember that we theorized that much about it. But I think the thing that settled us was the unambiguous position of Bishop Begin, that the Vatican Council is the teaching arm of the church. Now, compare that to—I have to be careful here, but [James Francis] Cardinal McIntyre was much more ambiguous and had no enthusiasm for so many of the directions. I think he was opposed to the religious liberty development, and he certainly would not be on the side of collegiality. He was for the papal authority without reservation.

04-01:11:04

LaBerge:

I hadn't realized how much opposition there was till I started reading—is it [Massimo] Faggioli's—the fellow you were on a panel with at St. Mary's—his book [*Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning*], how much opposition there was and tension between the two different parties.

04-01:11:21

Cummins: [laughing] Well, some are seeing it revived with Pope Francis and some American bishops.

04-01:12:22

LaBerge: Yes. Well, what was happening at the cathedral when you came back?

04-01:12:28

Cummins: They were really underway. They set themselves up as a teaching committee for any parish that wished to have them. They went out to a number of places, but I think they gradually—you'd have to have Don Osuna speak to this—they gradually settled at the best thing they could do was to make liturgy something that could be imitated. They put their major efforts at home rather than moving around the diocese. They gathered together so much talent. It could be picked up from the GTU people and—

04-01:13:27

LaBerge: And who was responsible for that?

04-01:13:29

Cummins: Well, it was the team really. The way they moved into it, they made a summer program with the school. That's where they really did a lot of initiating, trying things and involving the school people. A strong group of Holy Names sisters were part of that operation. The team was really important. You had Osuna with the art and the ideas and the creation of things. You had Lucid for the strong hand of the administration, that could keep the chancery in touch. And then Jim Keeley was such a delightful, talented, pastoral man, who was kind of—I once said glue, but somebody more flexible, that he really could be a contributor to the gathering of a community. But those men were always around. They were focused on the cathedral.

The position of the three schools in Berkeley, of Catholic schools and the whole GTU—there were resources that could be utilized around here, and they were.

04-01:15:13

LaBerge: Someone mentioned once that because the diocese was new, in some ways it was easier to implement Vatican II because there weren't all these things entrenched that had to be changed, but that you could build it from the ground up with a new spirit.

04-01:15:32

Cummins: I think that's true. And also Bishop Begin. The new dioceses started using the diocesan paper in San Francisco, Stockton, Santa Rosa, and Oakland—we'd have our page. That didn't last in Oakland. Bishop Begin wanted his own paper. He didn't want to be in opposition, but he wanted to have our distinct identity. And then his attitude toward the council was really important. But he

had us—we were in our twenties and thirties in all these positions! We weren't locked into an older pattern. I think if he had his whole staff and operation and deans in the older age group, it might have been very different. But we were free! And then he wasn't averse to our taking initiative and trying something new.

04-01:16:40
LaBerge:

Wonderful, wonderful. Do you think it just happened like that? Or did he have that kind of vision?

04-01:16:49
Cummins:

I'd say he wasn't fearful that way. We were the first diocese, I believe, that set up a deacon program. Dan Danielson latched onto the charismatics, to keep that within the diocese. See, the bishop would be easy with that kind of thing. He'd want to know what's happening, of course, and he could object. I wrote the story about this—there was a group down picketing the *Catholic Voice* one day, and of course, he wanted to know who the people were, whoever it was. Well, Jeff Burns tells the story that, "Oh, they're protesting the *Catholic Voice*." "Well, I'm going to go down and join them." This kind of thing could happen. But it had a follow up within a couple of months. A bishops' meeting took place in Chicago, and the Catholic journalist group invited them for lunch. Our bishop went to the lunch to find Frank Maurovich, his editor, the master of ceremonies. He'd be proud of a thing like that, and it wasn't a terrible vanity. [interruption in recording]. The bishop once had a secretary who was quite conservative. He could move in that direction at times too. Now, he wasn't revolutionary. He was traditional. [Father] Brian Joyce was quoted—"a canonical mind/pastoral heart"—that he could go against the conservative direction at times.

04-01:19:24
LaBerge:

Okay, I'm looking at other things about Vatican II, just if you have comments or if you've got something else you wanted to say.

04-01:19:30
Cummins:

No.

04-01:19:33
LaBerge:

What about—you started talking about scripture. Wasn't there a Document on Revelation?

04-01:19:40
Cummins:

That was an important document. I mentioned it yesterday in Orinda as one of the top four. It changed so much in our theology, as you'd go looking to the scripture for that field. That was a big change. That's why Monsignor John Connolly was once saying, "Wait a minute. There is scripture and then there is tradition, separate." The council said, "You have Jesus Christ. That's the Word," and how that is translated down through the written word, but also

through the understanding of the church. That makes the subject very organic and also very unified. But the place of scripture in theology—our moral theology was almost philosophical rather than—. I remember one who was at the council in my time, one of the *periti*, said, “Oh, the ten commandments—that’s elementary school.” His meaning was that that’s not the model of your life. The commandments are just fundamental—the things you shouldn’t be doing. And then if you remember, at Mass, the first part of the Mass, the Mass of the Catechumens, you could miss that and still take care of your Sunday obligation.

04-01:21:04

LaBerge:

Exactly. As long as you got there for the gospel. [laughing]

04-01:21:07

Cummins:

And then—how important was preaching? You could skip it in summer from the heat. People just don’t make that distinction anymore. And people realize—the opening of the word. Sundays we had [the gospel of] Matthew and not much else. All of a sudden you get the whole cycle [Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John] for Sunday, and then people started paying greater attention to preaching. Priests, by and large, did too. But the preaching is not catechism. It’s opening the word. A big change. The devotional patterns also—Holy Hours, Our Lady of Perpetual Help—all of those took on a scriptural flavor. That really ate into devotions. Some people say, whatever happened to the good old days? Well, the good old days were transformed into scripture. And then there was opening of schools and studies of scripture. Our people started going to the Presbyterians and the Methodists, where they had the classes in scripture. If you opened a course on scripture in the parish, you’d do fine. Social justice, you wouldn’t do so well. That was a controversial kind of topic. But oh no, scripture really came into vogue, and then the daily change—

04-01:23:00

LaBerge:

The daily change, you mean with homilies?

04-01:23:02

Cummins:

Yes, every day a new gospel.

04-01:23:06

LaBerge:

Yes.

04-01:23:08

Cummins:

When I was at Corpus Christi. I didn’t preach in the morning. It was too much work! I resisted that. Oh, I finally broke down and could give a two-minute commentary. The week that I started doing that at Corpus Christi, the following Sunday a parishioner who worked for Kaiser, Bud Carol, came outside after Mass and said, “Gee, you know something you said Wednesday in your homily...” I didn’t say it, and I thought—

04-01:23:40
LaBerge:

But he heard that; it's what he heard or understood.

04-01:23:43
Cummins:

It's that he was, people are geared up for listening to that word. It was his thought bouncing off, I guess, what I said and what he read. But I thought—oh, this is enriching. This is not just “read it and go on.” I think the change is in some ways imperceptible and some ways subtle, but oh, it's so different in our lives. I recall Jack [John L.] Boyle who taught scripture at the Jesuit [School of Theology]. He gave us a day of—well, we had a lot of study days following the council. But he said, “You know, you can't teach the scripture as literature. I was invited to Cal Extension to do a course on the Bible as literature. We got into an argument every class night, because the scripture is alive. It speaks to conscience.” People would get up and start arguing with each other—some hostility there. But his point was, it's just alive in a way that nothing else is.

I remember, too, a Jerry [Gerald F.] O'Keefe, bishop in Davenport, Iowa. Gee, he was a nice man. We were at the bishops' meeting and we stayed together as a group. It was really not so much a business meeting; it was a reflection time. He was talking about the old days—a cardinal was always the president of the bishops' conference, and if you were auxiliary bishop you just didn't say anything. He was also talking about the scripture and how they had a lengthy session on that. He told a story that he had a Benedictine nun aunt, and he went there the week he got ordained, a newly-ordained priest. Twenty-five years later he was back for his anniversary, I guess. And she said, “Oh, I never forget that line you said years ago, ‘Now is the acceptable time.’” And Jerry said, “Those are not my words.” [laughter]

04-01:26:20
LaBerge:

Anything else that you wanted to say today that you have—?

04-01:26:30
Cummins:

Well, I think I wanted to talk about the stimulation of ecumenism in the diocese that came. I think we dealt with that. The Document on the Laity, I don't think came out till '65.

04-01:26:51
LaBerge:

And how revolutionary or how significant?

04-01:26:57
Cummins:

You know, I don't remember that. I'll tell you what is revolutionary: “people of God.”

04-01:27:00
LaBerge:

Was that in that document?

04-01:27:05

Cummins: It's in the Document on the Church.

04-01:27:06

LaBerge: The church, okay. You've spoken about that, but not on tape, so please.

04-01:27:11

Cummins: That concept is really loaded, you know. And the way that the Document on the Church was organized, hierarchy is—I forget—is it the third or fourth chapter? [telephone ringing] Oh my. [brief interruption in recording]

I was invited a number of places to talk because I had been at the council. But that was my point yesterday at Orinda. The council is embedded in our thinking—everybody knows [the concept of] the people of God! We're part of the church and we benefit from the gift of baptism, confirmation, but we also have responsibility for the church. Wrapped up with the people of God is the universal call to holiness. Therefore, you have to have access to sacraments and you have to have access to instruction in prayer and opportunity for that. Participation, certainly in liturgy. Going to Mass and sitting there, that's not—as one woman said, “This is too passive,” the Latin Mass. And then there was opening to real formation in spirituality. I don't think people knew Ignatian spirituality until after the council. We invited a Carmelite to Davis to talk about spirituality of the Carmelites—what has that to offer? Now, I think the Franciscan third order and the Dominican third order, that was in vogue, got another boost.

And then lay participation in the administration of a diocese—there have to be avenues of consultation. That's written into the Document on the Church and the Document on the Bishops and the Document on the Laity. Add the acknowledgement of the autonomy of the human sciences—really, the holiness of the layperson in Étienne Gilson's [writings]—you can choose to be whatever you want, but whatever you choose, you have to be good at it and you've got to be disciplined at it, otherwise you can't serve well.

There remained something that was very much part of our life. We didn't have to be taught it, namely, concern for the church people but also for people outside of the church. We had a good sense of that, but not to the extent that Vatican II brought in with the Church in the Modern World. The areas of economic life, war and peace, of family, culture, the dialogue with culture, to humanize the whole earthly world—that came to be much more explicit, but we were ready for that, I think. Religious women have been par excellence as models. Next Step Learning Center [in Oakland]—that is making no distinction about who is baptized, and the Friendly Manor down there, too, taking care of the women off the streets. Well, there's just so much.

Opus Dei in its own way is trying to move into the secular sphere. I guess certain aspects of that some of us find difficult, but it started in 1928, so it was ahead of the council.

04-01:31:09

LaBerge:

But just that idea—the separation between the world and the church, matter and spirit, the attitude toward it became different, right?

04-01:31:20

Cummins:

Oh yes, very much. And to this day, in the Gospel of John, I think so many have written on this, including our Berkeley people—they are not “of the world.” That “world” has a bad connotation. But God loved the world! It’s a holy connotation. So that ambiguity—and I think that’s maybe the Latin Mass that came up yesterday [during a talk I was giving], that there’s a monastic kind of spirituality that takes you apart, there’s a spirituality of your rootedness in the life you lead, and it’s all the presence of God.

Our first pastoral council put lay development as the number-one priority. That was 1983. That was a unanimous judgment, that that should be number one, because people were moving into so many positions, even in the chancery office. You have a chancellor who is a lay person. When I came in 1977, every department of the diocese was run by a priest. And once upon a time, I’m not sure 1977 was the time, but each religious community would have a priest—not director, not chaplain, but some connection, that that would be the connection with the diocese. Well, that changed. It was gradual, rather imperceptible. But the mentality came with it—well, you don’t have to have a priest to do the diocesan paper. A priest doesn’t have to be the financial officer.

04-01:33:16

LaBerge:

Yes. Well, you brought that in, it sounds like.

04-01:33:18

Cummins:

But that was the mood of the diocese, yes. We brought the nuns together for an open session. It would have been, oh probably in February or March of the year after I came. We spent a whole day at Moreau High School, in small groups, and lined up the top ten issues. They stayed for dinner. But they didn’t want a follow-up. The idea of having a sisters’ committee—there’s some politics about that they didn’t care for.

But one Dominican sister made herself a spokesperson and came in to see me about something. But then she brought up, “Well, what’s available for religious women?” I said, “The director of cemeteries is open, but I don’t think anybody’s interested in that.” And then I said something else, “Well, this is going to get open.” Maybe it was the *Catholic Voice*. I said, “I don’t care if it’s a man, woman, or a gorilla, but it’s going to be somebody who can

do the job.” She came back a year later and—oh, she had some other issue, and I can’t remember what it was. At the close she said, “Oh, thanks very much.” I said, “Wait a minute. You were here last year kind of beating me up, and we happen to have six women in place since.” “Oh, I knew you’d bring that up,” she said. We didn’t make a case out of it or a movement.

I think Ken Reggio did, when he left the [Catholic] Charities—he wanted a woman in there. I thought that wasn’t what we were after. We wanted capability. Then we had Cath McGhee take over the administration of St. Monica’s Parish.

04-01:35:29
LaBerge:

That’s right.

04-01:35:33
Cummins:

We had the deacon George Peters take over St. Alphonsus Liguori, and a sister—oh, the wonderful one from St. Andrew’s/St. Joseph’s—Wright! Marian Wright, who just was splendid at operating that. We weren’t trying to remove pastors, we were just finding capable people to take over situations. We could see what was coming, that if you don’t have talented priests you were going to be careful about appointing them to major roles. We didn’t get many eyebrows raised. Of course, the first year Cath McGhee was at St. Monica’s, I’d meet people from the parish who’d say, “Don’t forget us.” Meaning—we want a Brian Joyce from you.

04-01:36:31
LaBerge:

Right. [laughter]

04-01:36:34
Cummins:

After a few years I didn’t even hear that. They were so content there. But I think what we *didn’t* do, really develop a spirituality of the lay people in the mission in the world. I told that story yesterday. I said, “We had the Christophers to offer to them, that they’ll light a candle instead of cursing the darkness.” I said that. I was in the Philippines in 1979, in Mindanao, and they had union organizers at the parish; they had catechists and other staff, and it was martial law. It was dangerous to be doing all that. But you talk about a team—nobody was out there by himself or herself lighting a candle. You’d get that candle blown out in a hurricane. I thought we had much to learn about supporting those people who needed protection from being interfered with.

04-01:37:40
LaBerge:

Well, why don’t we stop there for today and we’ll pick up next time?

04-01:37:44
Cummins:

Okay.

Interview 5: January 13, 2015

05-00:00:00

LaBerge:

Okay, we are on! Today is January 13, 2015. This is interview five with Bishop John Cummins. Well, the last time we covered mostly Vatican II, but I'm going back to another conversation which we didn't finish. And one was civil rights in the diocese in the sixties. And you just started to talk about the Rumford Fair Housing Act. So tell me—what involvement did the diocese have with that?

05-00:00:40

Cummins:

Byron Rumford was our assemblyman here. The Rumford [Fair Housing] Act went through [in 1964], which was: you cannot discriminate in housing. It mentioned the covenant, the restriction, that people were not allowed, in certain areas, to sell homes to—especially African Americans. An attempt was made to block it. I wouldn't remember the name, but there was a statewide committee for realtors [California Real Estate Association] that got an initiative created. Bishop Begin, early on, declared publically, "Don't sign that."

I'm distracted by something else. He was slow to pick up with the ethnic peoples here. I think it was the result of coming out of Cleveland, with so many national parishes. That had been a heritage of a lot of disagreement, especially when the diocese tried to close them down. But he was different with the African Americans. He had gotten national publicity—and even in his obituary in the *New York Times*, he told the Knights of Columbus that this is not a white organization and you are to welcome people in.

He was very strong about "don't sign that petition," but it got signed. Then what to do about it? He—well, *we* wrote a letter. Frank Maurovich, George Crespin, and myself—and it was rather well done! He signed that. I remember it was in June that he said, "I want that read in every parish." The initiative could not be contained within Catholic social teaching; the right to private property is not absolute; and there's a community responsibility. He was courageous. Cardinal McIntyre was an uncertain trumpet about the matter, and I don't think the bishops came out as strongly as Bishop Begin did, so we were really proud of him. Then he went off to the council. We were somewhat happy, because he could be volatile. I remember the *National Catholic Reporter* called him one day and said something about his giving money to some cause. And he said, "Oh! I'll give money where I feel like giving money. It's none of your business." That kind of thing.

The Catholic Interracial Council was operating at that time and we had many people who could speak to the issue. We had Sister Toinette Eugene, who was a Presentation sister at that time. I think by this time we were developing the

Social Justice Commission, which was a much more powerful weapon than the Catholic Interracial Council. Once you had the approval of the bishop, that this was a diocesan organization, nobody would have a door shut for you. We went to Castro Valley. Toinette Eugene and I went out to Pleasant Hill one evening, the two of us with the pastor. But despite our efforts, it was a 2 to 1 negative vote. That was very disappointing. We were young, so we were offended. But the bishop he came back from Rome and said, “No, no. We’re not going to stop what we’re doing.”

05-00:05:06

LaBerge: So you just kept plugging along at it.

05-00:05:09

Cummins: In 1966, that initiative was declared unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court. That was a good thing. Well we continued the East Bay Conference on Religion and Race. That was operative, and we had good connections with the black ministers. I won’t remember all their names, but Robert Hill from Taylor Memorial [United] Methodist—was just an elegant man. He was a good friend, and had a wife who when she retired went to teach English at McClymonds High School. They were marvelous. J. Alfred Smith came later, and he was prominent. I can’t remember all the people we had, but it was a great combo. We had Rabbi John [J.] Zucker from San Leandro, our avenue to the Jewish community. We really liked each other. We were happy to be at meetings. And then Bishop Begin [would ask] what do you need by way of money?

05-00:06:28

LaBerge: That’s great!

05-00:06:29

Cummins: Oh yes. We didn’t have to worry about raising funds. He took care of us.

05-00:06:36

LaBerge: It kind of went in with the whole Vatican II spirit, didn’t it, without being a part of it?

05-00:06:37

Cummins: Oh, absolutely! Yes.

05-00:06:39

LaBerge: But it flowed from that.

05-00:06:40

Cummins: And we hadn’t really drunk in the whole *Gaudium et Spes*, the Doctrine [on] the Church in the Modern World—but we had enough of it that we felt our responsibility. And the bishop would be unequivocal. Oh my! It’s where we go.

05-00:07:02
LaBerge:

Well, another thing you mentioned after the tape was off—that Monsignor [John] Connolly was the finance guy when you were appointed bishop. You had to talk to him about the finances because he was worried things were going to be different?

05-00:07:38
Cummins:

Well, I don't think he wanted me to be bishop. He was old school, though he had been at the council. But he learned from the council. I remember he wrote in the *Catholic Voice* in 1964 about scripture and what had been developed in scripture. He wasn't at that point in 1963 when the bishop went after me at his house, Monsignor Jack Connolly's house, for saying we know more about scripture than any generation before us. But when I came back from Sacramento to be bishop here, the very first day he said, "I'm not comfortable working with you. You're going to give away all your authority to committees." And my reaction was, "Monsignor, you really can't give away your authority to committees, because every time there's a tough issue you'll find they prefer to avoid decision." I also said I just wouldn't feel I'd have the wisdom to take care of so many things unless we had committees of experts. And I really brought to his attention that he had a finance committee!

Now, we enlarged that committee, and I remember I went to every meeting the first year because finance people can become your pastoral council. [laughing] I had learned—I was on the trustees at St. Mary's College, and the first three years the college was running in the red, and it was only when we got two more business types on the trustees—you'd see how important those people were, to demand changes and cuts, and so forth. And I learned that. I thought you can't function without very expert advice.

Also, by that time Walter [J.] Burghardt had passed through Stockton. I had his document on the style of authority after the Vatican Council. Underneath all that was *the people of God*, an expression easy to grasp—that as people of God, you have the benefits of sacraments and church life and community, but you also have responsibility. People were really happy to pick up on that. It was an honor, really, if you invited them on a diocesan committee, and then liturgically they wanted that participation. Well, parish councils—that was a hard sell.

05-00:10:33
LaBerge:

Parish councils?

05-00:10:36
Cummins:

A hard sell, not to the people; it was a hard sell to some of the pastors.

05-00:10:40
LaBerge:

I see, I see, because they were used to being the only decider, and without having to consult?

05-00:10:48

Cummins:

One of the older men said, “Well, if you have a parish council, you can’t do what you want to do.” [laughter] And then there would be a number that would say, “Now, I’m inviting you to the parish council, but you’re merely consultative.” And my advice always on that—don’t get on that council. You’re not going to be respected. Bishop Begin in theory supported parish councils because the council ordered them. A good number of parishes had started councils early on, and they were to have a meeting I think at Monterey for a few days. He wrote something to the effect—it was to Father Oliver Lynch, who was very close to him, the Franciscan at St. Elizabeth’s, and said, “I don’t approve of your getting together.” He thought it was going to be a move against clerical rule or something. But he said, “When you can, with the money that has been collected, take everybody to lunch and then disband them.” But no, he wasn’t favorable at that time. But later on, as it became the requirement, he set two deadlines for establishing them. But it wasn’t till 1983, when they revised the Code of Canon Law, that it was very clear that you make a diocesan decision whether parish councils are the policy or not. Well, by that time there was no way of cutting back in the diocese, so we just put it out—parish councils are required by canon law. That moved the pattern along very quickly.

05-00:12:55

LaBerge:

Okay, then the next thing—

05-00:12:54

Cummins:

I want to say one thing more about Monsignor John Connolly. He was on the priests’ senate. And when we organized it—I can’t remember exactly the issue, but he was really so uncomfortable, indeed negative. And my estimation was he may represent some very key older men, and I don’t want to estrange *them*. I remember it was Father Pat LaBelle, the Dominican said, “Well, I think we have a consensus.” I said, “No, we don’t. We don’t have Monsignor Connolly.” Monsignor was honored by that, and he told somebody—I learned it from that person—that he felt he had more freedom in my time than he did in Bishop Begin’s time. Now, he never said that to me!

It took me until December from June before I decided on his successor—and I even thought [of] maybe keeping him on, because he liked that work. But a very wise advisor said, “His style of authority is not yours, and you can’t expect him to pick up and be comfortable with that.” So I arranged to have a conversation with Father Bill Macchi, who was only thirty-nine years old, the director of Catholic Charities, an economics major from USF, with an MA from Cal, from the School of Social [Welfare]. We couldn’t get our calendars together. I finally said to Bill, “Listen, I’m going to Antioch for a confirmation. Why don’t we go out together and we can talk.” Well, before we got to the Caldecott Tunnel, Bill said fine about being the vicar general and in charge of finance. So then my turn to tell Monsignor that on the 31st of

January, Bill Macchi would be coming in. Oh, I can see the look on his face, he just—so I kept him on with the building committee and with the cemeteries—and there was one more thing. He was more than just a figurehead. It kept his hand in, and he was available for conversation. We got along fine after that.

05-00:15:27

LaBerge:

And what was his title then, after Bill Macchi came in?

05-00:15:30

Cummins:

Well, he'd be the one in charge of cemeteries, the one in charge of the building committee, and he'd be working under Bill Macchi. And then he was around a lot. He stayed on, oh gosh, another ten years and more, I guess. Yes.

05-00:15:52

LaBerge:

The way you did it sounded very—both compassionate and thoughtful and pragmatic, too.

05-00:16:01

Cummins:

Oh yes, but I didn't want to estrange the older men. If he thought I was going to just give away my authority, I wanted to make sure the other ones didn't think the same. But I never caught that from others. No, not really.

05-00:16:22

LaBerge:

Tell me about the call to become the bishop. You were in Sacramento, and how did this all come about?

05-00:16:30

Cummins:

I was three years in Sacramento. My brother died on January 14.

05-00:16:42

LaBerge:

What year is this?

05-00:16:44

Cummins:

Nineteen seventy-four.

05-00:16:50

LaBerge:

Tomorrow.

05-00:16:50

Cummins:

Yes, it's forty-one years. I can't believe it's so long. At that time a classmate of mine, who was our class president, left and got married. He was here [in Oakland]. And I guess I was so distressed by both those things.

Moving on had been on my mind. In my acceptance to go to Sacramento, I had signed up for three years. Bishop Donohoe from Fresno, who was a friend, markedly objected, "What do you mean you are signing up for three years?" I said, "You keep your option open, and I'm going to keep mine open."

I don't know if I can do this job at all." In 1974 I thought well, three more years. The remaining option for me was to be a pastor, and I had been out of parish work for so long. But then I came to San Francisco some weeks after my brother had died to deal with items about my brother's insurance. We never talked about those things.

05-00:17:49

LaBerge: Yes, but were you in charge of doing all of that?

05-00:17:52

Cummins: Oh yes. I came down to St. Agnes, my brother's parish. There also was a gathering that was part of my responsibility—a luncheon with the Conference of Christians and Jews in San Francisco. So I went to that luncheon, and then to St. Agnes. On the bulletin board, as I came in the room there, in the house, "Call Bishop Begin." And then a second one, "Call Bishop Begin." Another one, "Call Bishop [Alden J.] Bell." So I phoned Bishop Begin, and he said, "Listen, I've got to talk to you." He had just dissolved the Social Justice Commission.

05-00:18:36

LaBerge: Oh my goodness!

05-00:18:37

Cummins: And I thought oh, I don't want to get involved in this, and I didn't know what he was going to ask me to do. But he said, "What are you doing for dinner tonight?" I said, "Well, Pierre DuMaine is here." We were going to dinner because the NCEA, the National Catholic Educational Association, had a meeting in San Francisco of some of their leadership. The bishop said, "Oh, I've got a confirmation tonight. What are you doing in the morning?" I said, "I'm fine." "Well, come to the house." I said, "Okay." I stayed with the folks that evening. I went over at nine o'clock in the morning. I have that letter somewhere in this house, and I can't find it. I hope I didn't put it in a book or a breviary. It was a very short note from the apostolic delegate. The bishop gave it to me to read, "Dear Bishop Begin, Pope Paul VI has decided to appoint John Cummins as auxiliary bishop in Sacramento." And the line that I want to find read something to the effect whether I would be agreeable to this—which for me was very clear I could have refused it. Forty years later I was told you would not refuse such, to make the apostolic nuncio look good. Perhaps that's why this era they say they don't give you that choice. Oh, I'm glad to be able to tell this story. Well, on the letterhead at the top, *pontifical secret*, and you're not allowed to break this. It was serious stuff. Well, I said to the bishop, "Wow, let me take a week on this." To which he said, "This is the call of God." And I said, "I am very thin-skinned for that job, and I want to have time to think." I remember he said, "It's not as hard as it looks." [laughter] And then I said, "Well, I have to talk to my confessor." And he said, "Oh yes, you can talk to your confessor."

Well, I went home to my folks. It was the gas shortage, and my mother had just been diagnosed with some mild diabetes, a situation creating moods that she never had experienced. She was placid all her life. I didn't want to talk to her about it. But to my dad, "We're going to get some gas." I gave him the letter, as we sat in the car out front. He read it and didn't say anything. After some silence, "Well, you have more experience now, so that means more responsibility. You're old enough. That won't change you. You don't have all the qualities for that job, but I'll tell you what you do have." [laughter] I told that to a friend of mine once—

05-00:22:01

LaBerge: Only your family can tell you that.

05-00:22:01

Cummins: This gentleman said, "Oh, the Irish. They can't compliment their kids." My father's last observation began, "Now, I'll tell you the trouble with bishops." And I thought he might have started with that. He wasn't an habitual critic, but he could analyze. He continued, "Bishops are inclined to talk to the important people, but every man, every woman has a story—and you listen to those stories." I told that once to a group. I thought they were going to line up in columns of four at the chancery office. What was clear was he didn't see that I *shouldn't* take it. I remember that night I was just going to bed in the back room there at home. He kept his best suit in that closet. As he hung up the jacket he said quietly, "I think you'll enjoy that job." And he never talked again about reading that letter or—because he saw the notice [at the top].

05-00:23:15

LaBerge: He saw that it was a pontifical secret, yes.

05-00:23:18

Cummins: A pontifical secret, yes. Never brought it up again. I would have had such confidence in him that if he had said, "not a good idea..."

05-00:23:31

LaBerge: You wouldn't have done it.

05-00:23:31

Cummins: I wouldn't have done it, I'm sure.

05-00:23:35

LaBerge: And then—there was something about Raymond Sontag also helped you make the decision.

05-00:23:43

Cummins: Well, if I hadn't gone to Sacramento I would not have been a bishop, I'm sure. Bishop [Begin] came back in 1970, in November, from the national meeting. He never spoke about those meetings, whereas when I became bishop, I would

come back, and whatever was relevant to the diocese, I would write an article about it in the *Catholic Voice*.

05-00:24:11

LaBerge: In the *Catholic Voice*. I remember that!

05-00:24:12

Cummins: Because I felt—you want the bishop translated by the secular press? You're going to get a different slant. But we were eager to find *out*. I remember going in to the bishop, "What happened at the meeting?" His first response was, "Well, we stopped communion in the hand." He was opposed to that. Perhaps he thought it would lead to lack of reverence or whatever. Then he said, "We have a California Catholic Conference." He had pressed that issue from the time he came to Oakland. This was 1970. He had been here eight years. He had promoted that, because Ohio had a state conference of the bishops, and so too New York, Pennsylvania, but California didn't. I offered congratulations. "It's not all good news. They're going to ask you to be the secretary [of the California Catholic Conference]." And I said quite quickly, "Bishop, I'm not the least bit interested in that." His secretary, Joe [Joseph H.] Skillin, was the one in the chancery who went to the city hall and into the politics and liked to deal with the people in that world. And I was—negative. A few days later he asked me if I had given further consideration. And would I talk to Bishop Bell?

05-00:25:48

LaBerge: And Bishop Bell is in Sacramento?

05-00:25:49

Cummins: Sacramento, yes. A most wonderful man and a most wonderful boss. We became compatible—I was Mr. Outside; he was Mr. Inside. We really clicked, as they say. I reluctantly went up to see him; I listened to what the office had been doing. He also got into something about marriage preparation, and I thought it was off the point. He did say to me, "I know your mother is not well. You could live at Davis, and that would put you closer to Berkeley. You wouldn't be needed there, because they have two associates with the pastor." So on the way here I went back through Davis. But I was unenthusiastic. I really was. And Father Andy Coffey, the pastor—we had met at Dodge Ridge skiing years before. He remembered me when he saw me, but he didn't remember me when I called. When I came home Ruby Bennett, who was our bookkeeper, said, "You're not going to take that job, are you?" I said, "Well, I'm not terribly interested in it."

By this time Ray Sontag had really become a mentor to Jim Keeley and Frank Maurovich, myself. He'd have us up for dinner. And, of course, my folks were so great for inviting people, and my mother was a very good cook. It got to the point where she would call Ray at four-thirty on a Sunday and say,

“Monsignor Ellis is coming over for dinner. Why don’t you come down?” He was part of the family by this time. I would also have lunch every month or so with him at the Faculty Club, because he was really wise. Oh, and John Tracy Ellis said, when he died, “We shall not see his like again in our generation.” So I went up, and by this time I had that invitation from Cardinal Manning, outlining what the job consisted of. To Ray I said, “They want me to go to Sacramento.” And he said, “Well, the old man,” he called our bishop that—he was the same age as the bishop. “The old man is getting conservative, and you’re not going to be comfortable with that, and you’re going to end up supporting policies that you don’t believe in, and you’re going to be separated from the younger priests, which is going to be a burden for you.” And I thought, Wow!

Living in the office I had not seen the change, because twice in recent months I had to go to Monsignor Connolly and have a confrontation. Now, it was polite, but it was a confrontation, because I had heard that he and the bishop were going to take a look at the inner-city schools, especially a big look at the subsidies for the inner-city schools. I went in to him and I said, “What’s this about you’re going to cramp the inner-city schools? You have me out telling all the teachers and the school board that we’re on the way and this is a priority. If that happens, you’re going to have picketing outside here at the front gate, and the bishop is not going to be able to handle that.” A second thing was an offhand remark made by Monsignor Connolly that, “We’re going to have to see what’s going on in Berkeley, and whether there is orthodox teaching.” I said, “You have me out as the collaborator with them. Are you going to undercut me?”

05-00:29:46
LaBerge:

And did he mean at Newman Center, or at GTU?

05-00:29:49
Cummins:

Oh no, at GTU. He had no contact, obviously, [but I was] the connection all the way through. That sentiment wasn’t Bishop Begin’s—but I guess they [the older more conservative priests] might have been rising up and saying we’ve got to look into this. My word to Monsignor was, “You can’t move me out of this.” Nothing happened on that, but I thought here I am daily in the office. I don’t even notice this [that the bishop and the older priests are getting more conservative.]

My conversation with Ray continued, “Okay, fine, the bishop is getting conservative. How about the job?” And he [Ray Sontag] didn’t look at the cardinal’s letter half a minute when he said, “Do you realize how far the bishops are from the priests these days, and how dangerous that is? And you, at your age, with the capacity to build a few bridges—a possibility you’re going to turn this down? As I read this, if this falls on its face, you’d come

home. Isn't that about the commitment?" [laughter] So I forget what we talked about after that, for lunch. But I went home that afternoon, and I wrote to the cardinal, "I'm very honored and delighted," and I didn't want to go.

05-00:31:04
LaBerge:

Right. And did you live in Davis?

05-00:31:07
Cummins:

I lived in Davis, and then when I became bishop I lived at Davis, which was just great. It was a priestly house. The pastor was welcoming to me, and was well regarded by the bishop. I relished the support, because when I began with the conference, Los Angeles really pulled its weight. The cardinal was saying, "Pull this together, John. Move us together." The vicar general down there was very hard. I went to see him after seeing the cardinal, the first visit. And in the middle of the conversation he interrupted, "We pay 40 percent of your salary, so you're going to play ball." I remember I said, "You know, everybody is talking about unity, and you're talking about division."

05-00:32:02
LaBerge:

So the Diocese of Los Angeles paid 40 percent of your salary?

05-00:32:03
Cummins:

Oh, they were 40 percent of the—they paid 40 percent of the budget for Sacramento.

05-00:32:08
LaBerge:

For Sacramento.

05-00:32:08
Cummins:

Because they were 40 percent of the whole state. Oh yes.

05-00:32:14
LaBerge:

Wow, wow! So when you say your letter to the cardinal, do you mean Cardinal McIntyre?

05-00:32:17
Cummins:

No, Cardinal Manning. Cardinal Manning. But I remember—well, I could stand up to the vicar general, because I had nothing to lose. But that really was a burden, because the lawyer for L.A. was working behind my back to change the staff in Sacramento. I wrote a letter to the cardinal, and I remember showing it first to Bishop Bell. He read it calmly but said, "You're going to be misunderstood."

05-00:32:55
LaBerge:

What did the letter say?

05-00:32:56

Cummins:

For Los Angeles to stop interfering with our office. It was polite, but that's clear enough. Well, I was basically saying we can't get going. We had to get Los Angeles involved. There was a Bill [William J.] Barry, pastor in Claremont, whom I had known from the Newman work. He was a Catholic Charities man, but had been a chaplain at USC, and through Newman work we had become friends. I went down to see him and I said, "I write to L.A., and I don't get much response back." His response was, "We don't even talk to each other from parish to parish, so don't get too upset that they don't write to you." I knew that L.A. had to be brought into this ballgame. After Bishop Bell's words, "This is going to be misunderstood," I did not send that letter.

Months later, just for the same reason—the same kind of interference—I went over with another letter and put it on the bishop's desk. He read it, flipped it back to me and said, "Do what you have to do." And I knew that whatever happened, I was going to be supported by him 100 percent. I remember much later—I can't remember what the issue was now, but we were down at St. Basil's, where the vicar general at that time lived.

05-00:34:35

LaBerge:

And where's St. Basil's?

05-00:34:34

Cummins:

It's on Wilshire Boulevard. Cardinal McIntyre was living there, retired. I'm trying to think; I may be mixing up two things. But on one occasion at dinner, Cardinal Manning said to the older cardinal, "The new bishop," you know, me, "what advice do you have for him?" [imitating his accent] "Well," he said, "Mr. Woodbury, one of the nicest men on Wall Street, told me when I was vicar general in New York, don't be afraid to borrow money." And when I was made a bishop in Sacramento, Bishop Donohoe—well, he had ordained me a priest, stood up at the banquet and said, "I just want to warn Bishop Bell that the advice that this young man got was: don't be afraid to borrow money." The other occasion was at St. Basil's. It was a conflicting kind of issue, and we went around and people gave their opinion, and then Cardinal Manning said, "Okay, John, I think you have the feeling of the group." And Bishop Bell, who did not like confrontation, put his hands on the table and said, "You can't send this man back to Sacramento without real delegation." Oh, I remember that. I had my directions very clear, you know.

05-00:36:12

LaBerge:

Yes. What was their response to your letter?

05-00:36:17

Cummins:

Oh, I can't remember, but I must have been happy about it. Well, I think—I would feel at the beginning that Cardinal Manning wasn't entirely in charge. The vicar, the finance man, had too much to say, yes. But in time we didn't

have to go to him. The situation changed. I could do all my business with the cardinal, and he was really gracious. He never gave me the impression he was busy or that he was looking at his watch. I never waited a half hour to get in to see him. Oh boy.

05-00:36:56

LaBerge:

So tell me about all these lines of authority or responsibility. L.A. was in charge of Sacramento, but not Oakland?

05-00:37:06

Cummins:

The cardinal was the chair, and I guess—

05-00:37:10

LaBerge:

Of all of California, or just—?

05-00:37:13

Cummins:

Yes.

05-00:37:13

LaBerge:

Of all of California. So Bishop Begin answered to L.A. also, technically? Maybe not really?

05-00:37:21

Cummins:

Well, of course, California had two archbishops, and many people thought that was a very bad move, to have two archbishops in one state. But they got along, and Archbishop McGucken was a native of Los Angeles, so there was good agreement on issues. That wasn't really an issue.

But Cardinal Manning was respected, and he could run a meeting. He was always ready. And then we got an easy working relationship, because I would fill him in with the information I had. I remember an initiative on pornography. It came up as item number six at the gathering of the bishops, and Cardinal Manning turned to me and said, "What have you researched?" And I said, "Well, I talked to this person, and I talked to this one and then talked to moral theologians. None of them agree that we should take a public position on this." "All right. Next item." [laughter] It was that kind of easy association.

05-00:38:47

LaBerge:

So any big issue that came up while you were in Sacramento?

05-00:38:53

Cummins:

Well, the major one was the farm workers and the creation of their union.

05-00:38:57

LaBerge:

Of course, okay.

05-00:38:59

Cummins:

And the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, that was 1974. I went to [Sacramento] in '71, but with the [Governor Ronald] Reagan Administration no movement took place. But when [Governor Edmund G., Jr.] Jerry Brown came in, that changed. Another issue was pretty sensitive: rolling back the law about consenting adults and sexuality. That one also was not looked at in the Reagan time. That wasn't going to be done. When Jerry Brown came in, it was different. But by that time we had three years to do homework. The English bishops had faced earlier the same thing—some law against homosexuality. They had done extensive study that was made available to us. Gee, I wish I could remember the exact words, but there was a *de jure* about the law, and then a *de facto* or something. What it amounted to is not every law is prudent or not every law is enforceable; the relation of morality to a law. So it was that a law which can't be enforced may do more damage or more harm. By the time the California legislation was being debated, we just kept quiet and didn't take a position on that. The world would have expected that we would not have rolled back a law about consenting adults. But that happened under our time.

But the farm workers—if I can tell one story.

05-00:40:36

LaBerge:

Yes!

05-00:40:37

Cummins:

There was a meeting of the California bishops in San Francisco. Part of it was the Catholic Conference work, after which I drove up with Bishop Donohoe from Fresno, Roger Mahony, who at that time was the auxiliary bishop of Fresno, and Cardinal Manning to meet with Governor Brown. On the way up I'm driving, and Bishop Donohoe is setting up the strategy. "Now, this man asks a lot of questions. We're not going to answer them all," and so on. "We're going to sit and listen and see what's doing." So we went to the capitol and we waited, and we were in the room to talk to Jerry. The table like this [pointing to an end table] had St. Augustine's *City of God* on it. Jerry came in and it was oh, just kind of gossipy stuff and old days in the seminary and the church of thirty years ago.

05-00:41:50

LaBerge:

Jerry, now we're not—Jerry who?

05-00:41:54

Cummins:

Oh, Jerry Brown.

05-00:41:54

LaBerge:

Okay, I thought so, okay. [laughing]

05-00:41:58

Cummins:

Then he brought in LeRoy Chatfield, who had been a Christian brother, his aide. It was really comfortable conversation. We were all on the in, you know. There was a former Immaculate Heart sister, another of his aides. I don't remember her name. And there was a gentleman who lived in Berkeley, another part of his staff, had a Hungarian name. The poor guy got caught growing marijuana in the Berkeley Hills.

05-00:42:33

LaBerge:

Yes, I do [know his name]. He was a lawyer [Paul Halvonik]. Yes.

05-00:42:34

Cummins:

It was really a Catholic crowd, you know, and there was a lot of fun about the old days, and so on. That went on for ten minutes. But then Jerry—and I was admiring of him, because so often you'd be dealing with legislators who really did not know the heart of the bills that they were sponsoring. Jerry went through the history of the bill, and then the entrance of the Teamsters to compete with the Chavez workers, and we're sitting quietly because we're under orders from Bishop Donohoe. Jerry concluded "This is the bill we're putting up, and take it or leave it. That's it." Bishop Donohoe raised two hands, "Wait a minute. We have summer after summer of violence in the valley, and we can't be going along like this. You get us some legislation. And if you can't, then we're going to have to get rid of you—by prayer, of course." [laughter] And Jerry just sat back in the chair and said yes, yes. He really accepted Donohoe's words. Well, we helped a lot on that. I admired the governor.

05-00:43:56

LaBerge:

I'm sure you did!

05-00:43:57

Cummins:

During those days there was an important family in Winters, where Andy Coffey, my pastor, had been pastor. I came home one evening and here this family was there for dinner, while we're in the middle of promoting the law, you know? The next morning my secretary, who was a wonderful lady, Norma Cappello, was waiting, "Well?" I said, "Well, you didn't have to put ice in the drinks." [laughter] The evening had been pleasant, but they were really concerned about what change the law might make in their lives in farming.

There was another family in Winters, and one of the brothers became [deputy] secretary of agriculture under Clinton. [Richard Rominger] We went hunting once on their property, and they came in for dinner one night. The mother was there, the grandmother of the family, who said, "Oh, I don't like this tension between the church and ourselves." Mr. Rominger spoke with some emotion, "You know, the only thing I know to do is farming, and that's all my life. But

I'm going to have control of my business. The harvester that we have is a \$30,000 machine. I want to be able to name the driver of that." I realized [there are] many sides to the story.

The National Catholic Rural Life Conference at the same time was very concerned about the wipeout of family farms in the Midwest, going into corporate farming. So we had to contend with that reality also. Of course I remember Bishop Donohoe once saying, "Now, be careful about that. Some of the family farms are corporation farms. They're so huge. So it's just not so easy to detect that."

My secretary was Italian, wonderfully—and knew people all the way up and down the valley. She was a native of Weed in Shasta County.

05-00:46:23

LaBerge:

Oh yes, I know where Weed is.

05-00:46:24

Cummins:

I remember we were writing something that we—because we'd testify before the committees. She was typing this as I came by. She looked up without even stopping her fingers and said, "This is going to cost you guys a million bucks." [laughter] We were helpful. It not only took time, but we didn't want a fight with everybody. There was a farmers' group—with some awfully helpful people on that. They'd talk to us about pitfalls and problems. But they wanted to be fair, acknowledging the whole Catholic understanding, people able to speak for their rights. Well, we were a big help. Of course, all the dioceses were into this, supporting the farm workers. There was much of that in Oakland, especially with—

05-00:47:35

LaBerge:

Oh, there was, for sure.

05-00:47:40

Cummins:

And then Cesar Chavez in the early days—there was great admiration, even from those who didn't agree with him.

05-00:47:47

LaBerge:

Oh, I know. When I first came to California, it was my first experience with the grape boycott and all that was going on.

05-00:48:01

Cummins:

I think someone, a priest or someone saying in the Jeff [Jeffrey M.] Burns book, that none of our kids ever had a grape until they were five years old! [laughter]

05-00:48:16

LaBerge: Right. So when you were in Sacramento, both your mother was sick and was your brother also sick?

05-00:48:20

Cummins: Well, my brother had leukemia for ten years.

05-00:48:24

LaBerge: Oh, he did? Oh wow.

05-00:48:26

Cummins: In 1965 he was diagnosed with it. He took a group of high school kids to Europe, and came back very thin. He was bigger than I. They diagnosed him right away. And of course that was *whoo*—because he was much stronger than I. He ran the 440—that’s a heck of a race. And he never took a nap. He was always up. I went to see him in the hospital. He broke the news to me gently, but I had heard it from Father [Raymond G.] Decker an hour or two before. He said, “I’ll be in the hospital three weeks, and then I’ll go back to work half day,” and so on. That was true. One year later he had a transfusion, but every three weeks he had his blood checked. He took over the superintendent’s job and he was president of the national group of superintendents. He went around the country. He was remarkable. But then in ’73 you could see the effect—he was getting tired. But that was so hard on my folks.

05-00:49:48

LaBerge: Oh, I bet. I bet. And hard on you, to keep doing your job.

05-00:49:47

Cummins: Oh yes—well, we never had a death in the family. And so of course somebody said, “Did he know you were going to be a bishop?” “No,” I said, “but he knows now.” [laughter] My dad was in marvelous health. He lived to be one month short of ninety-six, and was clear all the way and it was great.

05-00:50:13

LaBerge: That’s great. It’s really great. Well, how did the invitation come about being Bishop of Oakland?

05-00:50:29

Cummins: Well, of course we got a letter from the nuncio saying, Who would you recommend and what are the needs of the Diocese of Oakland?

05-00:50:36

LaBerge: Had Bishop Begin stepped down?

05-00:50:39

Cummins: He was going to be seventy-five. He did not want to retire, but he realized it was what the rule was. There is a theological issue, in that the bishop has a

ring because he's married to his diocese, and that's a commitment. The canon law—I didn't know this till it came my time to retire—the canon law states it is “recommended” that you send in your resignation when you hit seventy-five. But I didn't. I'm getting ahead of myself—oh, maybe this is going to be a bit of a story. I asked for a coadjutor bishop, somebody to come a year or two early to get the feel of the diocese, because we are very complicated—just higher education for one thing. That's a major industry here! And then the ethnic mix, Northern California's most diverse diocese. And then the growth, the economic and educational diversity—it's complex! I guess we had situated ourselves very much in the public eye or the public arena. Anyhow I received a letter in November of—oh gosh, it must have been 2001, that Pope John Paul II had approved the request for a coadjutor. Then in November of 2002, at the national meeting of the bishops, the nuncio called me upstairs. The first thing he did was light a cigarette and told me you're not getting a coadjutor. I thought, this is not a good idea.

05-00:52:34

LaBerge:

Who was the nuncio?

05-00:52:35

Cummins:

The nuncio was Montalvo, Gabriel Montalvo [Higuera]. Later into the conversation, he was taking my side, that it would be better to have a coadjutor. Well, I came home and I thought oh, it's the will of God, but I was not satisfied. I called Archbishop Quinn and he said, “Well, if you want something to happen, you'll have to go to Rome.” And he advised me what to do and how to do it. So I went in December.

05-00:53:09

LaBerge:

To Rome?

05-00:53:09

Cummins:

Yes, with George Crespin. And I received an appointment at the Congregation of Bishops. A cleric entered, but he didn't introduce himself, and I was—I have a little trouble with color. I was trying to think are those buttons red, or are they cardinal red? Indeed, he was the cardinal and was very friendly. I had a letter in hand which I had left [there] two days before. One item was about the inner-city schools, and one was about—oh gosh, building a cathedral, and one was about the ethnic mix. He stated something like, “We know all this; we know all this. But your diocese is so big and so important that you can't have a man there as just your assistant,” which was a very odd appraisal. Nobody would ever have said that. But when I told him how many Asian people we had—and I was surprised he'd have so much authority—“Well, we'll go to the Holy Father after the first of the year, and you'll stay on, and perhaps six or seven months, we'll have the coadjutor there.” So I was surprised that he could—

05-00:54:26

LaBerge: That he could quickly make that decision.

05-00:54:27

Cummins: Yes, I thought he'd have to go to some board or something. So less than three weeks later I was on a retreat and I get a phone call. "Yes, Bishop [Allen H.] Vigneron is appointed as coadjutor of Oakland." Along with that, the nuncio wrote, "Now, you'll send in your resignation." He reiterated that at the next meeting in, it must have been the springtime. He came while I was talking to Bishop Vigneron. The nuncio came up and said, "Now, you will send in your resignation, and then we'll have it when Bishop Vigneron takes over." Now we were trained to obedience. But the memory of the earlier refusal was alive. Both Bob McCann and Sister Barbara [Flannery] coached me, "You will not send in your resignation, because it'll be picked up by some staff person and you'll be moved out. We want this bishop to be here six or seven months at least, so we can talk to him." And that's when they told me the canon law says it's *recommended*.

05-00:55:40

LaBerge: It's recommended, but not required.

05-00:55:44

Cummins: But they can't really put the gun to you.

05-00:55:47

LaBerge: Sister Barbara Bray? Or which Sister Barbara?

05-00:55:49

Cummins: Barbara Flannery, Barbara Flannery yes. Oh, Barbara—oh, she was shrewd.

05-00:55:58

LaBerge: So you did not send in a letter.

05-00:56:01

Cummins: No. I saw the nuncio once more. Well, I guess he was being pressured from Rome, but I said the same thing, "We'll let you know." Bishop Vigneron had gone to Mexico for two months to learn Spanish—that was another thing, really there was a little anomaly.

05-00:56:20

LaBerge: That he didn't come here.

05-00:56:22

Cummins: No, with the cardinal [in Rome] in December—George Crespin didn't come in with me. He was sitting outside. But at the end of the conversation the cardinal said to me, "Ud. [es] de California. ¿Habla Español?" I said, "Puedo [entender] Español, pero no [puedo] hablar mucho." He came out, and of course, I introduced George Crespin. The conversation from there to the

elevator, which was a good walk until we got inside and waved, was all Spanish! Then two and a half weeks later we get a bishop who does *not* speak Spanish.

05-00:57:02

LaBerge: Incredible! What's the cardinal's name you spoke to?

05-00:57:03

Cummins: [Giovanni Battista] Re. I thought about one more thing—

05-00:57:12

LaBerge: Since we're going on this tack—Bishop Vigneron went to Mexico for two months and then came to Oakland?

05-00:57:20

Cummins: No, he came here in February, at the end of February. He went down in the summertime. They were teasing—some of our Mexicans, "Have him go to Morelia, because they *only* speak Spanish there." And I said, "Okay, but he'll go where he wants." He went to Mexico City and stayed with the Legionnaires of Christ. He came back with a good command of colloquial Spanish—oh my! Of course, he had Italian and French. He talked to Judy Fellner, my secretary, in French. He also had some Polish, because the first day I took him around we ended up in Danville with Stan[islaw] Zak, and they conversed in Polish. Bishop Vigneron was very good with languages.

But we both decided—he had time finally, because he had some positions with the National Conference. He wasn't a chair, but he was on some committees. So I set October first to be our date when we can make the change—and that was it!

05-00:58:35

LaBerge: But you never sent in a letter?

05-00:58:38

Cummins: Oh well, I did when it was decided that it was October first.

05-00:58:41

LaBerge: When you were ready, yes. Well, let's go back to the very beginning. How were you asked to come?

05-00:58:48

Cummins: Oh yes, we forgot that, didn't we? Well, I remember—I wrote the thoughts of the diocese as I knew them, and then suggested names and put them in order, and so forth. I'm sure I followed just what they asked. I *never* thought of myself. It didn't occur to me, because I was three years in Sacramento, I had—leaving your own diocese is not so easy. I gave a retreat to the bishops in the Northwest once, and I said to them, "Not one of you is in his home diocese." And two of them knocked on my door before the day was over and

said, “We’re so glad you mentioned that.” Because that’s a change! You don’t expect it. But I had become so comfortable in Sacramento, and where I was living—the house was so gracious, and the bishop and I got along so well. Of course a good 80 percent of the pastors were Irish, and my mother [being] Irish-speaking, I presumed that I’d be staying there.

I remember when I got the letter. It was Wednesday of Holy Week. I had played golf with Ed Kavanaugh and Dick Doheny at Valley High, south of Sacramento. I went to St. Rose, and I remember a porterhouse steak for early dinner. When I got home there were two notes, “Phone Brian Joyce.” And “Phone your dad.” I picked up the mail—it was only seven o’clock at night or seven-thirty. I went back to my room, and I was just flipping through, and there was a letter from the nuncio. Well, some weeks before, he had sent a letter. A Roman congregation was interested in a pastoral letter on devotion to the Sacred Heart. Of course, I checked around and that didn’t find much enthusiasm. So I had written a letter back that the intelligence was that this would not be desirable at this time. I thought it’s the thank-you for writing the letter back. I opened it up, second envelope saying “pontifical secret.” And I remember I put it down and I thought whatever is in that, I’m going to phone Brian Joyce and phone my dad.

05-01:01:42
LaBerge:

First?

05-01:01:42
Cummins:

Yes. And then I opened up the letter and it was quite clear: Oakland. And again, pontifical secret. But I phoned a very good friend, and I said ooh, I have a letter, and he—well, we were on the phone a lot. And he said, “Oakland.” I said, “Yes.” “Great.” And then he went on, “But, how do you feel about that?” I said, “Well, I’m very content here.” His response was quick, “Well, what are you going to tell them, that you like to ski?” [laughter] And then he said, “Listen, I’ve got somebody here. Let me call you back in an hour.” And I said, “No, I’m going to bed.” About a year later he said, “You know, you really don’t know people. One of the most important responsibilities you’re ever going to pick up, and you’re going to go to bed.”

The next morning was Holy Thursday, and at a quarter to seven we were still in bed. There’s no morning service. I remember that even after talking to my dad, I did take a week before I sent the letter back or—we had to send a Western Union telegram. I remember the second one was, “Catholic Conference Will Oblige.” That was the message that had to be sent back. But the first time I took a whole week. I remember I went off by myself, for an afternoon or two, to try to get my own head straight. But this time—well, as I say, I read that letter as I could refuse it. But Archbishop [Jean] Jadot—quarter to seven in the morning we’re all still in bed. Our house was fancy-

looking, but it was very thinly built. You could hear from one room to the next. And the phone rings, “Archbishop Jadot. Have you my letter?” I said, “Yes.” “Oh, and what do you think?” I said, “Well, I’m very content here.” “Oh, we know that. We talked to [Joseph Louis] Cardinal Bernardin and we brought the appointment to the Holy Father,” I don’t know how much of that is true. But it was very evident that there was going to be no—

05-01:04:12

LaBerge: No saying no.

05-01:04:14

Cummins: No saying no. And then he said, “Now, don’t tell anybody. Don’t tell the bishop.” Well, I was surprised.

05-01:04:22

LaBerge: Don’t tell Bishop Begin, or your bishop?

05-01:04:25

Cummins: Bishop Bell. Wow. And then there was something else too—well, I’m trying to think. There were two things—I wanted to let my folks know somehow before they read it in the paper. But that was also a delay—oh, it was weeks!

05-01:04:48

LaBerge: Before you said something to your folks?

05-01:04:49

Cummins: Well, before I was given the okay to tell anybody. That was Holy Thursday. We used to go from the chancery office to the cathedral for lunch that day. I realized I don’t need any discussion about this, and this is it. And two of the priests said, “Are you going to lunch?” “Yes,” I said, “I’ll be over.” So whenever they left the chancery, I phoned Western Union—“California Catholic Conference Will Oblige.” That was it. The nuncio phoned me again on Saturday, and I said, “Archbishop, this is really difficult, because we’re still setting up the summer program and I’m not going to be here. Our bishop is seventy-two years old.”

05-01:05:46

LaBerge: At the time you thought that was old? [laughter]

05-01:05:51

Cummins: Well, the diocese went all the way to—seven hours to the Siskiyous. So he said, “All right, you can tell him, yes.” The bishop lived with the chancellor, who liked news. I thought well, what to do? If I phone over, it’s going to be a giveaway. I decided to drive over. The bishop lived on the other end of Sacramento. He answered the door, thank God. We went upstairs. I gave him the letter. He didn’t say anything for oh, at least a minute. Then he spoke. “The priests are going to be disappointed.” And I thought he’s going to be disappointed, because we really—we got along well.

I remember he had said to me on my appointment as auxiliary, “What kind of a parish do you want?” And I said, “Bishop, I can’t—no parish. Give it to the young guy. I’ve lived in a place, and my brother lived in a place where the pastor was never home, and he’d be more interfering than supporting.” I remember the bishop and I were someplace. I wasn’t in the conversation, but I heard him say, “Yes, but he just doesn’t *want* to be a pastor.” That was the other aspect—we’d differ, but we’d have great respect for the differences.

I had left the Catholic Conference in February of that year and had suggested to the bishop, “Listen, why don’t you leave me alone for these next months and let me wander around. I’ll do the confirmations and get a read on where the priests are.” I thought that was a good move, because I had no axe to grind. By that time I knew an awful lot of them. So he said okay. I told him, “Gee, I’m really sorry that I didn’t get out of the conference till February, so I never got to enjoy the diocese.” He said to me, “You had a heck of a good time up here.” [laughter] And that was it.

05-01:09:05

LaBerge:

What was your folks’ reaction?

05-01:09:07

Cummins:

Oh, of course—let me see. My mother had died when I was in Sacramento. People would say, “They must have been so proud.” Well, they were content, but they didn’t fuss. I didn’t tell my mother about the appointment as Sacramento auxiliary until the night before it was going to be announced. She had gone to bed but was not yet asleep. And I said, “Ma, tomorrow it’s going to be announced I’m auxiliary bishop in Sacramento.” She didn’t even move, “Oh, your brother thought that would happen.” [laughter] They didn’t fuss over it. I remember at Mass, at home the next morning, at the Prayers of the Faithful, prayers were offered for the sick and so forth, but not for Sacramento. My dad was happy to have me return to Oakland.

05-01:09:53

LaBerge:

I bet.

05-01:09:57

Cummins:

He said the grace at the dinner that night of my installation. The nuncio had sat next to him, Jadot, you know. And my dad said, “Oh, he’s a humble man.” That’s a big compliment from my father. A humble man, yes.

05-01:10:17

LaBerge:

And what about Bishop Begin? When could you tell him, or who told him?

05-01:10:21

Cummins:

Well, what happened was, he died before it was announced.

05-01:10:23
LaBerge:

Before it was announced! Oh my gosh.

05-01:10:27
Cummins:

He was very sick. The cancer had spread through him. Jerry [Jerrold F.] Kennedy was vocation man, and Brian [Joyce] was the chancellor. They had phoned me in February, “Keep April 22 open, because we’re not sure that the bishop is going to be healthy enough to do the ordination.” So I said okay, that’s fine. Later the chancery called, “Would you do the Dominicans on the 23rd at the cathedral in the morning?” And I signed that up. But to Jerry and to Brian I asked, “Have you told Bishop Begin I’m going to be there to be the backstop?” Because he might be offended that I’m questioning his health.

So I came down. I hadn’t talked to him. He came into the sacristy at St. Lawrence O’Toole—oh gosh, it was maybe a half hour before the Mass started, and he said, “Oh, I’m glad you’re here.” He said that to me. The first part of the Mass went on and then the ordination, and—who was it? John Fernandes came up and put leis around the bishops for the ordination. The bishop got through it okay, and then I whispered to him, “I’ll do the Offertory.” “No, I’ll come up.” I said, “No, save your strength.” Somebody later asked, “What happened to you after the Orate Fratres?” I fell into space.

I thought my appointment was going to be announced the following Tuesday, but it wasn’t announced for another week and a half. After the ordination the Dominicans asked me to come up for their reception, and I thought okay. On the way I went up to see Bishop Begin, and he really was better. He was watching a baseball game and kind of relaxed. I stayed for oh, a half hour or so. He was talkative and in a good mood. Well, I said I was going to leave and I got as far as the doorway and he said, “Thank you for coming down. We’ve always been a good one-two punch.” And I said to myself, wait till you hear Tuesday what the one two... As I was going down the stairs the sisters said, “Oh, aren’t you staying for lunch?” And I said, “Well, I was going to go to the Dominicans.” And I thought—I’m going to have the rest of my life to see the Dominicans.

05-01:13:21
LaBerge:

To have lunch there, right.

05-01:13:21
Cummins:

So I went back upstairs. One of the sisters told me, about a year later or more, “We knew you were coming to Oakland, because you said to the bishop, ‘You should stay here. You shouldn’t move out to Bay Farm Island, Alameda.’” The sisters put it together. I wouldn’t have said that unless I had something to do with it. But my point was, it’s five minutes from the chancery, and it’d be so easy for me to send the guys up—go up and say hello to the bishop. But his reaction was, “Oh no. This place is too expensive. But the diocese shouldn’t

sell it. They should make a retreat house out of it.” In the middle of Piedmont? He died the following Tuesday, during the installation of John Quinn in San Francisco, and it was announced during the Mass that he had died. And then that was the first time that John Quinn heard what’s happening in Oakland. I had met him before, but I didn’t really know him well. He had given us a retreat years before. He caught me in the sacristy and said, “The nuncio told me the news. This will work!” [laughter] And it did. We got along very well, the two of us.

I’m glad you asked me that question, because people want to know what’s the secrecy and what’s the—

05-01:15:05

LaBerge:

Yes. Regular people don’t know any of that.

05-01:15:10

Cummins:

Well, I wouldn’t have known anything. I didn’t even know it when I got appointed.

05-01:15:18

LaBerge:

So when was it announced, and when was your installation?

05-01:15:21

Cummins:

I think it was announced on the third of May. We were at the bishops’ meeting in Chicago, the spring meeting. I know I wasn’t home, but anyhow, people seemed to be pleased. [laughter] One of my great friends, when I said, “Well, I was happy to stay in Sacramento,” said, “Well, Oakland will be more of a challenge. Even if you fall on your face, it’s a better responsibility than Sacramento.” I don’t know.

05-01:15:59

LaBerge:

But also you did know everyone, you didn’t need the orientation to the people and the place at all.

05-01:16:03

Cummins:

No, and I didn’t get tested by the priests to see how far they could push me. So many knew me. I guess the major concern—you know, the story of Monsignor John Connolly—make sure that the older priests wouldn’t be anxious or nervous about me.

05-01:16:25

LaBerge:

When were you installed then?

05-01:16:28

Cummins:

The thirtieth of June. It was two months. Staff cleared out some of the papers of the bishop and some of the day books, which I’m sure Jeff Burns would like to have for the history of the diocese.

05-01:16:49

LaBerge: And was it at St. Francis de Sales?

05-01:16:52

Cummins: No. Well, of course when I was made a bishop in Sacramento, the cathedral had been renovated, and it seated eleven hundred, theoretically. Two balconies had been taken out. I thought between priests in Sacramento and priests in Oakland, and the religious, there would be little room left—so it was at the Memorial Auditorium, which seated 3,500 in Sacramento, yes. We took the auditorium here, 6,500. We gave out communion in fifteen minutes. That was well planned.

05-01:17:35

LaBerge: And who installed/ordained you?

05-01:17:40

Cummins: Well, of course, I was ordained in Sacramento with Bishop Bell, and Bishops Begin and Donohoe were the others. Here the archbishop presided at the beginning, and then the nuncio, and they directed me to the chair and—

05-01:18:00

LaBerge: So did you have any time in between for transition or a vacation?

05-01:18:06

Cummins: No, no. It was worse than that. Archbishop Quinn was signed up to do the priests' retreat in Los Angeles. He, at that time, was in Oklahoma City, and he received the appointment to San Francisco. He wrote to the cardinal and said he really would be preoccupied now and wouldn't be able to do the retreat. So the cardinal asked *me* to do the retreat. I had never done a priests' retreat. Bishop Bell said, "Oh, don't turn him down." Well, I was waiting for the cardinal to call and say, "I know Archbishop Quinn now can't do it, and certainly it would be too much for you." Well, that kept me *busy*. How many talks a day? Three, I think.

05-01:19:02

LaBerge: Yes, for a week?

05-01:19:04

Cummins: For a week—three weeks.

05-01:19:06

LaBerge: Three weeks—oh my gosh! So you did that before you came to Oakland.

05-01:19:13

Cummins: I did that for the three weeks. That's part of it, because June 30—that was at the end of the week after I finished those. For three weeks I would come to Oakland on the weekend and then fly to L.A. on Monday—just to check what was doing. Actually, it was a blessing, because I didn't have to get involved

with all the detail. They would be talking about oh, it's such a big mess, and so on.

Oh, and of course some interesting things. At Bishop Begin's funeral, Don Osuna—we were standing right outside the dining room in the hallway—Don said, "If you are appointed bishop of Oakland, you come here to live." Well, I knew I was coming. And I thought oh, this is great. I had no need of moving into the Piedmont house. I wouldn't have sold it, I don't think, if he had lived. That might have been a reflection on him. But there was a split, you know. Living in Piedmont was not highly regarded.

05-01:20:52
LaBerge:

And did you sell it?

05-01:20:53
Cummins:

Yes. We sold it by October. He bought it for \$190,000. The back lot went all the way to King Street. We sold the house for \$460,000. We made money on it, yes. We had a buyer right away. Some of the priests were happy. Archbishop John Quinn, at Monsignor Nick Connolly's funeral, he was there. Cardinal Manning, a classmate of Monsignor Connolly, also was there. At dinner John Quinn said, "Where are you going to live?" I said, "At the cathedral." "Ooh, I don't think that will work." Cardinal Manning—"Where are you going to live?" I said, "At the cathedral." He said, "That's a good move. You'll never hear anybody talking about where you live, because they know where you live." He himself lived at the cathedral. So that was it. We sold the house. Jerry Kennedy and Don Osuna and I went up one night, and we tagged the things that we wanted brought down to our cathedral rectory. We took, I guess, most of the carpets. The carpet upstairs in the—

05-01:22:16
LaBerge:

Is one of them?

05-01:22:18
Cummins:

That was one of them, yes. Jerry found them. There were eight mahogany chairs on different floors in the old house, and we took those. We left the dining room. It was too fancy. But we rode home laughing, and I remember we were drinking Drambuie at the end when we had checked everything out. I had never *seen* Drambuie.

05-01:22:46
LaBerge:

Well, did Don Osuna plan the liturgy?

05-01:22:47
Cummins:

Oh yes, oh yes. It was participatory and it was fun—and of course, I'd just come back on the weekend, and Joan Doyle, Sister Joan Doyle, was in charge of where the choir music would be and the kids. And they had, instead of groups coming up as welcome, representing the diocese, they had kids. One

came up as a ballerina, one came up with a mortar board, and one came up in an [Oakland] A's thing—and I said, “Oh, that's so sentimental. I don't like that.” And Joan said, “Well, nobody else has trouble with it.” And so okay. Well, it added color to the event, all those little kids coming up. It was really participatory.

05-01:23:49

LaBerge:

So we'll finish in a couple of minutes. What were some of the first appointments you made? Or did you just rest for a while?

05-01:23:59

Cummins:

Oh now, I had to let go, well, Monsignor Connolly.

05-01:24:04

LaBerge:

Monsignor Connolly. So I know about that and Bill Macchi. But Brian Joyce was already—

05-01:24:09

Cummins:

He was chancellor. Yes, he stayed on. Dick Mangini wanted out, because he had been appointed pastor at—that took a long time for me to get him replaced.

05-01:24:29

LaBerge:

What position did he have?

05-01:24:31

Cummins:

He was editor of the *Catholic Voice*, yes. Gee, I'm trying to think, there were—gosh, well George Crespin was gone.

05-01:24:44

LaBerge:

He was on sabbatical, is that right? Or going?

05-01:24:48

Cummins:

He was going, yes. Because he came down to see me, and we went out and had a sandwich out by Lake Merritt, and he said, “I'm all set for Notre Dame.” “Oh,” I said, “I'm not going to bother you.” But he says, “I'll do anything you want.” And I said to him, this is before Brian ever knew it, I said, “Well, I think I'd like you to be in the chancery.” And George—you know, that wasn't his idea of life at all.

05-01:25:12

LaBerge:

Yes, right. I know.

05-01:25:15

Cummins:

But I figured we have to have Spanish-speaking, and we had been together in years before. So he went to Notre Dame and had a great year. And he came back—he was extraordinary. He was just terrific. He would give me extraordinary insight into what we were dealing with, with the farm workers.

In the 1960s he had understood Mario Savio and the Berkeley scene way quicker and more deeply than *we* realized. That was not just a protest, but a revolution of participation, and student/faculty relations—it was really a big change. There were notes back and forth, but he'd be filling me in.

05-01:26:14

LaBerge:

Why don't we stop there for today, and then pick up on this the next time.

05-01:26:19

Cummins:

Okay. [laughing]

05-01:26:20

LaBerge:

I'll just turn this off.

05-01:26:26

Cummins:

I feel like I've been talking too much. You're a good guide though.

Interview 6: January 22, 2015

06-00:00:00

LaBerge: Okay, today is January 22, 2015, and this is interview number six. When we finished the last time we spoke off-tape about a couple of stories, but we haven't recorded them. One was about a woman who came to—or you heard about someone who wanted to donate land to the diocese?

06-00:00:27

Cummins: No, she had made the move already.

06-00:00:30

LaBerge: Oh, she'd already made the move, okay. With Bishop Begin?

06-00:00:32

Cummins: Yes. What she had done—she was quite a successful real estate woman in Marin County. She had sent a notice to three different institutions that she would like to give a donation, that she was very interested in the elderly and the destitute and she'd like to explore that with people. Only one responded, and that was Father Bill Macchi, who was the director of our charities and a young man; he was in his thirties. He put together a program for what Catholic Charities does, so she gave the property. It was valued at one million.

06-00:01:20

LaBerge: What year was this?

06-00:01:22

Cummins: I'll have to guess. It had been done by 1977. I would say 1976, and we had this program started by Bishop Begin and Jack Donovan, the great Knight of Malta, and it was A Thousand Thanks. If you gave \$1,000 to [Catholic] charities, you were invited to dinner at the Claremont Country Club with the bishop, and so forth. Well, I picked it up at that time. There were two couples at our table. One was Wayne and Gladys Valley, of course, the famous—I think Wayne was terribly bored. [laughter] But I sat next to Julia Weber, and across was her husband Jack. It was easy conversation, especially with those two women. They really could talk—they were articulate.

Well, there were some amusing things [that] happened during that dinner. Julia said to me—do you know Monsignor Bernard Cummins? And I said, “Well, yes; he was my brother.” “Oh, no wonder you remind me of him,” she said. And then—I didn't get the whole story. I barely got the details of it, but I picked up a few more things. On the way out, Wayne Valley stayed at the door, and when I got there—he was all man, kind of gruff, he said to me, “What do you want?” [laughter] And I said, “Well, I don't want anything now.” But within the year I did want something. I wanted him to finance us through the building of the Youth Retreat Center in Lafayette. I wrote to him and I said, “You mentioned at the dinner what did I want. I want \$125,000 to

prepare this retreat center. Give it to me, number one. Two, give me a piece of it. Number three, let's go to lunch and you can tell me how I can get it." The reason was that they had a swimming pool there, and nobody knew that. I felt you'd have to develop a ball field and get that swimming pool done, but the workers were at the finish and they weren't going to touch anything. So Wayne phoned me the next morning. [imitating gruff voice] "I have your letter. Now, you're a busy man and I'm a busy man. We don't have to go to lunch. You get half of it by September 29, and we'll give the rest." Well, that was pretty much the end of that story.

But Julia Weber—I realized that she lived in Belvedere, and for her to give us something on this side of the bay... We had a very welcoming house, five of us at the cathedral, and so we invited Julia and Jack from Belvedere to West Oakland. They came in the big Lincoln and parked. At dinner Don [Osuna] said—a little toast to Julia and Jack, "We want to welcome you here." And then she said, "I want to give a toast." She had this gravelly voice. "You guys are more fun than anybody I've been with for a long time. Does your cook have a sister?" And then she said, "And I want to tell you guys that this is the most expensive dinner I ever had in my life!" [laughter] After dinner she went over to see the church. There was a wedding rehearsal going on, and she addressed the bride and the groom, and she was so cordial with them, and so on. Then she went over with Don before the tabernacle and said a little prayer out loud to Jesus in the tabernacle, and then came back in.

We went upstairs—people would give us these after-dinner drinks. We just weren't into them. There was a Bailey's Irish Cream, and she had not just one, but she had two. And then she told me, "You have to be careful! This will put you on your ear." Somehow the conversation moved on that she was born in Nome, Alaska, and left when she was five years old, and she really wanted to go back to Nome, Alaska. So I talked to Frank Hurley, the archbishop—a year ahead of me in the seminary—the archbishop of Anchorage, Alaska. He came down for a funeral in a couple of weeks, and I said, "If we got this couple up to Anchorage, could you take care of them? She wants to get back to Nome before she dies." And Frank said, "Oh yes, any time in July. I'm home all of July." Well, of course I thought going from Anchorage to Nome, Alaska, was like going to Eureka. It's a two-hour time difference! Well, I phoned her and she said, "Oh, aren't you sweet." And then she advised, "Now, go over a weekend, because the tickets are cheaper." But she phones back in a half hour. "Jack won't go. *You* go with me!" And she said, "I won't embarrass you. I'll go as your mother. As a matter of fact, I won't wear any lipstick."

06-00:07:09

Cummins:

Cosmetics. “I’ll go as your grandmother.” So we lined [it] up. She and I went to San Francisco and got on the plane. I had my breviary, and I said, “I have to read this.” This is going to be a long story!

06-00:07:27

LaBerge:

But this is—it’s an example of what being a bishop is!

06-00:07:36

Cummins:

I said to her, “I’m going to say my breviary.” She says, “Okay,” and added “I know how precious your time is, and don’t think that I don’t appreciate your coming along with me.” Then she took out her little Office of the Blessed Mother, very well worn, and a rosary. I finished saying my prayers before she finished hers, just about as we crossed the Oregon border. We flew up to Alaska, and, of course, Frank picked us up. She was staying across the street with Frank’s secretary, and I was staying with Frank in his house, a little one-story kind of thing. Well, she walks into Frank’s, because we just got out of the car and we’re going to have lunch or something. She walked in with her fur coat and her boots, “I thought we were going to rough it.”

Well, the next day he put us on the plane to Nome, and we were there three days and two nights. The place had really changed, because all that frozen stuff, the tundra—they move houses all over the place. But she did find the house she grew up in and found the church where she was baptized, and found her folks’ marriage certificate and her baptismal record. But the town had moved two blocks in. The rough winters just had wiped out two blocks. She wanted to go to a bar, because she remembered that when she was a little kid they’d put her up in the bar and sprinkle gold dust on her, and she wanted to go back. Well, she met this native couple in the middle of one afternoon, and they were just kind of gone—and that took the pep out of that.

Frank flew us up to the pipeline, which was probably close to an hour’s flight. He was a pilot himself, you know. I remember on the way up we were going up this large canyon, and he was looking over and announcing the weather on the left and the south, and so forth. And she said, “Are we in trouble?” And Frank said, “No, no, no. This is just standard.” Well, then we went up to the pipeline, and this Dominican, who had worked here, Urban, showed us around the pipeline, a few of the rivers and the salmon coming up. Well, she enjoyed that. But on the way flying back we’re going down one of those big canyons, and Frank all of a sudden makes a turn, and she says, “Are we in trouble?” And Frank says, “Yes, we are in some trouble.” “Oh,” she says, “I’m not nervous. I’m just wondering about the headlines. ‘Two bishops go down with blonde in the back seat.’” [laughter]

We go back home, and that night we went to Frank’s for dinner. His secretary from Washington, D.C. days had come out. Everybody had a job. I remember

I was doing the salad. I don't know what she was doing. There must have been eight or nine people. In the middle of dinner she stood up, "He," pointing to me, "He said you're a hell of a guy, and you *are* a hell of a guy." The next morning we had twenty-three Jesuit volunteers. Many of them worked in the hospital—now this is for free, just for a stipend. One was from Oakland here, but he had graduated from UCLA. They were doing a variety of service. There was a radio station covering the area that belonged to the bishop. Well, that night we were having dinner with them, and Julia, with a drink in her hand said, "Oh, you wonderful young people. You could be making money. You've got so much education, so much going for you. And here you're up here just taking care of God." Oh, it was really touching.

The next morning we visited the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld, who wore denim habits and lived very, very simply. We went there for Mass, the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, July 22, and she was, on the way home telling me, "They didn't stand up for the gospel." We sat—we had the Mass in their home. At Prayers of the Faithful, one of the sisters said, "I want to pray for Sister Mary Magdalene, our mother superior, on her feast day." And Julia Weber offered, "I'd like to pray for Sally Stanford, on her feast day," she didn't say feast day.

Then on the way back to Frank's she said to me, "I knew they wouldn't know who Sally Stanford was, but I meant that prayer, because we were building an apartment house in Sausalito, and I went to the city council to get the approvals." Sally was the mayor at that time, and she walked in, in the middle, and she didn't introduce herself to Julia, but she said, "You people are always talking about keeping riffraff out of here and raising the culture of this city. Now, stop making it difficult for this woman who wants to make a contribution." Julia explained that on the day of the open house, in came Sally in her fur coat. Julia said, "I didn't invite her." So somebody else put her on—but said she walked over and said, "Mrs. Stanford, you're entirely welcome. May I buy you a drink?"

She told the story that she saw Sally afterwards. "I can say things because they think I'm kind of rough and not very pious." But she said to Sally at that time, "Sally, you've been straight for so long and you've been doing so many good things. You take care of Hanna Center," and she went down the list. And then she said, "Why don't you become a Catholic and get merit for it?" [laughter] And she said that Sally remarked, "Oh, I couldn't stand to go through all that rigmarole, the catechism," and so on. But Sally added, "I have a friend, a priest, and he knows my situation." As Julia told me that story, I asked, "Does that priest know that is something she's anticipating?" Well, we found out later, because Sally died some years later, that she was buried from Star of the Sea Church in Sausalito, and Father Jack [John D.] Shanahan, who

was a classmate of my brother's, was the pastor. So that's the Sally Stanford story.

She left her Belvedere house, and they moved into where the Bel-Air is. We went to visit her, Joe [Joseph P.] Carroll and myself—oh, that was it, one more part of the story. She wanted to go up in the *wintertime*!

06-00:15:18

LaBerge: To Alaska?

06-00:15:19

Cummins: Yes! To Nome. And the last time, that February, Joe Carroll took her up!

06-00:15:30

LaBerge: Who was Joe Carroll?

06-00:15:30

Cummins: Joe Carroll was a Jesuit who worked with us for twenty-five years. He was the front man when the Jesuits moved to Berkeley to organize the house and all that. Well, the two went up, and she wanted to get into a dogsled. She got the dogsled and almost froze to death. They had a hard time warming her up again. Again, Frank Hurley was just a lot of fun with her. I'm sure she took care of Frank in a very big way. Joe Carroll and I would go to visit her and Jack in the retirement home, and she was always very, very welcoming. I remember the one time—maybe it was next to the last time we saw her. We were going out the door and she said, "Well, you can tell you're very old when you can kiss the priests in public."

06-00:16:36

LaBerge: She was a character!

06-00:16:36

Cummins: Oh yes, but she was—oh, she was devout. She eloped, I guess at twenty or twenty-one, to the chagrin of her parents. She always wanted to make up. The dad left Nome, Alaska, to be the drayage for the *LA Times* newspaper. She lost both husband and son in the war. So this second marriage was to a marine—oh gosh, he was up the ranks. I don't know if he was a colonel. She had this notion of doing good, getting settled with her folks, but really making something out of her life—and she really did.

06-00:17:33

LaBerge: Well, it sounds like you and/or the diocese responded when she had something to give; other people didn't respond and you *did*.

06-00:17:45

Cummins: Oh yes, yes. She was—[laughing]

06-00:17:50

LaBerge: So did you say her funeral or give a homily?

06-00:17:55

Cummins: No, you know I'm trying to remember. I don't think I did. I think Jack Shanahan did it. It would have been the parish, yes. We must have been there. I haven't got a clear memory of it. I know I didn't get to go to the husband's. That was much later.

06-00:18:14

LaBerge: Oh, what a wonderful story. Anything else while we're on that subject of fundraising? You brought up the Valleys. How did you learn how to do that, or was it just by—?

06-00:18:30

Cummins: I didn't have to make major efforts. The Valleys were very into education, and when I came it was a \$500,000 check a year, which they raised to \$750,000. We received it every September with very little accountability, in the sense that it was for the schools in need. We'd report, but they really didn't oversee us. It was their gift, and of course, they gave to charities, most new things that would come up—the San Ramon Parish, building that—they gave an enormous amount to that. They were just—

06-00:19:18

LaBerge: And what schools—is that how you kept the inner-city schools going?

06-00:19:20

Cummins: Oh yes, the Valleys were terribly important. Now, what I inherited was a wonderful relationship with them, because they lived just down one block and over from Bishop Floyd Begin.

06-00:19:34

LaBerge: Oh, in Piedmont.

06-00:19:35

Cummins: He would call them and bring them up to dinner. And so Gladys would come to dinner at our place. Now, I didn't see so much of Wayne. In fact, I didn't know how close I was to Wayne. He got very sick, lost his sight, and I remember he went to Houston, the cancer place, but I always kept in touch. That's how close we were to that organization. Then I'd be down there a number of times and Steve—oh my—Steve [Stephen M. Chandler] was the president and was very—

06-00:20:20

LaBerge: Of the foundation?

06-00:20:21

Cummins:

Yes, and very favorable towards almost anything we'd do. John Stock was on it, the famous lawyer family—Heafey, Ed [Edwin A.] Heafey was on it. Oh, and Bob Brown—oh! [laughing] He was a tough guy with a dollar. But I'm trying to think—well, to finish off [the story about] Wayne. I visited Wayne in St. Mary's Hospital, and it wasn't the first time I had been with him. Now I hadn't been a parish priest except my early years. A rule I learned from Jim Keeley and Andy Coffey in visiting the sick—fifteen/twenty minutes/a half-hour—but you don't tire people out. With Wayne it got to be a half-hour, and though we had a lot to talk about, I got up to go—oh wow, Wayne said, “Sit down.” And I was honored by that, that I was that close to the family.

Gladys would come to dinner. She'd come to be sociable, just because she was happy to come. But then when we started with the cathedral, I brought her down to ask her to rebuild the cathedral. I didn't get very far because she was a talker. She wasn't dull—she was terribly bright and had given me the background of how she came into the church. She had been raised in eastern Oregon, which is very evangelical. She went to Oregon State [University] and she read her way into the church. She said the first three priests she approached walked away from her. And of course, I laughed and I said, “Gladys, I can see why.” [laughter] She became a Catholic while she was at Oregon State and met Wayne there.

The theory of how they operated—they were really high on education. But she just said very simply to me, “We had more money than we needed and we were just happy to share it.” She told me Wayne could not drive a nail straight. He got out of the service—I don't know whether he was wounded or what, but it would have been 1944. He got involved with this fellow who built custom homes, and Wayne was the brains and the finance behind it. In 1945 they flew a plane over Hayward/Castro Valley Hills and took aerial views and decided that's what they were going to do, to build homes after the war. She said they never had a home that was not bought before it was finished, and they just did extremely well. By this time they had hooked up with a group, I don't remember the name, from Denver. They were on a national scene of building, so the income was really... Wayne managed things very, very well.

The first time she came down to dinner, I said to her—this is after we had the news the cathedral wasn't going to make it—“Gladys, how about helping us build the cathedral?” She and Wayne had been married at St. Francis de Sales. She answered, “Why can't you renovate that?” And I said, “It's a bad deal. We can't make it safe. We could redo the thing for \$6.1 million, but it may come down in the next quake.” And she said, “I'm a businesswoman. You have to make tough decisions.” But we didn't get farther than that, and it was so brief. So the next time she came for dinner, I got Jim Vohs.

06-00:25:15
LaBerge:

Also a Kaiser person.

06-00:25:18
Cummins:

Yes, they were a great crowd. The Valleys appreciated Jim. Before dinner, Jim asked, “Gladys, how about building the cathedral?” And she said, “Why can’t you redo it?” The same as before. It was just word for word. And also added, “I’m a businesswoman. You have to make tough decisions.” Jim Vohs remembers that she said, “You have to build it in Oakland.” Now, I don’t remember that, possibly because I just presumed we were building it in Oakland! We never had a serious question about moving it out. I do recall that she said, “That’ll be a great cultural center for the city, apart from being a religious place, and it’ll give the city some real identity.” And she says, “Go for it.”

06-00:26:09
LaBerge:

Wow!

06-00:26:12
Cummins:

That would have been 1990 or 1991. And I guess in 1999 Steve—oh isn’t that—what’s the matter with me? He was president of the Wayne and Gladys Foundation. I had a Christmas card from him. Steve—oh! My age, I guess. He wished to make an appointment, and of course I said, “Listen, Steve I can come over,” Steve *Chandler*.

06-00:26:42
LaBerge:

Chandler, okay.

06-00:26:44
Cummins:

Yes. I said, “Steve, I can come over.” “No, no, no—I’ll come over,” he said. Of course, by this time I’d played golf with him, Jim Vohs’s friend. His question was, “Are you still interested in a cathedral?” I said, “Oh yes; we have to be.” And he proceeded, “Well, our board met this week, and they would like you to explore.” I said okay—we had had a decade to think about this. I inquired, “Are you going to announce this?” because our finance officer had died two weeks before, suddenly, and we were—

06-00:27:28
LaBerge:

Who was that?

06-00:27:29
Cummins:

Father Albano Oliveira. Oh, a masterful man. A native of the Azores. Came here to the seminary without anything except Portuguese, and commanded English superbly and was terribly bright. Never got into a pulpit without being really prepared. Oh, he was one of those great priests.

Steve said they were not making an announcement. Then I said, “Steve, this is the first time we’ve had some substantial base. If I’m moving around, can I

use a figure like \$15 million?” Well, that’s how *my* thinking had changed. And he said, “Oh yes, oh yes, of course.” Going out the door he said, “Thank you very much for making time for me.” [laughter] Well, you know what my thought would have been. I think Steve would have gone ahead and paid for the whole cathedral. I didn’t hear him ever talk about, as Wayne did to me, matching funds. There was never a hint of that. I think John McDonnell did a lot of the negotiating, and I never questioned him, but I don’t think that—well, the Valleys always wanted company to join in something, so you involve a number of people. But I don’t think there was any word about that—never to me anyhow.

But that went from—well, they started with \$15 million. It went to \$25 [million], went to \$50 [million]. The Valleys were the key to the cathedral. And of course they’re not much for recognition you know, but there *is* a silver plaque on the left of the door as you go into the cathedral, because I really insisted that they had to be recorded there. The only time they ever interfered—they never told us about architect, size—Tammy Valley said, “Get that property on the lake.” And that was stupendous. That really made the project. At that time they added some more and it got up to \$65 million.

06-00:29:49

LaBerge:

Oh my gosh. So early on, hadn’t you looked at that property and then let it go? So by the time you *did* buy it it was more than—?

06-00:30:00

Cummins:

Well, when we first looked we had—gosh, how many was [it]. We had what, some acreage at the old cathedral, and I thought that’s our ace in the hole. I wasn’t thinking big. We were questioning moving the chancery, because we had two other buildings on Lakeshore plus one in Concord, and I thought that’s not efficient. Building a new chancery and selling the old—that didn’t get a criticism, because everybody thought it would save a lot of money. Well, it wasn’t going to save much money, but it would make for communications, I thought. So we considered that. But my heart wasn’t into going back to the old place, and Jim Vohs and many others, were very cool on building in that part of the town.

Then Jim brought, maybe 1992 or so, he brought Glenn Isaacson, who had developed the downtown Civic Center in Oakland. I remember he was saying something about well, this neighborhood here—you have a good neighbor. The Veterans Hospital people had just built that office across the way. And he went through the virtues of it. But then he countered, “You don’t want to build here. I know you people don’t like the term, but you have to build in a *prominent* place, because the cathedral brings life.” [tapping for emphasis] And he said, “I went to Archbishop McGucken after St. Mary’s Cathedral burned down in San Francisco, and I said, ‘You can’t build here. You have to

go to the top of the hill.’ There would be no Japantown unless the cathedral was on that corner of Geary, and there’d be no St. Mark’s Towers.’”

I remembered that I had called San Francisco, the chancellor, who was in school with me. I said, “Who was in on the building of the San Francisco cathedral, where you got so much help from the city?” And he disappointedly said, “They’re all gone. There were four of them [who] made all the decisions.” I stopped Glenn Isaacson and I said, “Wait a minute. You’re the only one alive who knows what happened in San Francisco.” He basically stated, “You want to be on Harrison and Twentieth Street, where the traffic is moving all the time.”

Jim Vohs and I had looked at Fourteenth and Martin Luther King, and at the old St. Mary’s property downtown. We reviewed the Oakland Unified School District building. That was up for sale. And then there was—gosh, there was something—was it the old Lafayette Park, or across from Lafayette Park, down maybe Tenth and Clay or one of those? We also looked at the Wells Fargo Building at Fourteenth and Broadway.

06-00:33:23
LaBerge:

Really! And didn’t you look outside of the city also?

06-00:33:25
Cummins:

No.

06-00:33:25
LaBerge:

Was that ever an option?

06-00:33:26
Cummins:

Not really, but Jim Vohs wanted the parking lot where it’s built now.

06-00:33:32
LaBerge:

Oh, yes. [laughing]

06-00:33:34
Cummins:

Because he said he felt that really finished that site properly. We investigated that. The owners were Los Angeles people by that time. They didn’t even know what the property held, nothing about ground investigation. But it was something like \$9.2 million, and I was afraid that we’d spend all our money on property.

06-00:34:00
LaBerge:

Property, yes, yes.

06-00:34:02
Cummins:

And not have anything to—now, I also estimated that we’d be close to \$20 million by closing Francis de Sales, St. Mary’s, and the three buildings on Lakeshore. The naysayers said you’re only going to get \$8 million. Well, we

got something in between \$8 [million] and \$20 [million], I know that. And so I thought we could do it.

We did some of the soil testing and looked at the building of that, and then the ones who owned it brought us in one day—and oh, they were very reprimanding! That if we could have made up our minds we could have got—but this was when the boom took place. Well, they later came back to us, because it was very evident that the real estate market had really fallen off. But they wanted \$29 million for the property. Yet the soil testing had been done. Well, we went ahead at the urging of Tammy Valley. That was a good move.

06-00:35:14

LaBerge:

Who else—did you have a cathedral committee besides Jim Vohs and—?

06-00:35:16

Cummins:

We had several. [laughing] I put together a steering committee. Jim Vohs was very important in that, John McDonnell and Ron Courtney very important in that. Gosh, who else? And I put Holy Names sister Cynthia Canning—she didn't want to be on it, but I said I've got to get a read from you about whether the religious women are going to support this. George Crespin was on it, not enthusiastically—for the same reason. I wanted a good read. I put Gerry Moran, who was not always in my camp, and I thought for good reason. [laughing] He was in Fremont. That would keep up suburban thinking.

But just to try to be brief—the first time we got together—“Where are you going to build it?” I said, “Well, we could go back to the old place.” “Oh, no, no. We've got to get it someplace that's prominent,” and so on. And then, “How big are you going to make it?” And I said, “Well, I think twelve hundred, because if you go beyond that you really have to go to the auditorium.” “How big is San Francisco?” “Twenty-four hundred.” “Oh, I'd like to make a motion that we build it for twenty-four hundred.” I said, “You won't be able to afford it. I know that.” We settled for eighteen hundred. In reality it's only thirteen hundred. It got cut back in the building. And then—“Who's going to be the architect?” “Well,” I said, “We've had architects help us with the building pro bono for years, and it would be a wonderful tribute to one of them.” Not satisfied.

By this time Brother Mel Anderson, who had just retired from St. Mary's College, who had done a lot of building, I asked him to come to be staff for the project. He was very friendly with Allan Temko, the *Chronicle* architectural critic. We did not make a competition out of it, but Temko sent the word around, and we had thirteen world-class architects applying. Brian Joyce was head of that committee, and he cut the thirteen to five, and I'm trying to remember. There were—

06-00:37:45

LaBerge: I remember [Santiago] Calatrava.

06-00:37:48

Cummins: Calatrava and Craig Hartman, SOM, you know. And then [Ricardo] Legoretta from Mexico. Roche—what was his name, Kevin Roche, who built the [Oakland] Museum. And the last one was Lord Norman Foster, who built the Reichstag and the Hong Kong Airport.

06-00:38:13

LaBerge: This was big, really big names!

06-00:38:17

Cummins: One left off was Meier, Richard Meier. I met him at Berkeley one night with Jane Dillenberger, “Oh, Richard, this is our bishop, John Cummins.” And he said, “*Oh*.” I went home that night—Richard Meier won the international competition to build the church in the jubilee year in Rome—and I phoned Brian and I said, “Was Richard Meier on the list?” “Oh yes.” “Oh,” I said, “Well, no wonder he was so ice cold to me.” [laughter]

But we had the five come and make presentations. Of course, I thought Roche, with the award-winning building—

Oh! And one place we had looked with Calatrava when he came on, property-wise, was the parking lot alongside the Oakland Auditorium. The reason that the city has developed that end of the lake and are going to develop the creek is Calatrava! Because we parked our car once at the auditorium, walked down to the freeway, and Calatrava’s imagination was just going all over the place! “Oh, this is the walkway, this is the panorama. Laney College, that’s a wonderful asset.” When we reached the freeway he said, “Oh, this is such conservative building. There shouldn’t be this noise.” Calatrava’s mind reached into the Lake Merritt crowd. That’s where they developed that initiative or ballot measure that got it—

The five made presentations, our committee cut out Roche and Norman Foster. That left the three who were asked to bring in models. Calatrava was the choice. Brian Joyce was for Craig Hartman. I was, too, because I liked the idea of the wood, and I liked very much what he had done at the international terminal for San Francisco Airport. Beyond that—there was a group [that] made a bus tour. I couldn’t go. Everybody on the architectural list had done something in this area. Legoretta had built in Emeryville for one of the high-tech companies. I went down and looked at that one. The group took a trip to Stanford to look at things done by the people down there. It was a studied process.

06-00:41:24

LaBerge: Yes, and did you go up to Redding to see the [Sundial] Bridge?

06-00:41:26

Cummins: No, we did not.

06-00:41:28

LaBerge: But you could see pictures of it.

06-00:41:31

Cummins: Yes. Now where were we going with that?

06-00:41:33

LaBerge: Well, just how you chose the committee, the cathedral committee, but then how you chose the architect.

06-00:41:39

Cummins: We had a committee for architecture, we had a committee for liturgy—gosh, what else did we have? Well, finance.

06-00:41:49

LaBerge: Finance. Big, yes.

06-00:41:51

Cummins: That was terribly important, Bill Utic, who worked for PG&E, a Holy Spirit-Fremont parishioner, was on the diocesan finance board *and* on the cathedral finance board. That was a very important connection, because Rich Campbell and the O’Dowd graduate, Kip Wixson, came to see me one day, from our diocesan finance committee, and said you have hazards in going ahead with the cathedral. They were very careful—they didn’t interfere to tell me you shouldn’t build it, pointed out the issues and the dangers. I thought them so professional. I was pleased with them.

Of course, it took us thirteen years to get it built. But to get the feeling of the diocese, we had 350 people come twice to Holy Names College, and we laid out what was the cost and why we had done what we were doing. There was resistance. I think there was more indifference such as with our priests. For example at the beginning, I thought if we engage the [Y&H] Soda Foundation and the Gleason Foundation, I’m sure we’d receive matching funds from the Valleys. I was pretty confident from the beginning. Then two of our priests came in, not together. One was [Father John] Maxwell from St. Andrews, the other was [Father Edgar] Haasl from [St.] Louis Bertrand’s, North Oakland and East Oakland. Both said, “You can’t do this. You have to allow the people to build this.” My response was, “We have that in mind. But we need the security that we can get it built.”

06-00:45:15

LaBerge: So when you retired, where was the cathedral?

06-00:45:21

Cummins:

Well, we had to shut it [St. Francis de Sales] down in 1989. The people tried to make a go of it in the hall. Very significant, because people would come up to me and say—now, don't feel bad, because the church is not a building; it is *people*. We had plummeted from 2,200 each weekend to—I don't know, 900. A building *is* important.

06-00:45:50

LaBerge:

Yes, but when you retired then, how far along was the new cathedral?

06-00:45:55

Cummins:

Well, let me say one more thing.

06-00:45:58

LaBerge:

Okay.

06-00:45:58

Cummins:

There was little population at St. Mary's. It was more a Vietnamese center. And so we moved the St. Francis de Sales community down there. That's when Father Jim Keeley was still the pastor. We moved at Christmas. We didn't lose many people, although the mind of some people saw moving from 21st Street to 7th Street, as: we're not going down there. But it held together as a base community. There still were 1,100 people at Sunday Mass, and some genuine leadership held on there.

06-00:46:48

LaBerge:

I know a lot of the choir members did.

06-00:46:51

Cummins:

Yes, well because Lidia [Carlos Reynes], the choir director, was very, very good. Now, you asked me the other question—

06-00:47:02

LaBerge:

How far along was the new cathedral when you retired?

06-00:47:05

Cummins:

Okay. We had the Calatrava—

06-00:47:09

LaBerge:

The Calatrava plan?

06-00:47:11

Cummins:

Yes, that had gone on. Craig Hartman had come in with his plan, had developed it quite large. The property was underway. What else do you have? The size, the plans were really complete. They didn't need to touch that.

06-00:47:29

LaBerge:

Yes, the plans were complete, and so it just needed to be built.

06-00:47:35

Cummins:

Yes. But I had asked for a coadjutor bishop, and I'd gotten the approval in November 2001. And then 2002, after we had had a few years to move with the Valley base—also, we had picked up some \$18 million in pledges. Ron Courtney was a leader. Howard [J.] Korth was marvelous, gave us \$7.5 million, and Dan Whalen and Katharine Whalen were very generous. We picked up sizable donations at the beginning. We had the base in place, really, when I retired. I figured on chancery property sale—and nobody questioned that. Nobody raised an issue about—well, you can't sell diocesan property to build a cathedral. Oh yes, sure you could, and we did. Things were in place.

But [in] November of 2002, without my hearing anything during the year from Rome, the nuncio called me upstairs and said you're not getting a coadjutor—and wow! So I talked to Archbishop Quinn, who said if you want something done you have to go to Rome. So George Crespín and I went to Rome.

06-00:49:10

LaBerge:

Yes.

06-00:49:13

Cummins:

I guess it was less than three weeks later after we came home we had the announcement of Bishop [Allen H.] Vigneron. He came, and we had a press conference. Well, the night before—he landed in the evening—I had brought the priests' senate down for dinner. All came in their suits. The announcement of the appointment had not been made. I wanted them to meet him, and him to meet them, so that he wouldn't be translated through the *Chronicle* or the *Tribune*. The night of the press conference I brought a group from the chancery office to dinner so the bishop would get a good look at things. I outlined what I was going to do. I was to take him just on a circle [tour], up the Delta, come down, show him the Livermore vineyards, and then come into Mission San Jose and back up to Oakland. That night, I said to the people who were from the chancery, "Listen, I'm taking him around tomorrow. Where do I go?" "Kmart." [laughter] So he'll see the variety of people, and then Mission San Jose, and so on.

I sat him down the next morning after breakfast and said, "Now, we expected you here months ago. We were not able to postpone decisions. We are so far down the line that if you're not going to go with the cathedral, you haven't much time to stop it." And that was about it. He kept his own counsel. I had sympathy, in that no new bishop would appreciate the burden of a large building project. I learned later that he consulted Jim Vohs. Within two months he inquired of me. "Do we need a cathedral?" I said, "Well, if you ask that kind of question, no, because a cathedral is a secondary thing. Secondary is not to be identified with unimportant." I added, "Another reality is that our

cathedral was really a center of life in the diocese. You do not have resistance in this diocese for building a cathedral.” And that remained true.

06-00:51:56

LaBerge: That must have been something, showing him around and trying to give him a quick course in the diocese.

06-00:52:04

Cummins: He told me that he wanted to go to St. Albert’s Priory, because there was somebody there from Detroit that he knew and he felt obligated. Well, we stopped at St. Albert’s on Chabot Road, and there were more people that he knew than he thought. We must have been there an hour and a half, which threw the planned schedule all off. I drove him up through GTU. I didn’t know him, except the word that he was more to the right than I was. I pointed out the property that Opus Dei had bought, but I told him the difficulty we had with Opus Dei, about trying to find out what they were doing. Meanwhile I had phoned Dan Cardelli to say, “Listen, we’ll be by for lunch at twenty to one.”

06-00:53:21

LaBerge: Who is Dan Cardelli?

06-00:53:21

Cummins: Dan Cardelli was the pastor at St. Isidore’s in Danville. Stan Zak, a Polish priest, was his associate. Well, Allen Vigneron had talked French to Judy Fellner and talked Polish to Stan Zak. We drove down and circled the vineyards, but we didn’t stop. Afterwards we went to Mission San Jose. I showed him the mission, and we met with the Dominican Sisters. I wanted to take him to Holy Names [College] for the panoramic view, but we didn’t have time.

06-00:54:00

LaBerge: I’m just going on threads that you bring up, because it’s so good. Tell me about Opus Dei, when they came, what you tried to find out, what you didn’t find out.

06-00:54:18

Cummins: They were brought in here—

06-00:54:19

LaBerge: By?

06-00:54:23

Cummins: Well, I’m trying to think. I guess they came to St. Margaret Mary’s first. There was a young Opus Dei priest from San Francisco. There was a tall, young one who had come to see me in Sacramento to touch base with bishops. I was the auxiliary. And then would I sign a petition to canonize their founder? So I said, “Oh, okay I’ll sign that.” I think now that was a

questionable thing, how they rushed that through. But this young man—I could remember his name if I think about it—came in to see me, again, to touch base. What I didn't know was that they were *operating* here, and at Margaret Mary's—and I'm trying to think—were they in Pinole? They were into hearing confessions, for their own people. Bill O'Donnell [pastor at St. Joseph the Worker parish], I know, dismissed them from Berkeley. He wasn't comfortable with them. Gee, I'd have to look up what parishes they were in. Maybe it was Martinez.

06-00:55:53

LaBerge:

So they'd offer their services if somebody—like if Bill O'Donnell needed extra help?

06-00:56:00

Cummins:

No, they didn't do that. They set up their own operations with their own people, and their priests served them. They were confessors, spiritual directors. They established, a little later on, a day of recollection at Margaret Mary's for the priests who wanted to come. There'd be a talk and time for confession and then lunch. I never went, but I didn't disallow them.

06-00:56:30

LaBerge:

Could you have?

06-00:56:32

Cummins:

Oh yes, yes. When I had the deans one day I brought the matter up. Well, it came to what they were doing, and it was very hard to get information exactly. They were looking for property to set up their West Coast headquarters. One place was on Palomares Road on [Highway] 580 going towards Mission San Jose. That was bought by this Mercy devotion group later. But then the Kaiser estate in Lafayette—I didn't know it was there—they were inquiring about that just at that time I was in Rome with the pope for our *ad limina* visit. Part of that was fifteen minutes with Pope John Paul II. There was a pause in the conversation, and I said, "Opus Dei wants to set up their West Coast headquarters in our diocese." I added, "I understand you're favorable towards them." He waited then said, "They're very controversial, you know." And I thought what an answer!

06-00:57:47

LaBerge:

What an answer!

06-00:57:49

Cummins:

No, but it got to the point where I had to say to this priest from San Francisco—oh, but the poor guy. He came here from Michigan State. He had been an engineering student, and he really didn't understand the functions of church workings, and so forth. Meanwhile I learned from Cardinal Edward Egan, in Collegeville, at a group for lunch one day, who said, "Opus Dei is structured incorrectly. It reports to a personal prelate in the Vatican. Every

other community in the church is geographical.” And I said, “Is that true?” And he said, “Yes. Read the doctoral dissertation of Pope Pius XII and you’ll see the geographical base for religious communities throughout the world,” and so forth. And he said, “Opus Dei does not understand diocese or bishop.”

Well, the day that priest came in, I said, “Now, you’ve got to be straight with me. I’m not the office boy, and I really know all the religious in the diocese. Our people don’t make distinctions. How many people do you have here in Opus Dei?” I felt he had to think over an answer, never spontaneous, you know. And he said, “Well, we have one family in Orinda, one in Pinole, and one at the university.” And I said something about—no, he left off the university. And I said, “How about the couple who are at the university?” “Oh, they’ve moved to Stanford.” So I said, “Okay, Father. Now, you have one here, two here, and one here. That’s all?” “Well, we have various levels of membership.” I really—it was everything I could do not to be impatient. I said, “Father, no matter what I tell you or ask for, you’re never going to tell me the truth. Isn’t that right?”

I went on, “Now, I’m going to tell you one more thing. In the valley here, San Ramon Valley, people who object to parish policies are labeled Opus Dei. Now, I know they’re not Opus Dei, but if I were in your position I would be worried that that happens.” I added, “I don’t know what the story is in the valley exactly, but if I find out that your people are undercutting what we’re doing in this diocese, I’m going to embarrass you as publicly as I can, because I’m not going to allow that.” Oh, he got indignant! “Oh, we wouldn’t do a thing like that.” And I said, “Well, I don’t *know*. I don’t know who you are.” Later he sent me, which I’m sure not many people have, the constitution of Opus Dei. Of course the first thing I looked at was *local church*. Local church really meant Rome. I agreed with Ed Egan that the clarity of diocese is incomplete in that book.

But then the next thing was they bought a house in Berkeley. I went up there one afternoon to have a cup of coffee. Again, I thought they were most resistant to supplying information. And one year, early on, they had rented a house in Piedmont, right at the circle there, and they invited me for dinner and I went. But as soon as dinner was over, “Well, we don’t want to take any of your time now, Bishop.” And I thought I don’t know any more now than I did when I came. In time, they bought the house on College Avenue near Dwight, in that area. I went up and again, they were hesitant to tell me where they were from or anything. Then they bought the corner up there on Hearst, and then I moved on.

On New Year’s Day of 2000, we had gone to Asia and I had George [Crespin] with me—now who else? George and Felicia and Tony McGuire. We had dinner New Year’s Eve at the Maryknoll parish in Hong Kong. And I said to

the pastor, “Do you have Opus Dei here?” He said, “Oh yes, they’re here. They’re not the future.” I think that’s where I am with them. They haven’t been troublesome; I don’t know how close the other bishops have been to them.

06-01:03:23

LaBerge:

Well, on that note, I didn’t realize they were an actual order, a religious order. So when a religious order wants to come to the diocese, you need to—?

06-01:03:38

Cummins:

Oh, you have to be approved by—

06-01:03:41

LaBerge:

By you, by whoever is bishop? While you were bishop, were there new orders who came?

06-01:03:50

Cummins:

Yes, we invited some, because we realized the issue of priestly numbers. Bishop Begin thought we were so low on priests when he came in 1962. He had six assistants in Cleveland! [laughter]

06-01:04:07

LaBerge:

Six, right.

06-01:04:09

Cummins:

We never had that many in California parishes. We studied areas, and decided that St. Bonaventure could be offered—we didn’t want to give to religious the poorest places. So the Claretians were interested in that. The Holy Cross community took over St. Clement’s in Hayward. Many orders had inquired about coming, to be close to GTU, for continuing ed. The Augustinians went to Our Lady of Grace in Castro Valley. The Oblates were already here. Eventually we gave St. Ambrose in Berkeley to the Salesians from India. But that’s back in the hands of the local community here. The Precious Blood fathers took over Newark, St. Edward’s. That worked out very well. They gave us wonderful talented men.

06-01:05:22

LaBerge:

And what is the reporting between an order and the bishop?

06-01:05:27

Cummins:

Well, they have to fill out the annual reports and follow all the rules, just as everybody else.

06-01:05:38

LaBerge:

Do they owe you obedience?

06-01:05:42

Cummins: [laughing] No, that's an interesting question. No, their commitment is to their community. Tom [J. Thomas] Madden, my classmate, noted an interesting comment from Archbishop Charles Chaput from Philadelphia. The archbishop was asked a question, and I forget whether this was on television or whether Tom was there. He remembered the comment, "If you choose to be a religious, you choose that charism and that community, and then the priesthood goes with that. If you choose diocesan priesthood, you choose priesthood." And Tom Madden thought that was a wonderful insight, because Tom went to St. Ignatius High School, but said no, he never gave a thought to the Jesuits. The understanding has been revived by the Vatican Council, that you have a specific identity as a religious. A Dominican is not a Benedictine. With religious women, that really needed reviving.

06-01:07:31

LaBerge: So is it similar with the religious women as far as a new order coming to the diocese?

06-01:07:39

Cummins: Yes, yes. Now, people can drift through, and the Vatican Council gave any priest with faculties to hear confessions, faculties for all over the world. A great canonist and moral theologian in Berkeley, with the Jesuits, told me that's not going to work. He said one should have faculties locally.

06-01:08:00

LaBerge: Locally, right.

06-01:08:01

Cummins: That's why—people can come through. If they're coming steadily, you will expect them to check in.

06-01:08:13

LaBerge: Yes. Okay. Would this be a good time—I have a list of things we have not covered. Would this be a good time to talk about women in the diocese?

06-01:08:24

Cummins: Yes, sure.

06-01:08:25

LaBerge: You don't need to have prepared this, because your memory is so good. Both women religious and other women. You mentioned Margaret Mealey, Sister Barbara Lerner.

06-01:08:38

Cummins: Well, I have two things here. When I came[as bishop] it was shortly after the Jesuits in Berkeley had sent an open letter to the *LA Times* on the place of women in the church, which got a bit of notice as you'd imagine. [laughter] Soon after I came they invited me up for a seminar. I forget all that was

involved in it. Dick [Richard A.] Hill was the president at the time. He said, “John, do you want to say anything?” “No,” I said, “No, no. I don’t have anything at the moment,” whatever the topic was.

A second item had to do with *Octogesima Adveniens*, which Paul VI had written for the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* [Of New Things] of Leo XIII, and it was a marvelous statement. I had not read it until a year or two after it was published. With it fresh in mind I raised my hand at the end [of the seminar], “I have a question. You went ahead criticizing what came out from Rome on the women’s question. It seems to me that if you’re going to start in that direction, you have to be pretty consistent supporting as well as criticizing. You didn’t say a word about *Octogesima Adveniens*, which is really the whole matter of justice.” Michael Buckley later responded, “The situation with women is critical, in the sense that it’s like the workers in Europe in the nineteenth century, that the church could lose a great number [of women] because they’re not given full participation.” Now, I remember that.

So in 1980 or 1981—well, I was conditioned. I can’t remember whether it was my direction or the priests’ senate. But they decided—and we put Bill Macchi in charge along with Nora Peterson—to get a letter written that I would sign on the role of women in the church. They set up a committee. Well, it went from way over to the left to way over to the right. [laughter] I didn’t want those on the edges, because I feel they can’t dialogue. They’re fixed! If you can’t dialogue you just can’t be in the—well, anyhow, it started off and we had the women on the right, the women on the left. One was Pat Driscoll. You wouldn’t know that name. Her husband was the big Knight of Columbus, Frank Driscoll. Oh, she had a big number of kids, and the devotion she was protecting was of the Pregnant Madonna. Yes, there were fastball pitchers on the left side too. I’m trying to remember all there. But we had Margaret Mealey. And I forget if it was Sister Barbara Lerner. They had so much experience with groups and committees and so forth. They left the ordination question out. They focused on the place of a woman in the parish. The letter was not terribly long. It was readable, and people *did* read it. We put it in the *Catholic Voice*. Women could be extraordinary ministers of communion—the letter made a point that you can’t make a woman an official lector, but she can read. [laughter] Where a ministry is open, fill it in! When you’re putting together your parish council, or a committee in the diocese, it would be worthwhile to mix the numbers. Now, I told somebody—it didn’t solve much, but it softened the situation. It wasn’t [solved] every place you’d go.

You’d have to—

06-01:14:03

Cummins:

Yes. There was a deacon ordination of the Jesuits at our cathedral. I remember, gosh, just before I went I was going home to have dinner with my dad, then come back. It was a little early for dinner, but I wanted to be sure I was back in plenty of time. Before I left I found in my box this note from one of the people being ordained, that we'd like to protest that women aren't allowed to be ordained deacons. Well, I didn't know what to do with that. I felt no, it's not the place. I didn't want them doing that. At the cathedral entrance a few had daisies or daffodils or something. And one of them—they weren't noisy—but went like this, you know. [offering a flower] And I nodded, no thanks. But that backfired, because so many in the Berkeley crowd said, "You've got an open situation in [the] Oakland [diocese], and to try to make a divisive thing out of an ordination isn't helpful." I was very grateful for that.

We had another ordination, this time at St. Joseph's in Berkeley. It was on my birthday. I can't remember the year. It was the Jesuits, and they sent a note down to me that they'd like to make a statement before the ordination that they object that there are no women from their class being made deacons. What to do with that one! I remember it very well. I called the one in charge at that time. I said, "What are you doing to me? The hottest issue in the church and you're going to put that in my lap?" Well, [he said] that the ordinands had strong feelings about this. He said, "we won't have to do that." I said, "Yes, you do. You have to straighten that out. You've got it aflame now." Well, the families were all from out of town practically, from places like San Marino and the gold coast of Philadelphia, and so on. One of the candidates ended up with a Prayer of the Faithful that everybody have openness, and so on. Well, I didn't want to get a fight over that. But the class rep stood up at the beginning—"In the joy of the day, I just want to testify. And the people around,"—well, my homily was, that I understood this is a painful day for people. So my homily was on carrying the cross. [laughing] Well, I just couldn't get over how I got caught in the middle of that one.

About two weeks later, I got a letter from the cardinal archbishop of Los Angeles, sending me a copy of the invitation, and the Prayers of the Faithful, and wrote, "I'm getting so many questions about this down here. I'm just so glad that we don't have Berkeley in the archdiocese," and I thought so *phony*! Because we had gotten through it up here. And then I dictated a letter back—I was laughing, because I said, "I have your letter, and I think you should take it up with the proper superior, because really, there's nothing in conflict up here." So, I got through the Jesuit ordinations. Now, that didn't answer your questions.

06-01:18:14
LaBerge:

Well, I don't know if I had a question, or just the whole subject of the women religious here and what you did to encourage women to have more participation.

06-01:18:30
Cummins:

Okay. Well, the first spring here, I don't know how late in the spring, we invited all the sisters to Moreau High School, and 358 came. The direction was: what are the ten priorities of the diocese? It was very open. They all stayed for dinner, and we had drinks, which was very nice, and so on. They came up with their list of ten, but they did not want a committee to come out of that. They were happy to have the one question.

Well, one of the sisters put herself up as a spokesperson and came down to see me. Oh, she was very active in the diocese. I really didn't know her because she had come [to Oakland] when I was in Sacramento. But it was, "What's open to women religious?" And I said, "Well," kind of teasing her, "the cemetery is going to be open. The editorship of the paper." And I remember I said, "Now, I don't care if it's a man, a woman, a gorilla, but I want these to be competent." But what happened was very soon after—Tom O'Shea had brought Sister Rose Marie Hennessy back to be assistant superintendent of schools, and of course, I knew Rose Marie.

06-01:20:05
LaBerge:

From way back?

06-01:20:05
Cummins:

Quite a way back, yes, '62, I guess. But I remember I wanted to make her superintendent. I got a list of about six tough priests, because if there was going to be resistance out there I was not going to put her through that. But I went to Alvin Wagner and said, "You know, I'm interested in getting a school person and a religious to be superintendent of schools." And he just said very quickly, "Well, if it's Sister Rose Marie Hennessy I would certainly have no objection to that."

06-01:20:56
LaBerge:

Oh, great!

06-01:20:57
Cummins:

The other I approached was Dick Hecht, who wouldn't be as far to the right as Al Wagner, but he'd be conservative, in a nice sense. And he just said to me, "I don't think anybody would raise a question." But that was number—

06-01:21:12
LaBerge:

You knew that was okay, yes.

- 06-01:21:15
Cummins: That was the first major woman appointment. Well, then of course in time Monica Clark got the—
- 06-01:21:18
LaBerge: The [Catholic] *Voice*?
- 06-01:21:19
Cummins: —editorship, yes. And where else? There was opening for women to bring up ideas, like FACE [Family Aid-Catholic Education], that was the thought of Barbara Morrill and Sister Sebastian Adza. It was *entirely* their initiative. Gee, there were a few puzzling things on my mind. My brother was superintendent of schools in San Francisco, and he had not come up with an answer for school financing.
- 06-01:21:49
LaBerge: That's right.
- 06-01:21:49
Cummins: And I thought—I knew that the mission collection worked. And well, the Campaign for Human Development—that was in its early stages. That one was a big one. Sister and Barbara wanted a second collection. I said to them, “Oh gee. You won't get enough money. The missions are \$100,000, but you won't even get that much,” and so on. My thought was—and I didn't know anything about computers, “Oh, all of us got our education for a dollar a month, or nothing if you were in Ohio or Pennsylvania. Nothing.” And I thought gee, you can get a whole roll on the computer and say, “How about a dollar a month?” I told them, “You just won't get enough money.” Barbara Flannery got involved. She was at St. Patrick's in West Oakland. Well, the first thing we ever did in Mission San Jose, when we rebuilt it, was a FACE fundraiser. That was a kind of a tour plus the raffle and so on. The next year FACE took over the de Young Museum, the Vatican exhibit.
- 06-01:23:05
LaBerge: Oh yes!
- 06-01:23:08
Cummins: Oh, and it was one thing after another. It was most imaginative. The leadership was so *right*. They were creative, terrific, and everybody was for them. That had long been in the making.
- 06-01:23:30
LaBerge: And Catholic Charities—there has been a woman at the head of it at different times?
- 06-01:23:36
Cummins: Oh yes. In time—well, you know the religious ed director when I came was Paul Schmidt. A lay person succeeded him. But that was a tragic one. After a

year I asked one of the people in the office that we'd better evaluate her role, because the signals were going out that she was somewhat anti-clerical. I don't know how much of that was her fault. The women's lib—a little strong. You have to work with the community people that are there. I asked him, give us an appraisal—he dropped her.

06-01:24:40
LaBerge:

So she worked under Paul?

06-01:24:42
Cummins:

No, she took over after. She was the first woman. Sister Mary Leonard [Donovan] came in after her. From there we went—we reorganized twice. Monday morning, people could come, department heads, and others could come too. And one day there were more lay than cleric, and that was remarked. In time there were more women than men, and nobody said a word. But everybody had noticed. I'd hear in the months following, "Yes, remember that, when we were at the..." But it happened so gracefully or easily that—the people would evaluate staff on their talent, not being clerics or not being men. By and large I'd say it worked pretty well.

06-01:26:00
LaBerge:

Would you want to say something about the role and contribution of the women religious?

06-01:26:06
Cummins:

Yes, of course; I did a paper on that.

06-01:26:10
LaBerge:

Also, when you get the transcript we can refer people—or I'll write in the interview history—to your book also. So we won't worry about leaving things out.

06-01:26:23
Cummins:

Oh okay. Of course I'm thinking how far back do we go. When things started getting pleasant and easy with the religious, I remember Jim Keeley taking the Presentation Sisters when he was stationed in Berkeley—they'd go skiing. [laughter] They'd leave the house in habit, and at Fairfield they'd stop at the Standard station and change.

06-01:26:51
LaBerge:

[laughing] That's great!

06-01:26:56
Cummins:

Our family had cousins. We had a Mercy Sister cousin, we had a Presentation cousin. And then my brother Ben knew—he was close to the Presentations, San Francisco. And he had taught at Marin Catholic, with the Holy Names alumni—we were all Holy Names alumni. Holy Names were at St. Francis de Sales, and Jim Keeley was the associate there and he was very easy with them.

The Immaculate Hearts were at Corpus Christi. We started taking them water-skiing. It was very nice, except they'd all bring their lunch and then they'd sit in their own corners. Everyone will admit to that now. It's funny how one thinks about it now, but they were in their own group. One story about the Immaculate Hearts—my brother was a natural teacher. He was good. So he'd teach everybody how to water-ski. And the one failure he had in his life was Art Quinn, one of his students from Marin Catholic and later a professor of rhetoric at Cal Berkeley.

06-01:28:02

LaBerge: Yes, yes.

06-01:28:05

Cummins: Well, Art was the great first baseman and football player, but my brother never got him up on water-skis. My brother organized the outings. There was a ranch just outside of Santa Rosa. Now it's all sold and divided up. It had a twenty-three-acre lake, with a little island in the middle. It was a good place to water-ski, but talk about privacy! My brother would leave the boat up at the ranch, in the barn on the property.

06-01:28:37

LaBerge: So which body of water was this?

06-01:28:41

Cummins: Oh, it was—there was a round barn, red, that—you'd see it from the freeway.

06-01:28:59

LaBerge: Not Berryessa.

06-01:29:02

Cummins: Oh no, no. This was a tiny lake, an irrigation lake. But again my brother couldn't get the Immaculate Heart sisters up. And he was puzzled, "Gosh, they are into clean living, but they're out of shape!" And young, you know. A year later a priest from L.A. came up and stayed with us—I forget who he was with or why he was in town. But he wanted to go after dinner to see the Immaculate Hearts, and so I phoned over. When would he be coming, they asked. "Well, he wants to come after dinner." "Oh, we do our exercises." [laughter] That was all having to do with water-skiing. That's kind of a silly side thing.

06-01:30:07

LaBerge: But it tells a part of the story. People don't know that.

06-01:30:13

Cummins: Yes, it was—of course as George [Crespin] mentioned, that was the first time sisters put on lay clothes. Yes, that was a big change.

06-01:30:23
LaBerge:

It was a huge change. I remember it, being in college, and our nuns were going to give up the habit.

06-01:30:34
Cummins:

I think that in the diocese here, the inner-city schools really brought the sisters to new life. I call them the Magnificent Seven, from Louis Bertrand's all the way to West Oakland. Those women were just so professional. And then they could band with each other. Diana [M.] Pellegrino, especially, from Louis Bertrand's. She was a Detroit native, and somebody said to me if she weren't a Dominican, she'd probably be the president of General Motors. There was something just lovely about her. But everything that our school got from the federal program went through the public school system. So the sisters laid claim to what was theirs, and I guess they ruffled a few feathers. But it was really a matter of fairness. They were entitled to these helps. But they revived the schools, and the spirit was marvelous.

They moved into other ministries, because I think that was the encouragement of the Vatican Council. But it was underway from 1950. People don't pay enough attention to this. Pius XII wrote a letter on religious life in that year which said, "Adjust your habits." Imagine driving cars with the old habits. "Also look at your daily schedule and check how your prayer life fits into modern times." Within that decade came the sister formation—part of the pope's point. "You've got to professionalize. Goodwill is not enough." So you had the sister formation in this country, and the Immaculate Hearts were strong developing that. But everybody made a contribution. They were all for it. And from this diocese, the first full-time staff, the executive director of—I guess it was what came to be the LCWR, was Sister Rose Emmanuella Brennan, the president of Holy Names College, who was an absolutely admired woman—and talk about administrative/professional skill! She had *all* that.

And there's one thing—I was talking to John Quinn, and who else was I with? I guess it was Mike Buckley. The role that women played—how many women are CEOs of hospitals now? How many women are college presidents? You had that in the church—

06-01:33:37
LaBerge:

A long time ago, yes, yes.

06-01:33:37
Cummins:

A long time ago, yes, and major responsibilities. Those were admired. They were very competent in those positions.

Now, there was a change. In Rose Marie Hennessy's time with the schools—well, there was so much of change in American education, the digital

presence—well, so much, and the inner-city [schools]. A big change really was lay takeover, and that required formation. Rose Marie put that all together in marvelous kind[s] of ways. A great many old-time ministries opened, like theology professors in seminaries. Sandra Schneiders, Mary Ann Donovan, Barbara Green didn't create those roles, but they moved into those roles. Oh my gosh, what else? Parish associates and whatever that included, from being a secretary to being an assistant. The ministries and the liturgy in the parish, all those. Those were established, but I'd say the great areas were the initiatives, like the Next Step Learning Center. Gosh—I'm sure I have a whole list of them here. [sound of pages turning]

06-01:35:12

LaBerge: What about St. Mary's Center?

06-01:35:16

Cummins: St. Mary's Center—yes, that was a Holy Names initiative, yes.

06-01:35:20

LaBerge: And Friendly Manor.

06-01:35:22

Cummins: Friendly Manor, exactly. And very interestingly, they never asked any permission. Oh, housing—Jubilee West came out of St. Patrick's.

06-01:35:35

LaBerge: Oh, that's right!

06-01:35:39

Cummins: And of course as you say, women/sisters' work in Catholic Charities—Elaine Sanchez—an affordable housing project in Fremont on Holy Family Sisters' property. Those are super. And then Mercy Housing, that started here. Sister Lillian Murphy was at Mercy [Retirement Center] in Oakland, just retired from Denver. She brought about a national organization for housing. Well, Sister Marietta Fahey, Holy Family Center in Walnut Creek, for spiritual direction. [reading from paper] Mission San Jose opened doors for conferences and retreats. Sister Patty Bruno—with Jude Siciliano, promoting preaching workshops, and so forth. Nancy Teskey, physiology at Holy Names, died last year, but had made herself available for parishes on science and religion. That would have been new. Again, the Mission San Jose Dominicans, they're opening an Alzheimer's center, with this new project they're building—all of those things. [papers rustling]

06-01:37:15

LaBerge: They've just flourished from the time you came to now, there was so much new happening.

06-01:37:22

Cummins: For the religious.

06-01:37:21

LaBerge: Yes—well, for everything! But this is just one example.

06-01:37:30

Cummins: Sr. Elisabeth Lang is the expert on immigration, Vietnamese, from Catholic Charities. Well, you have to know—Barbara Flannery as chancellor and Sister Felicia [Sarati], ethnic ministry.

06-01:39:24

LaBerge: Well, this might be a good time to stop.

06-01:39:27

Cummins: All right. How late is it? Oh my goodness, yes. I always keep you over time.

Interview 7: January 29, 2015

07-00:00:01

LaBerge: Okay, today is interview number seven, January 29, 2015. Before we started we had mentioned that [Nobel laureate] Charlie [Charles H.] Townes just died, who was, I think, a great friend of yours and others at the university with you.

07-00:00:25

Cummins: Oh yes.

07-00:00:28

LaBerge: So maybe we can use that to launch into both your ongoing relationship with GTU, and then the University of California and the diocese and the people involved. So you were just saying how much that meant to you.

07-00:00:53

Cummins: Sure. We should start with Charlie Townes?

07-00:00:53

LaBerge: Yes, why not?

07-00:00:58

Cummins: I got a call from him. He wanted to come down to see me. I didn't know him. And that is terrible, a man as famous as he. He came down, and he had an invitation to Rome. Twenty Nobel Prize people had been invited by the Pontifical Academy of Science to discuss the main issues facing the present civilization. He wanted to know what I would comment regarding that. Well, that was very far away and highfalutin, in a way. He said the invitation came from Cardinal Franz König of Vienna. And I said, "That is *very* dependable." That man was a leader at the council. He visited Berkeley in 1962, gave a talk to the student body, and gave a great appraisal to the fledgling GTU. It had just been formed as a corporation, which was an influence on Bishop Begin, or assurance, that König would speak favorably of it.

Well, Charlie went to Rome, and Frances went with him, of course. When he got back he invited us up to the Faculty Club, Father Joe Carroll and me, and he had pictures. He just enjoyed the event so much! I remember the ten major issues facing the world, and right in the middle was violence in the cities. Gee, this must have been 1980 or maybe even '79. The group really represented a variety. He said there were a good number of nonbelievers, people with no faith. Everybody participated, and so forth. Shortly after that I received a letter from the nuncio, and it said Charles Townes had been—I don't know if it was the word *nominated*, to be a member of the Pontifical Academy of Science in Rome. I wrote back and said, "I would rate this man very, very highly, and a very devout man." He received the appointment.

He and Frances went every year, when that group met. They had such a wonderful experience and they were so faithful. I remember one time, because they came to our dinners at the Newman Center. It was when Father Tom [Thomas F.] Gleeson had just arrived. Tom was on the one side, and Frances on the other at the end of the table, the big table. Charles was there, and she said, "Oh, I'd better tell him." And Charles, "No, please don't tell him." And she says, "Well, I'm going to tell him. We were at the gathering, and we just formed a community, and so the pope said Mass for us the last day, and I went to Holy Communion because I belonged to that community." [laughter] And Charles said, "No, you shouldn't be telling him that." I said, "No, no. This is very good, because when I get a letter from Rome about correcting liturgical abuses, I'll write back and say, 'You clean up your own house in Rome.'" [laughter]

There was another time—this is a side thing, but the year after Charlie went to that gathering, I was in Guam and was sitting at dinner two down from the pope.

07-00:05:14
LaBerge:

This is John Paul II?

07-00:05:17
Cummins:

Yes. And across the table but one over, at the end of the table, was this man who was in the pope's retinue but nobody was talking to him. And I said, "Oh, archbishop, you are..." "Well, I'm Archbishop Martain. I am in charge of the protocol at the Vatican." And I said, "Wow, you deserve a compliment, because Dr. Charles Townes and the wife were so pleased with the hospitality." At which the pope leaned over, hearing that conversation, and said, "You have many Nobel Prize winners at Berkeley." And I said, "Oh yes." And he said, "In science?" I said, "Well, not just in science." I didn't think of [Czeslaw] Milosz, who had just gotten the Nobel Prize for literature. I forgot that one. [laughter] I made the point that Berkeley was really a well-rounded institution, and so on. And well, that was that. Charles was very supportive of our having those dialogues later about nuclear arms.

07-00:06:30
LaBerge:

Okay. I wanted to ask you about that, because in this Diocese of Oakland book, there's something about the bishop's pastoral, and one of them was on peace and one of them on economic justice.

07-00:06:42
Cummins:

Yes.

07-00:06:42
LaBerge:

So do you want to talk about that, and who you gathered to advise you?

07-00:06:47

Cummins:

Well yes, I'd be very happy to. I think the conversation started in 1981. There was—oh, a number of people. Frank [P. Francis] Murphy was an auxiliary bishop in Baltimore, and he introduced it. He had three or four bishops supporting him, that we really should be writing about nuclear arms, because there was talk about limited nuclear warfare and a lot of saber-rattling, with President Reagan, and so forth.

Well, the first draft came out in a year, and at one of the GTU/UCB dinners I just reported back that the first draft on the nuclear arms paper was here, and if any would like to take a look at it you'd be welcome. Twenty-three asked for it! And every one of them wrote a written response. Seventeen were favorable; six were not. The seventeen went from enthusiastic to fine. The negative went from maybe, wait a minute, to pretty strong—all six of those had either taught or lived in Eastern Europe under the Communists. And I remember when the second draft came out and somebody said to me, "Oh, you people lost your nerve. You've softened it too much." And I said, "Well, if you were in Berkeley, with a quarter of your people with experience raising an issue, you would really have to pay attention to that." And I think we did.

07-00:08:43

LaBerge:

Where did you get input from campus?

07-00:08:47

Cummins:

Oh gosh, well—Geoffrey [P.] Chew from the physics department—gosh, I'd have to go back, I think, over that.

07-00:08:56

LaBerge:

But how did you even make those contacts or think about how you were going to approach this?

07-00:09:02

Cummins:

There was an enormous amount of consultation that went into that draft. That's how the first draft was made—with invitation to tie into it, which I have to—well, of course some of those were GTU people, but it was largely the Berkeley crowd.

07-00:09:27

LaBerge:

Now, how did you gather them all together?

07-00:09:30

Cummins:

They were all at the dinner.

07-00:09:31

LaBerge:

Okay, *okay!* And just for the tape, I want to say these are dinners at Newman Hall, where you gathered Catholic and non-Catholic faculty.

07-00:09:43

Cummins:

Oh yes, oh yes; it was anybody who wanted to come. Bill Bouwsma, my major professor, would come very regularly. Robert Scalapino at times. Gosh, I'm trying to think who else would come. Well, anybody was welcome.

07-00:10:04

LaBerge:

Yes, yes. But the word—you must have had—somebody gave you a list of faculty to invite, and then maybe some invited others? I don't know.

07-00:10:12

Cummins:

Well, this goes back earlier. It was June 30 in 1977 when I was installed. Archbishop Jadot, the nuncio, came and gee, it was wonderful that he did. It meant a lot to the people. He had been in New York the day before and took the red eye to be here for the installation. The next day down at the hotel in Emeryville he wanted to see me. He had a nice view, that Holiday Inn in Emeryville looking out over the bay. I said, "Oh, you have a great view." He said, "Not as sharp as Anchorage, Alaska," where we had both been the year before. I had been to Anchorage because Archbishop Hurley was in school with me, and I guess I met the nuncio up there. He had six things for me to do, but number four was, "The faculty at Berkeley, the Catholic faculty, feel neglected. They are going to invite you up for Mass and dinner in October." He said, "You pay attention to that." Well, that was easy, because I knew a lot of people by that time in Berkeley.

So I went—I remember Don Baxter was the Paulist who was in charge. Jack Campbell was the pastor. We had Mass at the coffee table upstairs, instead of in the chapel. Don Baxter asked, "Do you want all the vestments?" Now, I think he meant do you want a chasuble, and all of that. But I didn't need all that. So when he did ask me about vestments, I said, "Don," who was a native of Los Angeles but he had been in New York, "Listen, Berkeley is not this big wide-open place. Wait till you meet the political scientist from Poland, and there's a Romanian. We ought to be downstairs with the Gregorian chant, ten candles!"

Well, we had Mass, and then I was to give a state of the union. There was no dinner attached. It seems to me it was the late afternoon, not the evening, but it could have been evening. They had a few questions, and then Don said, "Well, thank you very much." I said, "Wait a minute, I have a few questions." And one was, "I don't hear of any connection between the GTU and you people here." Well, they said there *was* none. I was taken aback. I think you really can't expect the academic priests to be that pastoral. Their vocation is something different. And what was it, now I'm going to lose [my train of thought]. Oh, one asked me, "What is our relationship here to Newman?" Well, once upon a time those people would have been living in Berkeley and going to Newman, but now they were spread around.

Well, my experience at Davis, with the Newman Center, was bad. It had been taken over by dissident people from all around the area, Woodland or other places—and I thought the students were quite neglected. My reaction to Davis was—[these are] important developmental years, from eighteen to twenty-two. I remember one of the Mills College mothers, after one of her daughters graduated Mills, wrote me a note and said, “I’m so glad that you worked at Mills and had the Mass and the various events to keep those people aligned to the church. Because my experience is that when you graduate from a university, that is your orientation religiously.” That’s not entirely true—but I guess I mentioned that.

And then afterwards Fred [Frederick C.] Collignon—

07-00:14:33
LaBerge:

Whom I know, yes.

07-00:14:34
Cummins:

Fred came to me and said, “I’m three years here out of Harvard, and I’m in public policy. I really could use theological input, but where would I get it?” And I thought oh, wait a minute now. Well, Jack Campbell was thinking—in the commentary afterwards you could see—this isn’t the only time we’re going to have *this* group together. So we decided on a dinner the following year. And the chancery office took care of the costs—so the bishop did the invitations. *We* didn’t know who the Catholic faculty were. There’s no list. And it was all word of mouth. We were into that dinner ten or fifteen years, and we were still picking up people that had been on the faculty twenty and twenty-five [years]. But I remember that first dinner we had, there were so many remarks around the table that evening, and “We were on the Academic Senate together. I didn’t know they were Catholics!” Oh, the dinner was a screaming success.

That evening one of the organizing people said, “Oh, you don’t have to say anything.” I said, “I prepared to say something! I’m not going to write a paper and not deliver it.” But I just made the point, welcome, and the history of Newman, and so forth. Dick Hill was the president of the Jesuit school, and he explained GTU. Oh, he was awfully good. And he said, “Now, as you go up Euclid Avenue, the Dominicans, oddly enough, are on the left.” [laughter] And when you get to Virginia Street, even more odd, the Jesuits are on the right,” and so on. It was a big success. Without anybody hesitating, it became an annual event. Probably less interest from the diocese than I would have expected, especially from priests whom we had sent off for degrees.

07-00:16:46
LaBerge:

You mean, would they be invited and didn’t come?

07-00:16:50

Cummins: Oh yes, well, I felt that was part of their ministry!

07-00:16:53

LaBerge: Yes, yes.

07-00:16:54

Cummins: By that time we had seventeen college institutions in the diocese. I thought this is a big investment and a big industry here. But the weakness came from—now, [not] people like George Crespin, of course very faithful, and Paul Schmidt, and Sisters Rose Marie Hennessy—the gang.

07-00:17:16

LaBerge: The gang. [laughing]

07-00:17:20

Cummins: But the second year—of course I wrote to Archbishop Jadot and told him the event had worked out well. He offered to come and talk! And so he did. That was the time we switched the talk to before the dinner. That was a good move! [laughter] Instead of having it—

07-00:17:46

LaBerge: It's always better, isn't it?

07-00:17:47

Cummins: With several drinks and trying to follow a conversation. And he was very good. But oh, the GTU people took him on about academic freedom and Rome interfering. I thought he handled himself very well. Was there a Larry Sweeney in the law department?

07-00:18:06

LaBerge: Larry [Lawrence A.] Sullivan.

07-00:18:06

Cummins: Larry Sullivan. Well, the wife was talking to me afterwards and says, "A little immaturity with some of this crowd, isn't there?" The Cal Berkeley crowd were very favorable towards the whole evening.

Well, the next year I got George [G.] Higgins from the national office who—well, he rebutted the academic freedom, because he said, "I've been working thirty-three years for the American bishops. I have never been interfered with in my direction or the topics of my writings." He went on. He chided the theologians a bit, that the American contribution to the Vatican Council was the Document on Religious Liberty, and that has not been developed in the American theological world. I thought, leave it to George!

The following year we thought we were going to move the diocese into this a bit more. John [A.] Coleman was the chair, and [Franciscan Father Joseph]

Joe Chinnici talked for GTU and [Dean of Engineering] Karl Pister for the University of California. And I remember Karl—one remark was, “I would just like you people to show up at my office when you’re not protesting.” [laughter] Rose Marie Hennessy was very good. She said, “I don’t need any research project. I want to know what you know now, and I need it that day.” But it was a very cheerful kind of evening. I thought it worked out very well. We asked for a critique, and one of the profs from Cal wrote and said, “Well, it’s wonderful to have the invitation and the socializing and having all the mix of people there and the clergy, except for having to listen to all these dull programs.” [laughter] So that was—what to do about that? I don’t know whether that represented a lot of people or a—

07-00:20:19

LaBerge:

Just the one who wrote.

07-00:20:24

Cummins:

We’re conditioned to ignore compliments and to watch carefully for criticism. But what happened—was the first draft, in 1982, the first draft of the peace pastoral.

07-00:20:38

LaBerge:

Oh, okay!

07-00:20:39

Cummins:

From that time on the evening became a report of the national bishops’ meeting. I would select stuff that was relevant to Berkeley particularly, and that would make for an interesting commentary. They looked forward to it. Even liturgical changes, but things that were of interest—and that led us into the pastoral on the economy, and one of the hearings from around the country was done at Boalt Hall.

07-00:21:26

LaBerge:

So you organized that?

07-00:21:29

Cummins:

Well, we were pretty well known by this time, and the Berkeley faculty. The first time—that time when I spoke and introduced the group, and Jack Campbell talked about what the Newman Center was, Hilary Martin and another of the Dominicans, on the way out, said to me, “We got your point.” I thought—I don’t think I had a point. And then I reflected oh, yes I did, but it wasn’t that specific. I felt that Berkeley was very helpful to me when I was secretary in Sacramento, and USF was helpful, GTU was helpful. Loyola, in Los Angeles, made it clear that any department I needed help with—and the law school was very good. And I thought we’ll take this Berkeley operation and make it available for the Washington office, which—that was really an intent. And I think that worked out rather well.

07-00:22:36
LaBerge:

And you had who come—Robert McAfee Brown and somebody else.

07-00:22:42
Cummins:

Well, he was working at Stanford in those days. I'm sure he came up for the presentation of the pastoral on the economy. We had Cesar Chavez at that gathering and Frances Moore Lappé was there. The man who—was it Gérard Debreu, a St. Mary Magdalene's parishioner who got the Nobel Prize for economics one year? He talked there. For the peace pastoral Bryan Hehir, wrote Sandra directly and asked her if she would do a paper on New Testament themes related to nuclear arms.

07-00:23:54
LaBerge:

And this is Sandra Schneiders?

07-00:23:56
Cummins:

Yes. Sandra phoned me and was upset, because I think it was ten days or two weeks' notice, and she said, "Don't these people realize that I'm teaching?" She did write the paper. Thirty pages. She sent me the paper as she was off to Colorado Springs. I think she had Carmelite friends there. I thought the paper was superb. But she phoned me for comments. I said, "Take page nineteen out. It's condescending. You're dealing with wonderful bishops. You've got Jim [James W.] Malone, Ed [Edward T.] O'Meara,"—I forget who else. When she got back from presenting the paper—well, she enjoyed it. And the bishops really acknowledged her in a very strong way, especially Ed O'Meara. But she'd come back and said to me, without any oversensitivity, "Jim Malone told me to put page nineteen back." [laughter] She remembers that one to this day.

07-00:25:24
LaBerge:

Oh dear. And then out of that, what was the diocese relationship, if any, to the protests at the nuclear labs? Was there some kind of dialogue about that?

07-00:25:38
Cummins:

No, not really. Well, a few of the Franciscans were involved. Bill O'Donnell was involved.

07-00:25:44
LaBerge:

That's right.

07-00:25:47
Cummins:

Now, Bill wrote a letter to the *Catholic Voice* that was published—well, I think Ray Decker felt the same, even though Ray was awfully involved in the—he really put together the dialogues after we had the bishops' paper. But their feeling was well, you're talking—and the people in Washington are setting policy and paying no attention. My feeling was we can *do* this. We've the talent, and the wonderful mix of a scientific community and a theological

community. Plus the fact that we build the bombs! But I thought protest is okay. I never got involved in that.

Well, later on when I began our first pastoral council, and social justice was one of the top-five issues—gee, it was number three! And this came out of the blue from the point of view of—if you had the feel of your diocese, you wouldn't have heard that. I asked Olga Morris, who was very much a leader in the St. Vincent de Paul Society, to serve on the committee. And she said, "I don't protest. I don't picket." I say, "Well, neither does the pope. There are other things besides demonstrations and picketing."

That was a big event here, people getting arrested. That was something other than what we were interested in. In the nuclear dialogues that took place later, one of them was at the Livermore Lab. I did not know that we had to get clearance for everybody. There was a very embarrassing thing there, because oh, now I'm going to forget—the geography professor at Berkeley. Oh, he was *so* faithful to everything. He was a Brazilian citizen.

07-00:28:03

LaBerge:

I'll look up his name. We'll find that. [Hilgard O'Reilly Sternberg]

07-00:28:05

Cummins:

I knew him so well. He passed away a year ago. He participated in everything we did and was always so complimentary and supportive, and the wife was just marvelous. He couldn't get in, because Brazil was not favored-nation status. And this man who had been, from the beginning, participating—I was so embarrassed. If we had known, we wouldn't have gone there. But as a result of those dialogues, we wrote to the committee to invite Pope John Paul II to Livermore Lab when he said Mass in San Francisco.

07-00:28:50

LaBerge:

So did he go to Livermore Lab?

07-00:28:55

Cummins:

No. The general secretary of the bishop—he was a good friend of mine, but he said, "I didn't know really how serious you were." I said, "Well, I didn't want to press it, because it would be an enormous logistic matter how to get him out there and in there, and how much picketing would go on if he were there."

07-00:29:26

LaBerge:

Yes. Well, besides those dinners where you brought GTU faculty in, what else was your relationship ongoing with the GTU?

07-00:29:39

Cummins:

The relationships were always close, because getting them established required diocesan approval. But it became, with the bishop, a collaborative venture, and we really were close.

07-00:29:59

LaBerge: And did the diocese contribute financially, or not?

07-00:30:05

Cummins: No. Well, we did some beneficial things, but it was ad hoc. There was no—those institutions—

07-00:30:13

LaBerge: Are on their own.

07-00:30:15

Cummins: Oh yes, yes. But now I lost something, we were—[pause to think] What was I going to say? How did you bring that question in? [tapping]

07-00:30:35

LaBerge: It was the GTU, because you'd had the dinners and you brought those GTU folks in to the dinners with the faculty from Cal.

07-00:30:47

Cummins: Yes, but the heart of it was the Cal faculty. They were the instigators. But it made so much sense to—

07-00:30:52

LaBerge: To have some kind of crosscultural—isn't it funny that the campus is not much farther from GTU, but not everybody crosses over Hearst to go over there.

07-00:31:06

Cummins: No. Now there was a good amount of—they were really surprised when the GTU got set up. Of course there was real agitation in Berkeley. And that was a big factor. Do you want seminarians in Berkeley with all the—?

07-00:31:27

LaBerge: You mean when the Free Speech Movement was going on, and things like that?

07-00:31:27

Cummins: Yes, oh yes. In one sense the GTU bailed Cal out, because here was something that was really traditional and moral and was bringing that element about conservative values in pretty strongly. And what surprised the GTU people was eight departments from the university immediately set up collaboration with the GTU.

07-00:32:01

LaBerge: Wow!

07-00:32:01

Cummins: Library privileges were always mutual, and the credits were exchanged.

07-00:32:13
LaBerge:

Did you have anything to do with getting that worked out?

07-00:32:13
Cummins:

No, that was all done with the GTU people.

07-00:32:20
LaBerge:

Which departments? Do you know?

07-00:32:22
Cummins:

Well, I know psychology was one, sociology was another—history, I'm sure. The Cal people served on doctoral committees regularly for the GTU, and vice versa. To this day the courses are exchanged with those departments. Maybe it's gone a little farther. No money has been exchanged. And I think the loser on that is really GTU, because they're the ones taking care of the Cal people with no great support. But there is no intention of making that change. They're all delighted, and I think every GTU person that I ever talked to thought it's a beneficial relationship and no agitation for changing it.

07-00:33:18
LaBerge:

Well, as you're saying it, I remember going to a couple of talks at GTU given by Robert [N.] Bellah [Department of Sociology]. He crossed the campus to GTU.

07-00:33:29
Cummins:

Yes, and Bill Bouwsma was very active. Of course, Stephan Kuttner and the canon law people; that was a big connection.

07-00:33:44
LaBerge:

Of course. Well, I have jotted down—this was from a long time ago that we talked, about other people on campus that you had relationships with and wanted to say something about. And some of them were the chancellors, starting with Roger Heyns and then Mike [Ira Michael] Heyman. So tell me about—

07-00:34:05
Cummins:

Well, Roger Heyns came in in the middle of all the turmoil.

07-00:34:08
LaBerge:

Right, in 1965.

07-00:34:19
Cummins:

Yes, but he wasn't here very long, only a matter of months, it wasn't a year—it might have been the first month. Bishop Begin invited him for dinner, and invited a number of us from the chancery office. We were having a drink before, and the bishop said, "Chancellor Heyns, how can we help you?" Dr. Heyns said that was the first positive comment he had received in the area, because most of it was, "You straighten that place out." And from all sides.

Roger Heyns never forgot that, and he had the whole gang of us, from that dinner, at his house for a lunch one day. He was very participatory at Holy Names and at Mills, so much part of the scenery. But he was available. There was much interchange between the bishop and himself. They became good friends. When he left Berkeley, remember he went to the Hewlett-Packard Foundation. And I would meet him occasionally. We'd be on the phone occasionally. And it was oh, come down for lunch! "Oh yes, I will." But we never set a date.

07-00:36:12

LaBerge: You didn't mention this, but after Roger Heyns, it was Albert Bowker and then Mike Heyman.

07-00:36:20

Cummins: No, I didn't know Bowker and I didn't have any—what years were that, do you remember?

07-00:36:24

LaBerge: Maybe '70 to '75, or something like that?

07-00:36:28

Cummins: Yes, see I was in Sacramento.

07-00:36:31

LaBerge: That's right.

07-00:36:31

Cummins: But I knew Mike Heyman, and he had come for dinner, and that lovely wife—she was—

07-00:36:38

LaBerge: Therese, yes.

07-00:36:37

Cummins: She was lovely. Well, [Professor of Law] Jack [John E.] Coons brought him down, I think more than once. Mike Heyman was easy to get along with. I remember that when the pope came for the first time to the United States—was that it? Yes. Mike sent a note to the then-chancellor to invite him to Berkeley, because Charter Day had what—[Pierre] Trudeau and Desmond Tutu—and Mike Heyman just saw the pope as another champion on the human rights question. That would have been a headache. [laughter] But I'm trying to think—did Mike come to our dinners? I wouldn't be surprised if he came, but I don't quite recall. But yes, there was quite a bit of contact with him. And then after he retired he took over responsibility for downtown Oakland.

07-00:37:48

LaBerge: Oh! That's right.

07-00:37:51

Cummins:

For the revival of the inner city. It was after the quake [in 1989], and he came in to see me and he brought Duke Bascom with him, who was the Canadian—oh, I forget what that group was, but there was a Canadian outfit that was talking about the development of central city Oakland. I remember Mike came in and said, “Are you going to rebuild the cathedral?” And I said, “Well, we don’t have a church that would be adequate. But I’m going to have to find out from San Francisco what was the aid that the city gave, because we’re not going to be able to do this without the city moving us along.” And of course Duke Bascom—when Duke came in, shook hands, “Sixteen years of Catholic education,” I forget, Catholic University or Fordham or something, but he reacted, “You’re into church/state; you’re not going to be able to bridge that.” Mike Heyman quickly jumped in, “Oh, wait a minute, Duke. A cathedral is a public—it’s a community project. Do you know any big city that doesn’t have a cathedral? That belongs to the whole people. There is no church/state issue here.” I never forgot that.

The last time I saw Mike Heyman was in the Dulles Airport. We were both waiting for baggage. We were coming from different planes. The first thing he asked me was, “How is the cathedral?” And I could tell him, we’re on the move! Oh, he took great interest. And he took great interest in Catholic schools. He’d go down himself to Presentation [High School] to talk about Cal Berkeley.

07-00:39:43

LaBerge:

Oh really! Oh, good for him!

07-00:39:47

Cummins:

Oh yes, they recruited from our schools pretty much. Well, they liked what they saw at St. Mary’s and O’Dowd. Those were very wonderful relationships. I didn’t get to know [Chancellor Robert J.] Birgeneau. I met him at the funeral for Rita Pister, but I had met the wife [Mary Catherine] once before when they came. Her curriculum vitae was Catholic Charities and Vincent de Paul!

07-00:40:20

LaBerge:

Yes, they are both wonderful people.

07-00:40:23

Cummins:

The last time that we had the dinner, Bishop [Michael C.] Barber had the dinner down at the cathedral, which I disagreed with. It should have been at Newman; it was a Cal faculty project. But the bishop sat me at a table with the wife and with Bob, a marvelous chance to talk. But I opened the conversation by saying, “I didn’t approve of this, because you have to be talking to the bishop, not to me. I’m a has-been.” Bob’s response, “Well, so am I.” [laughter] When he got up to talk, they gave him the diocesan medal.

07-00:41:04
LaBerge:

That's right.

07-00:41:08
Cummins:

He spoke well about how important the parish is in the cities and gave his own history. His sister moved from school in Toronto to the brass factory, the foundry, and when he got out at fifteen years old he moved in there. But it was the parish priest who said, "Are you happy with that job?" Bob explained at dinner, "Our whole family got through college because of that priest, and that's what moved us along." He was saying that the middle class is getting pinched, that the outreaches to them were poor. But who was from Berkeley that said that's his common theme; he says that all the time. Oh, we had a lot to talk about, and Mary Catherine was just great. Later he said, "Oh, we're staying here." I said, "What does the family say?" "They're not too happy about it, but this is really home." And I asked, "Did you get a sabbatical?" "Oh no, no. I wanted to go back to teaching." He's still there, I guess.

07-00:42:18
LaBerge:

Yes, yes, he is.

07-00:42:19
Cummins:

I wish I'd gotten to know him better.

07-00:42:23
LaBerge:

Well, then before that, Chang-Lin Tien. You mentioned that you had—

07-00:42:27
Cummins:

Well, he had a community advisory board, and he invited me to be on it. It met a couple of times a year. I remember that the Chez Panisse lady, Alice Waters, was on it, yes. I'm trying to think of who else. But I do recall that there was a good amount of discussion about finance. I had read something about the University of Michigan, that something like 28 percent of its finance was from the state, all the rest was private. From my time in Sacramento too, watching the funding for hospitals and university and for public schooling, everything was so arbitrary. The healthcare people were much more on the spot because they couldn't plan ahead. They never knew how much money they were going to get. But I told—that was one of my things, that it seemed to me, for the experience, that the public universities are going to have to get more private funding. But that does not work, because the more private funding, the less from the state—well, we talked about this the other night. I was shocked when Karl said 11 percent [state funding]!

07-00:43:56
LaBerge:

Yes, of course it is, yes, yes.

07-00:44:01
Cummins:

Now, that came up a lot. Another item was they wanted to have a restaurant, by Alice Waters, in the art museum. And it came my turn to talk to that. I said,

“Well, Berkeley has got a nice reputation for restaurants. But you’ve got to get the word out—you *can’t park*.” People are fearful of trying to park a car at the university.

The chancellor once rejoiced and shared with the board the news that Pope John Paul II had asked me about the university. Every five years we had the *ad limina* [visit], and each of us got fifteen minutes with the pope. John Paul II would always talk about Berkeley. Another Berkeley reference—it wasn’t the first time, my sister said, “What are you going to bring the pope?” I said, “I never thought of bringing anything.” So she got Czeslaw Milosz’s acceptance of the Nobel Prize, both in Polish and English.

07-00:45:17
LaBerge:

Oh, how perfect!

07-00:45:19
Cummins:

She found it at Cody’s, a little leather bound volume—and Joe Carroll went up and got Milosz to autograph it. So I gave it to the pope, and the pope said, “Oh my. What’s he doing these days?” I said, “Well, he’s still teaching. Cal Berkeley has this wonderful opportunity, that you drop your administrative role but you stay teaching. And these are very capable people that are doing that.” That was one time. The pope said, “Oh, he’s a very religious man. We don’t always agree, but he’s a very religious man.” Well, the first time I said, “I understand you’re a friend of his.” “Well, we know each other. I don’t know if I’d call it a friend[ship].” But the time after that, Berkeley came up, and he said, “I have a friend there, Milosz.” I nodded, “Oh yes.” “What’s he doing there?” I said, “Well, he’s still teaching, and he just got married.” And the pope reacted, “He’s eighty years old!” And I said, “Oh yes, but he lost his wife.” And the pope—taps his head. That was nice. But then I’d get home and I’d drop a note to Milosz that the pope was asking about him. I thought that’s pretty much of an honor to have the pope ask about you.

07-00:46:44
LaBerge:

Of course it is, yes.

07-00:46:47
Cummins:

There was one amusing experience I had with Milosz at Berkeley. He was at the faculty dinner. He had recently had a friend of his talk at—I forget if it was the Presbyterian church, or one of those, and he had written a book, and I got the book and I even took pages out of it. And I said to Milosz—“Gee, I was so sorry. I wanted to hear your friend talk,” because he had introduced this philosopher, “I had wanted to come, but I just got interfered with and I’m sorry I didn’t.” But I got his book. I said, “I can’t remember the name of it.” And Milosz says, “*Religion*.” [laughter] We both laughed over that one.

07-00:47:39
LaBerge:

That’s great.

07-00:47:41

Cummins:

But a little comment about GTU. The first time I met the pope occurred when the first investigation of American religious, men and women, was taking place. That was 1983. Well, we talked about nervousness approaching a bishop in the old days. Well, sitting down with the pope is a little different too.

07-00:48:05

LaBerge:

Yes!

07-00:48:05

Cummins:

But I didn't realize—I had my thoughts gathered if this was going to be a dialogue. But the one was about the religious. I remember I grabbed his arm—and I pulled back quickly from that. I thought that was getting very familiar, but we were sitting at the end of the table. I remarked to him that it's my experience that the religious in the United States had gotten the message from the Vatican Council they are to participate in dioceses under the bishop, and they're not just independent operators moving hither and yon, and they took that very seriously. I would say GTU, from my experience, we kept very close—there were times when we would just sit, where we would be with each other. And then the presidents would come down and give me a report, and I would have them for dinner every year just to see what's doing, and so on.

I belonged to this National Catholic Bioethics Center—it was called John XXIII [Medical-Moral Research and Education Center]. They moved it out of St. Louis to Massachusetts. But they have a week or maybe three days in Dallas every January or February on science and religion. Because I was on its board for a few years, I sat at dinner next to [Cardinal] Joseph Ratzinger. I mentioned Berkeley, and that if he wanted to see a wonderful collaboration with a diocese and an academic institution it would be great if he could come out some time. He'd be very welcome. Now, that's all it was. I didn't write him a note officially, but I would have been glad to have Ratzinger out here to show off Berkeley.

07-00:50:17

LaBerge:

Well, what was that commission on bioethics?

07-00:50:21

Cummins:

Well, it was started by Bernie [Bernard Francis Cardinal] Law when he was the bishop in Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and it was very traditional in its theology. In fact, I didn't realize—they were helpful to me when I was in Sacramento, because we didn't have enough resources in the country, much less in California, to take care of the politics that we were dealing with. And they were focused precisely on the topic of church/state, what's public policy in religion and science. They were helpful. They asked

for a contribution when I came here. Well, we had money. I gave them a contribution and then next—would I be on the board? It was only quite late, after I was on the board a number of years, that John Coleman said to me, “What are you doing on that board? That’s a very conservative crowd.” But I filled out my term. It was okay.

07-00:51:23

LaBerge: So mainly—

07-00:51:25

Cummins: It still exists, yes. The National [Catholic] Bioethics Center, and it’s in Braintree, Massachusetts, outside of Boston.

07-00:51:39

LaBerge: But studying things like abortion, genetics, things like that?

07-00:51:42

Cummins: Yes, oh yes. Gee—I get the copy every month. It will overlay the scientific with what human values are there that are being supported. Or are they going the wrong direction entirely? They’re very fearful of artificial insemination, because you don’t have a generation yet that wants to know who their mother and father are, and again, does that cheapen human life? They’ll raise questions like this. And then drugs that are questionable. They’ll examine that sort of thing.

07-00:52:41

LaBerge: So it includes both theologians and scientists?

07-00:52:42

Cummins: Yes, yes. And I’m trying to think—I saw one of them, one of their staff on television. I forget what he was dealing with, but I’m sure it was a life issue of some kind. They serve a purpose.

07-00:53:08

LaBerge: Yes. Well, I have jotted down other names you mentioned. Now we’re back to faculty and just maybe what your relationship [was]—starting with, I’m going to go back in time. [Professor of Law] Arthur [H.] Sherry and [the journalist] Mary Ellen Leary [Sherry]. Were they part of the original group, the faculty group?

07-00:53:27

Cummins: [laughing] Oh yes, very much so. And there’s Tom [Thomas L.] Hayes.

07-00:53:34

LaBerge: That’s right, Tom Hayes, who was at one of the labs, right?

07-00:53:38

Cummins:

Yes, he was at Donner Lab. He addressed the papal committee on family life that existed, for Paul VI, that I guess opened up the question a bit on contraception. He wrote an article that Frank Maurovich still sends to everybody in *CrossCurrents*, that magazine. As I recall it, Tom said the feminine cycle is not included in this [discussion] the way the whole male issue is—and every act has to be open to the beginning of life. In the animal kingdom it's the preservation of the race. There's much more involved in the human relationship. Frank sent that to [Cardinal] Séan O'Malley, because O'Malley's an important advisor to the present pope.

07-00:54:49

LaBerge:

That's right.

07-00:54:53

Cummins:

Something else. Tom has been very faithful to everything we did in Berkeley. He had a lot to say—he is really insightful. Gosh. George and I had lunch with him a couple of months ago. We haven't gotten back to him, but he'd like to keep in touch with us.

07-00:55:19

LaBerge:

And what about [Professor and Federal Judge] John Noonan? He also wrote about—

07-00:55:21

Cummins:

Oh yes, well, John Noonan and Jack Coons were the ones that wrote to Jadot and said, "We're not well taken care of." No, I should add that. What happened was John Noonan and Jack Coons wrote before I came down to Oakland, before Bishop Begin retired, and said that when Jadot was out here they would like to have lunch with him, to have some consultation about Berkeley. And Jadot said yes. Twenty-four people came to lunch! And that's why Jadot said to me, "You take care of those people."

07-00:56:05

LaBerge:

Twenty-four people, oh my gosh.

07-00:56:10

Cummins:

I remark on that, and I fault our bishops who have come in. That initiative was taken by the Cal people [tapping for emphasis], and that arose from their wanting to be together. Well, Newman Hall was active, but they really did this on their own. Karl [Pister] was original with that. And as the Vatican Council developments came up, they would invite people to talk to those points, you know? One was Étienne Gilson. Did you know that name?

07-00:56:41

LaBerge:

Oh yes, I did.

07-00:56:44

Cummins:

The French medieval philosopher. Well, he was very highly praised in our seminary days, and Jacques Maritain was the other big name. Our philosophy prof said that Jacques Maritain writes with an elephant trunk, and Gilson writes with the wing of an angel. [laughter] Well, Frank Maurovich and I went up there [to Cal] one day, and here's Gilson! We thought he was long gone. He was so full of pep and he was funny—just amusing. He was great. Somebody got to him and said, "Now, how do you handle bishops? You must know many in your experience." He said, "No, I've never met a bishop." And then, "Oh no, wait a minute. I met a bishop once, at Lourdes. He came across the *place* to say hello to me, but he thought I was Maritain." [laughter] Oh, when Frank and I left we thought oh wow, we were in the presence of an icon!

No, I think I always felt that the Cal people—you didn't know what to do with all that talent [at Berkeley]. Where could you direct it? I just hoped that they'd be on the national stage, which—oh, I'll bet it happened half a dozen times. I would get an inquiry from the nuncio that this person has been recommended for the Pontifical Academy of Science, and a few were Chinese names, maybe a Korean. But then, "Would you confidentially search out..." I'd write back and say, "You've got to let me loose! I can't be going to find out if people—I have to be able to talk to the colleagues." But I think I was helpful. Then occasionally I would go to those national bioethics [meetings], and there'd be somebody from the University of California I'd never heard [of], and they'd be the presenters at those gatherings.

07-00:59:11

LaBerge:

What about, since we're on the subject of universities, your other relationships with Holy Names, with St. Mary's?

07-00:59:16

Cummins:

Well, those were very easy.

07-00:59:18

LaBerge:

Yes, I mean—they're really in your bailiwick.

07-00:59:25

Cummins:

I'd make them part of the dinners. I thought it was important that they be there. In fact, it was very good one time. The pope was in Los Angeles on his visit, and he addressed the American bishops that—they have to develop relationships with their theological faculties. Also they were to approve theological teaching. Now, we resisted that. But Mary Ann Donovan explained to me once that in the old days theologians were religious or priests, and one had the religious superior and another had the bishop, for the Roman assurance that they're teaching Catholic dogma. Well, when the theologians become lay—she was sympathetic with that, and the others, "Oh, you can't have the local bishop," but I guess Rome didn't see where they had anybody

else. Well, by accident we went one year to Clark Kerr [campus] for the dinner, because we thought it was getting too big for Newman.

07-01:00:38

LaBerge: Yes, to the Clark Kerr Campus.

07-01:00:39

Cummins: Yes. It fell flat. These big wide tables, it wasn't home. The Newman [Center] was home. But I ended up at the table with the presidents of the three institutions at GTU and the three Catholic colleges. I said, "Listen, this is going to come down the line. Why don't we set up structure, so that when it comes, the bishop overseeing will be in place, and nobody will be stamping feet and screaming about Rome—and Rome may be satisfied too." We didn't know when *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* [From the Heart of the Church] was going to come out, the big document, you know? But that evening was helpful! For example, the Dominicans would have me up with their board of trustees once a year. The Jesuit general said, "Why don't you do a pastoral visitation?" [laughing] I backed off from that. I thought that was too much interference.

But we had a kind of a big context. St. Mary's College would have me out for an afternoon, give me a classroom, for any students who wanted to come in and say hello. Then I would have an hour with the theological people and stay for dinner. We did that for a few years, because *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* blew that out of the water. But that was great, to have the connection. It was always very warm. Honestly, it was wonderful. And then they'd both open up their campuses for diocesan events. They were very helpful. And at Holy Names we had the establishment, the pastoral council and other diocesan events.

07-01:02:19

LaBerge: Oh, that's right.

07-01:02:20

Cummins: Holy Names opened their facilities on evenings two different weeks, so that we had about 350 people talking about a cathedral—should we or shouldn't we? The college was very good. And St. Mary's equally welcoming. St. Mary's had the second dialogue on nuclear arms. San Damiano [Retreat Center] was first. We thought a pious, quiet atmosphere—because we thought there were going to be a lot of arguments. At that first gathering there was consensus. It was just wonderful, yes. And then [physicist and Nobel laureate] Owen Chamberlain, at the end, reporting in small committees, operations and talking about the relation of Cal Berkeley to Lawrence Livermore [Lab]. He addressed the group, "We are sister institutions, and we have built a wall against each other. Bishop, I thank you and the diocese for bringing us together."

07-01:03:25

LaBerge: Wow.

07-01:03:29

Cummins:

That was a touching kind of thing, yes. But St. Mary's College had Bryan Hehir—and oh, my goodness. Here I am a blank again—the Stanford expert on warfare and armament—oh. [Sidney Drell] It'll come before I go to sleep tonight. One of the recommendations from the first gathering was more small group discussion, and don't bring facilitators, leave us alone! But that day they changed the structure right away, that we want these people [the experts] to talk. Skip the small groups. I said to Bryan when he was here two weeks ago—I remember you were at St. Mary's with whatever his name was [Sidney Drell] and Bryan says, "Oh, I had correspondence with him two weeks ago." So they're still in touch. And I said, "He must be getting old." And Bryan said, "So am I." He was one of the very important staff people for the peace [pastoral], and I think for the economics [pastoral] as well.

07-01:05:10

LaBerge:

What about the origins of the new institute at St. Mary's in your name? [Bishop John S. Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture and Action]

07-01:05:19

Cummins:

Well, of course what happened on that was I wanted to force the issue raised by *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, because I could see myself—I was on my way out, and I wanted conclusion before a new bishop arrived. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* was published in 1990, and it was—you know, the bishop has to sign that this guy is teaching theology or this woman teaching theology. We hadn't acted on it. Now, the Code of Canon Law was revised in 1983, and that requirement was in that Code of Canon Law. The American bishops argued against that, but they didn't win. *Ex Corde* was the follow-up. Well, the directive given to us was to adapt this to your country. And I think in 1997 a group of college presidents and a group of bishops wrote a proposal, but Rome would not accept it. So then came—

07-01:06:28

LaBerge:

Were you part of that group?

07-01:06:30

Cummins:

No. It must have been pushing the millennium. It came—that we had to rewrite the adaptations. Well, I felt somehow we've got to get this off the table, because it would be an area of conflict with the bishop before he would have time to settle in and do anything. In that day we not only had the two colleges that are known, the Mission San Jose Dominican Sisters had their own college. Well, that was easy. Holy Names was easy. They didn't seem much bothered by this. St. Mary's College was not so easy. I recall Brother Craig Franz, the president, invited me for lunch one day, and after lunch turned me loose on three of the theology people. I can't remember the third one, but Tom Poundstone was one, and Alexis [Doval]—I had to sit with

them. And of course, it must have been twenty to twenty-five minutes on the mandatum, they called it, the signing on of theologians by the local bishop.

They took a breath. I jumped in, “Wait a minute, that’s not the major issue. The big thing—what does it mean to be a Catholic university? That’s the whole first section. And it’s highly praising of the Catholic university. It doesn’t say that’s where the church does its thinking, but somebody said that along the way and that’s often quoted.” Whatever happened from that—they had me out once or twice, but they organized six groups from the college, of their theology people of course, the social action element. I’m trying to think what were the six groups? Maybe it was core curriculum—I’m trying to remember.

Anyhow, they started this consultation. After a good amount of time they had me out one night, and it was the trustees and the faculty and the students, and I guess the regents. Oh, it was a big dinner, and they had in detail how St. Mary’s College is going to relate to the diocese. I was scheduled to visit six times a year. I said, “Too much!” [laughter] But what happened was that conversation, which I was only on the edge of, I wasn’t there—though I *started* the push. But they continued the dialogue, because they thought this very worthwhile. The provost’s office was involved. They invited me out a couple of times, and I enjoyed it. It was really a—all the Catholic colleges were getting into that phase. What are we—and there was a Monika Hellwig.

07-01:10:13

LaBerge:

Yes!

07-01:10:16

Cummins:

Yes, who gave great guidance to all that discussion, that we’re not going backwards; we’re going to a new era of the Catholic college. But then I went out for the convocation the year before I retired. Brother Craig was standing outside the chapel waiting to go in, and he said, “Listen, we’re going to make that conversation a standing committee, because it’s important—and we’d like to call it the Cummins Institute.” I thought he was asking me a question, you know. Well, he proceeds inside and announces it to the convocation, “We have our bishop here, and we’re forming the Bishop John Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture and Action.” And well, the announcement caused a little excitement. I met a group at St. Mary’s one night from Lafayette and Moraga. And they were saying, “Isn’t this great, to have a place, or a focus, for this type of discussion and reaching out?” And the Redemptorists wrote me a very formal letter saying, “We’d like very much to be part of that, because it’s so timely,” and so forth. But St. Mary’s did not move out beyond the college boundaries.

But afterwards, Brother Craig said—well, the damage was done, pretty much. [laughter] “I’d like you to be the chair of that.” I said, “Oh, I can’t do that.” And he said, “Why not?” I said, “I don’t know the college. I’m not *here*.” Well, he wasn’t satisfied with that. He came down for dinner. I was the only one home. “I’m not leaving here till I get a handshake. You be part of the institute, and you come and go as you please. You’ll have an office on the campus.” Well, it sounded workable, “Oh sure, I’ll help out.” It’s now getting beyond me to—but it’s still a lot of fun to be there. And the young people that I’m with—we always have two or three students on the board. The development of those young people is remarkable.

07-01:12:38

LaBerge: So how often do you go up?

07-01:12:38

Cummins: It’s once a month.

07-01:12:39

LaBerge: Once a month! Wow.

07-01:12:42

Cummins: I tried to go there a day or two a week, and they had me right there in the cloister, next to the chapel. Well, the kids, I’d get to know the kids pretty quickly, and I was surprised at my age. I always loved Newman work at Mills College and [San Francisco] State. The St. Mary’s students would come by and knock on the window, and then would drop in. And then of course the subject came up only once, just in passing—would I be interested in living out there? I wasn’t interested in that, because I have my own work here. But I also felt I won’t have time to write anything. I was trying to write that first essay.

07-01:13:19

LaBerge: Yes, you’d have too many people dropping in.

07-01:13:22

Cummins: Oh yes. And they have clubs all over the place, meeting every night and afternoon, and I thought oh, I’ll get eaten alive! But it has been a happy arrangement.

07-01:13:37

LaBerge: Oh, and what a wonderful honor for you as you’re retiring, to have this new venture.

07-01:13:44

Cummins: But the [successor] bishops have never asked me about that.

07-01:13:48

LaBerge: Isn’t that something?

07-01:13:51

Cummins:

I don't mean to tell them what to do, but to realize that this is really a momentum, just to have us part of those faculties. And at least just to keep it going—the socializing I'm doing.

07-01:14:15

LaBerge:

Wow, okay. Was [Professor] Dan Cawthon a part of any of that group?

07-01:14:18

Cummins:

Oh yes, he was on that committee from the beginning, yes. And then [Professor] Ron Olowin—I don't want to get too long on this one. But because of the Berkeley situation and Blessed Pierre Du Maine, from San Jose—there's a [Catholic] Bishops' Committee [for] Science and Human Values, really science and religion. Well, I was invited through Bishop Du Maine to be on that, and once you got on you stayed on, because they didn't want to have new faces for the science people to constantly adjust to. That developed into something just wonderful for me. The first topic was genetic testing and screening, and the complications of that. The presentation was by a Jewish MD and PhD from the University of California, San Diego. He offered a troubling case affecting public policy and much else. Oh, I just looked forward to those gatherings once, sometimes twice, a year. We had one at Notre Dame in the middle of the year. Brain, Mind, Spirit. [laughing] Oh, these topics were just substantial!

But we were kind of put on hold as a committee after we did this weekend on cloning, and then the following year we did—well, what's the word I want? Stem cell research. We did those carefully, and if they had paid attention to us they wouldn't have gotten the public thinking we're against stem cell research—we're not. But when you get to the embryo, you're talking a deeply moral situation.

Even here, during that period, there was a Bob [Robert B.] Brauer, who was very active with the Catholic Interracial Council when I was chancellor here, but served on [U.S. Congressman] Ron Dellums's committee, or his staff. I think he's now assistant to the head of Children's Hospital here. Along with the director of their research project, he took me to lunch and showed me the work being done on stem cells. But it's really adult cells. But I know the reason they brought me, though not stated, was: are we going to have trouble with the church? I took their material and sent it to our chancery. Nothing was followed through, but I said no, this is great what you're doing. You're going to get support. But the word didn't get farther out.

But what happened to the Science and [Human Values Committee]—conference officers told us not to publish, because it's going to be misunderstood. I think that came from the staff on the pro-life committee. They were afraid we'd be talking on their issues. My point was: whatever we

see as true, we talk about. Because if you don't assess what you learn—that comes back to create a problem for you. We accommodated that group as much as we could, but it never got resolved. But in the course of that we were never told to disband.

St. Mary's College became interested in that Science and Human Values Committee. On the committee we had Phil Sloan from Notre Dame, on some department of culture; we had Jack [John F.] Haught, the Georgetown expert on evolution. The moderator of all the meetings was a Jesuit from Loyola Baltimore. So at St. Mary's we drew up this nice plan that the bishops would have input from four faculties in the country as to what issues should be taken up, and also they'll have a dispersion of what the committee is doing, because Ron Olowin at St. Mary's—I'm awfully long, I'm sorry.

07-01:18:50
LaBerge:

No, this is wonderful!

07-01:18:52
Cummins:

Ron Olowin at St. Mary's said, "I'd like you to come to my class." Astrophysics or something. "We're dealing with extraterrestrial life." Well, I thought I am not a target for that! But at a lunch one day, and I don't know whether present was Mary Evelyn Tucker, from Yale, she's the great Teilhard de Chardin fan, environmentalist. And there was a Margaret Aisle, I think A-I-S-L-E [spells], who was an adjunct prof at St. Mary's but worked for NASA. She was saying this whole world is opening up so fast. "Here we are into extraterrestrial life. Suppose we find life or the remnants of it? Can we experiment with it? Can we destroy it? Can we bring it back here to do some transmutations? You look for the church, and the church is not there." So I said to Professor Olowin oh, okay.

07-01:19:59
LaBerge:

You'd better go, yes.

07-01:20:01
Cummins:

So I went to his class, and the only thing I did was give a longer history of the Science and Human Values [Committee]. Well, the reaction was so positive, of those students, and some of them were just—they just couldn't say enough. And the bishops' dealing with these tough issues, and new issues. They were pleased.

The bishops reorganized the offices in Washington, partly for efficiency but mostly for economics. And when it came to what our status was, we felt there's no place where we would fit, because we were really free-standing dialogue. We weren't confrontational. We weren't argumentative. That's why we could have anybody come to talk to us. The best in the world as far as science people go. The conference put us under the committee on *doctrine*.

07-01:21:08
LaBerge:

Oh. [laughing]

07-01:21:10
Cummins:

The staff on the committee I invited out here with the chair of the Science and Human Values [Committee], and we met one afternoon with five or six from the faculty at St. Mary's, including the president—gosh, who else did we have? Oh, I could tell the staff guy was bored. He wasn't interested at all. He stayed with us two nights at the house. I just couldn't warm up to him. There was a gathering in Tucson, Arizona, of the bishops in the summertime. There I made a date with the chair of that doctrinal committee to talk about the Science and Human Values Committee. I'd met him at the social hour. Oh, the conversation was—I felt I was mistreated. He was looking around while I was talking to him. I also said, "You are now responsible for the continuance of this dialogue. You should take our chair and put him on your consultants to maintain the relationships we have, because they are going to be very hard to develop anew. They've been going on for twenty years." I never heard a word since.

07-01:22:46
LaBerge:

Wow, wow. And your committee is disbanded.

07-01:22:47
Cummins:

Right, disbanded. Yes.

07-01:22:56
LaBerge:

The name of the professor in astrophysics, Ron—?

07-01:22:59
Cummins:

Olowin. He has a brother, a priest, in Erie, Pennsylvania. He goes on retreats to the Carmelites in Arizona—where is that? Grand Canyon or Sedona, whatever it is. *Oh!* Well, he just invited me to Robert [J.] Russell's Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences. Well, I know Bob from a long way back. The talks in Berkeley that have been very good. Ron organized, through Bob Russell, for me to go to Cancun, Mexico, for a whole week, an international group on cosmology. [laughing] But it was science and religion, and it ended up with science, art, religion.

07-01:24:05
LaBerge:

Everything!

07-01:24:07
Cummins:

Poetry, music. Oh gee! It was a great event. And it was a very multicultural operation. And then the last thing I went to was in Rome, a weekend on Charles Darwin on his 150th anniversary [of publication of *On the Origin of Species*]. And again, the stuff—I'm way over my head, but it's a great place for the church and the science to meet.

07-01:24:40

LaBerge: Yes, yes. Well, I noticed—I hadn't realized—in the obituary of Charles Townes that he was early interested in extraterrestrial life.

07-01:24:48

Cummins: Oh yes.

07-01:24:48

LaBerge: And people thought he was a little nuts! But now they're doing that, too, with the laser, the laser being just one of the things—

07-01:24:59

Cummins: When I first met him I said, "You know, my dad had some growth over his eye." He was ninety years old, you know. "The doctor did laser treatment. No surgery. Nothing else needed." And Charles said, "Well, I'm happy to hear that they're using it for a beneficial purpose instead of a war." [laughter] Oh, we became good friends—oh, Frances [Townes] was organizing for the homeless in Berkeley.

07-01:25:30

LaBerge: Oh, she does wonderful work, really wonderful work.

07-01:25:35

Cummins: Well, they loved that Roman trip every year!

07-01:25:45

LaBerge: [reading] Let me just think—I'm looking to see if there is anything else. Anything else you want to say about the relationship between the church, the diocese, and higher education?

07-01:26:01

Cummins: Well, I'm thinking that the GTU people were very helpful. I would get them to write letters for me. Mary Ann Donovan was helpful on that.

07-01:26:16

LaBerge: Letters for you to Rome?

07-01:26:21

Cummins: Well, for anything. Oh yes, Joe [Joseph M.] Powers—there was something about some technical thing about liturgy, and I gave him that. They did it well, you know. [Franciscan Father] Kenan [B.] Osborne was always available for priests' gatherings and chancery gatherings. I told people to leave him alone! He's too busy. And Joe Chinnici was the same; very, very helpful. Well, Joe Powers I mentioned. Joe Daoust had asked—put me on their board when I retired, for the Jesuits. They felt that if we got a new bishop who's a little troublesome, that I'd be a little—some kind of a barrier. Well, I was happy to help out. [scanning a document] And Chang-Lin Tien. I mentioned him.

Birgeneau. Well, I do think that whatever we did with the gathering at Newman, Cal faculty, and GTU—that threesome was a Berkeley community.

07-01:27:47

LaBerge: Oh, for sure!

07-01:27:47

Cummins: Yes. You know we didn't have the dinner this year.

07-01:27:50

LaBerge: Yes, I did notice that.

07-01:27:55

Cummins: Well, but our man [Bishop Michael Barber]—gosh. Something that we had that last year, the convocation, he was very good at it. He really listened.

07-01:28:14

LaBerge: Oh, the convocation of all the priests?

07-01:28:15

Cummins: Yes. And I was among the jubilarians that year. So they gave me a bottle of very expensive scotch. I'm sorry that people keep giving me scotch—but I've had to write him a note. But I also added, "I would love to talk to you about the Berkeley dinner, because this was the initiative of the Cal people, and I thought you'd be interested in the history."

07-01:28:48

LaBerge: You haven't heard anything.

07-01:28:48

Cummins: No. Because I was going to tell him, "You have changed the situation, and some day it's going to come back, because the Berkeley people suggested this after the Vatican Council," and people sense a responsibility for the church. But I guess he wasn't comfortable. Well, [Bishop Salvatore] Cordileone wasn't comfortable. But without asking me any questions, all of them said, "Well, I know I'm supposed to give a report of the bishops' meeting." "No, you can do anything you want." I felt it was time for them to get a group of the Cal people and say, "What should we be doing with this? Should it be strictly relationship?" I've often thought if Princeton were in their diocese, would they be as afraid of it as with Berkeley? No, I think that's a loss. I really do.

07-01:29:58

LaBerge: Yes, I think yes. Well, I'm thinking this is a good place to stop, because that was a whole subject matter, and then we could go on to the others the next time.

07-01:30:09

Cummins: Well, we've done pretty well with GTU, yes. Of course, by the time I get my notes out, GTU may not exist.

07-01:30:23

LaBerge: That's true. That is true.

07-01:30:26

Cummins: Well, it's always going to exist, to the extent that the Jesuits are going to be there.

07-01:30:29

LaBerge: Probably, yes.

07-01:30:32

Cummins: Oh yes, they do not want—there never was any thought of their moving to Santa Clara.

07-01:30:42

LaBerge: No, no. They want to be near Berkeley, I think.

07-01:30:43

Cummins: Yes! They want to be part of Berkeley. Of course, there's one interesting thing. The Jesuit provincials—now I forget the exact year, but it was while I was bishop in the eighties—the Jesuit provincials from around the country came here twice. And my suspicion—and I wasn't the only one—was that with three [Jesuit] theologates—something was going to close. And from my experience of the American church, the Northeast controls, and the West is—someday we'll grow up, I guess! But they invited me up—they called Dick Hill back and made him pro tem president, because they felt they really didn't want to have to do this big—and I said to Dick I'd be available. He replied, "Oh, I think there won't be any problem." And two weeks beforehand, "Listen, I'd better sign you up." So I said to the gang up there that here's the history of it, and here's the relationship with the diocese. Here's the big surprise: The closeness of this institution to the university in Berkeley and the opportunity for dialogue. Then, knowing that that wasn't going to be bought by everybody, I said, "If you move out of here and bring up the subject of *Gaudium et Spes*, and dialogue with the contemporary world, [it's] going to be hard to convince me that you're serious." Oh, they were really taken aback by that! Well, that wasn't in their thinking. So when decision time came, they closed Chicago and kept Weston and Berkeley. Jim [James J.] Hennessey, from Boston College, commented, "Well, Berkeley was really in favor, because they've always taken religion very seriously." [laughter] That was a compliment.

When they did the second round I pointed out that this is the West Coast, and Asia and the Pacific Rim are really important. Not long after that the Vatican

did another study up here. I signed up to go up there and talk, and spoke of the same thing. I had nothing but good things to report! Such mutual benefit. And then again, that rich outreach to Cal Berkeley. [James A.] Cardinal Hickey—he wasn't cardinal then—came up to me afterwards and he said, "You know, Bishop Begin was always opposed to this." I said, "No, he wasn't."

07-01:33:47

LaBerge: No, he wasn't.

07-01:33:48

Cummins: I had explained that the bishop championed it. Bishop Vigneron, when he came here, also said, "Bishop Begin was opposed." I said, "No, he championed it." That's when Vigneron said, "Oh, you should write that up." I said, "Well, I intend to." At that time I pulled the whole file, because I felt that that story has to be written. Well, let me see—[reading list of interview topics] Church and chancellors. Good. The two Catholic colleges, yes. We have Asia, clergy abuse. Vision for the future, yes. Oh, I'd be glad to go into that. I think the number one thing in which the lay people are disappointed in the last many years, is the style of authority. They had to adjust. They still sense—

07-01:34:45

LaBerge: We haven't lost our faith, right. [laughing]

07-01:34:46

Cummins: Yes, oh yes! And therefore, style of authority is—that has to be brought to people's attention. Gee, because our dear man here—he was for dinner with—Tony Valdivia and Brian Joyce had a group for dinner last Saturday, and this one, who had disbanded the personnel board and a few other things, remarked that the pope went ahead to announce the canonization of Junipero Serra without consulting the local bishops. My experience is those who don't consult are super sensitive if you don't consult them. And also, whenever they'd complain to me, "You didn't consult." I'd say, "I apologize." But in the back of my head—*they* don't consult. They would know how hard it is to communicate, and you're going to drop the ball always somewhere. But in my head I'm really apologetic but I'm saying *you guys*—

07-01:36:01

LaBerge: You don't consult.

07-01:36:02

Cummins: You don't do it.

07-01:36:06

LaBerge: Yes, yes. Well, I'm going to turn this off.

Interview 8: February 5, 2015

08-00:00:00

LaBerge: This is interview number eight with John Cummins, and it's February 5, 2015. So you had some thoughts since our last meeting.

08-00:00:12

Cummins: Well, number one—I couldn't remember the name with Fr. Bryan Hehir at St. Mary's College on the nuclear—the man who's the armament, munitions, weaponry man from Stanford—Sidney Drell. D-R-E-L-L. [spells]

08-00:00:32

LaBerge: Thank you.

08-00:00:34

Cummins: I picked that up from Bryan Hehir when I was talking to him. The other thing—now, I don't know whether I want to bring this up or whether it's appropriate, but oh—I have to show you this. This came since we last met.

08-00:00:54

LaBerge: Oh my! I want to just put this on the tape. The bishop is showing me his book, *Vatican II, Berkeley and Beyond*. The proofs.

08-00:01:00

Cummins: Yes, the proofs. Now he told me, "Pay no attention to the cover, and so much of the language is going to be changed."

08-00:01:08

LaBerge: Yes, oh! It's beautiful.

08-00:01:11

Cummins: He gave it to me to—it's only the first eleven chapters. I read the first seven and sent my little critiques and thoughts back to him.

08-00:01:23

LaBerge: Wonderful, wonderful!

08-00:01:26

Cummins: Oh yes, very nice. But there was something I was talking to you about, Roger Heyns. A couple of things—he once declared to Bishop Begin, or I was there when he was talking about it, he said, "You know, at Berkeley you can get a doctorate in any world religion except Christianity." He also said once that departments of religion or theology, whatever, in state universities, are inevitable. I thought that was an interesting comment. That would have been what—the eighties?

08-00:02:15

LaBerge: In the sixties, actually, 1965 to 1969, something like that.

08-00:02:20

Cummins: Yes, it goes to that time. But there was another thing. Dr. Louisell—

08-00:02:29

LaBerge: David Louisell from the law school?

08-00:02:32

Cummins: Yes. Now, I'm trying to think here. You know, in 1962 he, with Professor John [H.] Jackson—it was in conjunction with the law schools at California and Minnesota, quoted Thomas Jefferson [reading]—"The want of instruction in the various creeds of religious faith existing among our citizens presents, therefore, a chasm in a general institution of the useful sciences." And then Louisell, on his own said, "The problem with the place of theology in the university has to be faced. The dialogue of our intellectual community is not complete without the participation of theology. We cannot afford to leave its voice indefinitely muted or to hear it at most only tangentially and indirectly. Ideally, this discipline, overtly and forthrightly, should resume its historic university role."

08-00:03:43

LaBerge: Wow.

08-00:03:47

Cummins: Now, he said this in 1966 at St. Albert's College: [reading] "Catholic professors," and I said I'm sure he would include others, "were interested in a platform for a hearing of the theological considerations in modern life. And there is a corresponding hunger on the part of students for such information." Now, there's a longer quote I have in the other thing here—it adds very little—but it's at that same meeting. [sound of pages turning]

08-00:04:30

LaBerge: I'm going to refer researchers—I always write an interview history. So I'll refer them to your book to embellish this oral history.

08-00:04:40

Cummins: Oh, okay. Oh, and this is not a quote, but Louisell acknowledged the practical problem of overcoming secular prejudices. But he said he would like to see a university and GTU developing a more organic relationship—and I think he meant it's timely—anyhow, I just wanted to bring that one up.

The other thing I wanted to say [consulting written materials]. Well, now—this is something at Holy Names University that I should give them credit [for]. Now, I'll try not to make this too long. [laughter] We were talking about my putting a pleasant spin on many things.

08-00:05:41

LaBerge: Yes! [laughter]

08-00:05:42

Cummins:

It was one upset I had with the Graduate Theological Union, although I had very few through the years. Over the years, and it started way back, Brian Joyce came back from New York, from Manhattan College with a degree and started lay development. It was done pretty much by himself, but he'd have big crowds, hundreds of people that would turn out. Then [in] 1986 there was a Jordan Institute, put through by some people in the diocese, kind of a continuing education of lay ministers. It was significant. Later arose a school of pastoral ministry, one in English, one in Spanish, 1995, with Monsignor Ted [Theodore W.] Kraus. A bit later, we developed pastoral associates as they called them. They'd be really assistants to the pastor, and there was a variety. Some were secretaries, some were directors of religious education, some were business managers. But for all of them—there was a kind of thrust to get further education, and especially to get a degree. That meant the world! But there was no way of taking off a couple of years to get a master's.

A group of them came in to see me about this. They had talked to the GTU, but the thing wasn't going to work there. But there was a Marist priest, I forget his name. I don't think he cared for bishops too much, but he came out here for a continuing education—I found him a little bit harsh. He taught at New Orleans with the Jesuits, Loyola. Well, these had contacted him, and it wasn't a correspondence course, but what did we call it, the digital—?

08-00:08:05

LaBerge:

Like an Internet class?

08-00:08:04

Cummins:

Yes, the class would be [on the] Internet. I want to say I was old-fashioned, but I had an impression that the people doing digital education didn't see it as replacement for classroom—

08-00:08:21

LaBerge:

Classroom, right.

08-00:08:24

Cummins:

Well, but I said, "Listen, why don't you start a conversation with St. Mary's and Holy Names? Because in the past," I did not mention USF, who were even more pronounced in doing this. That was post-Vatican II, but those summer schools were awfully good. But I said, "And see if they could arrange something for you." They went to Holy Names College, and Sister Margaret Campbell, and Sisters Marcia Frideger and Maureen Hester—and I think Mary Alice Muellerleile might have been the president at the time. Well, it was open arms, and the hospitality was just tremendous. And they eventually developed that for the Diocese of Fresno also, as kind of an outreach. People would come up for the weekends. Holy Names did the accommodating.

- 08-00:09:35
LaBerge: Was this connected at all with Sophia Center [in Culture and Spirituality]?
- 08-00:09:36
Cummins: No.
- 08-00:09:37
LaBerge: It was something separate.
- 08-00:09:38
Cummins: It was really the theology department. Well, I once saw in my calendar that I had a date at four o'clock in the afternoon with the three presidents of the GTU. It was a little odd that I didn't have any agenda.
- 08-00:09:57
LaBerge: You didn't have any phone calls or subject matter.
- 08-00:10:00
Cummins: No agenda, no. Well, the three of them came in—
- 08-00:10:05
LaBerge: And what year was this about?
- 08-00:10:10
Cummins: Oh gosh, I would say in the 1990s. We could find it. Bill Cieslak was the president of the Franciscans. Joe Daoust was the president of the Jesuits, and Greg [Gregory P.] Rocca was at DSPT [Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology]. Well, they came in and sat down, and the conversation was, oh my, it was really harsh.
- 08-00:10:36
LaBerge: So what was the subject?
- 08-00:10:38
Cummins: Well, that they understood that I directed these people to go to Holy Names College to get a degree, and that would be somewhat damaging to GTU.
- 08-00:10:56
LaBerge: Wow!
- 08-00:11:00
Cummins: Now, two of the presidents sat quietly. There was kind of a threat that they allow some favors and privileges for the diocesan people, and if this is the way you're going to treat us, we may drop this. Then I said, "Well, I hadn't gotten this message. I'll have to check with my own people to find out what happened here." And then leaving, Greg Rocca says, "No problem." I said, "Oh yes, there is a problem, otherwise we wouldn't have had this meeting." Upon inquiry I was surprised that our own people were not so favorable to the GTU. They thought GTU was removed, and not terribly caring and not very

servicing—and certainly not adaptable for this kind of help. I'd said to one of our priests, who would be reasonably connected with the operation, "They thought they might eliminate the breaks and the considerations they give to our people." And this guy says, "Well, that's a short list." [laughter] I was surprised.

Well, anyhow—now, I talked to three of our people who really had positions in the diocese, and one was the assistant to Sister Barbara Flannery, and that was—this would be mid- or late 1990s, because Barbara was here—Chuck Siebenand was his name. He outlined what they had done. They'd gone to the GTU and there had been no interest, and so forth. And then a spark plug who was in religious education, Kelly [O'Lague] Dulka—

08-00:12:53
LaBerge:

Okay, I know that name, but I don't know—

08-00:12:54
Cummins:

Kelly O'Lague, Kelly O'Lague Dulka. Oh, I liked her. She was bright. I brought her in and said, "Give me the story." It was line for line, word for word with Chuck of what had happened. Well, then I talked to one more, too, but the explanations were exact. And Kelly said, "Oh, we'd prefer a degree from GTU, to have a little class and a little meaning." Well, that must have been that week, and I didn't have a chance to get back to the three presidents.

There was an installation of a Jesuit pastor at St. Patrick's the following Sunday, and I went down for the installation, and Joe Daoust was there. After the Mass he said, "You have been a great friend of the Jesuits." And I said to him, "You know, that doesn't carry much consolation today, I'm telling you. I was really hurt by the way I was treated by you guys. I am aware that I *never* did that to you." Gee, he was taken aback. He really was surprised. I said, "I checked with my own people about the impression you gave—and what they gave to me, and they were exactly the same, the three people who were involved all the way [was that there had been no interest on the part of GTU]." I didn't say you owe me an apology, but I said I'll have to get back to you.

Well, Joe phoned me the next day and he said—well, it was unpleasant. I don't like to be confronting like that. And he said, "Are you free tomorrow afternoon at three-thirty? I could come down." And I said, "Well, if you're coming at three-thirty, come at four-thirty and we can have dinner." Now, he came by himself. I never heard from the other two. Well, he really wanted to know why I was hurt. And I said, "The GTU is inflexible! You are not accommodating, and what were these people to do?" Basically I said I'm going ahead supporting this operation. But I was so admiring of him for coming down and facing me, and I said that. I said, "I've been treated well by the GTU all the years, and I think mutually that that's correct," and so forth.

Joe and I became even greater friends. He wanted me to be on the board for his last years and his leaving and all of that. In 2010 we went to Rome, George Crespin and I, on the way to England. [laughter] I phoned over and Joe said, “Oh, come on over. We have a Mass this morning for Paul [L.] Locatelli,” who had passed away. George and I went over and concelebrated, and then Joe took us to lunch, and you’d think he had nothing else to do!

08-00:16:21

LaBerge:

He was in Rome at this time?

08-00:16:22

Cummins:

Oh yes, he was the master of the house, had gone just a couple of years before with no Italian, and preached over Paul Locatelli in Italian. Joe was very good.

08-00:16:35

LaBerge:

Can you spell his last name for me?

08-00:16:38

Cummins:

Daoust. D-A-O-U-S-T. A degree in law. Oh, there was a great friend, yes.

But I was going to say one more item about the GTU. [laughing] I wasn’t here very long, but I read in the paper that Hans Küng was coming to Berkeley. So I phoned and I said, “Gentlemen, I can see why town and gown don’t really get along. When you invited Hans Küng, and I didn’t know about it, how was I supposed to handle the press questions?” Oh, but gee, they got all—Kenan Osborne said, “We didn’t know anything about it. The PSR [Pacific School of Religion] invited him.” And I said—and I forget the Jesuit, it wasn’t Mike Buckley. They said the same thing, “We don’t know anything about it.” And I said, “Well, you found out before the papers found out, and I think one of you could have called me.” But I’d say the rest of the time—

08-00:17:48

LaBerge:

So did you end up going to hear Hans Küng?

08-00:17:52

Cummins:

No, I was out of town. It was just an accident—he came and it was a quick—but he had come once before when I was in Sacramento. And whoever was touring him around, whether it was Father Ray Decker—but Ray was very close to our family, and he went to say hello to my folks and brought Hans Küng!

08-00:18:22

LaBerge:

Oh my gosh! To Woolsey Street!

08-00:18:24

Cummins:

Well, we tease about Hans Küng sat in this chair in our house! [laughter] And I remember—I just heard about it because I was away in Sacramento—whether I was bishop, I can’t remember. But it was funny. My sister told me

the story that after they'd left, my mother said, "Now, that's a very intelligent man. We shouldn't have talked so much. We should have listened more to him." [laughter] But except for those two events, I do not know any surprises with the GTU. I mentioned the last time that I invited Cardinal Ratzinger to come. I was that confident in our relationship all those years.

08-00:19:14
LaBerge:

Well, since we're still talking about education, and since there has been news in our present paper about education, maybe you could just say something about your relationship with the schools—the high schools, the elementary schools. What was your input, or did your superintendent of education just take care of it? Did you get highly involved? That's the question!

08-00:19:44
Cummins:

Well, I hope I did. [laughter] I think when I came down from Sacramento I was surprised the first week or two the kind of things that came to my desk. We had a priest superintendent, but I guess there was a mix. Maybe there was interference from the vicar general and the bishop. I don't know that. But there were things on my desk that—certainly were the department's concern and they should take care of it—and I made that clear early on. I said I don't want these things coming up here.

Well, within a year we replaced that superintendent with Sister Rose Marie Hennessy, and I would say fifteen years, that the generosity of that community to allow her there—and they made a remarkable transition. It really went from religious control and administrative role to lay, and that required enormous selectivity, process, development of continuing education, instructing people coming from a public school system into the Catholic school system what the differences were, and so forth. That was the year of developing school boards for every school and financial committees. And then we outreached some through— educationally, in Sacramento. I remember Rose Marie and I went down to visit the Hilton Foundation in Los Angeles. I would say that they didn't tell me all of their troubles, but I think we had a very close relationship.

08-00:21:57
LaBerge:

The two of you did, and you could just delegate to Sister Rose Marie.

08-00:22:03
Cummins:

It was so much the same with George Crespin and Bill Macchi. When people talked to them, they understood they were talking to me. And Sister Rose Marie was the same. Now, they didn't bother me with everything, and if they thought I was going to get really annoyed they probably wouldn't tell me at all. But I made sure I was at the meetings. And then the school board, I'd have them down for dinner every year. It was a casual, cordial thing.

08-00:22:36

LaBerge:

What about teacher contracts? Did you have anything—do you even remember seeing a teacher contract?

08-00:22:42

Cummins:

I don't remember that we had any hassle over that. Gosh, no, I just don't remember any real difficulty with that. Now, later on, of course, at O'Dowd, we had the transgender teacher with the sex change.

08-00:23:00

LaBerge:

Yes, yes! In fact I know Tim Newman—

08-00:23:08

Cummins:

Tim.

08-00:23:08

LaBerge:

—had been the volleyball coach. I knew him very well because my daughter played volleyball. What a wonderful person!

08-00:23:21

Cummins:

Well, we got through that one okay, because I had—

08-00:23:22

LaBerge:

Probably today, in 2015, would not happen in the same way, I'm guessing.

08-00:23:27

Cummins:

I guess not. Well, of course on that one, we settled it—it was a very difficult assignment, and I was thinking sophomore boys, what are they going to do with that? And then was there going to be a huge parental reaction? It really went very smoothly. Now the atmosphere of that, remember that young—well, it was a boy, but he was transgender—got killed in Fremont.

08-00:24:01

LaBerge:

Yes, on a bus.

08-00:24:03

Cummins:

Yes, and people just weren't interested in getting into a huge argument over all of that. And then so many of the parents told me—this is past Rose Marie's time, but I'm sure I was consulting her. But she said, "Probably the students will handle it better than the parents."

08-00:24:24

LaBerge:

Right. Because he was so well respected and really took care of the students. My personal story is our house was in the '91 fire when my daughter was at O'Dowd.

08-00:24:33

Cummins:

Oh gee!

08-00:24:38
LaBerge:

And Tim was one of the kindest persons to us, brought things like socks, things you wouldn't normally think of—but that were necessary, and really took care of my daughter during that whole time, more than an average teacher would. In fact, I think the kids probably did support him very well.

08-00:25:05
Cummins:

I got a letter from the Congregation [for] [Catholic] Education, congregation of seminaries and universities in Rome, signed by the cardinal prefect, inquiring about this situation. I was put off by that. I felt if a cardinal prefect—if all he has to do is worry about a high school in East Oakland. [laughing] But I wrote back and said this was worked out with enormous consultation and there are conditions attached, that if it really becomes a huge problem, which this person is fomenting, then we'll have to release—but haven't heard a word since.

Now, I'm trying to think. Earlier on I think I mentioned to you the Black Panthers with our schools. There was one thing—I inquired pretty heavily when Our Lady of Lourdes School closed. Sister Rose Marie said the school was down to what, 110 or 89, and she said it just wasn't workable. She told me before it closed that we have the capacity to take care of every student: St. Leo's, St. Jarlath's, and whatever. That was a sad thing. Oh, of course Presentation High School! That institution got the Department of Education Blue Ribbon Award, and it was the great feeder school for the University of California at Berkeley. It just got away from us. Rose Marie had somebody else in her department who was a holdover from the old days, who was supposed to be overseeing that and didn't pay close enough attention. Whether we could have kept it going, I don't know. But to lose it, I felt bad. Of course, the Sisters had moved out, and we'd kept it up. But then to make the transfer we had to bring everything up to code. We spent—oh, a million-plus on the building. But to lose that one, that was too bad.

Oh, but we had the great FACE developments. There was a wonderful school department, and the great lady, Lillian Black, with the arts—and then Sister Barbara Flannery, who not only had experience with running schools but got her master's in business administration from St. Mary's. They were a great team! And I saw a lot of them, but they certainly didn't bother me with the day-to-day details. They handled it very well and they were very popular. When we'd send out surveys to evaluate departments, the school department was always at the top of the list. And I think I was that satisfied with them. I've always thought that since 1884, when the American bishops said that every parish should have a school—and a third of the bishops left before the vote so they didn't have to vote for it or against it.

08-00:28:59
LaBerge:

Oh, really!

08-00:29:01

Cummins: Every year we were faced with enormous financial problems, and we always seemed to survive. We kept going.

08-00:29:13

LaBerge: Well, should we move on to our topic of the day?

08-00:29:17

Cummins: All right, yes.

08-00:29:18

LaBerge: Well, one was Asia. Tell me how you were appointed to the committee—was it a committee of Asian bishops?

08-00:29:31

Cummins: No. Well, I backed into it in a way. Now, I don't know whether they would have known. Such as 1968, World Airways flew out of Oakland. Well, the year or two before we had seen something [about that]. My brother was very good about looking up chartered travels, and Los Angeles to Tokyo and back, \$345. Six of us went, and we did Japan.

08-00:30:09

LaBerge: So this was a vacation?

08-00:30:10

Cummins: Yes. And it was—I'll mention this a little later—the stewardess on the plane ushering us up, my brother had had in a play at Serra High School. She was at Mercy High in Burlingame. We picked up with a Maryknoll classmate of mine in Kyoto, and then we went to Hong Kong, and Jack Casey was there, another San Francisco Maryknoll priest. Then the group split. Four of them went to Kuala Lumpur, but my brother and I went back to Taiwan because we had Maryknoll friends there. He had a classmate, Lou Quinn, a San Jose native, whose brother was a classmate of mine, Dick Quinn, another Maryknoller. And oh, we had a wonderful time—we had a week at Lukang. It was Maryknoll territory. We said Mass; we concelebrated the Mass for the indigenous people who had been pushed up into the mountains, the natives. The Eucharistic prayer was still in Latin, that's why we could concelebrate. We ended up playing guitar and singing cowboy songs, and they were singing. When we left, there was a Chinese sister—she was in tears to see us go. It was a very lovely time.

But then when I was in Sacramento the second year Frank Maurovich phoned and said—I was not a bishop now at that time, I was secretary to the California Catholic Conference. Frank Maurovich phoned and said: "Do you have vacation plans?" And I said no. He said, "We have a trade arrangement with American President Lines." Instead of money, they provide a free trip. The option was first class to Hawaii. And I said, "Oh, I'll bet that goes to the

South Seas. And why don't [we], since it's \$80 to fly to Hawaii, why don't we pick that thing up in Hawaii and sail the rest of it?" [laughter] "Oh, Cummins you always think..." When I was in Oakland—I'd stay at St. Benedict's where Frank and Jimmy Keeley lived together. I was having breakfast, and Frank came in and said, "That doesn't go to the South Seas." This is all happening very fast. He said, "It goes to Yokohama." I said, "Well, you, editor of a paper, ought to learn something about Asia—60 percent of the world's population." So he said, "Well, let me inquire." When I got back to Sacramento he called me and said, "We can go all the way from San Francisco to Yokohama, but it won't be first class. We'll be in steerage." And I said, "Well, I think I vote for adventure." And he said, "Well, we've already decided we're going to follow the floating yen." I guess Japan was having some financial problems. We did a thirteen-day trip on the ship, and then we got to Hawaii, and here was a telegram from Ed Daly that said if you want to come back on World Airways, we can fly you home. Well, that saved us a lot.

08-00:34:16

LaBerge:

A lot of time and—?

08-00:34:17

Cummins:

But we lost a week in Japan, so we only were in Japan four or five days. We did get to Kyoto, but there wasn't any great amount of time. But now whether that had something to do with this Federation of Asian Bishops or whether that was known, I don't know. In 1979, I along with Bishop Howard [J.] Hubbard, who was just a wonderful guy, made bishop of Albany, New York, at the age of thirty-eight—he was very close to my time. I would say we were friends. Howard had his own—could be a very private kind of guy, knew my sister, because he was in the School of Social Welfare at Catholic U. with my sister. In 1979, we were invited to go to the fifth BISA, the Bishops' Institute for Social Action, a product of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, which I didn't know anything about. But I went, and poor Howard—

08-00:35:30

LaBerge:

And where did this take place?

08-00:35:34

Cummins:

Yes, I should say this. It was a program sponsored by the Office of Development or—well, the FABC, the Federation by this time had several offices. Whatever this one was—maybe it was the social action office—this was the fifth time they had this, and it was an international group invited to Asia. I think there were thirty-seven of us altogether. We had a choice of five or six places to go for what they called "exposure." And then we were going to meet in Bangalore, India, the whole group. The options were Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, I think Indonesia—and where else? The Philippines—maybe India. It's just funny how I can't remember.

I chose the Philippines, because on my return from Sacramento after six years, every place I went the Filipino population seemed to have grown, and it had. It wasn't quite doubled, but in those years that I was away, it had gone from something like from 75,000 to 125,000. That was a big increase. The trip worked out very well, because instead of my staying in Manila, which I—who was it, Spiro Agnew—“You've seen one slum, you've seen them all.” That wasn't my attitude, but I really wanted to see something a little more basic. When I got to the Philippines they assigned me with two Spanish bishops and a bishop from Sumatra to go to Mindanao, the big island at the south which was being torn apart by the Muslim rebellion. But dear Howard, oh the poor guy. His classmate was appointed bishop of Rochester, and the ordination took place right during that week, so he didn't get to go. So I was the only American. There were two from Ireland. One was the auxiliary bishop of Cork, who had spent years in Peru with the call of—who was that, Pope Pius XII or Pope John XXIII?—John XXIII, to go to Latin America. The other one was Ed Daly, of Bloody Sunday fame, waving the white handkerchief out over the bodies that had been shot. There was one from France, very nice. I'm trying to think. There must have been a Canadian. I can't remember.

08-00:38:57
LaBerge:

Do you know how you were chosen?

08-00:39:01
Cummins:

No, I just got the letter from—I think it was Tom [Thomas C.] Kelly who was the general secretary [of the USCCB]. Well, I was interested, growing up in Berkeley, Asians were a part of life! At that time I wrote a long essay about the whole experience, which continued from 1979 to 2004.

08-00:39:27
LaBerge:

So you went every year?

08-00:39:32
Cummins:

No. A pivotal element in all of this—the night we got to Manila we went downstairs to have a drink, and we were getting acquainted, the group of us. It was just ourselves, the ones who were going to stay in the Philippines. Meanwhile, the Indian bishops had become nervous about us, and they were, I think, afraid that we were maybe into politics or foreign affairs. So, the BISA people transferred the second week to Baguio City in the Philippines, north of—it was really in the mountains, a much milder climate, a kind of resort place, in a way. That was the second week. The first night the staff for the Asian bishops from Hong Kong, he was a Maryknoll professor of theology, whom my brother and I had met when we went back for my sister's vows in 1956 and again in 1957. He was very enamored of the Cummins boys, and it was a wonderful reunion. I'm sure I got the instructions to bring a bottle of scotch from the duty free for the event. That was a standard practice. Well, that was pivotal, because Ed Malone wanted me around.

So the next year the Council of Churches—well, they called it maybe the National Christian Association, in Tokyo, sent a letter—would I be available to represent the American bishops at this conference called by the Protestant groups in Tokyo, about Kim Dae-jung, who was into politics in Korea, big time? He had been kidnapped from Japan and brought back, and it was tough—I guess martial law in Korea. He had been sentenced to death. This gathering was a protest group wanting to raise the issue that this was against human rights. Bryan Hehir on the staff in Washington, he gave me articles to read, and I took the pope's encyclical, *Dives en Misericordia* [Rich in Mercy], which he had just published. I don't know why. Hopefully we had made a few friends in Berkeley through Robert Scalapino. Susan Saxby, his secretary, provided me with a couple of books on Asian economics. I had a cram course here, but especially on the fourteen-hour flight.

But I got there, and the Maryknoll people took some care of me, and the archbishop of Tokyo arranged a morning with—oh, what was his name, the bishop of Nagoya—[Aloysius Nobuo] Soma, who was the chair of the social action group of the Japanese bishops. They had two men from Washington, D.C. Gosh, they were Donald Ranard and Pharis Harvey and—well, they were very helpful. It was really a crash course on what was going on. And then I found out that I was supposed to make a presentation. So I did, wrote it out very carefully. The day we went to the meeting they had a barrage of microphones and television cameras. I was the first speaker. When I returned to Oakland Bryan Hehir called and said, "Gee, we didn't know you were going to have to address the crowd." And I, without any undue modesty said, "I was terrific!" [laughter]

08-00:44:01

LaBerge:

What did you talk about?

08-00:44:04

Cummins:

I quoted that this was a human rights issue. President Jimmy Carter had spoken to it. Who was president at that time? Anyhow, such was the representative of the American scene. I quoted Pope John Paul II, that violence begets violence. Now, I don't know exactly what happened, but Kim Dae-jung sent me a Christmas card every year.

08-00:44:37

LaBerge:

Oh!

08-00:44:41

Cummins:

He *was* released. He was exonerated. So I guess we had some influence. But it was an education.

The following year Dan [Daniel F.] Hoyer was secretary. An invitation arose from the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference to go over and appraise

Radio Veritas. Now, I wasn't very familiar with it. I called it Vatican Radio East, because they broadcast in six different languages by that time, later increased. But Hoyer sent me. It was a ten-day event. I had met some of the people before. The two great German organizations, Misereor and Missio, had given money to Radio Veritas and they were very inclined to step out of the funding. They were most interested in what America could do. But my instructions were: there will be no money, which was a policy of our conference of bishops.

So I went. I was impressed, even though the enterprise had a checkered history, that the money had been spent somewhat lavishly. They did theology courses for Vietnam, because that was forbidden in that country. They pumped scripture courses into China, both in Mandarin and Cantonese. There were two Korean women; I'll never forget them, nuns. One a stereotype of the Asian woman, put her hand to her lips when she'd begin to laugh. Both were so deferential and nice. One of the German monsignors said [to the nuns], "Now under what auspice are you here?" Oh—a steely response, "We are delegated by the National Korean Conference of Bishops." I thought, there's a lot of steel in these women.

Well, I wrote a favorable report to Washington. I did try to organize—oh—there was a Hugo Delbaere, a CICM priest from Belgium, who when arrived in Manila had said, "We would hope that the American bishops could come through with \$2.3 million."

08-00:47:59

LaBerge:

Wow!

08-00:47:59

Cummins:

Well, you know I was embarrassed. I knew nothing about fundraising. But I asked Cardinal Bernardin—and who did I ask—Roger Mahony, a number of people. And [Edward A.] McCarthy—I guess I asked ten bishops just to let me use their names. So we got \$67,000.

08-00:48:39

LaBerge:

Oh!

08-00:48:39

Cummins:

So I sent that, but that was difficult for me.

There was one little sidebar here. When I was leaving—gosh—I'm trying to keep my years straight. This is '81, yes. Well, I was coming out of Dulles Airport in the van, and our plane was delayed, so we just sat and sat. The fellow in the corner with me was leaning back and he had his Walkman. I asked, "Business or pleasure?" "Oh," he says, "that's my music. All-day meetings just drive me crazy. Who are you?" "Well, I'm John Cummins. I'm

bishop....” “Oh! I’m Lee [A.] Telesco. I’m from the Philippines.” He said something about—now, I don’t know why—I thought he might have been Jewish, but he was the vice president of San Miguel Brewery, and he had a degree from Stanford in international law. He was friendly, gave me his card, because I had said, “Well, I may be in the Philippines next year.” I know it was the next year. And sure enough, I went.

He was from Fresno, Italian, had been at the Jesuit novitiate for a few years in Los Gatos and was drafted, of course, spent the years of the war behind the lines of the Japanese in the Philippines and was praising of Marcos, who had a very bad reputation by that time. He had worked with Marcos, during the war, behind the lines. Lee picked me up the Sunday afternoon of the meeting and drove me to the San Miguel Brewery to pick up a helicopter to Corregidor. He went back over that history. We had lunch at his home in Makati, very nice. In the evening we went with his family to the Manila Hotel, which had been [General Douglas] MacArthur’s headquarters. The chorale group from the University of the Philippines sang, and it was a masterful concert. I kept in touch with Lee. He was here a few times at UCSF. He had been wounded during the war, and he had some hip problem to deal with. That was my—I’m talking too much, really.

08-00:52:04
LaBerge:

But what a great story! It says something about you, that you just struck up a conversation with him, and you hit it off!

08-00:52:14
Cummins:

Oh yes. That was a great one. Well, there’s another one coming up. [laughing] By now we have reached 1981. [In] 1982, invitation came to Howard Hubbard and me, and I’m sure it was from Dan Hoyer, to the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences general assembly. I was getting familiar with them especially through Ed Malone. Of course, every place I went I picked up with Ed Malone.

08-00:52:49
LaBerge:

Tell me again what was Ed Malone’s position.

08-00:52:54
Cummins:

He was a graduate of Regis High School in New York, which was a Jesuit place for the smart guys. They had many Jesuit vocations from there. He went to Maryknoll. In 1956 he returned from Rome with his doctorate in theology, taught eighteen years at Maryknoll, and was finally sent to the missions in whatever year that would have been—’74, I guess? He arrived when Asian bishops were putting together the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences. His was providentially timing, because there had been a [Fr. John A.] Cioppa, a Maryknoller in Hong Kong who had been helping the project along, but he didn’t want the job because he wanted to be in the Maryknoll missions. But

Ed came untrammelled. But through imagination, and a sense of discipline and his experience in the academic world, he's the one that really gave the structure to the federation. Yet he never overstepped his role. The bishops were always in charge and he had great relationships with them. Father Malone, oh, they all called him Father Malone.

But he established the Office [of] Social Communication, another for ecumenism, [Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs], for theology—I can't remember how many, probably five or six. And how ingenious and sensitive he was! The bishops wanted a neutral place for their center, because there was—maybe not jealousy, but especially that the smaller Catholic groups would not feel oppressed, because you had the Philippines with its millions, and small Catholic populations such as in Myanmar and Cambodia. And then places like Korea rollicking in missionary activity; Japan, where less of that was happening, and other small Catholic populations, like Indonesia. Well, Ed would put the offices in *those* places. Bishop [Julio X.] Labayen was in charge of that first BISA. He was a Carmelite in a place called Infanta, in the Philippines. But Hong Kong was chosen for the FABC headquarters because it was a neutral place. The welcome was there. I think India, Bangalore, had the theology group. Well, Ed Malone was the genius for all of that.

Then he started publishing booklets, and it's in the hundreds now! It's a library—on sociology, theology, spirituality, history. I have a pile of them. They're really valuable. But he managed that, and he was on the job till 2004 when he got sick. But oh, he was just great.

08-00:56:26

LaBerge:

So you were starting to say something happened in 1982.

08-00:56:29

Cummins:

In 1982 Howard Hubbard and I [were] invited—would we want to go to the general assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences? I wrote back and said yes, I'd be very happy to go—and so was Howard. But I added that I've been going to Asia, and I write a report back—but I don't know if anybody pays attention to it. It seems to me I should be dealing with some desk on Asia, partly because money is being spent. I wasn't spending it; they were. But I said I'd love to go. Now the time was profitable—well, our people [in the diocese of Oakland] loved that I was going to Asia and meeting their bishops. So oh, it was a big help at home. Washington wrote back or Bryan Hehir called, "Oh, didn't you know you're our liaison with the Asian bishops?" I said no! Well, twenty-two years later, when it came to what's going to happen after I retire, one of the staff back there, Tom Quigley, wrote and said, "Can we get a copy of your letter of appointment?" I wrote back and said there is no letter.

08-00:57:47

LaBerge: There wasn't! [laughter]

08-00:57:50

Cummins: I said nobody much cared. Well, Howard and I went to Bangkok, and while at Bangkok, the nuncio, Renato [R.] Martino, who became the Vatican delegate to the United Nations for many years, arranged for us to visit a refugee camp in Cambodia and one in Thailand. We really saw a lot. Gosh, it was great. One of the first things I had written back when I went in 1979, was that the American bishops could really look to going to Asia, because the Asian bishops know *very* much about us, are very concerned about the impact of American politics and economics. Many of them trained in this country, but seemingly all of them had visited the United States. And there was nothing mutual. Ed Malone had offered to arrange trips that would be educational, not sightseeing, engaging. They didn't pick up that. However, with me Ed said, "Why don't you come early, and go to Calcutta and Nepal and India?" Well, I liked that idea. Ed made arrangements.

08-00:59:34

LaBerge: So did you go to all those places?

08-00:59:37

Cummins: Now where did I go first? I'm trying to think of where I landed. I didn't go to Calcutta. I would have been there by myself, and well, he had so many other places to go. Like Nepal—that sounded interesting, and there were Maryknoll people there. And Vanarasi, or Benares, in India—he recommended that one. I wanted to go to Burma/Myanmar. That FABC meeting was in October. Earlier in May St. Mary's College, big in ecumenical activities, especially Anglican, involving Brother Patrick Moore, invited me out for a dinner to meet Primate Alexander, the Anglican primate of Rangoon: would I come out to meet him? I wrote back and said, "You know, that's the only day I'm home in two weeks. Why don't you bring him down to our place?" Well, I thought it was just Patrick Moore. We ended up with twelve for dinner, along with Joe Carroll and myself. The brothers came. During dinner I found out, or I picked up, they were leaving the primate with us. Nobody had told me that. Happily, our guest room was available. Well, he had a little pencil moustache, very Asian, very Oriental. And he was somewhat submerged during dinner because the conversation just roared around.

But we went upstairs afterwards. The guests went home about eight-thirty, nine o'clock. And I said, "Would you like a brandy?" Yes, he'd have a brandy. I think we were still there at ten-thirty, quarter to eleven. I wanted to go to bed—and well, he was just vocal. Meanwhile, I didn't know my geography, but I knew we were likely to be in Bangkok in October. And I said, I may be in your part of the world [Burma] in October. "Oh, you come up." I said, "Can I get in?" Because Burma had an awful xenophobic

reputation. “We’ll get you in.” And I told Joe later I didn’t dare ask the next question—can I get *out*? [laughter]

So Bangkok. Ed Malone had said to me, “Why do you want to do Burma?” Someone from Berkeley had told me that I should see Myanmar. The British had been there, but they didn’t form the place as they did other places where they left heavy imprint. This was really Asia.

Well, after Nepal I went to India. Nobody picked me up. I was on my own. That got a bit apprehensive. But in Rangoon I got picked up by—I thought it was a young priest. It was a young bishop. Paul [Zingtung] Grawng, G-R-A-W-N-G. I stayed in Rangoon at the house that was the National Conference of Bishops of Burma, and it was so, so welcoming and hospitable. I kept in touch with the one from—oh my goodness. Well, the one from Mandalay was there, George Phimphisen who had studied in Wisconsin, he was a Redemptorist, and Matthias U. Shwe. He later had heart surgery at UCSF and visited us a number of times.

But anyhow, I went to see the primate, the archbishop. “You didn’t expect to see me again,” I surmised. “No, I didn’t ever expect to see you again,” he said. In this very Asian house, we sat on the porch. He had two little kids. I heard later—I think it was some kind of framing—they discovered guns in the basement of the church. I don’t know whether he was very activist—I don’t think he was a—but he died rather young. I think he found the government very difficult.

Then to Bangkok, and Howard was already there. Now this was only the third general assembly. The FABC started in 1974, in Calcutta. In 1978 they’d gone to Taipei, and this was Bangkok. I won’t remember the number of bishops, but it was certainly in the neighborhood of a hundred. And I, by this time—well, I had checked with Ed Malone. Tony McGuire, from San Francisco, had been given the charge of the ethnic groups in San Francisco—he was altar boy for me at Mission Dolores when I was first ordained, and we, for years, had belonged to a Jesu Caritas group. I suggested to him, “Tony, why don’t you come with me? You’ll meet the bishops in a way you won’t meet them otherwise, and it’ll be beneficial for your work at home.” Ed Malone arranged it and Tony went. He went with me twice. In fact, he went with me three times! The very last time I had George Crespín and Sister Felicia—the whole gang had gone with me. It was our last hurrah, we thought, in Bangkok in 2000. Tony had gone to Tokyo along the way.

But the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference—it was so informative! Those who went with me split up. They’d find their own way, and I’d go with my own gang. The ten-day meeting was well organized. It was presentations the first four days. And again, this is Ed Malone’s organization. Then a free

day, at which time a writing committee would start doing a draft of the topic they wanted to work with. The last four days would be adjusting to that topic. In the meantime, you'd have Mass in the various languages with the acculturation. Standard practice in the evenings [was that we] would have closed sessions. Once it was the two people from Sri Lanka, and the two warring factions—and really explaining what it was like to try to be bishop in those times—the tension.

08-01:08:00

LaBerge:

So you talked about a lot more than theology or doctrine. You were talking about the politics and the—?

08-01:08:08

Cummins:

Oh yes. And you'd be mixing all the time with them. 1986 was Tokyo. In 1984 I went to Rome for a meeting of liturgy—well, I had three things to deal with, and one of them was inclusive language. That makes a problem in English for us in the United States. I'd say Rome was not really believing. They thought that's an overdone issue in North America, and they weren't too excited about it. And then the following year, 1985—he wasn't the prefect, he was the secretary to the Congregation of Divine Worship in Rome. I got friendly with him because I had met him at that meeting. We brought him to our St. Francis de Sales Cathedral. I took him to the liturgy. Well, he was here for Pentecost and was mightily impressed. Oh, he thought the liturgy under Father Don Osuna was just splendid. And he said to us kind of sadly, "We couldn't do this in Europe." Which was a great compliment to us.

08-01:09:38

LaBerge:

Yes.

08-01:09:40

Cummins:

And then I went back with him to Chicago, to another gathering of our liturgy committee. But I had taken him around the first day he was here, well, to the Jesuits in Berkeley, and we had lunch, and then to St. Mary's College. At lunch, I was at the next table. I let him talk to the others, and I heard him on the topic of inclusive language say, "Oh, the bishop is concerned about that, but that's really an American issue."

The next year I'm [in] Japan with the FABC, and at breakfast—there were about eight of us at the table, and the man on the end was from Sumatra, so Indonesia, you know. And he opined. "When we have more experience with women in politics and public life, it'll be easier for us to develop their greater role in the church." And I thought—this! Of course when I had been in Rome talking to an English Benedictine, very young, [Peter] Cuthbert Johnson, and a Vietnamese secretary with enough English—Archbishop [Virgilio] Noè had the least English, I remember I said, "Now, it comes down to such things as a woman in the United States is paid fifty-nine cents on the dollar for what a

man is paid.” Gee, I really had their attention with that one. This was 1984, I added, “This is going to be all over Europe by the end of this decade.” And I said to the Vietnamese guy, “It’s going to be in the consciousness of Asia.” It was already *in* Asia, you know? Well, that’s the kind of thing that you discover. Then along with that came many invitations. Oh my! “Gee, come back! Come over to see us!”

08-01:12:01

LaBerge:

And it sounds like then you also had a lot of visitors because of it.

08-01:12:04

Cummins:

Yes. Well, following—I wrote a report for Washington on this, and there was always that recommendation of Ed Malone, to send the bishops to Asia. We can get a travel arrangement for them and really familiarize them with this whole program. You just asked me—

08-01:12:34

LaBerge:

You *did* have a lot of visitors.

08-01:12:36

Cummins:

Well, I became aware early on how much they travel through the United States. And I said, “I don’t want to interfere with your holiday, but if you could let us know in advance when you’re coming, we could gather your people for an afternoon, evening, dinner—but they’d love to have Mass.” Oh, Taipei did that. And one day Orlando Quevedo, he’s now a cardinal, in from Mindanao. But he was in Iloilo or somewhere—he was in Marcos territory I know. I got a phone call from him on a Wednesday, from Minnesota. And he said, “I’m going to be in the Bay Area on the weekend. Do you want me to come by?” I said oh sure! So it was still Marcos martial law time. We brought him to Pinole, because that was the easiest place to gather—there was standing room only. And then he stayed for dinner. Well, the homily was very political. [laughing] Afterwards, on the way [to] wherever he was staying, he said, “Gee, you have a lot of Filipinos.” I said, “That’s just one *parish*! Give us a month, and we can get the Oakland Coliseum.” I was very grateful for that kind of visit.

And gosh, gee, I’m trying to think who else came. Well, the bishop from Kyoto was a great friend of the St. Joseph Sisters from Wichita here, who ran St. Rose Hospital. Yes, Taipei came here. Oh! Well, there was a standard visitor, the exiled bishop of Canton, China. Joseph Ti-Kang—Dominic Tang Yee Ming, S.J. That’s a longer story. I don’t know if we want to go into that one. But gee, I’m trying to think who else. [laughing] Hong Kong was here. Eventually we had Chinese bishops, but they didn’t connect with the FABC. That was something else.

But there were other things in gender, like 1986—this Thomas Liang, the one whom I mentioned in another context to you—he was into banking. But he really started working in schools, and schools in Hong Kong make money. And as a result, well, he opened a school, the American [International] School, and this was for Hong Kong people who wanted to send their kids to college in the United States, and he asked me to be chairman of the board.

08-01:15:50
LaBerge:

And this wasn't a Catholic school, it was just a—?

08-01:15:53
Cummins:

Well, he'd made it a Catholic school, but I don't think it was part of the Hong Kong Diocese, but it had religion. Religion was taught. Well, he was devout. I don't know what happened to the family, but that school is still operating, and they made a high school out of it. He had me write a few letters to various people. He was, I guess, trying to get a piece of property from, I think, the Religious of the Sacred Heart.

08-01:16:28
LaBerge:

In Hong Kong?

08-01:16:29
Cummins:

Yes, and he had me write a note to them, and I was happy to do that. But Dan [Daniel E.] Danielson wanted to go to China, and we had plans for maybe October. We only had ten days, because I was going to the Federation of Asian Bishops. That would have been in Tokyo, yes—that was tight. But by the time of this meeting in the school in Hong Kong—that was July—we had a whole gang going from here, connections that he had made. Bell—what was his name, the secretary of education.

08-01:17:13
LaBerge:

Terrel Bell?

08-01:17:15
Cummins:

Terrel Bell, yes. He was in the group. And then there was an Elsie Gee from San Francisco. She was into politics. But by this time Sister Rose Marie Hennessy was going, Sister Barbara Flannery was going, Dan Danielson was going, Joe Carroll was going, and Sister Lois MacGillivray, the president of Holy Names College, was going. And Thomas Liang flew all of those people over there, and then two weeks into China, and took care of us. Oh my goodness!

08-01:17:49
LaBerge:

How did you meet him to start with?

08-01:17:53

Cummins: Well, the family house was here in Piedmont, but all his business was—well, not all his business. He was on the board of Union Bank in Detroit—is that a famous bank?

08-01:18:12

LaBerge: Well, National Bank of Detroit was one.

08-01:18:15

Cummins: I could look it up.

08-01:18:18

LaBerge: This may be after my time too. [laughter]

08-01:18:23

Cummins: Well, I want to tell you a relevant story that I don't want to miss. I got a letter from Archbishop McCarthy in Miami, that there was a man in my diocese who wanted to meet me. Well, I guess he had called for an appointment, and I had written back, "About what?" And I guess I just postponed it. I didn't know what the urgency was, or something. And then there was something about it, I felt wait a minute, this is kind of aggressive, and I wasn't clear on what the point was. Well, I think there was a bit of—he had bishop friends, and in the house in Piedmont he had all our pictures. McCarthy was the centerpiece. But McCarthy wrote to me and said this man wanted to meet me. McCarthy had met him in Hong Kong. I don't know the connection. But I guess I was put off that—that seemed a funny arrangement.

Well, the year that I went to the BISA, 1979, and met Ed Malone, a few months before that, I had seen an ad in some magazine—it was just when China was opening up—"Visit Canton, China—five-day trip from Hong Kong by rail into Canton, five days, \$350." So I wanted to get some advice on it. There was a Matt Connors who was the travel agent out of the Kaiser Building here, and I thought well, they'll be familiar with Asia. So I went to see Matt, and I said, "Listen, I've got an invitation to go to—I'll be in the Philippines, and I'd love to go up to Hong Kong afterwards." He looked at me, and the first question was, "Catholic bishop? For heaven's sake—they want physicists and science people. They wouldn't even look at your application for eight months." And then he said, "And \$350—you realize what they're doing to you?" I said, "Yes, but I'm the first kid on the block." He got me the visa!

So I flew up from Manila with Ed Malone. We got on the plane; it was China Air Lines out of Hong Kong. And the flight attendant comes by and Ed said, "We'd like a Manhattan." This is before the plane took off, you know! So we took off, and then the steward comes by, when we get to leveling off, "How are things?" Ed Malone said. "I don't think she understood. We wanted a Manhattan." We had two Manhattans. Well, we went to Hong Kong, and my instructions were to see Eddie Chang, at China International Travel, in

Kowloon. So I went over and dropped—well, I had what Matt Connors had given me, the visa, but it had to get—

08-01:22:18

LaBerge: Verified first.

08-01:22:22

Cummins: And I left the passport, and I said, “Anything else?” “No, that’s fine.” I got a phone call at three o’clock that afternoon. Oh, he was so upset, Eddie Chang. “You have Roman collar in your picture on the passport. Visa *refused*.”

08-01:22:40

LaBerge: Oh no!

08-01:22:41

Cummins: Then I went over, and I was telling Ed I wanted to crawl in and reach up over the desk, because he was so upset. And Ed said, “You embarrassed him. He lost face. Couldn’t deliver.” Well, that left me, I guess, the five days. I didn’t stay the five days because I got an earlier flight home. On day one, I went to Macau with a Christian Brother from Cuba. You do that in a day, over and back, and I was interested in Macau. It was still independent. But Ed said, “Thomas Liang wants to take us to dinner.” And Ed was cautious, because he said the China cultural thing is: you do a favor, then you’re obligated to a favor. It’s not of equal size or quality, but there’s a little indebtedness, you know? And by this time I think—no, I wouldn’t have known Archbishop [Dominic] Tang. So we went to the Miramar Hotel, and we were up on the second level. And every twenty minutes you’d hear music, and we’d go over to look down and it was dance routines and song. Oh, it was a wonderful, pleasant evening, and this is Thomas Liang. Well, when he came next to California, he invited us up to his house—Joe Carroll always went with me, and Joe got very close. There was a tragedy at one point with a crib death—and Joe was very, very helpful in aiding at that point. But then whenever I’d go to Hong Kong, I’d see Thomas. And he was a good cook!

But of course what happened is he got into horse racing, and he had a big farm in Orlando, Florida. I never went there, but Joe did and stayed. We were in Hong Kong many times, gosh, because you’d never go to Asia without going through Hong Kong. And they took us down to the track at Sha Tin Racecourse in Kowloon, to the air-conditioned stable that had three floors or something. We went in to see this big black horse, the California Kid. And I guess the California Kid won a race, and Thomas sent me a thousand-dollar check. And I guess the next-to-the-last time I saw him in Hong Kong I was visiting, and I can’t remember—these get mixed up with the dates. But I went down to see him at his office to tell him I was going to be there a few days. He said, “New horse. California Bishop.” [laughter] Whatever happened—the daughter was here, the youngest daughter. She came down one day and

dropped me off an envelope with a check, a thousand dollars. And inside it said, “California Kid won first race.” And then California Bishop—there was one time we were there at Keith [F.] Pecklers’s. We were on our way to Mongolia, but we started in Hong Kong. We went to the racetrack at night, and Keith was there with a friend of his from Rome, a Canadian who is now a bishop in Saskatoon, who had never been to a horse race. We went to dinner and the races, and we went down to where the horses were, walking around, and so forth.

But I guess then the next time I was with Thomas—well, we were still living at the house here—California Bishop won the New Zealand handicap, and it was just when we were moving here, and he gave me a check for \$10,000! But the people who are in the know said, “He won considerably more than \$10,000 with that handicap.” But that was funny. Of course, I said, “Send that to the chancery office.” And then the next day I realized we’re moving here [Prospect Street house in Oakland], and I don’t want to be nickel and diming, because I said to my secretary, “Did you send that?” “No. *Oh*,” and she got really apologetic. “No, I didn’t send it.” I said, “Don’t send it.” I said, “We’re going to outfit this house without having to go—

08-01:27:55

LaBerge: With the California Bishop. [laughter]

08-01:27:58

Cummins: With the California Bishop. I’m distracting you.

08-01:28:01

LaBerge: Shall we wrap up the Asia part? Was there another significant meeting?

08-01:28:13

Cummins: Well, I would like to say—the publications from those general assemblies, there’s much written on those. But they are an education in the theological thinking and the spirituality of the Asians, and it’s different from ours. They talk about the Holy Spirit as though they’re holding the Spirit in their hand. That the Spirit is—what did I do with the Asia paper. [searching for Asia paper] My goodness. Oh, it’s underneath everything. I would just like to read what I wrote here.

08-01:29:15

LaBerge: Is this going to be in your book?

08-01:29:20

Cummins: Yes. Years ago Ray Decker told me this, that the idea of the Holy Spirit—it’s mystery to us. It’s almost an unnecessary piece. Now, the Vatican Council has brought it to the fore for Asian sensibility, but he said the Holy Spirit’s a reality, almost *tangible*. I remember that Mills girl from Saudi Arabia, and when we talked about how she got interested in the church. She said well—I

thought she wanted to talk about birth control or something. “Oh later,” she said. Because she had worked at Planned Parenthood in the summertime. Mills would farm these [students] out for internships. And she said, “You meet these young women with their lives just *destroyed*.” But she said, “The spirit of God lives in them, does he not?” That is different.

But here’s what I wrote, [reading from Asia paper]: “Asians find the Holy Spirit in creation, in history. The spirit has sown the seeds of truth and grace among all peoples’ philosophies, cultures, and religions. Asians see the Holy Spirit as the inspiration of gospel and enculturation, ecumenical and religious dialogue, and human development. And the church is a communion of communities united in the Holy Spirit. The bishops urge their colleagues as well as their priests, religious, and laity to be alert to what the spirit is saying to the respective churches.” It’s really, I think, the poetry of their approach: Jesus, the Enlightened One. All of those Asian words, when they’re talking to God, it’s poetic—of course, I think I make a remark that St. Paul says, “Yes, God shining on the face of Christ,” pretty poetic. I said, “Yes, well, Paul is from Asia.” [laughter]

Religious experience is terribly important. We were trained in the seminary to watch out for religious experience. That’s emotion, and may draw you away or imbalance you, and so forth. The bishop of Nagoya said, “Eyes, not ears, are the important evangelical equipment.” And I think that’s true. I’d say that’s why you have to develop quality relationships when you’re dealing with them. Everybody knows that. Another quality is the reverence for the Holy Father, for the pope, really very marked. At the Asia synod, some of the people, especially the Japanese bishops, spoke up in a sense criticizing the operating of the church from Rome. But the esteem for the pope—and what’s coming out now in this country with Francis and people criticizing him—I don’t think the Asians would do that. They see the pope as the lifeline, especially—they’re such tiny minorities.

I think it was the Bangladeshi bishop when we were in that BISA up in Baguio City, who said, “Gee, we’re only 0.3 percent of the population.” And there was a bishop from Finland who interrupted him, “Well, in Finland we’re only 0.03 [percent] of the population.”

But I think that reverence for the Holy Father, very, very—well, it’s edifying for my taste.

08-01:33:33
LaBerge:

And what about devotion to Mary?

08-01:33:36
Cummins:

Oh yes, yes, that too. They had a wonderful statement about that. [finding paper] [reading] “A bishop in Bangkok said it is in Mary that all faiths of Asia

meet.” Of course, we had evidence of that here. The first time we got the ethnic groups together, we did it on the Feast of the Assumption.

08-01:34:20

LaBerge: On purpose?

08-01:34:20

Cummins: Yes. Well, everybody brought the icons and the pictures. It really was the central drawing card. Yes. That was Sister Felicia’s work. She tried to get the Asian leadership—well no, the whole ethnic leadership to talk to one another, and they were very resistant. You know, if you’re Polish, what do you have to do with Koreans? But they found, by three years of her patient nurturing, that family questions, job questions, generational differences—everybody had that in common and everybody had something to mention.

How about one Berkeley story? [laughing]

08-01:35:21

LaBerge: Yes, good!

08-01:35:25

Cummins: In 1986, when we went to China, I got a phone call from Maryknoll Father Larry [Laurence] Murphy, whom I had known because he had worked in the bishops’ office in Washington as the head of campus ministry. Now I had met him before that, and we were very friendly. I remember Charlie Albright, a Paulist here in Berkeley, before—and he had that same position. Larry Murphy, when China first started opening, took it upon himself to begin contacts. He was really as informed as anybody about the church situation, after all the years. He phoned me before we left and he said, “Where are you traveling?” So he gave me a list of bishops and said, “Now, this one you want to be very careful with, because undoubtedly his office is wired. This one, don’t be talking too much.” The day after I got home, Larry Murphy [called]. “Who’d you meet?” I said, “We met Canton, Beijing, and Wuhan. We gave Canton a seven, figuring he’s doing the best he can.” He’s the one that replaced my pal Bishop Tang. “And we gave Wuhan a ten. He’s the Franciscan. We thought he was really genuine. And we gave Beijing a two.” And Larry said, “That’s pretty good.” We were in Shanghai. The bishop was very well known, [Aloysius] Jin [Luxian], a Jesuit. He was out of town. We didn’t get to meet him.

But the year before, there had been a group of Catholic college presidents invited to China by the government, for a tour. Brother Mel Anderson of St. Mary’s here was on that. Well, this was the return, and they sent a group of, I guess, Chinese education people and bishops, and three came to Berkeley—Bernardine Dong [Guangqing] from Wuhan, the one that got a ten, and

Michael Fu [Tieshan], from Beijing, and Aloysius Jin [Luxian] from Shanghai. They came to Berkeley in—

08-01:38:25

LaBerge: How do you spell Jin?

08-01:38:26

Cummins: J-I-N, I think, yes. We had lunch in the backyard at the GTU. And of course, I was hitting it off with Wuhan because we had corresponded. He knew some English. It was amusing, because one of the women who was in his office there, she was quite good in English and she would translate. But if you'd ask him directly, you didn't know whether he'd answer back, because he wouldn't pick it up. But he'd have enough so you could carry on. Larry Murphy, I guess, was traveling with them, and he said, "Listen, go over and talk to Fu. Nobody's talking to him." So I said, "Okay, I'm glad to do that." I was going to say one more thing. Of course, Bernardine sent me a Christmas card every year until he died. Then Keith Pecklers and I, in 2002, we were in Shanghai on our way to Mongolia—that was another thing. You see a trip to Mongolia—who ever got to Mongolia?

08-01:39:40

LaBerge: Right.

08-01:39:43

Cummins: The outstanding people! And then East Timor—we had an important role to play there with all that trouble. George Crespin and I were there twice.

08-01:39:56

LaBerge: Twice, wow.

08-01:39:57

Cummins: In 1990 and in 2000. Then that bishop visited us, the one from East Timor [Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo]. But the one from Mongolia—I'm getting off the point—I was going to make a point.

Well, there were so many connections that were established. The Mongolian one wasn't a bishop. He was the prefect apostolic. He was a Filipino priest, and I guess he started coming to the Federation of Asian Bishops in 1995. He had gotten a master's in theology from Berkeley in the 1980s. He had a remembrance of me, but the big one was he loved Berkeley and he loved the Oakland Cathedral. He, of course, was saying to me, "Come to Mongolia." Well, that seemed so remote!

But in 2002 Keith Pecklers was going to Kyoto, to a Japanese religious group, and—would I be interested in going with him to this religious dialogue? Yes, I said, that would be fine. Two weeks later he e-mailed me, "I can get ten days. Can we go to Indonesia and Korea?" These are the Jesuit strongholds—oh,

and Nepal, in ten days. I said, “Keith, you’ll be on airplanes eight of the ten days, with those distances.” “Well, what do you think? Can we go to China?” “Yes, we can do China’s big cities.” I said, “If we go to China, to the east coast, we’re going to Mongolia.” “Okay.” So we had a lovely trip. We started in Hong Kong, and that was, I guess, the horse racing event. Then we went to Shanghai, and the bishop spent two days of welcome, went to Beijing, where Sister Felicia’s eighth-grader from San Francisco, Old St. Mary’s Chinatown, took care of us with generosity. She was number two in UNESCO, and put us up at the five-star Hyatt and sent her driver.

Well, the night before we left she took us shopping, because we felt we’d better get clothes to go to Mongolia. That night, oh, we went down and got parkas. I got a vest; I had a jacket. And she bargained—they start at twenty-four whatever it was—she moved them down to twelve. Back at the Hyatt, Keith said, “The guidebook for Mongolia says the best way to travel is by horse or camel.” On our arriving an SUV, a Ford, picked us up. The driver Wens [Wenceslao] Padilla—a bishop by that time. We spent the weekend there. Ten years earlier he had come, [and] there were no Catholics at all. But they had a five-story mission house and they had Mass—they were really very much part of the community. A couple of Mother Teresa’s sisters were working with the aged. They had the Salesians in charge—a high school. And they were building a church that became the cathedral.

08-01:43:59

LaBerge:

What’s the city?

08-01:44:03

Cummins:

Ulaanbaatar. Well, on our way to the airport Keith said, “I’m not a cheerleader, but I’m really proud to be a Catholic.” He went back twice to instruct in liturgy, and even brought up to the Jesuit general the possibility of building a high school in Ulaanbaatar. They postponed that, because they felt they don’t have elementary schools that could feed in. I went back there with Frank Maurovich, too—gosh, it’s thriving—and it’s a church where you can say the spirit is alive.

08-01:44:40

LaBerge:

The spirit is moving.

08-01:44:45

Cummins:

Oh yes. Now, it’s Keith in Kyoto. We went to Kyoto.

08-01:44:53

LaBerge:

Maybe that’s a good place to wrap it up for Asia? You have one more thing?

08-01:44:56

Cummins:

One more thing. You know the Asians in the 1990s—well, maybe a little earlier even—became very conscious of their presence in the United States as

Catholics. And there was a group—one was Ruth [Narita] Doyle, who is a Japanese convert, I believe, a Fordham University doctorate in sociology, quite close to Cardinal [John Joseph] O'Connor. She picked up with Teri [Teresita L.] Nuval who was in charge of the Asian apostolate in Chicago. And there was a Social Service Sister, Chinese, from Los Angeles. Oh gosh, no, it wasn't Teresa.

08-01:46:04
LaBerge:

You can fill that in.

08-01:46:05
Cummins:

Another's name was Barber. She was a Pacific Islander, Samoan. These got a group together. Since I had the connection with the Asian bishops, they connected with me and Sister Felicia. I was chancellor when the bishops put the Office for Black Catholics in Washington. But it was so slow-going. When they did establish that Office for Black Catholics, it was down the street from the big office of the United States Catholic Bishops. And I thought—you know, that was a little troubling. Because it seemed to imply hesitant recognition.

Well, then in the eighties we went through trying to engage the Hispanics and the Latinos. It was a national project, but California was important. And to hear those stories about having to pay rent when they used their own church, Mass in the cafeteria instead of the church. Those things were so sad, and my feeling was—because I suggested that we—well, John Quinn, in the 1980s, wrote to Washington and said you should establish a China desk for the future. One could see that things were not happening. Twenty-eight of the fifty states didn't have measurable Asian population.

Not easy to get the interest of those. But the group was so determined. Well, twice I was on the administrative board and offered shyly, "We really should acknowledge the different Asian groups—nobody's mad, but they're very conscious of their place here in the United States." Later, I quietly asked for the nomination for the Migration and Refugee Committee, because that took care of the pastoral care of Asians. That was a mixed bag what with new immigration. But with the Chinese here in California for what, almost two centuries? And the Filipinos. But anyhow—I made the presentation to the administrative board twice, but the second time the president was Anthony [M.] Pilla, from Cleveland, and the vice president was Joseph Fiorenza from Galveston-Houston. Though there wasn't a great response from the forty-four member board, there was great sensitivity on the part of those two leaders, that led to a publication on Asian American Catholics, and a huge welcome to them from this ethnic gathering that was organized for the year 2000 in Los Angeles.

08-01:49:10

LaBerge: So you got that established.

08-01:49:15

Cummins: Yes, and we didn't have to go through the effort and the slowness. The people felt resistance. They realized—and then we got three Asian bishops appointed.

08-01:49:27

LaBerge: Oh good!

08-01:49:26

Cummins: Yes, that was great. And our committee, the migration committee, [Theodore Edward] Cardinal McCarrick preceded me, and he had written a letter to the nuncio urging the appointment of an Asian bishop. Our committee—we had John Favalora, who had lived with the first black bishop in the United States, and the burden placed on him [as the only one]. And we knew from the encuentros—Bishop [Gilbert E.] Chávez in San Diego and Bishop [Juan A.] Arzube in Los Angeles, the burden on them as the first among the Hispanics. So we suggested three, make three at a time: Chinese—Korean could wait, we felt. That was our reading—but Vietnamese and Filipino. And that happened.

08-01:50:19

LaBerge: Wow.

08-01:50:20

Cummins: Now I'll shut up. I'm taking you too long.

08-01:50:22

LaBerge: No! Well, this is a good way to wrap up the Asian part, and then we'll go on to the next topics.

08-01:50:29

Cummins: Okay. We have sexual abuse—

08-01:50:32

LaBerge: And then summing up or whatever else we think we've missed

Interview 9: March 5, 2015

09-00:00:00

LaBerge: Okay, we're on. Today is March 5, 2015, and this is interview number nine with Bishop John Cummins. So today we might as well start with the hardest subject, which is the clergy sexual abuse. When did you first become aware that there was a problem?

09-00:00:29

Cummins: I would say the early eighties. [sound of papers rustling] Now, I became bishop here in 1977. Within a year or two we ran into a difficulty with a priest—now, we were not suspicious. This kind of thing was just beyond our comprehension; you didn't even *think* of it. But it was very iffy—and well, I should go back a bit. I was chancellor here, and there were two issues that came up. One was one of our priests arrested in—I think it was Santa Cruz. I wasn't really privy exactly, but I overheard a conversation. Bishop Begin said, "We have to get a lawyer for this man, because he could be written in as a sex offender." I think it was some solicitation in a public bathroom or something. I wasn't interested in it—I just passed it by. We had a lawyer here, [J.] Fred Haley. He was a former football player for USF and was from our parish at St. Augustine's. He was such a wonderful Catholic man. He'd be at Mass almost every morning when he'd be home, even in college. He was a big man. He'd come in and genuflect and kind of shake the church. We were just so admiring of him. He, I guess, took care of the case and never heard of it again.

And then there was another one. Brian Joyce, as chancellor, was involved—I knew something of this. But again, we weren't suspicious. It was one of our pastors, one of the older guys. The comment was that he was too fond of the young girls in the school. Well, that came up when I became bishop, and I went down to see him, because there was one experience when I was chancellor—there were two times a question was raised about one of our priests—a very good priest. He was in the chancery one day, and I steeled myself to say, "You know, it's being said that you're too familiar, going to this house." He was the director of the deaf. Taken aback, he responded, "I'm old enough to know better. That woman takes care of the raffle for the support of the deaf work, and I was bringing the raffle tickets and dropping them off at the house." He was very grateful that I brought it up to him. Besides we were good friends. Remembering that experience, I went down to see this older priest. We had some business and we took care of that. And then I said, "You know, I've heard it twice, so I just want to bring it to your attention that you are probably too close or too familiar with some of the young girls." And he went, "*Ohhh*." Well, I told that to our lawyer, who was extremely valuable for us through all of this.

09-00:03:59

LaBerge: And who was your lawyer?

09-00:04:01

Cummins:

Dick Logan, Richard G. Logan. He was a young man when Bishop Begin appointed him as a diocesan lawyer—hard working and very careful. Again, a good friend. And Dick said to me, “He’s guilty, because,” he said, “could you imagine taking on two or three of your best priests and say you’re being criticized for this? They’d come across the table at you they’d be so upset.” Well then, when Paul Schmidt, twenty years later was doing this kind of work and so forth, he came in once to me to announce, “Oh, he passed the Logan test.” Or, “He didn’t pass the Logan test.” How a person reacted became something to notice.

09-00:04:57

LaBerge:

So what happened with that priest? Did you reassign him?

09-00:05:10

Cummins:

We were unable to find people to speak up. Fear, I am sure. The public authorities threatened him later, causing his resignation. A harsh time. Well, as to the case in Bishop Begin’s time, he was a pastor where there was no school. In fact, he was the pastor in Rossmoor. Well, I did not—again, unsuspecting. I didn’t try to go back and—I thought the thing had been resolved. And then we all had confidence in psychology and psychiatric training, and I didn’t feel any motivation to go back into that. I thought well, it must be settled and he’s about his work, and we had no complaints about him.

09-00:05:46

LaBerge:

But for instance, would you have sent him to therapy?

09-00:05:53

Cummins:

That’s the only thing we knew what to do, yes, and to get a clearance. There were a few dates—I’d say 1985 was crucial, 1992, I think, or 1993—and then the big blowup in 2002.

09-00:06:09

LaBerge:

Okay, so shall we start with 1985?

09-00:06:13

Cummins:

Well yes, I’d like to. Now, Dick Logan deserved praise. There was that case in New England. I think his name was Porter. And there was one in Lafayette—these were nationally known. But again, we didn’t apply that to our standing. We got a bit familiar [with the issue], but then Dick Logan said to me, “You know, you have one priest who’s really a time bomb.” I didn’t know anything about that. Well, it was many years later that it showed up that he had molested children, but we had no details. Even the older one that I had gone down to see and said this is being said about you—Brian Joyce, as chancellor, had tried to deal with him because he had heard complaints. He went to this family that had made a complaint, “Oh Father, what do you mean? We don’t know anything about that.” There was just that mood in the whole world, this

world—you didn't talk about this because it was so repulsive. And families didn't want any publicity. They didn't want that to be headline stuff. Brian gave it a try. George Crespino had something to do with [addressing] it too, when he was chancellor in my time. But we were learning something was going on, and then the fact that Dick Logan had warned me about one of our guys.

In 1985, at the bishops' meeting, there was a professor from Johns Hopkins, whose reputation was of a man expert in these areas. Oh, he must have talked for almost an hour, with questions and so forth. It was executive session, of course. The thing that I took away from it was, don't be quick to throw these priests out in the street, because you could oversee them a bit, whereas if you put them out in the street they're predators forever. Now, that's the caution. Well, that was a terrible caution to have. It really didn't leave too much freedom.

09-00:08:37

LaBerge:

And then for instance, would you as a group of bishops discuss that among yourselves?

09-00:08:42

Cummins:

Well, not very much. I guess by this time Dick Logan, really when we had the first case that was public, said, first of all, this is a criminal offense and you've got to take care of families, and there's a great amount of nurturing and rehab for the person who was abused. We had no idea that abuse was so damaging, that it just took people's lives away.

09-00:09:24

LaBerge:

And was that first case Stephen Kiesle?

09-00:09:28

Cummins:

Kiesle was involved in there, but you know—whatever was doing with Kiesle, and I can't remember it exactly, he left on his own. There was something unhealthy about him. I didn't like him at all. And a couple of the guys who had been with him said, "We were kind of admiring of him. He was so good with kids." But they were very concerned that he didn't have any relationships with adults. But again, we weren't drawing conclusions. Well, something happened, and we really got taken up with Kiesle. It was probably because of some police action or something, and he left. Later he applied for laicization, and I was most pleased with that, because I didn't want him around. The Associated Press was in here not too many years ago with a letter I wrote to Rome, to say you can't put this man back on the job, because it'll be an absolute scandal. And then Cardinal Ratzinger wrote back after a year or so and said, "He's very young. We don't want to move on this at this point." So we put up with that. He was off the job as priest. But again, they didn't laicize

him right away. And that left us as the responsible person which was—it would give one pause, as they say.

Now, I think before 1992 or 1993, we started getting these complaints.

09-00:11:17

LaBerge:

And would they come from the families or from teachers? Or any place?

09-00:11:21

Cummins:

Any place, yes. But we had George Crespin, who really had a very strong pastoral response to this—take care of the families. And we had Bill Macchi involved. I can't remember all the details, but I know each of these had a priestly grasp of this. Then Rose Marie Hennessy would pick it up in the schools.

09-00:11:43

LaBerge:

Of course.

09-00:11:44

Cummins:

And Sister Felicia Sarati would get to it with the ethnic groups. This is what we were up against: one of our priests got involved with a sixteen-year-old woman, and Felicia went out—well, the family didn't want anything and please keep it quiet, and so on. We sent the guy off to counseling. I was really upset at him, because I thought your ethnic group—we have it in the ethnic community. I guess it'll be a long story. He came back from therapy—

09-00:12:28

LaBerge:

Do you want to mention his name or not?

09-00:12:32

Cummins:

I'd just as soon not. But he came back, and the story was he can't do full-time work; he has to do part-time work. And well, we put him in a parish. We weren't comfortable, but we just felt the option of throwing a guy out just wasn't there. And this was an older teenager—it was different from what came up later with kids. But he had a psychiatrist, a Chinese in San Francisco, and I phoned that man and he said, "We'll help him out but it'll take time." I said, "Well, I'm not worried about the time, but I am worried about—is this a dead end?" That psychiatrist left and went to New York, didn't tell me, and neither did the priest tell me. So we took him off the job, because 1988, the priests' senate—I could give you the details of that, but basically said that—and this is very good, really advanced given the times—that we have to respond even if it's an anonymous complaint. We have to report to the authorities and we have to provide counseling and aid to the family and to the abused, which was—

09-00:14:03

LaBerge:

That *was* early, very early.

09-00:14:05

Cummins:

Oh yes, but I give credit—well, George Crespin gets credit, but especially Dick Logan. He never got defensive. We didn't try to cover our tracks or not bring things up. And then, the fact that the senate went ahead—but now some place during that time I learned that this thing was really a personality disorder. It wasn't a moral question that you resolved by taking a pledge or making a retreat. But they said that they could really estimate that there was only a 5 percent chance of recidivism. Well, I think we all decided—especially I did—what are you going to tell a parent? That we're going to put this priest in the parish? [That] it's only a 5 percent danger? That ended it really. I don't think we made any mistakes after that, but I think we made them beforehand because we didn't realize the danger or we couldn't get the information we needed. But that one who was on the part-time job, we had to take him out of the work. We had to support him. He was ours. And then in 2000—

09-00:15:33

LaBerge:

So how did you do that?

09-00:15:36

Cummins:

Well, we just gave him his salary, and so forth, and kept him on. But in 2000, it was: you have an offender, you get him out. I've only seen that person once, and it was at a funeral. We were walking very close together, but he didn't come near me. I was glad. But that was a kind of difficulty we put up with.

Well, what happened in—do I have this right? [looking at papers] In 1993, the bishops set up a committee on the sexual abuse, and some of course—oh, even by 1992 we were into monetary claims—now, that made a change in our counseling. George Crespin could speak to this very well. The insurance people got involved, and it was, “Don't talk to those families.” See, it really blocked what our—instinct. I'd say the instinct of my staff, was quite good. But in 1993—that's when they—gosh, I've got to find it here. The national office came out with [looking through papers]—let's see, 1985, 1988—guidelines from the center for the diocese. Oh, December—gee, I don't really have it here. Oh boy.

09-00:17:36

LaBerge:

Well, just what you recall. It doesn't have to be the exact date.

09-00:17:39

Cummins:

There were five patterns that were clear. I can get them though. I think I have them right here. Maybe you'd want to turn that off for a sec. [gets up to find written material] On the national scene, this was really well done. Peter Steinfelds from the *New York Times* years ago. [looking through book] Okay, 1992-June, five principles. [reading] “Number one, respond to allegations promptly. Number two, immediately suspend anyone reasonably suspected

while proceeding with an investigation and making use of appropriate medical evaluation and intervention. Number three, comply with civil law and cooperate with criminal investigations. Four, reach out to victims. Five, deal with the issue as openly as possible.” Now that was quite a large change.

Before that, Cardinal Bernardin had set up an office in Chicago pretty much following those directives, and the Archdiocese of New York had some developments. But the bishops established a new ad hoc committee. As compared to the pro-life committee, which had a cardinal, they appointed a comparatively lowly bishop. A canon lawyer out of Minneapolis, he was the bishop in Bismarck, North Dakota. That was a pretty small leadership compared to the other. And I think it was the measure of the lack of awareness, or more so the difficulty of dealing with it. Now, the bishop, John [F.] Kinney, was very good. He kept in touch with us here and he was quite a help.

09-00:20:16

LaBerge:

Was he the bishop of Bismarck, John Kinney?

09-00:20:20

Cummins:

Yes, a very good guy.

Now, a couple of things are really important in here, after 1993. Sister Barbara Flannery became chancellor in 1994. She had most sensitivity to family. And there was one case, it didn't involve a minor, where a priest had gotten involved and it brought publicity. Some of that stuff came late to me, which was disturbing for me.

09-00:20:58

LaBerge:

You mean you found out the information too late?

09-00:21:00

Cummins:

Yes, and I should have been in from the beginning. But this woman had moved to Southern California, with the implication the diocese wanted her out to protect this priest. Sister Barbara made contact, and much more. She reached another woman who had been abused by a priest when she was a college student. Barbara dealt with her, and ended up with a few confrontational things with the one accused. Later she went to Toronto, to a meeting of the survivors, and it was a difficult assignment. She came back and told me so. But she did marvels with families making contact, and so forth. There was one more thing I was going to say about preparation for that. Barbara drew attention. Santa Clara University gave her an honorary doctorate. But I hated to see her identified solely with this, because she was very good in business, with law, handling the press. She was a wonderful chancellor.

In the year 2000, John Paul II brought about that, in the jubilee year, we must profess our penitence for things we've done wrong. He did it for the past history of the church. And more recent times. Barbara was involved—and Dan Danielson moved that we should have some apology sessions for people who were not well-cared for. I think at first ethnic mistreatment they meant Hispanics, and I suppose some of the Eastern Europeans who came to the United States to face Irish dominance of the church. But no group responded—they weren't interested. It wasn't bygones be bygones, but they just felt too self-conscious to be bothered with that—except survivors of sexual abuse.

They had first made contact with us here in the diocese in the early 1990s. There was a Terrie Light, who made herself a kind of the public spokesperson for that group. But they instructed us how much pain is involved and how much disorder ends up in one's life. That was a pretty new story for us, and then to put that out so publicly. Well, the decision was that we would have some kind of a ceremony, but not in a church, because people would be estranged. I was to make a public apology, and we were to invite people who wished to come. It was at Leona Lodge up in the Oakland Hills. I was edgy about it. When I finally saw the planned program that invited anybody who wants to get up to testify, I thought oh, this could get out of hand. We didn't register people; we had no names; we just had them come. It became a news event, of course, television and press—I took the press aside, the media, and I said, "Please, you're dealing with so sensitive an issue. Don't interview these people. Be careful and be absolutely respectful of how hard it is for them to come here." The media were very well behaved.

09-00:24:48
LaBerge:

Oh good!

09-00:24:52
Cummins:

Now, I gave a very strong—well, it was written by Barbara and Dan. It probably would have been stronger if I would have been able, but we did it. We made a prayer service out of it. People did get up to testify. Some were from Methodist churches and Baptist churches. It had an ecumenical flavor, which was not mentioned by the press. We took the heat. Thirty-five of our priests came. And I'm trying to think—about 130 to 150 people came to the event. Its promise bore fruit. It was worth doing.

And something more—two years later we developed a ministry to the abused, which Barbara took charge of. Something we had learned—well, I had seen it in Sacramento, but we had done this in Oakland with divorced and separated Catholics. Sister Barbara built a team of people, who had been abused, to do the ministry for others. Barbara organized a group of the ones who were damaged—that [isn't the right] word—who had suffered this abuse but were

strong enough and put-together enough. The first time I went to the group—oh boy! But I heard later on, many years later—“But you came back the second time.” A couple of them told us that they thought that was good. But I remember that first time—I had to leave because I had a confirmation, I’m pretty sure, after an hour, an hour and fifteen minutes, and it was a tough session.

09-00:26:42
LaBerge:

I’ll bet it was a tough session.

09-00:26:42
Cummins:

I got up to go, and one of the women said, “Sit down. What have you heard?” I asked Barbara the next day, “Well, how did it go?” “Well, they don’t think you get it.” I said, “Yes, well, I was sure of that.” We followed up, and the group grew to be a workable group. Sister Barbara and the group set up a weekend retreat for whoever wanted to come. Later they developed a monthly event, real psychological help and counseling. Now, we didn’t get to everybody, and not everybody could come forth. But something was good about that.

Now, one thing—the day after [the Leona Lodge gathering]—John Kinney phoned me and said, “How did it go?” And I said, “Well, it was difficult but it was a step forward, I think. It was a public gesture that worked.” And he said, “How did the bishops respond?” I said, “I haven’t heard from anybody.” And he said, “They just can’t talk about it.” He had been in his position for a number of years. Well, that week there was a province meeting of our bishops. The bishops of Nevada, California, Hawaii, Salt Lake City. Only two people mentioned it to me, and it was kind of quiet. Richard J. Garcia, who at that time was still auxiliary bishop in Sacramento, gratifyingly inquired, “How did it go?” Bishop McGrath from San Jose in a friendly observation, “You got more publicity than you wanted.” And I remember responding, “Well yes, but I don’t think it was damaging.” Those were the only two who commented.

09-00:28:45
LaBerge:

It’s surprising people didn’t call and ask for your advice, other bishops around the country.

09-00:28:51
Cummins:

I know. But it really was a help here.

09-00:28:57
LaBerge:

Where did the money come from for the reparations, if I can use that word?

09-00:29:05
Cummins:

Those things were not discounted out of general insurance funds. I think from that time on the insurance people started cutting it out. I have the figure on how much money we spent. [papers rustling] I think that this might have been

after my time—\$60,517,000. Now, they said half of that was paid by insurance. This is secondhand, but I'm not surprised that the insurance didn't pay all the—they were going to contest this. I was gone, but it wasn't worth a suit, because with the lawyers' fees, you'd wouldn't make up the issue. So the diocese was in that for a lot. But we learned also that the money didn't do it. The contact did, and the outreach was so important.

Now, 2002 found the bishops responding in Dallas, Texas, after the January beginning of the *Boston Globe* exposé, which made the terrible story a national one.

09-00:30:40
LaBerge:

And this was for Cardinal Law?

09-00:30:43
Cummins:

Yes. One couldn't help but have some reaction yourself to that, and we were moving on it. Now, we had to solve that in due course, but gee, to have it blow up in the national scene. [reading] I can't read what I said here—well, it got to be very heavy duty. The reaction to the priests was very hard, although I heard so much when the thing was blowing up nationally, whenever I'd go to a parish, how much the people would go out of their way to praise their priests. I often relayed that message back to them. But for some it was just words. One told me years later that he was aware that one phone call could take him out of ministry. Oh that's it, that's the note here. The priests' senate reacted to me about the action of the bishop in Dallas, "Why did you pass so severe a pattern?" And I said, "Do you people remember that I brought this up to you before I went to Dallas, and there wasn't one recommendation that came out?" They had the same difficulty talking about it as the rest of us.

Now, I think the last thing I want to mention in regard to this—of course, we're still involved, still have something going on. When Bishop Allen Vigneron came, he really grabbed onto this with both hands. It was a tribute to him. The world knew about it by this time, too. That's another thing I think that was very important, that we didn't hear too much leadership nationally until 2002, but I think the rest of the world thought this is absolutely confined to—

09-00:33:06
LaBerge:

To America, yes.

09-00:33:09
Cummins:

Yes. And it was quite a shock to them to pick up the European stories and even the high-level reports, the apostolic nuncios, one of them being taken out because of this. But they were very slow, very slow to move on this.

Bishop Vigneron went to a good number of the parishes, and he was just so moved and collapsed emotionally by the testimonies that came up. And at St. Ignatius of Antioch, the first place, a hundred people came. He was really moved by that. Well, then a little later Terrie Light, and this Jennifer Chapin, who's from SNAP [Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests], they, in conversation with Barbara Flannery, thought that since we're going ahead with the cathedral, there ought to be some reference in the cathedral to this. So they decided—well, they had a lot of conversations with the architect, Craig Hartman, and something not in the church, outside the church, and they set up the healing garden they called it. There are two benches there, curving benches, and on either one or both it says, "This healing garden, planned by survivors, is dedicated to those innocents sexually abused by members of the clergy. We remember, and we affirm: never again." That's the quote.

They didn't know at first what they wanted, but Craig put them in touch with an architectural designer from his Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and she suggested a work of—his name is Izumi Masatoshi. He recommended a piece of basalt stone, and the survivors group said this describes the feeling of wanting to be whole and healed once more. We had the dedication there. I went, Bishop Vigneron went. I don't think we had thirty-five people. I don't know to this day whether people visit that shrine. Again, for some reason the difficulty of talking about this is just—it's not as bad as it was, but it has remained.

09-00:35:57

LaBerge:

Is there any advice you would give to other bishops, your successor?

09-00:36:03

Cummins:

Well, I think there's so much out in the public now that everybody has to know what's going on. But again, I remember in Berkeley one night, and I don't know whether it was Sandra Schneiders's group, but it was either Thanksgiving or some big day. I went up just to have a drink. The provincial was there and maybe six or eight of the sisters, some of whom were working in the diocese. They weren't hostile at all, but they asked, "Why were you so slow to pick up?" I said, "We couldn't believe it! Could you believe it?" There's a wonderful master general—I won't mention his name, of one of the large religious orders who became friendly with me. He'd never come here without coming to dinner, and so on. But we were out once and he said, "You know, I can imagine myself seeing lots of crime—but not abusing kids." It's just impossible for you to think of it. And then of course, when you hear the type of personality that—it's so warped. They create a friendship with kids who were easy to be—then be friends with the family, shower gifts, and it's all a plot—ooh, wow. You cringe when you think about it.

09-00:37:44

LaBerge:

You do, you do.

09-00:37:49

Cummins: And then the damage done. The survivors can't go to church, and they don't trust anybody and have a hard time with relationships. I don't think the world of psychology was attuned to it the way they are now. They didn't come to us and say, "Do you realize this is a permanent damage?" Now, I think there may be a benefit though, that it's out beyond the church.

09-00:38:25

LaBerge: It is beyond the church, yes.

09-00:38:25

Cummins: And it's much more in the news. In some communities, in some ethnic groups, it's a big crime.

09-00:38:35

LaBerge: Yes, yes.

09-00:38:41

Cummins: But it did a lot of damage in the church.

09-00:38:42

LaBerge: It did. Well, this might be a segue into something I wanted to ask you, and that is how have you maintained your hope and your faith when there are things like this? Or if the church is taking a stance you don't like—just in society, to the sadnesses. How have you maintained—because you have maintained an equanimity and you haven't gotten pessimistic.

09-00:39:27

Cummins: Oh no. Oh no, no. My first reaction would be the Vatican Council has embedded itself in the life of the church. And I know the leadership in many areas resisted it, but not all the leadership. But then the response of people to—let me go to the divorced Catholics. There were two issues in Sacramento, and one was the gay community. When I became auxiliary bishop, people call on you that didn't call on you before. [laughing]

09-00:40:10

LaBerge: Right!

09-00:40:10

Cummins: And one was—it was a divorced Catholic women's group. I went out to visit them. They didn't meet in a church. They didn't have any parish that was local that would—

09-00:40:26

LaBerge: That would host them?

09-00:40:25

Cummins: Host them, yes. So they met at some bank or something, and I went. I expected to be just socked hard! I had some experience of getting beaten up in

the civil rights days, too. But they were so nice to me! They were really hurting when they'd tell their stories. It was very painful, and I couldn't do anything but listen. But they said they wanted to have a meeting, diocesan wide, for the group, and I encouraged them. I thought it was a very good idea. I forget where they had it, but this time it was either at a school or one of the schools, and the leadership was very sensible. Oh gee, they were good. And then priests got involved. Now this kind of thing—you've always got people who respond so gracefully and generously, and I know I went. But in the workup to that, they basically said: we need a like-to-like ministry. We want an open door for people, especially in the early years, especially if they're really abused by the breakup. So they set up that gathering in Sacramento, and that was good.

So I came down here. Sister Marie Weidner had developed—she was the staff at St. Charles [Borromeo] [Parish] in Livermore, and she had gotten involved with this same group. Well, I told her the Sacramento experience, like-upon-like. So she put together something here in the diocese which is still operating. And oh, it's in many areas, if not in many parishes. Of course people are wondering—well, are you going to create the likelihood of people falling in love? And I said, “Well, I don't think that we worry about that. What we have to do is take care of these people,” which led us to taking care of the abused in the same way.

I remember also the Dignity group in Sacramento came over to see me one night, and gee, there was—they were a really nice group. We had five priests in the house. Every priest walked by the front room that night to see what—

09-00:43:14
LaBerge:

To see what was happening?

09-00:43:14
Cummins:

[laughing] Yes. And I remember the discussion moved along and I said, “Well, your life is difficult enough without...” I forget how I put it. I had consulted, when I knew that they wanted to see me, with Father John Vaughn, who was the pastor at St. Francis in Sacramento and really had an outreach to gay and lesbian groups by that time. I don't think they had reached to the other, the transgender—but I went over to see—well, I used to go to confession to him, and I said, “What do we do?” He says, “I don't know.” He had wanted to offer some kind of welcome. John went on to become provincial of California, and then went to Rome to elect the master general—or they call him the minister general. And he became the minister general for twelve years.

09-00:44:10
LaBerge:

What order was this?

09-00:44:12

Cummins: Franciscans.

09-00:44:13

LaBerge: Oh, Franciscans. Okay.

09-00:44:15

Cummins: He's still alive, and he's the procurator for the cause of Junipero Serra being canonized. I don't think he's in good health. He's at San Miguel Mission. A very sensible, saintly man. And he's great. But I remember that night the Dignity [group] said, "Gee, we'd love to have you come and say Mass for us." I said, "No, you really don't. Because I'm going to have to explain publicly, and it's not going to be satisfying for you or for the public." And so they were just very nice about it.

But it left me with that difficulty of—there are two things we can't seem to resolve: one is the issue of sterilization of people, because it's related to contraception. And I thought—the situation where you can do a hysterectomy but can't do tying the tubes was an unsolvable problem really. And then I said, With the homosexual crowd we had documents from Rome, we had documents from the American bishops offer[ing] all kinds of pastoral help—except the idea of being a homosexual and acting out is just not permissible. And that struck me as, here we are. It's insoluble. And I guess we haven't solved it yet.

09-00:45:45

LaBerge: We haven't solved it yet. Well, it sounds like your listening, your way of consulting people and just giving everybody your ear has helped a lot in lots of situations.

09-00:46:05

Cummins: Yes, that was easy for me. I remember my first appointment at Mission Dolores. They gave me the high school club. So the first thing I did was invite half a dozen of the kids in and say, "What do we do?" I remember that—I think it was kind of instinctive with me. My dad was this way. He didn't mind asking advice. Now, when I became bishop—you know, I'm not a theologian, but if you become bishop of Oakland—you take advantage of theologians here in large numbers. And then the other thing is I had enough experience in Sacramento with the California Catholic Conference, with the advice of Boalt Hall, the Loyola Law School, USF Law School, University of San Diego. I had contacts with all of these people. And beyond that, the friends I knew in Berkeley, besides the legal people, and the Catholic colleges. It was just easy to get advice.

09-00:47:19

LaBerge:

But also you were willing, say for these hard issues, to be there, whether you were going to get socked or not, just to listen to people, that your presence was significant.

09-00:47:34

Cummins:

I don't think it was courageous. I just felt one had to face it. But there'd be more support than than hostility. I remember the first time we had a convocation of priests—and I doubt that George Crespín would even talk about it.

09-00:47:52

LaBerge:

Yes, he did. He did talk about that, that he was devastated.

09-00:47:57

Cummins:

Yes. I was—

09-00:48:05

LaBerge:

So it wasn't just George who was getting the criticism. You were both getting the criticism.

09-00:48:08

Cummins:

Yes, but they were savage with him. They were bad enough with me. But I think the second night George really was hurt. And then to allow these remarks to be made anonymously—boy, that really allows the cowards to come. Now, I thought what they did to George was really mean. But they certainly socked me.

One of my guys—well, we were in the seminary together, said, “You might remember that none of these guys who are criticizing would have the nerve to do in their parishes what you're doing here,” and so on. Then I remember we had a penance service, and there was a time for examination of conscience. We were spread around. And oh, three guys passed by and put their arm on me and said, “I hope you don't get beaten up by this.” And then it was the same thing. They said you really have courage to—well, I didn't ask for personal attack. My question was, what do we do in the diocese?

After that first convocation I would recall a couple of effects. We had Sisters Marcia Frideger from Holy Names, sociology, and Maureen Hester. They were the guiding lights. You'd get used to getting timely advice. With the convocation we got the experts in to help us. How do we get through this so it'll be a positive experience? We'd have a postmortem with them at nine o'clock in the evening. The second or third night the two women said, I think we've lost control of this. [laughter] They didn't know where it was going. And I thought, oh my heavens! But I think, though, that I got more support and more professions of “we're with you” than otherwise. But what changed—we never heard those criticisms again, no matter what we went to—

small group, large group, deanery meetings. What had happened was that the consensus that arose was just what we wanted. The strong guys in charge, and open conversation, and move to a pastoral council. All of these things.

I remember the second time we had a convocation we had this Brother Loughlan Sofield, and oh this sister—gee, she was good. Oh, I'm a blank. She has a very great name. It was the second morning, and we were waiting for the program to start, and she said to me, "You really have strong priests!" I said, "Oh yes. But they talk to each other, and they talk to me." And she said, "Oh, that's a blessing." And I said, "Yes, that's a blessing. They're in charge of the diocese," which—we were on the right direction here.

09-00:51:39

LaBerge:

You brought up something that we wanted to talk about—well, you sort of brought it up. And that is science and technology—both from Vatican II's entry into that, but then yours, too—in Catholicism, at St. Mary's College. Can you address that a little bit?

09-00:52:08

Cummins:

Yes. Well, I'm trying to think now—was there something before on this? Well, I had some contacts from Sacramento when technical matters came up. It was somewhat familiar territory for me. Oh, of course, Tom Hayes—we knew Tom and then the wife Jackie, who was in school with my sister.

09-00:52:45

LaBerge:

Oh, okay. And just for the record, we're going to say Tom Hayes was at Lawrence Berkeley Lab?

09-00:52:49

Cummins:

Donner Lab. Yes. Tom got involved with Frank Maurovich in that family life committee that Pope Paul VI had set up—and I guess with Cardinal Suenens as well. But Tom was always into conversation about science and religion, and I don't know how I'd quote him—he felt science had little to offer theology. [laughter] Because it was different methodology, and so forth. And in some ways he felt the science ought to be kept out of theological discourse. But at other times you felt, as on the birth control issue, the biology is perhaps not as—I think I mentioned this to you—not as sound as it could be, because it really—one may be talking about contraception from the point of view of the male, but contraception from the point of the female is quite different. Nature builds in—not every action is open to life. Tom was always fascinating to talk with. I guess there's something of an advantage to being around Cal Berkeley, for heaven's sake.

Well, by this time we had started the dinners in Berkeley—well, gee, we started those early, what, in 1978 '81 or '82. Later I was invited to be on the Science and Human Values Committee [of the USCCB]. Well, I was

delighted! After I attended the first meeting and reported at the Berkeley dinner, there were six who spoke to me. I didn't know them all. It may have been their first time coming to the dinner. "Gee, we'd love to be involved in that." Tom Hayes really wanted to be *on* it, you know. And then Ron Olowin from St. Mary's—he was one of the guys who came to the dinner. He was interested. Well, of course I'd report back every meeting of the Science and Human Values [Committee]—the first experience on genetic testing and screening and then we moved into—what do you call it, genetically modified—?

09-00:56:38
LaBerge:

Crops?

09-00:56:41
Cummins:

Crops. And stem cell research—before these got politicized. End-of-life issues. The last two sessions were on evolution. The interest at home here was just terrific.

Well, we got to a point on science and human values, those of us on the committee, that we ought to have more staff, because we'd meet once a year, and we were looking to twice a year. We had done, that year, a second discussion on brain, mind, and spirit at Notre Dame. And oh, what was his name. Oh, he's very famous—philosophy of science from—oh, isn't that awful. He stayed with us at—

09-00:57:35
LaBerge:

You can fill it in.

09-00:57:37
Cummins:

I'll think of his name later. Now, where was I going with that? Oh! We felt the importance of existence of our committee. When I went to St. Mary's College, the first time I went to a class on astrophysics, I explained what we had done. Oh, the students went from wow to gee, that's terrific! Archbishop Vigneron, by way of consolation to me once said, "The folding up of your committee—that could be picked up by the universities." I said, "It's not the same. With the bishops involved you have authority dealing with these questions, and you have scientific research spoken of well, and not just supported but encouraged, by just the presence of the bishops in the conversation." I feel that to this day.

Being at St. Mary's provided an opportunity to say, "I'm from St. Mary's. I'm on the committee." Jack Haught, who was at St. Mary's two weeks ago, the great expert on evolution from Georgetown—was on the committee. Phil Sloan, who's the chair of this Department of Culture at Notre Dame, and Jim [James F.] Salmon, a chemist, a Jesuit from Loyola Baltimore. And I thought—we'll have a group that feeds topics in and dispenses and

disseminates what we do out. Well, that was well received by John Strynkowski, a priest in Brooklyn, a theologian who was the staff for the Bishops' Committee on Doctrine, the committee that took us over with the conference reorganization. But it was hard for us to fit under doctrine, because we were dialogue and conversation, not argumentation or even advocacy, the way pro-life would have been. But then he got replaced by an unsympathetic theologian, and also the chair of the—

09-01:00:02

LaBerge:

Who is that?

09-01:00:03

Cummins:

His name is Thomas Weinand—a Capuchin. He wasn't interested at all. I approached the chair of the Doctrine Committee and suggested that our chair be put on as a consultant, to keep the connection but also to keep alive the dialogue, because we had very faithful scientists, Catholic and Jewish and one into Eastern religions. They were faithful to this dialogue and made enormous contributions. How quickly we could get to common ground and also how we could get to the separation. I'm not sure everybody we had was a believer, but they could sure contribute to the conversation. So we just got wiped out.

Before that, however, John Dunne, in collaboration with the science people, wrote a very concise and very explanatory letter to the Doctrine Committee and to the Committee on Priorities and Plans of the history of what we had done and the value of it and the testimony of the scientists who were involved.

09-01:01:42

LaBerge:

Is this John [S.] Dunne from Notre Dame?

09-01:01:46

Cummins:

No, it's a John [C.] Dunne from Rockville Center. He spells his name the same way. But he wasn't John the Holy Cross priest.

I do think that if you're talking about new evangelization, evangelization means going out to the world that is not evangelized. The public arena, and especially the higher education arena, is really in a scientific mode of thought, and it's dominant—and for us to abolish the committee was a signal. Hold this and let me read this. This is Bishop DuMaine's quote, and it was just offhand. [reading] He said, "The church is seen as a red light to scientific research. It should be reduced to a yellow light, only pointing out concerns, dangers, and problems, but affirming the worth and the value of scientific research."

09-01:03:05

LaBerge:

Wow.

09-01:03:08

Cummins:

Now, that's exactly our position, and it's advantageous. But to talk about new evangelization and chop this dialogue—that has to be looked at. And the bishops have a very significant place in that—so do the universities. But how quickly the universities responded, and John Dunne in his letter makes that point. I think he's talking about his experience with St. Mary's, but he said, "You have not only the science part, but you get the humanities part of the faculty being interested."

Now, we had a meeting at St. Mary's. John Dunne came, and so did Father Weinandy. They were on their way to Los Angeles for the June meeting of the bishops, but we prevailed on them—they stayed two nights with us at the cathedral. We made a date at St. Mary's, spent an afternoon and an evening. We had [Stephen] Woolpert, who was the dean of the liberal arts school and we had Ron Olowin of course. We had the president, Brother Ron Gallagher, and we had two more. I guess David Gentry-Akin, and then one from the science world. They outlined their interest and support for this, and there was no reaction, really none—even when the chair of our Committee on Doctrine was taking the lead. Oh, I knew it was over. I was really disappointed.

09-01:05:06

LaBerge:

You've tried your best to keep that alive.

09-01:05:08

Cummins:

Well, we all wanted to expand it. And John Dunne's recommendation, because it had been a year where we weren't allowed to have another gathering, recommended that there be a point man established to keep the dialogue going so that we wouldn't lose the relationships that already had developed, and nationally really, with the group we had. Gee, we had them from Woods Hole, Massachusetts, we had a representative from the United Methodist group on science and religion, and one from the University of Cal[ifornia] San Diego. It was a wonderful group. You really looked forward to being with them. I don't think I told the story about—there was humor involved. In genetic testing and screening, Harold [J.] Morowitz from George Mason University—gee, he was really erudite—he once told me a story at a coffee break about the whole Bosnia question, and Herzegovina. He said it was a Trinitarian problem, so I'll tell you that story. It's worth a tale.

But in the middle the discussion about the hazards of genetic testing and the public policy questions about an insurance company giving anybody insurance if they knew their genetic make-up—ooh, you know? And then the confidential stuff that doctors and scientists would learn, and then not be able to speak—tragedies down the line if nothing was said. In the midst of all that, Harold Morowitz sitting next to Pierre DuMaine, said, "Gee, Father, we're causing troubles! We're inventing new sins! Bless me Father for I have

sinned; I changed a gene.” And DuMaine very quickly put up his hand in the thinker pose and said, “For your penance, recite your DNA code.” [laughter]

That coffee break once, when all that trouble in Bosnia was going on, Dr. Morowitz said to me, “You know, that’s Trinitarian. Croatia—that’s all Roman Catholic, and so that’s Trinitarian. But then you’ve got—Serbia is Orthodox, who don’t think the Latins have the language to talk about the Trinity correctly,” the Holy Spirit proceeding and so forth. And then—the Macedonians are monophysite—the Trinity is wrong. It’s monotheism.” When the Turks invaded, it was, “We want you to become a Moslem or else we’ll kill you,” which is a very strong theological argument.” [laughter] So he blamed the whole thing on the understanding of the Trinity. He really contributed lively conversation.

Well, we were all friends, and it didn’t take long for a newcomer to fit right into our group because you really were allowed to speak your mind. That’s dialogue in the best of senses, just what Paul VI envisioned in his 1964 encyclical.

09-01:09:31

LaBerge:

Is it *Gaudiam et Spes*?

09-01:09:32

Cummins:

No, it’s *Ecclesiam Suam, Ecclesiam Suam* [Paths of the Church], yes. I told them in Berkeley—I don’t hear that encyclical at all praised, and I think the problem of the leadership in the church in this last number of years, or generation, is where’s the consultation? And the places that had plenty of consultation were happy dioceses.

09-01:10:07

LaBerge:

Like ours. [laughing]

09-01:10:11

Cummins:

Well, I went to the Franciscans the other night. They’re celebrating a hundredth anniversary of the Province of Santa Barbara, California, and the West. We had evening prayer service, and it was meaningful. And then the faithful crowd at the San Damiano Retreat House in attendance. Afterwards a woman I taught at O’Dowd, she and the husband came up. We’d been in touch through the years. She remarked to me, “During your time there was a lot of joy, wasn’t there?” Ooh, I said, well—

09-01:10:56

LaBerge:

There was, there was!

09-01:10:57

Cummins:

Yes, so I won’t have to comment about that. But that is really a gratifying comment to hear. Gee. Looking back, people say to me, you had an awful job.

I often say, “I don’t remember any day I didn’t want to go to work.” I was always surrounded by a powerful group of staff people. I had a lot of confidence in them and I think they were open with me. You know the story—become a bishop and you never have a bad meal and you never hear the truth. I wouldn’t buy that.

09-01:11:49
LaBerge:

Well, you’ve talked a little bit about your style of leadership—I would add it involved consultation.

09-01:12:01
Cummins:

Oh yes.

09-01:12:02
LaBerge:

What do you see for the future of the church?

09-01:12:07
Cummins:

Well—it’s not apart from this. I think this is not the one you’d focus in on right away, but I think Pope Francis is indicating a change. The change has to go in the direction of Archbishop John Quinn’s books. Now, his first one is—the style of authority very much—what the renovation/renewal of the papacy, the Petrine ministry means. But the second one is good, is very pragmatic, and he basically says that the church in its origins—now, Mary Ann Donovan wasn’t sure that that’s exactly the way the church started. She is a Patristic scholar. But he said the church started in the various places and arose from the communities that were there. Then developed a patriarchate that would connect the churches together, and those patriarchates—the four major ones—connected with the Petrine ministry. John, I remember, apologized at Santa Clara, “I’m sorry about the word *patriarchate*, but it’s the only one we have.” [laughter] But his point is that the Petrine ministry and the patriarchal ministry were separate, but it was a communion of churches.

Now, the Asians think in those terms, that the church is a communion of communities. But Archbishop Quinn’s thesis is that in the West, the Petrine ministry and the patriarchal ministry was joined in the person of the pope. That served pretty well while the focus was Europe but Rome brought it right into Latin America and then into Africa. Of course, the church was established in Africa from early times especially with the Ethiopians, and in North Africa with bishops like St. Augustine who had moved as well into East Asia. Archbishop Quinn proposes a level of administration like the patriarchate. He said that no Asian thinks that a European understands him or her. I would verify that observation from my experience with the Asian Bishops’ Conferences. A patriarchate model would also have some authority, and this is from history about issuing liturgical directives and canonical legislation.

Before we changed the Mass, the Mass was said in twenty-seven languages, twenty-seven rites! The variety of liturgical practice is long. The archbishop of Syria stayed with us. I met him when I was in Rome at the Asia synod. Oh, he was a gruff-looking guy, a white beard and bald head, but he was ready for a laugh and he really was entertaining company. At dinner the first night he came with us, “We’re Syrian Catholics not Latin Catholics. We can help you with the change in vernacular. We’ve been using the vernacular since the second century.” They’re very conscious of that. Maximos Saïgh, one of his predecessors at the Vatican Council, never spoke a word of Latin. He spoke in French as a protest, that we are not an entirely Latin church.

And I think the Asian churches—there has to be some kind of patriarchal system—this Carmelite from Indonesia, who was the president of the Indonesian conference—gee, I liked him very much. He sat next to me at the synod of Asia and he made that proposal, that there has to be another level of governance in between Rome and—but it is true, and how could they make the judgment on bishops from Rome?

09-01:16:46

LaBerge:

Exactly.

09-01:16:46

Cummins:

Yes, see a lot of those things—that should be done locally where people are *known*. And even where you’re known, it’s really hard to know as much as you have to know, because we’re just not in touch with all kinds of people. Now, I’m making this long, but the church has to go that way. And the centralization of Rome—all the wisdom can’t be wrapped up in somebody who gets an appointment. I think Francis already has reined in the secretary of state and the doctrine committee—the CDF, Congregation [for] the Doctrine of the Faith. And also, I think he doesn’t want the lifetime appointments for that, so I think he’s moving that way.

What I think is hopeful, is on the contrast with what you sense about the leadership and the bureaucracy. And the way Francis has picked up the world with his change of priority.

09-01:18:18

LaBerge:

Yes, yes.

09-01:18:19

Cummins:

Yes, we do moral theology, but we also reach out for evangelization, and we reach out to those in the greatest need. Well, that has caught on to the whole world. People who aren’t particularly religious like the pope. [laughing] He’s going to get resistance.

But I think now there's going to be no reversal of—now what would be the first thing I would say—participation. That people expect to go to a Mass and to be involved in the sacraments—really involved. Language goes along with that. They're also convinced that scriptural prayer has been renewed in the church, that it's not just catechesis. That is pivotal. And that demand for participation goes into consultation. They want to know what's going on in the diocese; they want to have some say about their parish. And my experience is that is not divisive. *Not* to have consultation is absolutely divisive.

What I've found out in the work here—well, of course I'd say one of the best examples I've ever seen was when the Jesuits in Berkeley decided to affiliate with some other institution. There was great division as that conversation started, worked up to a consensus that was strongly divided between—you go to Santa Clara; you go to USF. But the way that everybody was drawn out as to what they thought, and then the agreement.

In my experience in the diocese—this happened with the Social Justice Committee that came out of the diocesan pastoral council—third in priority list. I was absolutely surprised; this was 1983. Around the diocese—that wasn't brought up at the table or in conversation. Civil rights I guess, was, in a sense, [a priority]. But the chair of that was Jim McClay from Moraga, who did not think the bishops should be in the business of writing pastoral letters on the economy. He represented a portion of our community. And oh gosh, who was on the other side? My goodness? There was Olga Morris—very high in the St. Vincent de Paul Society. When I invited her to be part of that group she replied, “I don't protest with picket signs.” I say, “Neither does the pope.”

Now, we didn't have extremes, because I wouldn't let those extreme people on a committee because they're there to cause trouble and division. But if people are let into the conversation, and it doesn't go their way, they can adjust to that. What I found, people would tell me, “I know you have a little different picture,” so they'd feel that—oh, it can't be a bad decision, even though they would—and they wouldn't change their minds—but they'd accept. That's very respectful.

I think on the question of dialogue, Walter Burghardt made an enormous impact on me with a talk that I heard in Stockton in the year I went to Sacramento, 1971. He said the theology of Vatican II is that *everyone* is responsible for the life and for the health of the church, and that goes along with baptism and gets reinforced at confirmation. Also, that gives dignity to the individual human person and the conversation that goes on with that person and the Holy Spirit. That's the basis of why we have to listen to people. But he puts a strong theological foundation—the people of God—that is very easily understood.

09-01:23:13
LaBerge:

That seems to have been your hallmark, too. When we started these conversations you brought up the concept of the people of God, and it has been a thread throughout.

09-01:23:27
Cummins:

Oh yes, yes. I had little opportunity for special studies. I went to Cal, but—

09-01:23:37
LaBerge:

You mean special studies in Rome?

09-01:23:39
Cummins:

Yes. Warren Holleran, a classmate, did the same thing. He went on his time off and got a master's in philosophy at Cal. Another classmate, Billy Duggan—the archdiocese sent him off for canon law at the age of fifty, but long before he was fifty he took his day off and went to Berkeley and got a master's in theology. We had to push our way in there. But I felt the need for advice. A lot of stuff crosses your desk, like the selling of real estate.

09-01:24:21
LaBerge:

That you weren't prepared for.

09-01:24:23
Cummins:

No, you're absolutely dependent! You want talented people and you want enough of them. But consultation is a difficult assignment. For instance if people would say to me, "You didn't consult us," I never argued that, but I wasn't honest about it either. I would say, "I apologize, I apologize." But I invariably would say [to myself], *you*, friend, don't consult, because if you did you'd be sympathetic that you can't get to everyone or you'd get nothing done. Now Frank Quinn, in Sacramento, was very much the same. But I remember the pastor in Auburn, after Frank was there a number of years, said, "You can't get anything done in this diocese because you have to send it to a committee."

09-01:28:23
LaBerge:

Well, do you have anything else you want to wrap up with that we didn't—something on your list?

09-01:28:29
Cummins:

No, I guess—when you asked me the question what's the future or what are your expectations—that's a tough one for me!

09-01:28:38
LaBerge:

But you're hopeful.

09-01:28:41
Cummins:

Well, yes. You have to trust the Spirit. But if you look around, you find places that are exciting. I guess the church in Africa is just burgeoning. I don't want

to get caught up in the numbers game though. I think there's something else besides that, quality of life and custom of people—and the happiness! That's an enormous index of something, when people are really into—oh, you can feel it when you go to a parish and the participation in liturgy. Our cathedral hasn't regained that yet, and that's a big loss to the diocese, you know? I think our people are good-willed, for heaven's sake—and they're generous. But they like to belong to a community. And all the seeds are there, and in many places it's so well developed. Some parishes are just operations.

09-01:29:48

LaBerge: Okay, so I'm going to turn this off and say thank you very much.

09-01:29:52

Cummins: All right.

[End of Interview]