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<u>INFORMATION SHEET</u>			
INTERVIEWER:	Steven J. Haggard		
PROJECT:	East Baltimore Oral History		
DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW:	1997.11.26 1997.12. 2 1997.12.17	PLACE(S) OF INTERVIEW:	St. Wenceslaus Church 2111 Ashland Ave.

<u>INFORMANT'S BIOGRAPHICAL DATA</u>			
NAME:	McLoughlin, John (Rev., C.Ss.R.)		BOARD: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ADDRESS:	2111 Ashland Ave.		RENT: <input type="checkbox"/>
TODAY'S DATE:	1997.12. 2	PHONE NUMBER:	OWN: <input type="checkbox"/>
DATE OF BIRTH:	1957.11.20	PLACE OF BIRTH:	Brooklyn, NY

RELIGION:	Roman Catholic		
HOUSE OF WORSHIP:	St. Wenceslaus		
MEMBERSHIPS: (POLITICAL, PROFESSIONAL, SOCIAL, HOBBY, ETC.) LIST			YEARS:
Chaplain – Baltimore City Police			
Chaplain – Ancient Order of Hibernians, Maryland			
hobbies – music, marathon running			

SCHOOLING AND/OR OTHER TRAINING: LIST	YEARS:
Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Diocese of Brooklyn, NY	1963-1970
St. Mary's Seminary College (Prep., C.Ss.R.), North-East, PA	1970-1974
St. Alphonsus' College, Suffield, CT	1974-1978
Washington Theological Union, DC	1990-1992

OCCUPATIONS: (EMPLOYMENT, VOLUNTEER OR MILITARY SERVICE) LIST	YEARS:
High School Teacher	198 -1989
Ministry – Dominica, Commonwealth Caribbean	1989-1992
Ordained Ministry – Dominica, Commonwealth Caribbean	1992-1994
Associate Pastor – St. Wenceslaus, Archdiocese of Baltimore	1994-present

PARENTS:	
MOTHER'S	
NAME: Cooney	DATE OF BIRTH: 1931
FATHER'S	
NAME: McLoughlin	DATE OF BIRTH:
SIBLINGS:	
LIST	DATES OF BIRTH:
Rosemary (age 39, 1 daughter, Nanuet, NY)	
Peggy (age 37, 3 children, NJ)	
Susan (age 34, Staten Island, NY)	
Thomas (age 32, Brooklyn, NY)	

BACKGROUND:

The Interviewer's name is Stephen J. Haggard. He is a student at the University of Baltimore. This Oral History Assignment is for course History 496, which is the Seminar in Public History. The instructor of the course is Dr. Jessica Elfenbein. Three separate interviews were conducted with Father John McLoughlin, a priest at St. Wenceslaus Church. The church is located at 2111 Ashland Avenue, in East Baltimore, Maryland. The interviews took place at the church on November 26, December 2, and December 17, 1997.

INTERVIEWER: Today is Wednesday, November 26, 1997, I am the interviewer. My name is Steve Haggard.

FATHER JOHN: My name is Father John McLoughlin, I am the interviewee.

INTERVIEWER: All right, Father John, first of all can you tell me what your position is here at St. Wenceslaus and how long have you been in Baltimore?

FATHER JOHN: I've been in Baltimore now four and a half years. I'm the Associate Pastor of St. Wenceslaus Roman Catholic Church, located at 2111 Ashland Avenue, here in Baltimore. As I said, I've been here about four and a half years and living right here in the community. I live here 24 hours a day and the church and the rectory are located right within the community. In many different denominations the pastor who works in the church might be in the community and live out in the suburbs, but I live here in the community 24 hours a day.

INTERVIEWER: So, can you kind of go over a brief autobiography of yourself, where you are from and what brought you here to Baltimore, four and a half years ago?

FATHER JOHN: I was born in Brooklyn, New York. November 20, 1957, I went to school in New York while I was growing up, I had the inclination that I would like to be certain ministry of the Roman Catholic Priesthood so I went to seminary in Pennsylvania, college in Connecticut and I went to graduate school in New York and in Washington getting a degree in pastoral counseling and then a masters and then I was ordained a priest in 1992. I've been in the ministry now about five and a half years. I spent my first two and a half years pre-ministry and ministry down in a third world country called Dominica in the lower West Indies, and at the time I thought I was going to be there for a longer period of time, but what had happened was my father who was still living at the time in Brooklyn, came down with cancer so I asked my superiors if I could come up to a regional area so I could go off and minister to him and my mother. And at the time they were looking for an associate pastor in an African American community in Baltimore and asked me if I would be willing to serve in that role. I agreed to it knowing that New York was only three to three and a half hours from Baltimore. And I've been here and Father Mike Sergi and I came together as a team and we've been here together four and a half years and we continue to work in the community.

INTERVIEWER: So you're both still here now.

FATHER JOHN: Yes, we are both here. Both Father Mike and I am here and we have Brother Scott Bailey, a seminary student who has been with us for a year and a half and he will be ordained a priest this upcoming May of 1998, so the three of us basically are doing community work in the neighborhood.

INTERVIEWER: So you just hit the big 4-0 last week.

FATHER JOHN: Hit the big 40 last week.

INTERVIEWER: Congratulations.

FATHER JOHN: That's what I say, I may be 40 pretending I'm 16, as I still continue to run in the neighborhood and do things in the neighborhood, it bothered me. . . no, I'll still pretend that I'm young.

INTERVIEWER: So what did you do in Dominica then? What were part of your duties?

FATHER JOHN: Well, the main reason I was in the third world country against it was ministry work in terms of development with people and Roman Catholic teachings. But I also taught in one of the schools there, a girls Catholic School. I did some prison ministry work down there working in a local prison and I did a lot of outreach work in terms of reeducating and the people of Dominica in their villages where we had moved. It was very susceptible to eruption like in Montserrat, that kind of situation. And also, very susceptible to hurricanes and many times the village got destroyed and we had to do relief work in terms of bringing food and supplies to people and then basically, working with people, developing educational systems and bring them along in their Christian faith.

INTERVIEWER: Now, was that sponsored by the U.S. government and the Roman Catholic Church?

FATHER JOHN: It was sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church, yes, I belong to an order of Redemptorist Fathers and our ministry, we are from the Baltimore province, and our ministry extends from Boston to Florida on the East Coast as far as Ohio and then we cover the Caribbean also, Puerto Rico, St. Lucia and St. Croix so when I first was ordained or required ordainment based on my studies, I have volunteered to go down there to work and I really wanted to work in a third world situation and I volunteered to go down there and I stayed down there until I came to Baltimore.

INTERVIEWER: And you probably still stayed there had your Dad not gotten sick?

FATHER JOHN: Probably, but I was also burning out myself too. I had a parasite and my health wasn't the best either, you probably know from your experience in the military, a lot of things can happen to you. I was, had bouts of diarrhea and cholera and I would you know, so it was at that point that they gave me two and a half years it was time to go home for a while and regenerate myself. But I do hope to go back down there again.

INTERVIEWER: Now, when the church sends you somewhere or you volunteer to go somewhere, is there a set time like a tour of duty where you would spend in one place and then move on to another Place to give someone else a chance.

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, what they do is basically they try to look at your talents and also the people there, you know the church doesn't want to send someone who doesn't want to be there. I mean there are situations that if you send someone to a position they do not want to be in they can become a very depressed person or they could become very angry and it's not going to help people. So, what they do in our situation is our superiors talk to us and ask us, you know, would you be willing to serve in such a such place. Most times its a five year commitment and unless for illnesses or whatever, and then usually after about five years they say "well, would you like to stay on or would you like to move somewhere else?" The idea is then sometimes people get involved with something, they get so involved that they forget the bigger picture or visa versa, they could be in a situation where they think they are doing well, but then the people they are working with might not in particular like their type of leadership or their style of ministry. So, they are giving you an option. Every two years our regional superiors would come down and they will give an evaluation they would meet with parishioners, and with myself and the other priest not be in the room, and people would give an evaluation of how things were going and we would sit down with the superiors and give our evaluation and then hopefully they would be on the same page, you know. So it sort of gives people the opportunity to evaluate us and then we can evaluate the situations.

INTERVIEWER: So, when you are getting evaluated, is this an annual occurrence?

FATHER JOHN: Yes, it's bi-annual, every two years or so, because we are a small order and we belong to the Redemptorist Fathers. We have about 60 places that we have to take place of on the East Coast and then on the Caribbean and then of course, both locations being down, we don't have any more priests that are top heavy with all the priests so we are starting to cut back places and try to look for good use of resources and then we show that is why a lot of evaluations are done saying well, where can we combine the efforts so we don't recreate the wheel again.

INTERVIEWER: So, there is a priest shortage?

FATHER JOHN: Yes, very much so. If you look at statistics, since probably the mid 60's the numbers have been going down. My particular order of the Redemptorists in the Baltimore Province, they are projecting by the Year 2000 there will only be 70 of us under the age of 70 in our entire ministry. So, I mean we have to look at that realistically. In one way, even as a priest, the only way the church is going to make it, we are trying to get people to take a more active role in the church. People in Baltimore have to make those decisions. In terms of parents in the priesthood or ordaining women that is a whole another theological issue.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, I think obviously there is a shortage, but I think at least more people are now realizing that and people are worried about burn out and there isn't any situation, especially when you are dealing with a lot of people with personal issues and intense situations and there is the possibility of burn out, so we try and keep a close eye on that.

INTERVIEWER: So, once you become a priest, you are a priest for life?

FATHER JOHN: Right. Once you are ordained a priest, you are basically, if you want to call that, a career, or vocation. Yes, that is your life. Unless at one point in your life you decide that you are tired and that God called you and you decide to get married or something then you have to go through a process where you are released from your vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. And that has to be a written script coming from the church. But for the most part, yeah, once you are ordained that is why we have this long process of studying and also psychological testing and evaluations because it is a commitment, you know, and they try and make it so that it is a free commitment. But I mean, I have friends in the priesthood who have left the active ministry priesthood because somewhere along the line they have been disillusioned or they fall in love, and that is a very rare situation so, but yeah, basically. And the order I belong to, we do missionary work. So, one of our themes or our motto is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the poor and most abandoned. So we work out of our missionary motif so in the third world countries where people are abandoned, not only spiritually but also poverty. And, right now I think we have always been concentrated on a lot of the city parishes. But now as we are getting into the interview, you can see the situation we are getting into in the inner city of Baltimore. I would say this is the type of missionary project we are in now because of the poverty, the violence, lack of family structures. So I think I often talk about poverty, and I can talk about poverty as a valuable experience. When I was in Dominica, there was a real poverty, but there wasn't a sense of hopelessness. People were poor, but they shared with one another. I tried to explain this one time in a class that I saw poverty down there, people who were malnourished, and people who were sick, but I tell you they weren't greedy, nor did they abuse, you know, the government programs, nor did they think they were hopeless. They were always grateful for what they had where they see sometimes in the United States probably that some people are in that position, or they end up in that position, because of life choices. I'm not demeaning anyone, I'm not making any choices, but I think there is a distinction between someone who is born into a situation of poverty and then somebody who has ended up there, the person may be a drug user, or whatever and end up using crack or what have you. So I would say there are different types of poverty. So, our Order, when we minister we try looking to situations where we can feel that we can make a positive influence and try to maybe break the cycle of poverty.

INTERVIEWER: How many years of actual study did you have to go through before you got ordained, because you said you didn't get in until 1992.

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, what had happened was that, that is an interesting question. At the time, I went to a high school seminary, which is just a regular high school. I went to our college seminary and got a B.A. then went to major seminary for my first Master's and about a year before I worked with [inaudible] I left. I had come to a conclusion that I wasn't sure I was ready to make the commitment itself I felt that I needed to look at other things, so what I did was, I took a leave of absence and I pursued other things. I thought I was only going to be out for a year, but I was out for about six years. I taught high school, in an inner city Catholic High School in Brooklyn, New York and I bartended on the side and did some construction work and it kind of was a finding period for myself just to. I dated, because when I was in high school seminary, college seminary we didn't date. We were an all male situation. So, it was kind of a discovery period for myself, you know am I being called to this ministry, and I being called to the Catholic priesthood, let me see. I thought, well if I was going to fall in love, I would have fallen in love. So, then after six years I decided I wanted to go back, so I went back and started a second degree and got a second master's degree in two years and was ordained in 1992 Even though, really I started the process back in 1972, being in high school, but in and out periods there so. . .

INTERVIEWER: So that 1984 to 1990 period was your. . .

FATHER JOHN: Right, kind of feeling out period, time to discover myself I wanted to do something for myself, there was that. It was interesting, I guess because when I went away to the high school seminary I went away with a lot of friends of mine and most of them now are married or single, you know they didn't go on to the priesthood, but that was the idea, you know, we were young and we went away and it was a boarding school, we played a lot of sports and had a great time, it was typical, you know like hangin' out with the guys kind of thing and then, as you go along, people made decisions. So, I kind of went along and wasn't until I said like until a year before would have been my ordination, I really need to look at this, so I opted to take a year out which turned out to be six years, but I said, I just wanted to make sure that this was what I really wanted to do with my life.

INTERVIEWER: So, do you have brothers and sisters too?

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, let me think now, yeah. I have three sisters and a brother. They are all younger than I am. My sister is 39. I'm 40. My sister is married and living in Nanuette, New York. She has a little girl. I have a sister her name is Rosemary. I have a sister Peggy, she is 37, she has three children she lives in New Jersey. I have a sister Susan who is 34 and she lives in Staten Island, New York, married one child and one on the way. And I have a brother who is 32, Thomas, he is the youngest and he lives in Brooklyn, New York. He is married.

INTERVIEWER: Now, did they support you in your decision when you were going through all of this and now that you have come out.

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, yeah, well it is an interesting thing, because growing up I was the oldest, and like I said, I went into our high school seminary at age 13 in Pennsylvania, so from 13 to about 23 I lived away from home so I never really saw them and you know in the prime of years growing up or whatever, maybe on vacations and stuff. And, when I left, you know they were very supportive, I mean everybody chooses their lifestyles and now that I've been ordained, its been good. They support me, it's been good, it's been nice to be able to celebrate sacraments with my nieces and nephews, baptizing, and I actually was at my brother's and my sister's weddings. They have been very supportive, I guess that they have they been in contact with me when I was living in Dominica, often they would collect clothing and food for me.

INTERVIEWER: Are they worried about you living here in East Baltimore?

FATHER JOHN: Right. They have been very good like that they are conscious of you know, the situation. They worry about my situation in Baltimore, they came down to visit one time and they heard all these gunshots, and I didn't even flinch, so I said well, that's just you know kind of the norm around here. And then they are very supportive. They pray a lot for me.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, another question about the priesthood, so is there like a chain of command with regard to your superiors?

FATHER JOHN: He lives in New York and he has a council, two men who are on his council with him. And basically, they make corporate decisions for us in collaboration with us. They know that we have like I said 60 places on the Eastern Seaboard that we have to maintain. All of these boards have been maintained for many years so what they did is they make in corroboration with us, they make appointments and ask us where we would like to serve and call it a chain of command. Yeah but collaboration there, you know we have, they do all the finances for us in terms of our economics and maintaining places, they do all. They do all the administration work. We do it on a local area where each individual parish, but for the whole part. They have the bigger picture, so they are constantly looking at the bigger picture so we don't get too myopic and you know, just small pictures. They keep reminding us. And then over them is what we call our Superior General who lives in Rome. In the world right now, there are 6,000 Redemptorists. We are in every continent and all around the world and you know, with that vision again, it is tried to look at manpower and kind of keep it so that maintaining places in Africa or in Brazil, or multicultural and many languages, but on a local level, the people in Brooklyn would be the decision makers.

INTERVIEWER: How is your mission different from like the parish priests that I had when I was a kid growing up and going to church every Sunday?

FATHER JOHN: If you lived in a diocesan parish, most likely the priest who was assigned to the parish was there for a long period of time. Most, some priests can be there from 10, 20, 30 years they are ordained to the diocese. So, if a man goes into the seminary and he says he is from the diocese of Baltimore, let's say he grew up in Baltimore and ended up in this, you know, seminary then when he was ordained, he could only be stationed in Baltimore. I'm a "religious," I belong to a religious Order so, which is a Missionary Order. So, even though I grew up in New York in Brooklyn, does not necessarily mean that I am ordained through the diocese of Brooklyn, I was ordained for the Redemptorists. So the Redemptorists, I take a vow for them and then they would make a decision where they would send me and then they would inform a Bishop. Like when I came here to Baltimore four and a half years ago, they informed the Bishop that I would come here and minister me in St. Wenceslaus. And then with his approval, and of course he checked my background to make sure that I wasn't a psycho or anything and they cured my cholera, and he then would sign off and invite me into his diocese. But, like I said with being a member of a member of a religious order, like I said I was in Dominica, I've been in Baltimore, I could be, you know a year from now, I could be in Boston or I could be back down in the West Indies again, or whatever you know. I'm not per say, signed to a particular area. Whereas, a lot of times when someone is ordained through a diocese, they might be in a particular parish, or you know five years or twenty years and you know, sometimes that works out good, sometimes it doesn't work out because my personal opinion is that sometimes you know a person goes to a place and establishes a little kingdom there, and what happens is that I have found in my own experience, you know it becomes the Father's parish and not the people's parish. And then on the other hand, you might have someone that you put in there and then after awhile maybe people feel it is not the right person and you know, he doesn't want to leave. S

INTERVIEWER: I think I had the same priest for 17 years, I remember going to the same church. And he would do less and less masses as he grew older then the younger priest, but I was an alter boy for at least 10 plus years it seemed.

FATHER JOHN: Right.

INTERVIEWER: And he would like, I don't know if there is a promotion, like there is a Monsignor but he never. . what you wonder, is that is his choice to not leave or did they just never offer him a higher position?

FATHER JOHN: Could be, you know, there is politics in the church. With some priests, their goal is to become a Bishop somewhere. Now, that is not my goal, I mean the region, there are some diocesan priest. That to them is a sign of they are moving up in the world, or whatever. I mean, the majority of priests I think really see it as a vocation and as "I'm here to do my work," but I think ultimately some people, you know they start the power and obviously we need people in those kinds of roles, so you would hope that you know, the best people are chosen to be leaders of diocese, like our own Bishop John Leper, who is the urban vicar here in Baltimore for over ten years, who is African American. He last year, was made bishop of his own diocese down in Northern Florida. Pensacola-Tallahassee. Now here is a man which was Baltimore's loss, but Florida's gain because the man was a very good administrator very pastoral man for ten years he worked in the inner city here in Baltimore. You know with the African American community and he did many things to get the church moving in the inner city and you know, because of his ministerial and administration skills the church had you know the bishop in Rome and under the pope's guidance. Helped to redeem, you know this man should be in the a position where he has to make more decisions or be a shepherd for a great amount of people. So now he is a bishop down in Florida.

INTERVIEWER: Now, he could have turned down the position if he wanted.

FATHER JOHN: He could have, and he probably did. I mean, if they offered him, but I think they encouraged him saying, You know, like this is, we need you here.

INTERVIEWER: The bigger picture.

FATHER JOHN: Again, right. The bigger picture, because like I said the particular bishop that was down there had passed away and there hadn't been a bishop for over a year so it wasn't like they just picked him out of the, you know there was a process where, and he was asked, he was the frontrunner, and after much deliberation they asked him and he said he wouldn't, but then they asked him again. So, I don't know if you would look at it like promotion, but it is something that a person praying about it says, we I, I need to look at the bigger picture, if I'm going to be helping people that is where I need to go and like I said it was Baltimore's loss was Florida's gain. Same thing with our present Cardinal here in Baltimore, I believe he came from Pennsylvania, Harrisburg. He was a bishop in Harrisburg and then they were looking for a Archbishop or Cardinal for Baltimore there was a selection committee out of Rome, some big wigs over there sat down in collaboration with the Pope and handed in and deliberated and prayed over it and do investigations and then they came up "well we feel this would be the best man to fill this role" so they appointed Cardinal Archbishop of Baltimore.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, what is his name?

FATHER JOHN: William Keeler.

INTERVIEWER: Now, all Catholic priests still come under the Vatican is

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, the pope, the whole Catholic Church.

INTERVIEWER: No matter what order you belong to.

FATHER JOHN: Right, there are different religious orders for example, the San Franciscans, Jesuits, Redemptors, missionary. There are probably hundreds of missionary orders I mean religious orders of men and women. The sisters are the same thing. There are many like just here in Baltimore we have the School Sisters of Notre Dame, we have the Sisters of Providence, Mercy Sisters, I mean there are many, many groups of religious orders, but ultimately we have our local superiors, but if your looking into the bigger picture it would be under the Vatican.

INTERVIEWER: Now, looking at the Pope as a layman, I see some of the things he does seem really moderate in moving to the 21st century, and then there are other things obviously that he is not willing to budge on. Obviously, the abortion issue, the marrying of priests, the women, you know, do priests get together and kind of discuss these issues?

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, I think we are all affected by issues, I know, I do a lot of reading and I know here in Baltimore we get together every couple of months, local priests and we look at an issue like just recently there was a question about issues you know, what would we do for marriage practices like some parish priests will make couples come in for six or seven classes, you know counseling to make sure they are really prepared and know what they are getting into, so other priests might only do two classes. So we got together and we looked at different issues and you are right, I think people are always asking questions, I mean there is a tradition in the church for 2000 years and there are certain issues that the pope is never going to budge on, I mean we believe that abortion is murder and you know, people say well you have to look at the circumstances, but I think we have to look at it as a moral issue. The issue of let's say, a lot of different moral issues, same sex marriages for instance, it's always been our tradition that we would not, uphold that. And that is something that some people might personally question but they have to preach what the tradition of the church is and that is.

INTERVIEWER: Or get out of the priesthood.

FATHER JOHN: Right, I mean they have to be held accountable for what they say, I mean, you know contrary, do people want to know what the doctrine of the church is. I can give you an example, let's say, hypothetical situation. Let's say a young woman comes into me and says to me, you know, "I'm pregnant. I'm 16 years old, I'm pregnant. I'm probably going to have an abortion. Is it okay?" Hypothetical situation. Well, I would say, well what would you think, I mean, I'm just talking my point of view, I would say, what would you think? And talk with her as well. And again, I've had this, this experience both as priest and as a high school teacher, I'm looking back on my high school teaching day when I wasn't a priest. And I often would, my first thing was I would say to the person, well what are your feelings about it. A lot of times people will go back and forth and I would say ultimately your going to have to make your decision, I would say, these are your options. , if you decide to keep the child, the Catholic Church is willing to support you in that. If you want to put the child up for adoption.. to get back to situation, boyfriend, parents will kill her if they find out she is pregnant, what is she to do? My question to her is well, ultimately you have to make your own choices, you know, and what I would do is say well how do you feel about it. Now, it's presumed that she is a Christian and she says, well what does God think? I say, well, I would feel that at least the church's tradition is that we believe an unborn child is a living child and that it is a, and if you are going to have an abortion that you are killing the child. And will tell you this, this is what the church teaches, now whether you agree to that or not, I'm not going to argue with you I'm just going to inform you and then I would tell her what her options would be. If you were to said that you were going to need help to bring this child to the world, there are many organizations among the Catholic church like Birth Right that would take care of you and help you with this child. Another option would be putting the child up for adoption, another option would be if you were to bring your parents, I would go with you to your parents and talk about the situation, but ultimately I would say that you would, I would walk with you and hope you come to an informed decision, but I'm not going to tell you what to do. All I can do is inform you, you asked me what the Church's stance is and what I believe, I would share that with her, and then. I've done that as a teacher, as a priest and then I've also, you know different cases where women have, young girls that have had the child. There have been cases where they have had an abortion. But I also have been there to pick them up after that. I mean, I do believe it happens they call post abortion syndrome trauma. And people play it down, but I've seen it where it might not happen right away but maybe years down the line the person will come in and say "I had an abortion 10 years ago and I can't get over it, what can I do?" Well there are things in the church ministries like Project Rachel that is a support group for people who are experiencing abortion and they need that support that they can be healed and forgiven and forgiven,

so the church is not planting down people with an iron fist. The church is trying to be compassionate and realize that we are all broken people, we all sometimes make wrong choices. I'm not here to condemn anyone, I'm not here to tell what to do but what I am called to do as priest is to teach the word of God. If she asks me what the Church is teaching, I cannot say, well, the Church teaches this, but you don't really have to believe that. So I think, that is just one example, another example might be in terms of capital punishment which is very interesting. The church has never come out officially and said that it was wrong. It is getting close now because and I think if you look at it across the board, you know you are going to see killing an unborn child as wrong then if you are going to execute someone, then morally it has to be wrong. Personally, I would hold that and a lot of people challenge me that I have brothers, I have a brother who is a police officer, I'm the police chaplain in Baltimore. I see what goes on I know its a tough decision, people will say to me, "well, what happens if your mother was raped and murdered, would you want that person executed?" Hell yeah, I'd be very angry but I would say, now I would them to be in jail for the rest of their life, without possibility of parole. So the church will take stands and getting back to your original question about that. Other priests would probably say to me, well there are certain circumstances that maybe capital punishment would be a right.

INTERVIEWER: Suicide

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, well suicide, well that is interesting how the church changes its stance, I mean, probably when we were growing up you know, if you heard someone committed suicide it was like they were condemned to hell. Well the church has rethought that through because church realizes that its only now that they over the years of study that most people who commit suicide it is a last resort. And, ideally the traditional teaching of what sin is, is that one has to be in control of their faculties to make it logical decision to commit sin. So, I decide I'm going to hold up a bank, I make that conscious decision, you know the whole thing, it's simple, Robbery. Taking something that is mine, but when I think a lot of times people are in a suicidal situation, they are under stress, under pressure they are not thinking straight, so let's say that they do commit, kill themselves. I think our God is a compassionate enough God that says, well this person, really what's end there and they weren't in control of their faculties and the Church is to the point that 30 years ago, a person couldn't be buried in a Catholic cemetery, now you can; 30 years ago, you couldn't cremate someone, you can now. So, I think the church, there are certain things the Church will not bend on. Certain things, what we call dogmas, or moral teachings of the Church, but there are other areas where the Church maybe because of lack of science didn't realize the possibility. For many, many years the church condemned Galileo's theory and because we didn't have the resource. And, many, many years the church condemned the concept of a Evolution, and now the church says that can be held. We believe that God created the evolution process, but whether or not we were brought up that we call came from Adam and Eve, there was the first parents and then, that traditional.

INTERVIEWER: The world was created in seven days, but one day to God wasn't necessarily twenty-four hours, right.

FATHER JOHN: Exactly. So, I mean a lot of it is stories that were created through history to try to explain things. And the church has been able to realize through science and technology that there is certain things that the church was incompetent to make decisions. But when it comes down to certain moral issues or doctrine in the church, like we hold that our Blessed Lady, was the Mother of God. I got up to a pulpit and said "I know that is hog wash" I would be in a lot of trouble, that is. Or if I decided on my own that I was going to teach something that is contradictory to Church to teach then I would obviously be challenged and brought in and there have been theologians who were maybe because of research or whatever have decided that they disagreed with the Church. So you have to make a distinction of teaching from the Church's stance versus my own individual opinion.

INTERVIEWER: Now does the TV show on ABC, this season of Nothing Sacred where a priest is kind of mixing in his own opinion with the teachings and, the Catholic church obviously is very much against this show.

FATHER JOHN: I haven't seen tile show. And the reason I haven't is because of the time. It's on Thursday nights or something and I don't have the time. I've heard mixed reviews. I know some priests who have seen it and said that it is very good, it's realistic. Obviously, in any TV programs I think there is sensationalism, I never seen the show so I wouldn't know. I think, just from talking from my own experience like I said there have been situations where I have expressed my opinion as "okay, this is what the church is teaching. I'm going to inform you what the church is teaching." For two minutes, I'm going to step outside of my role as priest and say, "Well, this might be an alternative decision" or teaching, but speaking not as a priest representing of the Roman Catholic Church.

INTERVIEWER: So, you can do that?

FATHER JOHN: Certain limits. I couldn't publicly in the pulpit, you know but let me think of an example. An example that might be. Okay, let's say hypothetically, a woman comes to me and let's say she has got five children already and until now I think she should be responsible, I mean whether or not she's contemplating of bringing, having another child and her husband is working two jobs and she was taught that birth control was wrong. My personal opinion with her is that I could not get up to the pulpit and tell her that well, the church is saying that birth control is wrong, do whatever you want, what I would do, on an individual case talking to her, I would say, "well I think in your case let's look at all the variables here. You have five children now, you are open to the possibility that maybe right now it is not the right time" so in her case I would not consider it to be a sinful matter. That's an individual case. Now, somebody who is just coming in and using abortion as a form of birth control I think it a big difference than someone using artificial contraceptive.

INTERVIEWER: So. the only birth control the Church recognizes is celibacy?

FATHER JOHN: For males, for priests, but in terms of married couples they talked about the old days you threw caution out the window, but now they call it natural family planning. There are couples who will teach it , and its about 99% reliable believe it or not because its all about you know you can tell by the temperature of the woman when she is ovulating when she is not ovulating and its all done scientifically. But again, I don't want to live with the church's teaching, sexuality, because there are a lot of thing that are. . .The Church challenges, poverty, dictatorships, politics, I can't get up in the pulpit and tell people they should vote for Clinton because I personally like him, but if someone came to me and said. individually, who do you think policies more in line, I would say well, I like this about Clinton, but I don't like this about Clinton. And I think sometimes people get, they want you to tell them what to do. And that is why the Church, they really do, they don't tell you who do endorse. They tell you, and then this is "well, this is the stand on let's say, human life." This politician is against abortion, he is against this or he is for this or whatever. Same thing in terms of a person's track record. I like to look at people who fight for the rights of the poor, and giving tax breaks to the middle class, people like yourself who are middle class people who get lost. Because the poor get protected, the rich get it, its the middle class get screwed. So when people in the last election they came to me and they said, well, I said well you know you vote your conscious, but I think you need to look at some of these issues, what a particular politician's stance on let's say human life issues, what is his stance on schools. I mean our schools are a mess. That article that came out on Baltimore Public School System, horrendous. What are our politicians done to let them So I said, I think that you know, I speak sometimes as John McLoughlin, the person, a citizen and then I make a distinction when I tell people, okay I'm speaking as Father John McLoughlin, a representative of the Catholic Church and this situation. I share a very personal story on Chaplain in the Police Department. It was about five months ago, a fellow was executed for killing a police officer. A lot of police officers went down there to the prison while knowing this man was going to be executed and they wanted me to go down there with them as solidarity.

I said no, in conscious I cannot. I believe capital punishment is wrong, I cannot justify. I cannot, I know he killed a police officer, I know his family is hurting him, but I know executing him is not going to bring back this officer who is dead. Its not going to heal the pain of his family. So, and they respected that. They respected me and they said, Okay Father John, you arc our chaplain, I understand that. So I take my stand when I have to.

And sometimes that's hard with family issues. When you get down to practical stuff sometimes, you mentioned family, sometimes their kid, family issues they will put me in the middle of it and I have to say "Okay, am I your brother, or are you talking to me as your priest?" And its hard sometimes to distinguish that. Same thing with my friends. You know, sometimes I like to kick off my shoes and have a beer with any buddy. And, then this is informal kick back and enjoy myself, don't start asking me these deep theological questions, and then you want to see me at that time. Its not schizophrenic, but sometimes you have to pick and choose.

INTERVIEWER: Well, there are times where you can be in your official capacity as a soldier for all those years. I was a Sergeant, and I had to tell people what to do.

FATHER JOHN: Right, one of the guys. And anything here won't be used against you later. Sure.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so what brought you Baltimore four and a half years ago.

FATHER JOHN: Would I be in Baltimore if I wasn't involved in the church? Probably not, because I probably never would have ended up in Baltimore. Call it fate, call it roll of the dice, I like to think it was God working. Like I said, as I mentioned earlier, when I was in Dominica I had been sick and my Dad was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I went to Baltimore as I said it was basically ended up here was I had been in Dominica and my Father was sick, I knew he had six months to live, and I felt that I needed to be up here to help my Mom and her emotionally they had been 38 years very happily. And raised all of us, they were immigrants, they came from Ireland and they both struggled very hard to put us all through school and so again my superiors appreciated my honesty and respected that. They said, yeah, its important that you be around so when transfers came around at the time they called me and said "we are looking for two guys to come into a predominantly black community in inner city Baltimore. Many of our older priests can't do that work anymore, they are tired, they are afraid of the violence, they are afraid of the situation, would you be willing to do it?" And I said, fine. I said, I grew up in the inner city of Brooklyn. I know a lot, I'm streetwise. I know a lot of situations of inner city life was like, much different than living out in rural America there. I said that I would and they said they would like to bring a team in, you and this other fellow, Father Mike who happens to be two years older than me, in the seminary and we were friends and they said we would like to put you two guys there to see if we can revitalize the community. The church community because its dying in terms of population and also the neighborhood if there is some way that we can try to get people in the neighborhood to realize that we are reaching out to them. And we agreed to it and got here and have been four and a half years ago.

INTERVIEWER: So take mc through a typical day in the life of Father John. Obviously you sleep here.

FATHER JOHN: Right, I live here 24 hours a day. I tell people in our community here within probably about an 8 block radius there are seven different churches, but none of the pastors, or ministers live here. They either live out in the suburbs or they live, their church is their work let's say, but is not their hone. Whereas as a catholic priest who lives here 24 hours a day so I could be called in 2:00 am. and I'm going up to Johns Hopkins Hospital because there has been an emergency or some drunk might be ringing the doorbell at 2 am, looking for help or whatever, you know', typical day its hard to say. I can go through some of the staff. I get up and we as a community, I live with Father Mike, myself, Brother Scott, whose going to be a priest and we have an older brother, Brother Martin who is 78. He lives with us and he is semi-retired. We get up in the morning, I get up about 6 am., we have prayers together. Then we usually have Mass here for people in the neighborhood, primary Mass. At 8 am., we get about six or seven people who come and then what I do, I do what I call after that my different ministries. I teach, I'm involved in two schools, St. Katherine's which is about eight blocks from here going west, and then St. James/John School which is about ten blocks going east. St. James & John School there is from Pre-K to 5th grade and its about 250 students, 100% black, probably 98% non-Catholic but people choose to send their children to Catholic School because of the history of the discipline, history of the nuns being there. There are no nuns there now, but the fact that it is very dedicated and that whole idea of Catholic education improves statistically that children seem to do much better in Catholic School because of the discipline because of the reputation, because of the smaller classes.

INTERVIEWER: So, there is no requirement that you have to go to Catholic School, you just don't go to religious classes.

FATHER JOHN: Well, what they do is we, that is one thing we tell the parents up front when they want to come to the school, if they want to come to the school, one of the courses is Catholicism, religion. And most one of the things I learned in the black community most people are Christian based anyway, Christian oriented so they said "yeah, we want our children to have some kind of formalized religion." You know, so that whether they convert to Catholicism or not, we don't force anybody into that role. They have to be open to the fact that you know during the day we pray. We make the fact we have a Muslim family that comes through our school St. James/John which is really extremely rare. A Muslim who, most Muslims are very anti-Christian, but they love what goes on there and they involve their children to be open to Christianity and they still practice their Muslim faith, then they go home but their parents know it because most of what we do for our kids, most of parents are children who are in the school are from lower socio-economic base. So how do they pay the tuition? Well that's one of the things that I'm involved in is fund raising. We try to get the parents to pay something and then we have different scholarships. Within the last two years a lot of businesses in Baltimore have seen what we are doing in our schools and formed what they called this "business in partnership" where they're giving grants to us to educate inner city children and because they see the goodness that comes out of the schools in terms of the structure and that they said, "well the public schools aren't doing, let's file." This whole thing, this separation of church and state and there is just one way to get around it private companies funding us and saying that "we see the good that you are doing so let us help you." So we have, like I said, St. James/St. John, we are Pre-K 5th Grade and that's 250 children and in St. Katherine's School we have pre-K to 8th grade and then we have another 250 kids. So that is 500 kids in this neighborhood who are off the streets are going to a disciplined school and are doing well. So I am involved in the school, I don't formally teach. I go in and make visits, I play with the kids on the playground, I sometimes I do some counseling with the kids, with their parents so I do that during the week. Right next door we have the Kids of Hope which is an AIDS ministry, Mother Theresa's Sisters run an AIDS hospice for men who are dying with terminally ill and we are, from 6 to 12 men are housed there, so I go over there and I talk to those men, and minister to them and their families. Social outreach in the community we run two food banks, one is called Father George, which is open five days a week and the other one is run right out of the church and which is open 3 days a week so people come in search of food and clothing and referrals. We take care of people's needs for food and clothing. No longer do I give out money I used to have a fund but it's been replenished and I realized that a lot of that money was being wasted, through stores, people would come in and I was being conned, and you learn as you go along. So, we do a ministry that way. Also, I do some private counseling if somebody comes in with referrals to substance abuse programs. In the community here on a civic level, I am involved in a couple of block associations where people in the community are trying to clean up the streets and take back the streets from the drug dealers so I'm one of the organizing with that. I'm a Chaplain for the Police Department which is a volunteer position and I'm involved in the lives of police officers who think might seek counseling under their own family problems or also situations at work. I've been called to sometimes domestic disputes to see if there was anything to be done. Then we have Johns Hopkins Hospital in our neighborhood so sometimes I'm called up there for sick calls, plus our own parishioners, Mercy Hospital, Good Samaritan or UMB see, or Shock Trauma, we often would get a call and to see if people are home-bound and shut-ins, so I visit them and see what needs to be taken care of. So basically, I'm not saying I do these things every day but there is enough. I do try to run four or five days a week at least for an hour for my own sanity, and my own therapy. In the daylight I've only been mugged once. Have Mass, doing sacramental Mass, preaching on weekends, taking care of people on weekends. And taking care of people whose issues when they come in, a lot of times people will say "I've been evicted do you know anything I can do in terms of getting money" so I say well here are some referral numbers can you call this number in the city or whatever. I tell people I wanted to become a janitor and a maintenance man because the parish can't afford the maintenance of our building so it appears. With things in terms of trying to fix things and if it's out of my control then the person will call the plumber

or whatever. And then a lot of times involving committee planning and fund raisers with the parish or social events for the kids and process now we are getting ready for our Breakfast with Santa Claus, so maybe twice for the kids in the neighborhood. During the summer we run a Bible camp for the kids for three weeks to keep them off the streets, we keep them up in the hall there and we have games with them and take them on picnics. So depending on the time of the year we try and do some activities for the children so we can get them off the street, so we make it a safe environment.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a lot of participation in those programs?

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, it fluctuates. During the summer, usually we have about eight kids in Bible camp, kids from the ages of 4 to about 12 and then I usually hire about three or four teenagers and pay them \$50 a week so they can be mentors to these younger children. So there is a benefit because it gives them a few dollars but it also gives them a sense of responsibility and it also gives the little ones, to look at these teenagers and say that not all teenagers are involved in drugs. So, it is a kind of “big brother/big sister” program. Same thing with the Breakfast for Santa Clause and the valentines’ parties, we do it for the kids’ sake and we try and get some of the teenagers involved in it and try to mentor the children. It is a good program. Also, one of the things I’ve learned to which was real interesting, couple of parents have called me who have lived out in the suburbs. Now there is a thing a lot of the schools the children have had, high school kids that need so many hours of community service, so have not been able to bring some of the kids in who live in an upper class neighborhood. It is really interesting seeing their reaction coming in here and seeing the poverty and what goes on and again it fulfills a two prong project in one sense, because not only do they see what these kids don’t have, they go home and they are more appreciative of what they have. In fact, I had one parent call me up after our last thing we did to bring some of these kids in and he said “Father, this was the greater thing to see because he was so pissed off that we didn’t get a 1997 car” he said. Here was a 16 year old kid who wanted a 1997 car and then he came in here and felt that we what was going here. He said “Dad I’m just happy I have a car.” So, I think it makes you appreciate what you have, it makes me appreciate my own family upbringing and I did live in a stable family situation. We didn’t have a lot but at least my mom and dad were there and my brothers and sisters and we had we ate three meals a day, we had an education, we had a roof over our head. We weren’t involved in drugs and alcohol and violence I think a lot of that, I do a lot of

INTERVIEWER: Now, did your mother work when you were a kid, or did she stay home and take care of the kids.

FATHER JOHN: She took care of us until I guess we all probably were maybe high school age and then she had to take a second job, because my Dad was the main breadwinner and then until we were, we had five children and relatively pretty full. I guess once, I believe once, my bother was probably 7th or 8th grade, think my Morn took on a job. She was a nutritionist in one of the public schools in New York.

INTERVIEWER: And what did your Dad do?

FATHER JOHN: My Dad worked for awhile he was a factory worker. American Machine and Boundary which was a big corporation in Brooklyn. Then they closed that down, then he was a security guard. He took a couple of odd jobs, but again he was a man who was a farmer in Ireland. He left Ireland when he was 16 and only had an eighth grade education. He had to work the farm, and my mother grew up on a farm too, so I mean, they came over here, got married and they took menial jobs, but we appreciated what we had and we always had food on the table, we may not have had the best clothes, but we didn’t walk around in rags either. We were a close knit family and myself and my sisters appreciated what we have and what the values they teaching their children now, I think has been handed down Christian values through my mother and father.

INTERVIEWER: So you obviously were the first one in the family to go to college. Because you are only second generation.

FATHER JOHN: Right, exactly.

INTERVIEWER: Now, what about your brothers and sisters.

FATHER JOHN: They all went through college. One sister dropped after two years, but my one sister she has her master's and she is working on her Ph.D. now. Another sister had two years of nursing college then she dropped out because she wanted to have a family. Another sister who went a year, graduated high school then went to a year and a half to secretarial college. And then same thing, get married, raised children and then my brother went through business school to get a degree in management and then went on to the police department and now is working on his master's in management or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: Now, what about, we saw some pictures of the church during the classes. This church has a long history too doesn't it. Do you know what that is?

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, Baltimore a lot of communities in Baltimore are set up as communities throughout Baltimore and DC If you go down to the Fell's Point area that was the Irish community because when the ships landed, that's where they settled. We have Little Italy, obviously the Italian neighborhood. Over up what they call Butcher's Hill, upper Fell's Point, there is a lot of German communities. Highlandtown, there are a lot of the Polish, Lithuanian, Eastern European communities. While in this particular neighborhood going back to the mid 1800's on up to probably about 1970 is predominantly Bohemian, Czech, I get them confused now because I know there is no Czechoslovakia anymore. The Czechs and the Bohemians. There are two distinct languages. Czechoslovakia was Czech and the Slovaks. The Czechs I guess are Bohemian people and Slovakian people. So they immigrated to Baltimore and for whatever reason they landed in this neighborhood so this was a predominantly Czech and Bohemia neighborhood. The people spoke the language, you know they set up there own stores. their own ghetto and a sense of neighborhood. As far as, Mr. Potts has explained to me that word "ghetto" came from the Jewish. When we think of ghetto we think of a burned out whatever, everything was self contained. Everything was.

INTERVIEWER: That's what I think the Germans did to the Jews. They put them in their own neighborhood that way they segregated them.

FATHER JOHN: Right, "ghetto mentality" and then you became your only, self contained you know. No one from outside helped so everybody, you did your own banking, you did your own marketing, teaching, all within a segregated section of town if you stick to your neighborhood. A lot of people who have settled there were of Czech and Bohemian background and they settled here and for generations they lived here and people one of the strong backgrounds of any immigrant, especially if they have any kind of. The Eastern Europeans were very strong Catholics and it seems as if many European people came over whether it be New York or Boston or any inner city that they find it very interesting that when they landed here one of the first things they did was, that there wasn't a church there and they felt the need to have to build a church, you know the church became the center of their community life. Just to sidetrack for a minute, my parish in Brooklyn, was predominantly Irish and Italian and this place is a Basilica. And I think that for the poor Irish that came over, I don't want to be crude, but they didn't have a pot to piss in. But it was important to them that we might not have much but we want to give back to God the fact that we so they were being people who gathered them all together. Same thing happened in this community. The masons, the bricklayers, the plumbers whatever trade you had, the first thing was let's build a church and put our resources together and then the church became the focal point where the faith was alive and people gathered for committee meetings and the church, from the church they would set up bank crediting systems again, not to get sidetracked but when I was in Dominica, this is an undeveloped country they had only been independent of British rule now and French rule since 1988 and really the British and the French really didn't want you, they kept fighting for the islands, they never really established any strong hold there. So, the Catholic Church the hospital system down there, the two major hospitals that are on this island were built by the Catholic Church and funded by the Catholic Church. The banking system, the credit unions, that whole idea was started through the Catholic Church.

Let's pool our money together. Same thing happened in this community going back to the late 1800's, 1900's when the Czechs. could they trust each other. Like I said they were isolated but we know, Mr. so-and-so, I trust him with my money, let him invest it. Let us pool our resources together and if we pool it instead of isolate it individually we pool our resources together we will have more power and we can you know, so and then we got into politics. "Pole-Czech Park" which is a park probably about 10 blocks from here which is named after some kind named Pole-check who was a strong mayor in the 1920's, an immigrant mayor or whatever and again, either his parents I believe it was his parents who came to Slovak or Bohemia or whatever. But they had this whole part of East Baltimore, this section was heavily influenced by Czech and Slovak idealism. And strong hardworking people, people who enjoyed good beer too. I mean people tell me stories of the older Czech people, we worked hard, but we partied hard. They talked about living in a community where you left your door open all night and people would walk in and out and you had no fear, they talk about pre-air conditioning days people would sleep in Patterson Park because it was too dang hot to sleep in your house., They would set up little blankets out there and bringing their cooler out there and picnic all night and you would sit on your steps and maybe if you had a fan or something ou could sit out there all night and it was everybody knew everybody and everybody's parents knew everybody's children. So, they would discipline each other. They knew who was sick in their community so people would say Mrs. so-and-so is sick so people would go visit her, bring her food. So the church became like where people gathered to get married, not only marrying and have sacramental, but the people came here to socialize. There was a bowling area there, there was basketball leagues, there was slow parties, dances the celebrations they tell me. They used to have a band out of here so when someone died they would walk through the neighborhood like they did in New Orleans with the jazz bands for, we used to do that here in this community. They had a full band that they would, everybody would know if someone died, they would come out and pay their respects and bury the person and then everybody would go back to the local bar or whatever or back to the church and celebrate their life. So there was a real community or as people felt that they were connected because they think in the background with the Czech background the immigrant thing and then also someone who did speak English they knew that there were people here that spoke their language.

INTERVIEWER: So what year was this church actually built?

FATHER JOHN: The church, was built, I believe in I think it was started in 1907 and probably completed by 1915, I think but the parish is actually 125 years old because it was actually in different places because they built, before they built this church, the original building was a church down on Central Avenue and was. . .

Today is Tuesday, December 2, 1997 at 1:00. My name is Steve Haggard and I'm continuing my interview with Father John McLoughlin.

INTERVIEWER: How did you decide on a career in the Church.

FATHER JOHN: Well, Steve as young boy growing up in Brooklyn, New York I was very much influenced by the work they did but I grew up in a Roman Catholic family and it was a very close knit family and the church was also important for us. Our community, the church was the center of our life. I grew up with a Priest and a lot of Sisters in Brooklyn, New York. In a Roman Catholic, Irish community and somewhere believe it or not as young as I think maybe I was sixth or seventh grade I began thinking about it, went away to seminary. I thought that maybe I would like to try this out and I went along with my studies did those for awhile and then came back and got ordained. So, it was something that as a child I was very much in touch within our community especially working with poor people in our community.

INTERVIEWER: Now, fast forward to now. I know you've take a vow of poverty, but the church business section, do they give you enough funds to run the church and complete the mission they expect you to complete in East Baltimore.

FATHER JOHN: That's a real interesting question also, because personally I belong to a religious order so my medical needs, food needs are taken care of my the Order I belong to the Redemptorists but in terms of economics for the church per se, of the neighborhood we never have enough money, In fact, last night at our parish council meeting the pastor informed us that we need a new boiler and that the roof is leaking which we foresaw and to get a new boiler its going to be about \$17,000 and we don't have the money for that to get a new roof we could just do some patch up work which is another \$5,000 so we are constantly living just struggling. We have a very small congregation. Our average income probably through collections is maybe about \$1,200, we figure it costs almost \$1,600 to \$1,700 to keep the plant going in terms of heat, in terms of electricity and in terms of meeting the needs of people. We are some subsidized a little bit by the diocese and again through the generosity of people. We have a charity auction through St. Vincent Paul. People come and bring us food, clothing, we have two outreaches our own outreach center. Which people are very, very generous in donating food and clothing and especially during this holiday season during Thanksgiving and Christmas. People adopt poor people in their neighborhood and perhaps people who live out in the suburbs will call me up and ask me to find them help a family and they help support them during the holiday season. So we have been blessed that way. We live day to day. We have a lot of conveniences that we can't survive, I think I mentioned on the other tape on the first interview, sometimes I find myself wearing the hat as maintenance man because we don't have a maintenance person, so fixing light bulbs and cleaning toilets among other spiritual work that I have to do, because the fact that we can't afford a maintenance man. We have to get outside help for major stuff we try to be self-sufficient but it is hard, its a struggle to keep things moving.

INTERVIEWER: Is there any chance that you can get companies to donate services rather than money or food, can they donate time and services?

FATHER JOHN: Sure, that would be a great possibility, again with our outreach sometimes we looked on that and people come in janitorial companies, a friend of mine has one a lot of times he volunteers his time and effort. Sometimes in terms of work around here, people will come around here and volunteer their time. You get to a point where I hate begging all the time, I feel that we should be self sufficient and unfortunately we have a very older population, an elderly population so you can't keep beating them because they have given their blood to this parish and they are on a fixed income so its tough. You try to keep a balance, you try to do fund raising events ourselves through church dinners and what we have this thing called bingo and things like that, that is for nickel and dime-ing things. The bigger picture is that you have the separation of church and state but my gut feeling is that since we provide quite a few social services for people of Baltimore city why couldn't government supplement us? But then I know you run into problems with that because of these certain guidelines and they can't allow themselves any particular denomination through their church, but it's a question. More and more social services are being cut by the city and any time people go to the church is when the church doesn't have money either so would it be corporations that would maybe subsidize and in the best they had what our schools I think I mentioned on the last tape we have two inner city Catholic schools connected with the parish, St. James and St. Catherine's and through a dialogue with the cardinal and some corporations they formed independent scholarship fund which over the next three years corporations like BG&E and USF&G and some other corporations have contracted close to a million dollars towards educating inner city children so in that sense, that is a great plus.

INTERVIEWER: I assume your job is a 24 hour a day job.

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, unfortunately.

INTERVIEWER: You had discussed this a little big earlier.

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, you had mentioned to me earlier about a typical day as I said. You just don't know what is going to happen. We had made plans to talk earlier today but a funeral came up and I had to go to. I tried to sit down and talk things Out and for the most part, schedules I can keep but you have to be flexible, for instance this week we are on call for a church home hospital so they called the

night last night and you know, they are different things that you just have to, since we live here in the rectory, we live here in the church, we don't leave this is part of our home, people know we are here 24 hours so then I will get the answering machine and I come back, get the messages so its pretty much a 24 hour job. But I don't look at it as a job, I look to it as a vocation a calling because its worked but a find a great sense of joy and frustration, yes. But specially this past couple of days delivering food to the poor, some of these homes we went to were really dirt poor people and as cynical as I get, sometimes I think people are taking me for granted, I will find a family or two who really are legitimately very poor and just to see the expressions on their face being able to help them makes it all worthwhile. —

INTERVIEWER: So do you ever plan to retire?

FATHER JOHN: Not God willing as long as God keeps me going. Again, our policy with the, what belong to, at the age of 70, you can "retire" but many of the priests they don't. Their work might be light, but they might be semi-retired. I'm 40 now and I feel as long as I'm still young and strong I enjoy it and I'm a very fidgety person, an energy driven person anyway and I've got a strong drive so I get bored and I need to do something so I keep myself occupied.

INTERVIEWER: What were the hardest choices you've ever had to make and do you feel like you made the right choices in your life?

FATHER JOHN: Hardest choices I ever made. After I had left the seminary I decided to "find myself" as I mentioned I had been in the seminary since I was 13 years old. Came out at the age of 23. A year before my ordination. At the time I didn't know if I made the right choice but I'm glad I did because I was out of the seminary for about five years and I did a lot of growing up in that period, I dated, I had to support myself financially, I became a high school teacher which I really enjoyed, I taught high school for four years and that was really good. And then I guess the choice to come back. I was sitting there my sister's kid and my, she said "couldn't find anybody to find in love with?" I says, I've dated a few people, but I just felt that we are all called to different lifestyles and my choice to come back was another choice I weighted out different options and I chose. I just left it in the Lord's hand and said, "Lord this is where you are leading me." Another difficult choice probably was leaving the islands, as I mentioned earlier, I was working in Dominica and my father was diagnosed with a brain tumor and he only had six months to live. So I asked my superiors I chose to come back to the states to see if we could spend some time with him before he died. I was torn about that because I felt like "am I abandoning the people" is a wise priest it occurred to me "hey you only have one set of parents and you need to appreciate all that they have done for you" and that really put it all in perspective for me. I guess the other choice would be, and I'm in process of whether to stay here or move on. My time here is probably going to be up in a year or so, I have the option of remaining here in Baltimore or moving on to another inner city or back to the islands so I'm thinking about that and talking to people about that. It's a tough decision because I don't want to give up on this community here, but sometimes I'm wondering whether I'm just treading water, so I have to make a decision about that.

INTERVIEWER: Who was the person that most influenced your life most positive influence and who were they, what did they do?

FATHER JOHN: One person was my father, I had a very good relationship with my father, he was an immigrant, his dream was to make sure that his own children would get an education and an college education and that the five us graduated from college. He worked two jobs and then my mother worked after we got into high school and, I guess both, my Mom. There is so much family strife and problems and I appreciate the fact that I grew up in a good family environment, a family that is stable, a family that is nurturing, a family that was caring. I would say, yes, Mom and Dad had a great influence on me. I would say probably in terms of some of my decisions, some of the early priests that I grew up in Brooklyn with, men who were very spiritual but also very life giving and fun to be with. They enjoyed being with us, they were out in the street playing baseball with us, and then as I said as I got older, some people, Father George Richland who are, food center is named after.

He is a man who has spent about 20 years in Brazil at age the age of 60 he came back to Baltimore and he was in Baltimore when the riots were going on, with both black and white people considered him to be religious then. He could have walked through anywhere in Baltimore and nobody would touch him while the city was burning down during the '60's during the riots, here was a man who was taking care of people and people knew that to this day, people refer to him as the "Saint of East Baltimore." He came here when he was 60 years old and he died at age 90, so for 30 years of his life, every day he was at the center giving out food and counseling people. In a direct way, Mother Theresa, I met her last year when she came to Baltimore and, I couldn't say she is a close friend but I met her, and looking at her lifestyle and just the words she said, for example, I think she was influential in my life. Bruce Springsteen, believe it or not. I love rock and roll, I enjoyed the Jersey Shore for many years growing up listening to Bruce Springsteen and his song about the ethics of growing up in life and making life decisions. And I'm sure there are some other people but I can't think of their names.

INTERVIEWER: If you could change something about yourself, what would it be?

FATHER JOHN: I'd be 6'8". No. I would be a basketball star. If I could change something about myself, probably patience. I'd like to be a more patient person. I'm a very go-getter and I like things to fall into place. I like a plan to come into place. And as I mentioned around here, I've learned that plans don't fall into place. I wish I could be a better juggler of time. I know I take on a lot of commitments and make a lot of promises, and sometimes I have too much on my plate and I find myself all over the place and spread thin, and sometimes that ends up becoming frustration and anger and maybe sarcasm and cynicism. Yeah, I would think patience, because I was hoping when I came here four and a half years ago our church population would have increased, if anything its decreased. Just in terms of the neighborhood, in four years I've been doing this community work, it's just like we go one step forward and then we go three steps backward. Its that feeling of frustration and I guess I would have to be a more patient person. I think my background, I think I'm always going to be lacking patience.

INTERVIEWER: That Brooklyn background.

FATHER JOHN: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Everything is fast up there isn't it?

FATHER JOHN: Right. Very quick. Time is money, money is time and that used to drive me crazy in the West Indies because I would have a meeting at 7:00, and they would say, oh, that means 8:00. And I'd say no 7:00 and they would say, relax, if we don't do it today, we do it tomorrow or the next day and that used to drive mc crazy. Sometimes they had a great way of looking at life. They, said we're not going to have heart attacks and strokes, we are going to enjoy life. I find the same thing happens in this community, and I'm not being racist here, but a very close black friend of mine says to me, he says, "Father, you have to learn there is regular time and then there is CPT time which is Colored Person Time." And they talk about, and this is a black person telling me this. We unfortunately some of us, we realize that we are not the same thing. And it's true when we have meetings our meetings here sometimes, if I say 7:00, we begin at 7:00, but constantly, consistently there are certain people who show up at 10 after 7 or quarter after 7, and not because of an emergency but just because they take their time getting here. So, that is an example of the frustration. And I'm sure there is WPT time, white person's time so I just use that an example. That is a frustration that I'm finding I'm flexible, but when it comes to certain things, I'm respected of people's time and I expect them to be respectful of my time.

INTERVIEWER: I was here on time, I just want you to know.

FATHER JOHN: Oh, of course you were.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. this is sort of a multiple part question. How would you describe yourself politically, conservative or liberal, and if you have a favorite U.S. president and why do you admire him?

FATHER JOHN: I would say I was now, I'm not sure. I would say I am a moderate. I would say moderate conservative if there is such a thing. I am conservative in a sense that I believe that certain values, certain strengths and I'm open minded. I think in terms of government I appreciate what this government and in any particular government in this country of democracy. But I also, I'm not afraid to criticize in certain times, I think in a sense when we start defense spending. Its one of my pet peeves, I just understand why we put so much money into defense spending when we have people starving in the streets. As far as I know, the Cold War era is over but I still think that you know, you live with this fear of nuclear holocaust and I question sometimes where government budgets are going. That in terms of politics, I'm a moderate conservative. I wouldn't say I am right wing, I wouldn't say I was right in the middle. I like a lot of what the Republicans do but I also question again, some of their spending as well as Liberal Democrats, I question some of them. I don't think we have to live in a free to do whatever you want lifestyle. I think we need certain guidance and I feel especially nowadays for the middle class that I do a lot of work for. But I feel for the middle class because the way the economy is going. It's like I know a lot of middle class and upper middle class families who support me with my work here in the inner city are feeling the crunch now because there is no one helping them. But not making enough so they get all these tax write-offs and they are not making enough to us that they get away with stuff. So, in terms of I think this is the greatest country in the world, and I make no qualms about it. I have great civic pride, I love the U.S. I have take great joy in America, but I also love it enough that I see issues that need to be addressed. Whether they be nationally or locally I feel confident enough to address and be bold enough to address it and not shy away from that. Kennedy again. . .

INTERVIEWER: That's a liberal democrat there, you know.

FATHER JOHN: I know, I'm against everything that he did. I just think the enthusiasm. I think we, and I know I was very young, but I think maybe some of it, this whole Irish Catholic thing, or whatever, you know, I mean he was as much a saint and sinner as we all are. The other person I really admire and its only now I think, but I think Reagan, Ronald Reagan. And a man who I really admire not as president but what he has done since the presidency is Jimmy Carter. I think he is a man who has a lot of valucs. I don't think he was the greatest president, but just as an individual person, I admire him. Getting back to Reagan, I think he pulled this country together in spite of what people now say, but I think he really went through tough economic times and he got us back on the road again.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Have you ever been a victim of crime?

FATHER JOKN: Yes. Twice while down here in Baltimore. I'm an avid runner and I usually run through the streets of Baltimore probably 4-5 times a week and when I first started running down here, being a short white male. The first reaction was "Oh he's either 5-0" which is the street word for police, "or he's looking for drugs." I would often be stopped and people would then and then finally people got to know who I was and they left me alone. I got to know people in the communities and they knew my schedule like clockwork. I was out running my 45 minutes or so. I guess it was about 2 years ago this Christmas. This beautiful sunny afternoon and I went jogging and I just had a sweatshirt on and running shorts and three young fellas, I had my running stuff on, three young fellas called me from across the street and I stopped and they came over and they asked me for money and I tried to explain to them that I had no money and it was obvious I had no money and they didn't want to take that for an answer so they assaulted me and tried to take my watch and I wouldn't give them the watch and I got knocked to the ground and got kicked a few times and hit. And they kind of walked away. it was kind of ironic because I got up and got myself together and I went another block or so and I saw a police car so I was so angry about the whole thing I said, I'm not going to let them get away with this. So, I flagged down the police car and he came over and sure enough they were still hanging out on the corner so I pointed them out. And it was interesting because they tried to turn it into a racial incident because the police

officer, who happened to be a black officer, they said to the police officer that I went by and called them “the name” and they were retaliating and the police officer looked at them and said, I don’t think so. Why would he do something like that. And it was nice because there were two older black males who were local winos and they said, “Oh that’s the Reverend he would never do anything like that. We see him all the time.” So they stood up for me and the one fella who did most of the kicking and punching he was arrested and he was only 14. But it came trial I ended up dropping the charges because I just felt that after hearing his story, two of his brothers were already locked up and I didn’t know what was locking up, what good it would do and the thing that really frightened me about the whole thing was when it was pre-trial and when the DA has him why he did it he said, Well out of rage, he said he was going to pick on the first person who came around that corner. My question to him was, Well if I was an 80 year old what would you have done? He said, well, she probably would have been the victim. To me, I just see it as random violence. The other time was and this was a very serious situation where I was visiting some of my elderly people and two 14 year olds got into a gun battle. I was almost a victim of that battle, I was crossing the street, the bullet was by my head and I was throttled at the time and got back to my car and then drove back here and checked to make sure I was okay and I was fine. And then it struck me about two days later, guess post shock or whatever, I was a mess for about a week because it just dawned on me, I said, how close it could have been to have been killed on the street. I would say the other two times I was a vicim of a crime.

INTERVIEWER: So, the Lord was watching you that day.

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, it was interesting because even now I’m thinking about it that day, so I kind of blew it off when it first happened, but it wasn’t until I talked to somebody afterwards, a priest friend of mine who was a psychologist and we really looked at it and it made me count my blessings and also made me realize that you know, you read about these things in the paper, especially here in this book with people caught in the cross fires you read about victims and you just never know.

INTERVIEWER: All right, now I’m going to ask you some questions about the neighborhood and about your experiences here and maybe ways you can see them help improve the community. The basic question is “What is the socioeconomic break down of people that lived here in the community both racial and ethnic wise?”

FATHER JOHN: In the community right here, basically its I would say it is 98% African American and maybe 2% Euro White, again this parish community was predominantly a Bohemian solid community but most of those persons have either passed on or moved on, but there are still a few who still live in the neighborhood they feel like yeah, they have built their houses and they will live here until they die. But the majority of the community, like I said, 98% or so are African American. I would say the majority of people both the whites that still live in the community are maybe senior citizens so they obviously live on checks and social security. The African American community predominantly is a community I would say is low income, low economically. In the sense that a lot of them are working people, but there are a lot of people who are not getting paid enough. A lot of people are without insurance, and a lot of people under employed. And I would say there are a lot of people who are on public assistance. And that whole issue about that because I feel that there are people who abuse the system and then there are people who do not need the assistance so at least in our community here I find that there are a lot of people who have been abusing the systems and its one of my pet peeves.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any infrastructure supports that are already in place that provide the support obviously with the churches and I assume Hopkins helps out a little bit. You’ve already mentioned a couple of the schools and are there any other financial means of support for the community.

FATHER JOHN: I’m sure there are, but there are a lot of outreaches within the community, again this is done through the churches. All the churches within a three block radius here of our parish here. I would say there are individual people’s who, Bea Gatty has a residence, maybe five minutes from here which reaches out to, Bea Getty’s famous Baltimnorean herself who was homneless at one point in her life and she does a tremendous outreach program.

I would say money is supposed to be coming into the community through this empowerment zone program. Something that was created I guess about almost two years ago. As I understand 10 cities through the United States had rallied for it and Baltimore was one of the six chosen and I remember when it first came about there was this great hoopla that \$100 million would be coming to Baltimore. All sorts of committees were set up and the question is when is the money going to come. There is an organization in this community: HEBCAC -Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition, and they have been doing some work in the community trying to revitalize the community, but I feel that their hands are tied also, because they are waiting for money to filter down and a lot of the money is tied up with red tape. I remember when we heard about this \$100 million coming, we were all excited because we were talking about demolishing abandoned buildings and putting up parks for the kids, they were talking about opening recreation centers, they were talking about putting substance abuse centers, because many of our people are victims of substance abuse and they need help. And it was a great sense of enthusiasm, well, two years my question is where has all that money gone I'm sure its still out there, there is a lot of politics involved and people in the grass roots, we haven't seen the money.

INTERVIEWER: I think there is a time limit on that money isn't there?

FATHER JOHN: I think so too. Yeah, and that is why I said that is why there is a lot of questions people are questioning, especially community activists. I was asked to be on the board for the empower zone and was and after six months they said they revitalized the board and I'm not on it anymore. And there was lot of questions about where this money is going and is it being used to the best of its ability?

INTERVIEWER: Sounds like politics.

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, I don't know, like I said, I'm not I don't have the answers, I don't know I don't want to blame the higher ups, but I just question a lot of people - when are we going to see the change in the neighborhood, when is this money coming in. HEBCAC is doing a lot of tremendous work, but their hands are tied too. There was great hope about, I think I read a statistic somewhere that there are 40,000 abandoned houses in Baltimore. Well, I would say in our community, there is probably at least a couple hundred of those houses within a radius block here. So, I would just say, that I just question where some of that money is going and if you can get it down to the grassroots I think it would give a sense of hope to people.

INTERVIEWER: Are there any informal groups in the community that are of value particularly ones that are comprised of blacks in similar situations with the majority of people who live here?

FATHER JOHN: Yeah. I would say on the local level that there have been some community block associations organized, people who working there HEBCAC are trying to reclaim the streets. One of the things of this program is that they adopted one. It has been a challenge among blacks who lived especially under Harry Harrison and people out of, trying to think of the place, Middle East Housing Corporation. You get people to come back and be homeowner's to reclaim the streets because most of our people who live in this community are transients. They come in they rent, federal law and then they take off again, and there is no stability in the community. So Delegate Harry Harrison who is black and under McFadden there is another delegate they are trying to get people to become homeowner's in the black community and stay in the community and then what branched off of that was the need for block associations. People who would get together, talk about the issues address the issues and try and to chase the bad element out. We have a lot of people in this community who don't live in this community, our neighborhood is known throughout Baltimore and probably throughout the state of Maryland as an open drug area. You can ask any police officer, you can ask anybody on the street, you can get anything in this community. People come in here that don't live in this community and start hanging around and then bad element comes in and starts selling. That is one of the things that needs to be done.

INTERVIEWER: It's not just blacks that are there.

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, right we call them “the tourists.” Like a lot of times here in this community you will see young, white teenagers in this community and you know they don’t live here. They come here because they know this is an open drug market. You can get there stuff and take off, so again, that is supply and demand. The other thing is I would have to say I see help as fortunately stepping down was a Major France, Eastern Police District, here was a non nonsense guy. An African American police officer, Major, who came in here with a no tolerance policy. He has only been in this district for about a year and half but in that year and a half he really literally, tried to claim back the streets. Well, I don’t want to judge anybody, but many of our liberal judges wouldn’t take his case because he was arresting people for loitering and trespassing and public nuisance crimes, which he was flooding the court system and they were letting them in one door and out the other, but his point was that your not supposed to be standing on my corner, you shouldn’t be standing on my corner if you don’t have any reason to be on my corner. So he did come and I know the police are under weaponed, under manned, but I would say Eastern District has created a policy of trying to reclaim the streets, but also to do community policing with the community. They establish a PAL program, Police Athletic League where they have taken young children and have gotten them into hospital choirs, they have a sports program going and they have arts and leisure club going so the police department is trying to stress a good image of what community policing should be, getting to know the people, getting to know their children and by touching their lives, hoping that they can get them so they don’t fall through the cracks of the ground and become another victim of the violent drug system that we live in.

INTERVIEWER: Are there any more black, local politicians who support these programs or that would help the blacks in the area help rebuild the infrastructure and support the community that you know of.

FATHER JOHN: I’m sure there are and I hope I’m not really coming up with names. I have some problems with our mayor, Mayor Schmoke, I think he has done his best but I think he is missing some of the bigger picture of. . .he’s trying his best, but I think we have gotten so mismanaged in this city that I don’t know if the black/white issue, I think we just need a new beginning somewhere, and I don’t know where that is going to come up. New ideas, new blood maybe. Again, I am not a Baltimorean, I’ve only been here four and a half years, I don’t know what went on in the past, I think what needs to be done, one person who I’m impressed by and this is personal basis is Lawrence Bell, the City, President of City Council, the young black man who has come across and come here to meetings and seems to have a real interest, he is young, I like to look at that in people, young blood can maybe get the city moving. Him and Martin O’Malley who happens to be a white politician, seems to really have the city at heart. And I think. especially in this community of East Baltimore, I’ve heard a number of times, trying to get people to get their stuff together and I guess I mentioned Henry Harrison, she is an older person, a delegate, Lucille Gore, who is with Middle-East. Again, these are older people who have, I know their heart believes they are sort of prosperous go down to East Baltimore and I know they still have hope. I look at them as people who maybe can. And then I would say it has got to be done in the schools, it has got to be done with individual families. So, I don’t think any politicians, but I think its going to have to be a whole community effort.

INTERVIEWER: So, what can working class Blacks do to help mobilize their resources to create a network for the people that are under employed in East Baltimore?

FATHER JOHN: I think not abandoning the city. I think a lot of times, like I said I have some close black friends, white friends and everybody I think now, it’s like when you get to a certain economic standard, you want to leave the city. Many people leave the city, again there is a sense of hopelessness. So, maybe if you know people can weather this storm and maybe that is easier said then done, but I think we need people to be homeowners and I think we need people to stay. We need a stable population in the city. And its a good stable population in the community because like I said, faces come and go and it is hard to get anything done. So whether you are black, white, green purple or yellow, I think what it is people uniting together and have taken a stand and maybe if more people become homeowner’s and take a stake in the community to change things around.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, now a really big question, if you could be in charge of the \$34 million down payment on a \$100 million total empowerment zone money for East Baltimore, how would you spend it?

FATHER JOHN: I think, how would I spend it? I think a couple of areas, one I think definitely in the field of substance abuse. Unfortunately, East Baltimore has the reputation of having many people either on drugs or involved in drug treatment. Seems to be a given and I don't know what the answer is. I know Mayor Schmoke is proposing to give out free needles. I think that is avoiding the whole issue. Mabe you can protect people from AIDS, but you're not interested in the issue. Other people are saying that the drug issue is way beyond us. It's if you can get to the core, you might be able to get into the federal government. I don't know, I think with the adage that ideal would be everyday people that I would like to see a lot of that money be put into drug education and substance abuse centers. And that is the issue, because nobody wants the methadone center next to their home. Nobody wants a jail in their neighborhood, nobody wants a homeless shelter set up in their community but it has to be done somewhere. So, if I had the money I would look at social programs, I would also look at possibly education programs I know I think something has to be created to push people to want to work, there are jobs out there. It might not be the executive jobs that everybody wants to be able to put their feet up on the desk and sit back, but I believe there are jobs out there and I think there has to be something where we can education and push people to take control of their own destiny. I believe as I mentioned earlier, people who receive public assistance, who generally and worldly deserve it, our Seniors, single parents. But I believe there is also people out there who abuse the system and I think there has got to be some kind of way of either finding them or challenging them and also breaking the cycle of poverty. We have families who have been on assistance for three generations. People have reputations and people say you have been on public assistance for so many years and then you have to get a job. I have a tendency to agree with that. I think you take individual cases, maybe not, but I think we have people in this community who have been in this cycle of poverty, from grandma to child to grandchild. Someone has to go in there and education people and say "it's not a free ride." I'm the first one to give out resources to people, but I also believe people need to take ownership in themselves, you can't depend on everybody taking care of them. So, whether that means education or whether that be some kind of incentive program I would like to see money spent that way. And then I guess the third area would probably be personal responsibility, personal responsibility would be what I am looking for and I guess the third area to have in this community probably would be some kind of recreation center, they talked about knocking some buildings down and putting up a recreation center, it would be nice, but again it would have to be regulated so that people would be responsible. I don't believe in midnight destiny, I'm a sports enthusiast, but I know they are saying "well, at midnight there are kids playing therefore, they won't be on the street." I'm questioning why they spent the time anyway. We have kids in this community who are five or six years old hanging out until all hours of time, night. My question is, where are the parents? We have too many in our community who are grandparents who are raising second families. They are the people that need to be helped, parents need to be challenged to get involved with their kids. I would like to see some kind of education of parenting and if a recreation center could be put together that the community be involved in that and certain rules and regulations.

INTERVIEWER: Is there a Neighborhood Watch in your area here?

FATHER JOHN: Yes, there is its neighborhood we have people who watch, but then it's also become a situation where people, and they are afraid to speak up. Some of these Neighborhood Watches, I remember one time we had a meeting and people from the community came and one of the people who was sitting there, people tell me after this, but [*inaudible*]. In the community they say how ironic it was, so not that big brother was watching you, but I think that people are very leery' and they are worried about getting involved in things, but then again I do believe that some of them need people, I don't believe in vigilantism but I believe you, some people can't sit back and take it anymore. Personally, I have gotten actively involved in calling the police and people, like drug dealers, I'll confront them and

talk to them. I won't resort to violence but when I get angry, I get angry but I also realize the picture is bigger than me, so I just try. Education has to be with children especially. I feel we've lost a whole generation, the generation in this community from the ages of 18 to 30 are just lost. My goal is to get the kids who are under 18. Kids who like I said, kids three and four years old have seen their parents shot, parents shooting up in front of them, and kids that have been told the police are your enemies "stay away from them because they locked up Uncle so-and-so." Then as grown up the kids always turn to the police officer when they are in trouble, then you have kids that are taught to stay away from police. So I think there is a whole value system and system that has to be reestablished and that would be my dream. Again, I'm one of these people who try to make connections, six different groups, but the picture is much bigger than I think it is and I get a sense of hopelessness, but I keep on saying, yeah sure, in my line Christ probably saw the same things but in spite of it all, maybe I can make a little bit of a difference, even if it is sitting down with someone who is an addictive person in the program, fine, but they have to take the first steps. I am not a, nobody's hand you know, hand holder or whatever. I deal with people and I challenge them, but they have to take the initiative steps to get themselves together, but I think that is all we can do.

INTERVIEWER: So with regards to this neighborhood and this empowerment zone, do you think that the youth of the community now feels that there is a ray of hope that things are going to get better in the neighborhood?

FATIHIER JOHN: Yes, and no, Yes in the sense that I think that I am an optimist. I think or at least I try to do tell the children that they can do better than their predecessors. I believe sometimes that too many try and play the victim, they sit back and say, well I've gone into poverty so I am meant to stay in poverty. Or some will stay single parent, my life is going to be ruined for the rest of my life. I know from my own experience in Brooklyn that people can rise up above their environment for education, taking a stand and also by simply saying, well I've seen all the evil around me, I'm not going to become a victim and I'm not going to perpetuate that, I'm going to do what I can. We've had kids come from toughest backgrounds and go on to Morgan and college full scholarship and they are doing something with their lives, I think yes it can be done. On the other hand, I think there are people who are just allowing themselves to be trapped. We have young people in this community who don't want to sweat. What I mean by sweat is they want everything now, they want the gold ring given to them right now. An incident recently, I was talking to a young kid about 12 years old and I asked him why he wasn't in school and he says, because he was working. He was standing on the street corner right across from the church and I asked him, I said well, what do you mean you are working and he explained to me that he was a look out. So, I said, oh you are involved in some illegal activity, kind of played around with words and hey and, "yes, I am involved in the pharmaceutical business, yes I'm a look out for drugs." And I just started questioning him, I said, well just be honest with me. And he said he gets paid \$50 for an hour just standing and overtime, a police car is within a few blocks radius he screams out 50 and that word is passed down to the people who are doing illegal activities, there are people in the neighborhood. So I said to him jeez, \$50 and he said, yeah. I said why not work at McDonalds or Burger King or Dunkin Donuts whatever and get \$4.50 an hour and he could make \$50. So my question to him was well, don't you realize that you are involved in illegal activity and his response was well, you know what \$50 gets you and what made me sad was he said to me he wants to go in the fast lane because he would probably be dead by 21. He came out and said too that he is convinced he will be dead by 21, either dead or incarcerated, so he might as well get what he wants now. He wants that urban assault vehicle or that 4 x 4 by the time he is 18. He wants the flashy jewelry, he wants to be a big daddy or whatever and he was going to do it his own way. And I questioned him, I said, well you know, again, ethically, but ethics are not an issue here with him, its just show me the money, I want it now. Instead of working for it, legal ways, he wants to do it fast because, and again knowing the history of his family he has his brothers and sister who are involved in that trade so, but you know, I really believe that believe need to insure, need a good value. But I also believe that you can't sit back, decompose and say, woe is me, I've been given a shitty life and I'm not going to do anything about it, I'm just going to sit there, I can't change it. I believe people can't change their personal responsibility.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think this attitude is pervasive throughout the neighborhood with the kids?

FATHER JOHN: Yeah, I think right now it is, the good kids are hard to take a stand because they see their peers hanging out on the corner, they see other people who are not much older than them hanging out on the corner and for them to hang around in school, that pressure is on them, but I think that the kids need to find that inner strength and I think they need to live with some role models in the community. I think they need role models, especially in the black communities, where kids are staying in the school.

INTERVIEWER: But the role models have to stay in the community.

FATHER JOHN: Exactly. I think a lot of these kids are thinking hey we have a great basketball program in East Baltimore here, Dunbar high school and all of these kids think they are all going to be Michael Jordan. Hundred million Michael Jordan's, so I think it's the whole education thing to get these kids to think that education is the only way is going to get them out of their situation, they have to go to school. In spite of what everybody is trying to tell them, take a stand and do something with their lives.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, what do you see as the future of St. Wenceslaus and the future of East Baltimore?

FATHER JOHN: Interesting question, because actually beginning next week our superiors from New York are coming down and are going to talk to us about that because where I belong to we cover many parishes that belong on the Eastern Seaboard and we have so vocations now that we are strapped for manpower. So, Superiors are going to make decision 'bout closing parishes and what parishes should close and how are we gong to combine our resources. My gut feeling is St. Wenceslaus will probably stay open for another couple of years, but I can't see any long term, I would say this particular church would close. Just because, like I said, there are other Catholic churches in the neighborhood and I think we can start pooling our resources because we are so spread thin and we have all these buildings to maintain its just too expensive, so I think people have to realize that you know, we don't have many, many people who came to the church is past years. And that we need to be more resourceful, so immediate future I would say Windsor would stay open but I don't see anything long term.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, what about the future viability of this neighborhood, of East Baltimore itself?

FATHER JOHN: Okay, you know I think it's a good change, like I mentioned earlier. I think we need to get a lot of players together. we need state government, we need the churches, we need the schools and we just need people to take personal responsibility, I just think that so many people have gotten so passive and have gotten changed, so "I'm just going to go along with the status quo," I think this neighborhood is deteriorated because of that the attitude, I mean its amazing back in the 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's. this was a very vibrant neighborhood, people took a lot of pride in their neighborhood, so unless people start doing that again and let us, there is a sense of ownership, well, you know "I don't give a hoot," I don't think much will change for all the money to go into the city but unless people take that personal responsibility to make changes in their life and teach their children to respect and honor other people's property and unless people start getting a sense of the work ethic again, I think people are just going to slouch things off and we could having this same interview 20 years from now and it could be worse. I just think people need to wake up and smell the coffee because crime is still about the same as when I got here a few years ago, and the pumped a lot of money into the police force and there has been some changes, but still one group moves out and another group moves in so, the police officer is undermanned and under resourced. The drug traffic just got too much and struck a hole in East Baltimore.

INTERVIEWER: And what do you see as your future?

FATHER JOHN: Again, because of our superiors, I feel a little burnt out this time after almost five years here. I know I probably will be moving on because we have a seminary and I'm going to be ordained a priest and he has been here with us for years and he will probably stay here for another year

and two and I would suspect I would either move on to either inner city work either in New York, Boston or maybe go back to the West Indies where I was in Dominica, third world country. Then it all depends on what I would decide to do after prayer consultations with our superiors. But, I think personally, on a personal level, I need to get away for awhile. I need to get away from East Baltimore for maybe a year or two and maybe recharge my batteries. It should be interesting once I leave here for a few years, then come back and see the same faces.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any last words of wisdom to future generations listening to this?

FATHER JOHN: I would just say to anybody who is listening to this, I hope that there is still an East Baltimore, and I hope that we did make a difference. The priests that have gone before me, and the Sisters of Norte Dame and the Brothers who have worked here, they have helped the community very much and like I said this community is known as a Czech community and a lot of that is moving away with the black community I would hope that this church is still open that there would be a black pastor and a strong black congregation to keep the church going in the year 2000 and the year 2025 or whatever, people listening to this. If not, hopefully things have changed and that's that.

INTERVIEWER: I would like to thank you for your time, effort and for sitting with me on the various trips I've made here. Its December 17th, 1997. It is the week before Christmas thank you very much for your help and behalf of the University of Baltimore its been my pleasure.

FATHER JOHN: Steve, its been my pleasure. good luck and get a Ph.D. and maybe you can become mayor here in Baltimore and make some changes.

INTERVIEWER: I think I will, that is a good idea.