

September 29th, 2015 – Sister Diane Jamison with Professor Mary Ellen Lennon at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Indiana.

Abbreviations

SDJ: Sister Diane Jamison

MEL: Mary Ellen Lennon

MEL: Today is September 29, 2015 and I am Mary Ellen Lennon and I have the pleasure of being with Sister Diane Jamison in at the convent of the Sisters of Saint Francis in Oldenburg, Indiana. I would love to begin if you would introduce yourself, Sister and perhaps tell us about your childhood.

SDJ: Well I'm Diane Jamison, I grew up in Cincinnati in a family of there were two of us my brother Don is four years older than I and Dorothy Ont was my mother and Carol Jamison, my dad. Dad was a meat cutter by trade and a union man: secretary, treasurer, and president of the Meat Cutters Union in Cincinnati. So I learned a lot from both parents. From my father, how to negotiate, how to think ahead to your next contract. Not the one you're currently doing, but the next one. Where do you want to be the next time, so you need to take a step this time to get there? And negotiations were very important to him and strikes were not. Strikes were a waste of time basically. He wanted to be able to stay at the negotiating table. My mother was a stay-at-home mom, did some selling of Avon. She was really, she liked retail. Not the (laughs) this is not my forte, but it was my mom and my brother liked retail. So I mean they were—but what I learned from my mom was how to be independent. My mother was a very independent woman and I learned that growing up.

And that's not necessarily what a convent wants, is independent women and I remember going home when I was an aspirant because I came here for high school and told my mom that my director said I was too independent and she looked at me and she said, Well what does she mean? I raised you to be independent. So I've been very grateful for that.

The decision about religious life began in seventh grade. Theresa Marie Borsic who is now a Carmelite was a Sister of Saint Francis at the time. Was my seventh grade teacher and she woke up the student in me. Up until that time, school was a drudgery and you had to go to school so you went to school, but I didn't enjoy school at least I don't think I did. She woke me up, woke up the student put the challenges out there for all of us and I went after them. But what I saw in her was a deep spirituality that wasn't talked about. I just noticed things and so I wanted what she had. I wanted that relationship with God that I saw in her and so that began this great love affair with the divine and in eighth grade I wanted to go to the aspirancy, come here and mom said, But you're going to OLA, Our Lady of Angels High School in Cincinnati. Said mom, I really want to go to the aspirancy.

Well what I didn't know at the time is that the pastor made a visit to my parents and that didn't happen very frequently in that era because this is the [19]50's and they didn't visit. He made a visit to my parents and talked to them about my vocation and he said there are and I don't remember the numbers, but there were quite a few guys who wanted to go to the minor seminary and there were six or seven of us that wanted to come to the aspirancy and he said, out of that whole group there are two that will probably make it and your daughter is one of them. Now my parents didn't tell me that story until very much later, but, so I found

myself here. I did high school, had great time, learned a lot. Loved music, I played clarinet from fourth grade on. Thought I wanted to be a concert musician that would be just great. I want to play in Carnegie Hall (laughs) great ambition doesn't fit with community life, but it was a great ambition. So was in orchestra, was in the marching band and in grade school ended up being the drum major my eighth grade year. Came to the Academy the aspirancy, ended up being sophomore course director and co-director of the glee club, played in the orchestra was first chair my senior year and we entered in February of 1963, joined the first half of our class who entered in September of '62 so we increased the class by 13 when we entered and so those were the years of Vatican II, so you can imagine what was going on. We live through Vatican II kind of because we didn't have newspapers it's in the novitiate, there weren't newspapers, there weren't radios, you didn't listen to the news any of that. You were really pretty much in this little cocoon and our chaplain who taught us a couple of times a week would start his class with news clips. This is what's going on we always knew what was going on because he would fill us in on it. Those were—when we were canonical novices that was 1963. Fall of '63 all of us know exactly where we were when the announcement came that President Kennedy had been shot that was the one time we watched TV, was that funeral and everything around that period, but we all know where we were.

So went, started out as a math teacher because math was my favorite subject and you had to graduate from in something from Marian College so what I really wanted to major in was music and I was told no because I didn't have any keyboard. I only played clarinet didn't have keyboard and so, no I couldn't be a music major, so I was a math major. We were on the ten year plan to get through college. I had one semester of full-time college and the rest I got in summers, Saturdays, two days a week at the college when I was in Indianapolis, correspondence courses and so it took ten years to get that degree.

MEL: I'm interested why because you were studying here or why did it take ten what why couldn't you do it full time?

SDJ: Because we were sent to work to be in a classroom. I went—we went to our first classrooms as second year novices. So we had had—I had had exactly one semester of college and blitz course, a two-week blitz course on how to do lesson plans and how to outline. We went to class two weeks, morning and afternoon, so counted as an education course that actually was my only education course. So this math teacher didn't know what she was doing (laughs), but she knew the subject so that helped and then I became very creative and enjoyed the creativity, but did not like teaching religion. That was the hardest thing for me to teach and I think it was the hardest thing because this is Vatican II, religion books are going to be changed, so you didn't—it was in that period of time when folks weren't sure what to write in the religion books, weren't—they knew that the Catechism wasn't the answer, but they didn't know what was the answer and that was a very trying time.

So I taught math for seven years, started in fifth grade went to junior high, some of the eighth, was sent to Roseville, Michigan. I mean I had been in several places I started Indianapolis went to Bloomington, went to New Albany went to Roseville. And Roseville we had a good-sized school, there were trying to think if there were two of everything except junior high—we had one seventh and one eighth grade and our junior high students were on shared time with the public school. So we had like eighth graders a half a day and we

then they'd switch places and the seventh graders would come and we had them for a half a day and that was a great system as far as the expensive subjects like science and labs and those kinds of things were taught in the public school. We taught them math and religion and language arts, so that was a really nice system for two years I was—then whatever Proposal C or whatever that was called was going to co—went on the ballot and that was to continue the educational aid to private schools. Well, it got voted down which meant we lost all aid. So we lost our speech therapist, we had someone that worked with reading that would come to our building. We lost somebody else and I don't remember who that—what that was and then we lost the shared time we could not send our children any longer to public school, our junior high students. So we were faced with a monumental decision of what happens if the school closes? Will we remain and teach religion become full time religion, religious educators, which was a new thing DRE weren't—Directors of Religious Education weren't heard of at that point in time so it's like this is a whole new era and we're faced—there were eight of us or nine of us I'm not even sure anymore and we were faced with what are we going to do if this happens and we weren't sure whether the school would remain open or not and if it did remain open, it would become a school for the elite, for those who had the money to pay for this much increased tuition and our parish was one square mile in area and it had every economic bracket in it in that square mile and we had a good-sized majority who could not have afforded that increase in tuition.

We called here, the principal Sister Amy called to talk to Mother Marie about it and what should we do dah dah dah because those are still the days we were given and obedience and a little white envelope sent to us in the mail in spring and we really had nothing to say about where we were going, so we're asking her what are we going to do? This very wise woman who was the congregational leader through those turbulent years immediately before and after Vatican II and God bless her she was damned if she did and damned if she didn't, I mean didn't make any decision didn't make any difference what decisions she made, it wasn't gonna—so, but she was a very wise woman and she said to Amy, I am not there, so I don't know all the ins and outs of what's going on. I will honor whatever decision each of you makes individually, so if you elect to stay I will honor that if you elect to leave, I will honor that, that was a major piece. As it turned out and for me that was a decision I didn't think I would ever have to make because we were told where we were going to go and I'm sure the others felt that way, but I was the youngest in the crowd and I was in my 20's and it's like I don't know what I'm going to do and so God and I wrestled with that and wrestled with the justice piece because that's very important to me: Is this just to teach in a school for the wealthy when a major segment of the parish would be cut out of it and I couldn't do that in conscience I could not do that.

Now we know that I didn't enjoy teaching religion, but in Roseville those two years before any of this happened I began to enjoy teaching religion. All the creativity I had in other subject areas finally entered into the religion area and so I began to be extremely creative in my religion classes and that was enjoyable, the kids had fun, I had fun, we enjoyed it, it was a good thing and I thought, Well I think I could do this and the ironic part was I chose to stay and that began an 18 year experience of full-time religious education and I was no longer a math teacher. So—sure

MEL: May I ask you Sister about too, I'm very interested in how you approach teaching religion especially that crossroads that you're describing where you thought of yourself as someone who didn't enjoy teaching it to someone who now dedicated her life to teaching it

could we spend a couple more moments just thinking about that? If you if you remember those moments, or that time?

SDJ: Okay, I was doing—in addition to teaching in the school I also taught in the religious education segment of the parish and we did have—she wasn't called a DRE at that point, but for all intents and purposes we had a DRE who was a Sister and so almost all of us if not all of us taught religious education to our public school students that we had and I taught fifth and sixth graders and fifth grade was always—it was the first grade I ever taught, it was my all-time favorite grade, although I did enjoy my junior highers and that was pretty fun too, but I really enjoyed fifth graders because you could bribe them with most anything and they would learn, they would learn. So you know positive reinforcement or whatever you want to call it I mean educators had this wonderful description of it might go by any other name it's pure bribery, but it works (laughs). So fifth grade was sacraments, sixth grade was Old Testament.

So with sacraments, there are signs of every sacrament an outward sign, so I did it, fun things with water, fun things with oil, fun things with—like for confirmation, okay oil is the main outward sign, is to be anointed with oil and the Spirit will bring you to life so I popped popcorn without a lid on it in the classroom put a sheet down on the floor put the popcorn popper in the middle and not one of these air popper things, oil, and the oil heats the kernels begin to pop and they go and so the students got to eat the popcorn but it's—what does that tell you about the spirit? Every time they smell popcorn in the building after that, they knew I was teaching confirmation to fifth graders. They'd go, Sister you're teaching confirmation, we can smell it. I'd say yes that's exactly right.

So it was those kinds of things. So when we went into full time religious ed, I was the coordinator for fifth through—well, I didn't start out with fifth and sixth someone else did it for two years, but after those two years it was given to me so I had fifth through ninth grade that I coordinated for the religious ed program and it was important to do hands-on kinds of things with them so the, the intermediate grade teachers, fifth and sixth, and we had lay women who helped us teach because we had lots of kids and we had release time, so we taught around the lunch period taught a grade before lunch and a grade after lunch sent them back to their schools, but I had like five or six in each grade level that we worked with, we planned our lessons together and the name of the game was how creative can we be, how hands-on can we be with these students that they're not just reading this book, but they have something tangible to work with so in sixth grade Old Testament, we had the Exodus, the desert, manna, water, covenant all of that belonged with that experience. Well, we didn't have a desert, but we taught that in January, so our desert was full of snow and we would go out and roam outside in the desert and we would make a stop for manna, which was, I think it was some kind of bread that we came up with, we they have a stop for the Covenant, which was the church and the mountain, all of that. We had a stopped for water, which by this time we're in the building, which was hot chocolate.

So all of which had to transpire in 45 minutes, had to have kids that had boots on so they could—but this was Michigan they're used to wearing boots they're used to being in the snow so we went tramping through the snow, lots of fun, lots of fun.

MEL: I'm interested in the students in your classroom. Do you remember their experience of encountering religion and thinking about the sacraments or thinking about Exodus or—

SDJ: Well, their encounters would be—the thing that intrigued me were sixth graders after having been through fifth grade would walk into our classrooms because we had fifth graders first, they walk into our classroom and they could tell us what lesson we were teaching, like they knew, you taught confirmation because they could smell the popcorn, they would walk in and they smelled bread and it was like, you taught Eucharist today. Well yes, what do you remember about Eucharist? And they, they would tell us the whole story. What do you remember about confirmation? They could go—because it was hands-on for them, it it was tangible, it wasn't words just on a page. They knew the words, but it wasn't just words on the page. They wrote—the fifth grade, was it fifth or sixth grade, I can't remember, wrote the bishop, oh it had to be fifth grade because we talked about the bishop. All right we were lucky those—that was Cardinal Deardon, it was Bishop Gumbleton and Bishop Shaner. So we would write Bishop Gumbleton and talk about we don't know a bishop, we don't know what he looks or da da da or what he does, would you come and visit? So Bishop Gumbleton would come and visit their classes and he'd bring all his, his skull cap and his pectoral cross, he came with a little briefcase kind of thing, his Crosier, which he could screw together because his father had carved it for him and then he'd give it to the kids so they could feel it and touch it and be with it and so I remember one time I said Bishop Gumbleton, do you have your ring with you? He forgot it, it was on his dresser (laughs), so he told the kids you know I left my ring on my dresser, so if he couldn't come to us then we would go to him. We would get on the bus and visit him in the Cathedral or someplace where he was and so we could get the kids to him and that worked for us. They had a hands-on kind of thing.

Now with seventh and eighth graders I taught, I had seventh, eighth, and ninth grade, okay. I taught eighth graders, the ninth graders were the confirmation class, so I had another group that taught seventh grade, so I always had eight—I had two eighth grade classes, one on Monday night, one on Tuesday night, and I probably had a partner who also taught eighth grade I think we had two classes because we tried not to get them too big. So with the eighth graders I was into contemplative, that's what we would call it now, contemplative prayer. At that point it was quiet meditation, so at the beginning of the year I would start with them and say okay we're going to be quiet for three minutes, that's a long time. So I would do breathing exercises that I had learned from Jose Hobday, who was Native American sister and um, not from my community from another but, so I would incorporate those breathing exercises and then we would just be quiet and this is your time to be with God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, whomever you want to be with, dust and quiet and then I would bring them out of that, by the end of the year we could go 15 minutes of quiet. For me that was more important than the words on the page because they were developing a relationship, a personal relationship with their God.

So I asked the pastor to do bene—if he would come do benediction for us in the convent chapel, which is—was a very small chapel, but the kids would fit and they could sit on the floor and all that and I said, I want you to expose the Blessed Sacrament and I'll take it for 15 minutes at that point and he said, They're not going to be quiet. I said, They're going to be quiet. He said, Eighth graders are not going to be quiet. I said, Trust me, they will be quiet. Said, You're welcome to stay and join us for that part and then I—we'll finish benediction and you go, and he said, Okay. He was very skeptical. I—we got to the quiet part, I took them into the breathing exercises and we sat for 15 minutes in the presence of God. Brought them out, he closed the benediction, I took them back and dismissed them

and he came to my classroom and he said, I don't believe I experienced what you just did. I said, It's possible you it wouldn't have been possible the first day of class, but it's possible to do this with them because you just lay the expectation out there and they'll do it.

MEL: That's beautiful. That's beautiful.

SDJ: So thus began that career and I went back to Bloomington for two years and then I went to Barnabas, Saint Barnabas South side, Indianapolis and had the pastor that I needed in my life and that was John Sciarra. When I met John and he was always John to me. He was Father Sciarra to everybody else, he was John to me because he introduced himself to me as I'm John Sciarra. He didn't say I'm Father Sciarra, he always said that, not to me and I thought, Thank you John. His basic philosophy was I hire competent people, I want them to do their job so I allow you to do your job, I don't want any surprises I said, Fair enough. I had coffee every morning with John every morning. If I didn't go to the rectory, he came to my office. Is the coffee pot on? Yes it is, come on in. He had no surprise of us. What I learned from John was—I wanted to try something and I'm laying it out for him and I knew it was kind of skeptical, but he said go ahead and try it and I said but John what if it doesn't work? He said then you don't do it again. He said, but the only way you're going to know is if you try it. I said, oh okay.

And the other piece that I learned from him was you never read an anonymous letter. He said, If you receive a letter and it—he said the first thing you do is you open it up and look who it's from. If there is no signature tear it up, throw it away. If they cannot own their words, you do not need to own their words. So don't read it. I said, okay, do you receive anonymous letters John? He said, periodically and I haven't ever read them. I said, thank you because the anonymous letters can cause you great anxiety and great turmoil because the person can say anything they dang well please, but you had no way to respond because you don't know who it is. And he said, That's not right. So you throw it away, you tear it up, throw it away, don't read it and I said, okay.

MEL: Sister, I'm trying to picture, I can picture this wonderful relationship, were you teaching? I think, I would like—I want to understand what you were doing there in that parish.

SDJ: I was the director of religious education.

MEL: For the whole schools, for the whole school?

SDJ: Both the school, the religious education program, the religious education program in that period was as large as the school. We had as many children in that as there were in the school. So it was my role as the director religious education to coordinate the religion program for both entities. We did sacraments together so the sacraments were celebrated together. The first years I was there, we had a small church so one year the school would have the—we did it on a Saturday one year the school would have the first service and the religious ed would have the second service and the next year would flop, change. Okay. But then we got a new church, which was large enough to and John said we will have one first communion. I said okay. He said, You think you can pull that off? I said, We will pull it off. That's what you want, we will pull it off because John very seldom said, I want this and so we did. The kids were and it was the night of practice we didn't have like school and

religious ed separated the night of practice first-come first-serve, so we filled in the benches as they came, students and mom and dad, so there were three reserved seats for every family and the rest of the benches were for everybody else, so that's how we did it and I'd say to them, Now we're going to walk out backwards because we only had the students in that procession. Said, we will walk out backwards so that we can walk in forward and everyone will know where they are. Who is in front of you and who is behind you, well we had given them name cards, so they could just hand them to us when they came out. So we could make sure they were in the right order to get into those benches with their parents who were already in place, but, yeah, it was an organizational nightmare, but we did it and God bless John, he knew that we were all about creative creativity and that kind of thing and I went to him and I gave him this handful of balloons and he's ready to walk down the aisle and he said you want me to carry these up there? I said, uh-huh put them by your chair when you sit down they'll be right there. He said, Okay. I always said something to him before he walked down the aisle. I said, Well it's up to you now. He said, Well whatever will be will be and off he went with his balloons in his hand.

God bless the man. He never argued with me, he never said, I think that's a crazy idea. He did what I asked him, but there were no surprises. He knew, he knew. So, those kinds of things. That was when I I was there eight years and when I finished there I had the sense that God was calling me somewhere else. But I wasn't sure where that somewhere else was and what the somewhere else was, but so I asked for a sabbatical, went and told John I was leaving and cried my eyes out because I wanted to see him through his retirement and I I knew I couldn't. I knew I was feeling burned out feeling like there's no creativity left. I can't do this anymore da da da.

And so I left there and went on sabbatical and I kept thinking with the help of my spiritual director, knew I needed to look at spiritual direction and I kept saying, but that's what other people do. I go to my spiritual and I don't do direction that's what other people do and she said, I think that's what you're being called to. So, looked for spiritual direction training program was not accepted into the first one I applied for, which was probably a good thing it was a Jesuit one and so the only thing that was open first semester was a CPE course at Methodist Hospital and I said—two things I said I would I would never teach religion full-time. Okay I would never do CPE because I've seen my sisters come out bloody and I don't want any part of that. I mean they're just in shreds when they leave those. I didn't want that experience, I thought no I don't need that in my life and so I contacted Methodist Hospital because it's the only thing first semester and I needed to do something and I went to talk to the person over the process and he said you need to meet Frank Kiamba. I said, okay. He's doing the CPE unit that you would be in, so and he will interview you. So I interviewed with Frank Kiamba and I thought, I like this man. He was a Methodist minister. It's Methodist Hospital. I think he was Methodist and so I got accepted into that process and started it. Two weeks into the process, I have had it. It's like I can't do this. God you've got me here and you left. You are not here, you put me here, you left me high and dry, I want out. So that day and clinic in what IPG, which was our intensive personal agenda. Whenever and you could claim time. I claim time and I just poured my heart out.

Frank sat back in his chair, took his glasses off, and never took his eyes off of me for forty five minutes and never said a word. I learned what it meant to listen to someone because he listened to me. He didn't argue with me, he didn't fight with me, nothing, he listened. After I got it all out, he closed it—closed the day, he said, I won't be here tomorrow because

the the chaplains were going somewhere else for the day and that left the three of us on our floor and one chaplain to cover the whole hospital. Okay and Frank said to me, You don't need to come tomorrow. I looked at him and I said, Oh but I do. I will be here tomorrow. He said, You really don't need to come. I said, Frank, I need to come. So we arrived in the morning, knowing full well we're not going to see Frank, getting ready to go on the floor did our morning whatever change, getting the the information from the night chaplain what went on da da da da. Ready to go on the floor and here comes Frank with the excuse, I had to get something I forgot and I need to take it to wherever they were meeting and we all looked at him and said mm-hmm, okay Frank. So he left. On Saturday, I sat in my apartment and I rocked in the morning and I screamed and yelled at God and God would say, Are you finished? And I'd go, No. And I'd rock some more and I screamed and yelled at God some more. And are you finished? No. Screamed and yelled at God some more. By this time, I am exhausted. I am spent. Are you finished? Yes, I just so angry and God very gently and very quietly said, The crucified in you needs to meet the crucified in the other. And it was like, oh my, that's all there is to it. Yes, I'm there. The crucified in you meets the crucified in the other. Got it.

That was a complete and total change for me. I went back to Methodist Hospital, loved every moment, there after of CPE. Loved it. Cried the last day when we were going to leave, just—we cried because it had been so good. But Frank was an excellent supervisory for us, was extremely, extremely good for us. And so and then I did spiritual direction internship second semester, which was a Franciscan one and that was also a struggle. The piece that I am eternally grateful for is the covenant we made at the beginning of that with each other, there were eight or nine of us in this process that we would pray an hour every day. So that we would have material to bring to our practice sessions of spiritual direction with each other. If you didn't pray you wouldn't have anything to bring. So it was like okay and because of that, morning coffee was always with Jesus. First cup of coffee in my chair with the scriptures and for three months, I did that because that's what I had agreed to do. I left there, I still have morning coffee with Jesus and it's the piece that anchors me. That deep relationship that I saw in seventh grade that I wanted, I struggled with in my 20's, in my 30's, into my 40's, I could not get there. I journaled, but I mean my first journals covered years of time because I didn't journal regularly. I had a spiritual director they must have been terribly frustrated with me (laughs) because it was the same sob story, but that three-month experience, again, was a life turning event. Two life turning events in one year changed me for the rest of my life.

All right. I was in a retreat center for four years and from there I was interviewed and went to South Bend to Christ the King Parish in South Bend as the Director of Christian Formation, which meant that my main focus was I oversaw the religious ed program, but I didn't do it. I had cor—coordinators for that, coordinators for preschools so I didn't do that. My main focus was RCIA. I am the only woman on an all-male team. They are Holy Cross men, wonderful guys and there are—family is now five hours away, community is four hours away. There are none of my sister's up there. I know no one and I said yes to this. So I went to South Bend and I likened it to this is my desert experience and what I had come to in all those years of teaching the Exodus story is that the desert was not punishment, the desert was the time of building the relationship, of deepening the relationship of God with God's people. The people with God it was a mutual thing and so I would say to God, okay God, it's you and me, it's just you and me, here, in this desert of South Bend, five years and I said to God, When I am supposed to leave, it has to be as clear as a doorbell, a phone call, or a

letter and I had shared that with one of the counsel who came for visitation that I would know when it was time to leave because it would be that clear I had shared that with God and that was going to happen. She went, okay.

Well that same counselor the year—four years into South Bend called me to her office on Jubilee Day said, "I need to see you." I said, "Oh you're sending me to Assisi!" She said, "Well, could be." I said, "Oh, okay I'll come to your office at da da da da. Barb said, "I knew I'd catch if I told you it could be Assisi" I went to our office and she said, "We have decided as a council to—we received a letter about educating people in the Franciscan tradition and we want to know if you'd be willing to go to school for Franciscan education?" Oh my God I tried not to drool in the office (laughs). I tried and I said, "Okay, how long do I have to think about this?" She said, "Oh well, you could have a month." I said, "Okay."

So I talked to my friends and they said, Diane, you said yes didn't you? I said, No, not yet. Why not? I said, Because this is discernment. You need to talk to people and that's what I'm doing. Oh, okay. So I saw my spiritual director. I told her. She said, You said yes didn't you? I said, No I hadn't talked to you yet. She said, What are you waiting for? This is what you have been longing for, forever, why did—I said, because I'm being true to the discernment process. And she said, Okay, you've discerned. Write your letter, tell them, yes. So I told them, yes, they gave me three schools. I looked into three schools the only one that would offer a degree in Franciscan Studies was Saint Bonaventure University, the Franciscan Institute. So I applied at the Institute was accepted was the administrative assistant to Margaret Carney who was my advisor and got to do a couple of really fun creative projects for them and but my tuition was paid and the second year they—Anthony Carrozzo the director of the program outright gave me a scholarship so I didn't have to work as an administrative assistant. I could really concentrate on what I was doing, so I got two years of full-time education and it was the—we know I had six months of full-time Here I am and I'm thinking my God talk about the promise land. Here it is. Barb Pillar said to me, "Is that as—and she was the counselor who was—is that as clear as the doorbell, phone call, or a letter. I said, yes it is.

If I had not gone to South Bend, I would never have said yes to going to New York, which is now even further away from this circle of security. Now I had been to Roseville and I had been to Bloomington and I had been, but I had others with me. South Bend was the first time I was alone away from—that was a grand experience.

MEL: Meaning of the desert that you were describing.

SDJ: Yes, yes. So I could go to New York and that's—I had two years and Olean, Allegheny, New York in the middle of nowhere you have got to want to go there, seriously there is nothing there, you want to go there. Now, from that point you are an hour and fifteen minutes to an hour and a half away from Niagara Falls. My goal was to see Niagara in every season of the year. I saw Niagara in every season of the year two years in a row and soaked it in, just soaked it in and I crossed the border at one point and the person who's letting me into Canada says, And how long will you be here? And I said, As long as it takes me to drive River Road—I came over one bridge, drive River Road down to the other bridge and he said, Why would you want to do that? And I said, Because it's spring and it's beautiful and the trees are in full bloom and he said, Okay, enjoy your day ma'am.

So, after I had my degree it was like okay folks I got the degree what do you want me to do with it and they said we have no expectations. You and God will figure it out. I ended up at the common Franciscan Novitiate as co-director for four years, came back here, had a sabbatical, which meant in that sabbatical I moved my mother from condo to an independent living situation, which she chose. She chose to sell the car, she chose to close the conduct, put it on the market Diane, and moved to independent living, my independent mother right. My father died in January 2000, he had Alzheimer's. I graduated in May of 2000 and when Mom got off the plane, I said, Dad's here. And she said, He is? And I said, This is the only way he could be here. So he's here. And I gave the graduate address for commencement and I went running back to Margaret Carney's office when they told me I was it and I wasn't allowed to tell anybody, I, because you had to, you had to audition for this talk. You had to actually give it ahead of time to this committee and so they told me I was the one and I said, Can I at least tell Margaret because by this time Margaret is the head of the Institute. They said, Yes you can tell Margaret. So I went running over to Margaret and I said, Margaret, I'm giving the talk, the Institute is going to be represented. Because we were—the Institute is the smallest of the schools at Bonnis. I said, We're going to be represented, ah she was ecstatic.

MEL: Do you remember the theme of the talk that you gave?

SDJ: Oh, I don't, I have it somewhere. I know my desire was to talk about the excellence of Bonnis, the responsibility of a graduate to carry on that excellence and refer to many departments, none of which was I connected to, but they had won a Pulitzer, the journal—somebody from the journalism department, I mean had graduated from the School of Journalism, a Pul—Pulitzer. The fine arts and all of the plays and the programs that were there, I was an usher there, free for all of those, it was great fun. So I pulled in many departments and Margaret said, I want you to know that every one of those as of the departments who were sitting on that stage as you delivered that address because they're behind you. She said, They sat up straighter because you singled them out and I said, Well it's true, is it not? So that was part of it. That probably I did the dignity of the human person which is scotus digataitas peace, so that was probably part of that.

So that was okay, I'm here after the common novitiate, I'm here, I was teaching adjunct at Marian, teaching the Franciscan person course having a wonderful time and became Director of Ongoing Formation here through a whole discernment process because I was up for leadership and part of that discernment as I could see who was going to go into leadership, I knew that the Director of Ongoing Formation was now in leadership this office needs somebody who knows something and I said to several people in that the whole discernment process, I think I'd be better suited here than here, I can do more good for the community here than I can there and they looked at me and they said you're right you can, we want you there. So that's that was another wrestling match with God, four o'clock in the morning and God always wins so it doesn't take God near as long as it used to, to win, I give up much quicker now.

But then the council asked me if I would do because Director of Ongoing Formation was part-time, so could teach it Marian. Then they said would you be our formator also and then they said we know it means you have to let go of Marian. You cannot do Marian and that. I said, no I can. They said we know that, but we need you as our formator. I said, Well let me think about it. Okay, could you do it in about two weeks. Okay, okay. So I knew what I was

going to say, if they asked, I'm going to say yes. So I said yes and let go of Marian. I am still teaching in another way. So that's kind of, I don't know I think I got through all of these pieces.

MEL: Sister, listening to your beautiful life story I'm struck by, I don't know if you would use the word tension between consistency or constancy and change in your life of the constancy of your community, but yet embracing the change that either comes as a little, it sounds like a little white envelope in the beginning and then later the doorbell that you have. I wonder if you thought, I wonder, I just wonder if you've thought about your life in terms of that, you've brought up independence, but yet there's you have to embrace change and you have to listen to others, I just wondered what you were thinking?

SDJ: The discernment is an ongoing process. It's not for this thing only it's what you do when you get up in the morning, you live discernment. God what are you calling me to today? What do you want of me today? Am I where you want me to be? My journal is, has that and not near as often, but has that question posed many times and every time it has been, you are exactly where I want you to be. You are where I need you to be. There has been change, some changes have been catastrophic, some changes have been very easy, some changes are extremely challenging, others are what you do every day, but God's in the center of it. God is the constant. Even community is not a constant, but God is a constant. God is with me no matter where I am. If I'm in Olean, New York, if I'm in Wenonah, Minnesota, which is where I went from New York, I went to Minnesota, which was even further away. It took 11 hours to drive from Wenonah to Cincinnati, which is where my mom was and 10 hours to get here. My, the closest community was Indianapolis, which took 9 hours to get to. Then we moved to Joliet, which was a little easier wasn't quite as far, we moved the whole novitiate from Wenonah to Joliet. So that was a huge change without a lot of help from leadership. I mean it basically fell to Joanne and I to do.

MEL: But God was there. God was there.

SDJ: That was the constant for both of us and with that experience of moving, we were both torn over it and we got to Joliet and we have two weeks to get ready before the novices would arrive and we are inundated with boxes. I mean we just had boxes everywhere. We have no internet, we have no copy machine, we have, I mean we're just going through it and the first day we got moved, we sat down in our community room and we're going to pray together and we looked at each other and said, "Oh my God." That was basically our prayer that night, "Oh my god." Okay the next day we came together and prayed together and Joanne broke down. Okay, Joanne, we'll be fine, this is what we're going to do, we're going to handle this and this and this today, okay, okay that's all we got to get done today. This and this and this. If we happen to get something else done, it's a cherry on top of this cake. Okay? Okay. So, we'd go about doing this, next morning, we'd come together and pray. I broke down. Joanne would go, Okay Diane, we're going to do this, I mean we were each other's cheerleader for two weeks. We should never have accepted novices, when we did, we should have just said, They got to come the week or the next week, or the week after that. Joanne and I need a break. But we didn't.

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MEL: Oh Sister, if you don't mind, I have one more question.

SDJ: Oh that's fine.

MEL: I wonder if you could talk or it's not really a question, but if you could just reflect on, it's a big question, how your prayer life has changed over time?

SDJ: Oh my God.

MEL: It's probably too big, so however you want to reflect on that.

SDJ: Oh my God. It is, God is very real to me. There was a time God was kind of out there. God is right here. I dwell in God's heart and God dwells in my heart. I know that, I have absolutely no doubt about that. I know that God sees me through the muck and the mire and celebrates with me on the mountaintop and everything in between. I am much more tuned into God during the day. Aware of the little miracles that are right in front of us, the struggles that I see in others and say, God take care of da da and know that I don't have to explain it. God does, God knows what we need and gives us exactly what we need and no more and not sooner than we need it. I know that (laughs). It took me a while to figure that out, but I learned it. God taught me well that I will always have what I need, when I need it. Not before I need it and that was true of my cancer. I am a cancer survivor, my first year in the novitiate, I am in the process of moving from New York to Minnesota and I am diagnosed with cancer. Okay, I got to Minnesota the stuff is there I've had a biopsy, a lumpectomy, but couldn't lift anything, so Joanna is lifting the boxes and I'm undoing them and the call came from my oncology surgeon saying this is not the way I want to do it. I want you in my office, but you're in Minnesota and he gave me the diagnosis. I just lost it, I just lost it. Joanne came in, I hung up the phone, Joanne came in and said, What do you need? I said, I don't know. Okay. I got a grip. Took me an hour, but I got a grip on myself and said, Diane get a grip, life is going to go on. We're going to unpack. Called Joanna, got Joanne back up there and said, we're unpacking. I have to see them, I was going back to Minnesota, I was flying back, I had already driven there, so I'm flying back and I said, We have to have the beginning of this together before I leave and she said, Yeah we do because I have to know what we're going to do da da da dad. So we planned orientation for the novices, did, got coverage for classes that I would be teaching, got some coverage for that with an open time frame because we said we didn't know because we didn't know what was going to happen. So we lined it all up, I got unpacked and flew back, went to the

oncology surgeon and plastic surgeon for reconstruction, talked about that, got it scheduled. It's a month off, it will be September 15th. And I looked at my oncology surgeon and I'm going what—he said, Stop we've already done the lumpectomy. I got the tumors, he said. So we're okay, September 15. I said okay, recovery, what kind of recovery? He said, I will not let you go back for a month, I said okay. Said, so plan on a month. I said okay. He said, but I don't want you killing yourself when you go back, you're still going to have to. And we don't know if you're going to have to have chemo on any of that. I said, okay.

So, walked out of the office called Joanne. I mean this is still the same day I flew in, we've done all of this. Got on the phone and said, Joanne, I'll be there for orientation. She said, Oh praise God. I said, We have dates. The surgery's September 15th and I'll be back October 15th. It's a month. She said, okay so that's the coverage we need is for that month. She said all right, we can do this. I said, we can do this. We will do this. Then ended up having to have chemo, four rounds of it and I'm saying to God, What is this shit, really, what is this shit and God's going Diane, you're going to make a decision for life, not for death for life. Put your hand in mine and we'll walk through the fire.

A retreat several years earlier there was this wall of fire that I was supposed to walk through and I didn't want to and God is saying you're going with me through this fire and when we got through the wall of fire there is a bridge, fire all around, but not that bridge. And laid out on the bridge is a picnic and I go, Tell me we are not. Oh yeah, we are. We're going to have a picnic right here, so we did and then we walked down. So I'm facing chemo the first day I'm going to go and I'm going I don't want this shit, this is the one thing I said I didn't want and I then—Jesus, God is saying, take my hand and we're going to walk through the fire because you're choosing life, no you're choosing life, even though there's poison going in that's going to kill. You are choosing life. And so we did, so we did.

God has given me ahead of time images that later played out in my life and it's never only been for me. It has always been for someone else, someone I'm directing, someone I'm listening to, another cancer survivor. So, it my relationship with God has spiraled deeper and deeper, firmer and firmer. I tease my spiritual director about my own personal song of songs. And she said, Oh indeed, your journal is your song of songs. Because I go, you know more song of songs. God is telling me, God loves me. And she goes, in deed, God does love you. I know that beyond a shadow of a doubt. The thing I also know is, which our current administration, doesn't seem to know yet, is that okay we're in a time of transition and decisions and what's our future and God has it. And God will show it to us and God will take care of us and I know that and I'm not concerned about that future. I don't know what it is. When I need to know, God will tell us.

MEL: Thank you so much Sister. Thank you so much for sharing.

SDJ: You're welcome.