

Father Chris

2/5/82

Location; Unknown

Interviewer; Unknown

Start of interview

[There were times when the microphone was covered up, words and phrases were sometimes lost]

(FC)...And another child and I are were delegated to find the Orthodox priest come and speak to the youth of the church. We'd have the Jewish Rabbi the Catholic priest, perigee of different denominations so we went looking for an Orthodox priest at a Romanian church and we went even able to make ourselves under stood the priest ---- so the next week we went to a Serbian church and we found a priest there who was able to speak English quite well, he did come speak to us. And the following week he took the group down to his church and he showed everything in the church and explained it. I didn't have any further contact with the Orthodox Church for many many years. About the 19 or 20 I considered for a time going into the Anglican priesthood but there was some inconsistencies and compromises in the Anglican church at that time that I couldn't resolve from my own mind and my other great love was the outdoors so I forestry work so I worked for the forestry of natural resources for years.

(I) Do you want to run through your work at the ministry for me then? Where and when you started.

(FC)Yes I actually started in 1953.

(I) You were in Sault St. Marie, Ontario?

(FC) Oh no I started in North Bay I worked there for about a year and the following year I went to Ontario Forest Ranger School for a year in Dawson, Ontario. And after that I was posted in Haileybury and I stayed there for years then I moved to Kirkland Lake and we were there for... six years and I came here for the ---- wildlife management officer Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario in 1973. I became district supervisor and I held that position until I took an early retirement in 1978 went I went to go to the seminary. Sometime around 1969 or 70 I began to get ideas again about changing careers and entering the ministry but there was still problems with the Anglican Church. In fact the Anglican Church in the early 70s was in turmoil and there was a number of defections you might say something wrong with the Catholic Church – and some formed a systematic Anglican group. Anyway we became interested in the Orthodox Church largely through having read Timothy Ware's book, finding the Orthodox Church, which still remains the best on one volume book on Orthodox history, faith and worship available today. And we made periodic visits to the church here in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Sometime earlier than that Ann visited Helicon, Ontario and we visited a Romanian church there and I taped pastor there too ---- - but we came to know Father Meletios here in Sault Ste. Marie about 1971, 72 the Deconoria family they all became all my very good friends. So along 1975 76' we were becoming very

involved in the Orthodox community here and we actually entered the church formally in 1977 at the end of 1978 I took an early retirement and in January of 79' I entered the seminary in Brookline Massachusetts.

(I) When you went to Algoma college was it partly out of the interest in the church?

(FC) Yes yes I enrolled in Algoma college in 71', 72' I majored in history and philosophy and this was a preparatory step because you have to have a Bachelor's of Arts in order to enter the seminary.

(I) What was your educational background before?

(FC) My educational background before that was high school. I went through high school in Hamilton, Ontario and I also had the year at the Ontario Forest Ranger School. Ontario Forest Ranger School no longer exists see it was a government school run for training of forest technicians but that got passed over to the community colleges.

(I) Now we are back to... so you were already involved in the Greek Orthodox Church at the time you entered Algoma university?

(FC) Well --- you might say you were still nominally Anglicans and we were dividing our time.

(I) But you were still thinking of the priesthood and this is why you entered the university or primarily why.

(FC) Oh yes yes. Well I wouldn't suggest putting this in the paper because we don't want the wrong feelings of other people in other Christian communities the problems with the Anglican Church steamed largely from the inability to maintain the faith and practiced which they gave verbal allegiance to they were many ways ready to modernize to explain things to, rationalize I suppose rationalism overall would be the one single term you could apply to approach.

(I) Sometime when we have more time I'm going ask you on which issues, I'm not going to ask you on which issues I have a pretty good idea already.

(FC) Probably the one comes to mind is one of the priest issue.

(I) I thought it might be.

(FC) That's only one. That in my own case was the occasion rather than the the sole reason for my departure.

(I) I had some differences with them too. I didn't get married in the Anglican Church the second time because....

[Turns off tape]

(I) So in 1978 you entered the seminary?

(FC) 1978 1979 December of 78 I retired from the government service.

(I) That accounts for you finishing in the middle of the year you just finished.

(FC) Yes I just finished my B.A. degree at Algoma in 1976. And then after that I studied classical Greek after that for two years by correspondence from Queens University in Kingston. That only way I could take it. No local university offered Greek so in 1979 I entered the seminary I proceeded to embark on the three years program study for the maters--- which I completed in December of 1981I returned here and I was ordained deacon April 9th 1981 Saint Dimitri Church in Albina, Ontario. Priest on January 4th of this year.

(I) With Father Meletios?

(FC) Well the bishop of course has to do the ordaining, the – I'm attached to...

(I) Bishop who?

(FC) Sotirios I'm attached to a Canadian bishop of course being Canadian.

(I) Is he a Greek Orthodox bishop?

(FC) Yes yes.

(I) Now you were telling me a little bit about the campus at Brookline.

(FC) Yes it's a campus of about 60 acers in Brookline, Massachusetts and it has a beautiful 12th century Byzantine capital authentic in every detail. The classroom buildings are quite modern the resident---- We are presently in the process of build attentional resident for seminarians. Exclusively for seminarian because in the present resident the mixture of undergraduate students as well as graduate schools students so we are trying to make a separate residential seminary for who are quiet and what you would call a seminary atmosphere.

(I) Explain about the two colleges.

(FC) The Helanic College is the undergraduate school of Helanic college of Holy Cross. The college was originally founded primary as a seminary Harford, Connecticut in 1937. Sometime I believe in the middle 40s it moved to present city of Brookline and an undergraduate school called--- college was established in conjunction with the current Orthodox school of theology in attention to students who are Greek Orthodox jurisdiction there are other students from other Orthodox jurisdictions Serbian, Antiochian, Albanians esc. Who are attending our school.

(I) Yes and I had asked you before and I will ask you again about the other seminaries, are there other seminaries? For Orthodox in the United States and Canada.

(FC) Yes there are other orthodox seminaries which are not specifically Greek. The Russians have the St. Vladimir seminary in New York which our school has a very close relationship. St. Tikhon's seminary at South Camion, Pennsylvania, Carpatho Russian of the Christ save of the saviors in Georgetown, Pennsylvania. There's the Russian St. Herman seminary at Sitka, Alaska and in Canada St. Andrew's Ukrainian seminary ----- the Greek Orthodox jurisdiction is the largest on the north American continent of all the Orthodox jurisdiction and the United States there is the largest jurisdiction and in Canada it is somewhat small Ukraine, Russians ----

(I) I think you did just say something just now but also earlier about the different ethnic groups as a minority at the different seminaries.

(FC) Yes there is some interchange here off of different students of different ethnicities this other than Greek at the Greek Orthodox seminary and controversy some Greek students will be found in the majority in some of their seminaries, but the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox seminary enjoys a certain amount of prestige being the largest being the largest of the Orthodox seminaries. It also has a very good reputation academically.

(I) Now you also said there is Ugandans and Koreans. How many of them?

(FC) Yes there are a number of students from abroad, there are a number of Greek students I'm afraid I can't tell you the exact number.

(I) Greek students from abroad?

(FC) Greek students from abroad maybe 40- 50. From Uganda I'd say close to 20, two students from Finland and various times we've had students from Syria and Israel.

(I) And Korea how many?

(FC) One Korean lad is there.

(I) Now I interested in the question of the patriarch and do you want to run through that again back from the beginning.

(FC) Yes at the fourth – a council five patriarchs were established.

(I) That was when excuse me...

(FC) In 451 A.D in the --- council the patriarch of the --- church were established in order of priority as Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, ---- and Jerusalem. In 9th and 10th century the crisis developed between the eastern patriarchates and the patriarchates in Rome because Rome was increasingly making claims --- jurisdiction. ----

(I) Now I'll be careful about that.

(FC) As a result the churches of the east and west drifted apart there was no precise date that you can use the date of 1054 offend given as the date the separated between east and west but actually the period of separation was much more prolonged then that.

(I) You said there were reconciliations?

(FC) Reconciliations yes but they were between the 11th and 14th century but the break has been final for the past six centuries and of course today we are witnessing attempts again at reconciliation conversations between Roman Catholics and Orthodox Churches. The first among equals or prime patriarch of the Orthodox Church is the patriarch of Constantinople who by the way has charged all of the Greek Orthodox faith Diaspora they are not under the church.

(I) In the what?

(FC) In the Diaspora.

(I) Oh ok.

(FC) Diaspora. The Greeks in the immigration are not under the church of Greece but they are not directly under the patriarchy of Constantinople, Istanbul, Turkey today. Other ethnic groups for the most part are under their own patriarchs for example the Antiochian, or Syrian or Lebanese Orthodox fall under the patriarch of the jurisdiction of the patriarch of ---- in subsequent centuries the heads of various national churches such as the church of Romania the various Serbian and Russian achieved patriarchal status. These patriarchs stand a lower level the four patriarchs of Constantinople --- and again in the immigration for the most part the Orthodox of those ethnic groups come under the jurisdiction of their own respected patriarchs in the immigration the challenged in the decades ahead will be to be the various ethnicities together to one American or Canadian Orthodox Church.

(I) Now what do you mean when you say in the immigration I'm not sure what you mean by that term?

(FC) Well well like and an American kind of ---- Australia these places where you got Orthodox of diverse ethnic background to Russian, Serbians etc. The goal eventually to which all of the jurisdictions subscribe these --- to unify these into a truly American or Canadian Orthodox Church but this has been set back by a lot of practical problems of language, unique cultural traditions even like music for example, which you have music used by the Greeks not the same music used by the Russians. This is reflected in the other ethnic jurisdictions also. The worship the prayers the forms the literature of the Orthodox Church is the same no matter where you go these other things in which is packaged... are different most likely ----

(I) The Koreans for instance what patriarchy would they be under? Oh yes I remember what my other question is too.

(FC) The church of Korea was established by the Russians who also missionized also in Alaska in 18th century but after the revolution the Korea Church had not any contact with the church in Russia and subsequently it put itself under the Antiochian patriarchy so it's also under the Antiochian patriarchy today

(I) The Antiochian patriarchy is?

(FC) Is the patriarch of Constantinople?

(I) The other thing I wanted to add was the other thing you mentioned when the --- first occurred or was occurring or after it occurred did the eastern Church was much larger than the western church and then you went into...

(FC) Yes at the time of the --- the size of the eastern church was probably without any --- in those days but larger than the size of the western church but the eastern church was beset by number of disasters the Muslim conquest continued the surge forward with the Turks the Ottoman empire during the 15th and subsequent centuries which had the effect of placing most of the eastern Europe and much of the Mediterranean under Ottoman rule so the Orthodox Church had very

little opportunity after that time to missionize, well little missionary work was done it was mostly carried on by the church of Russia and it was quite intensive in the 18th and 19th centuries. The following Russian revolution it was cut off also. On the other hand the western countries the countries of Western Europe pursued the vigorous policies of colonization. Spain France, colonized very heavily in various parts of the world and along with their colonization the Roman Catholic faith spread so the western church came to a number one size by the several margin by the church of the east. The eastern church today though today still remains the largest – the largest Christian group next to Roman Catholic Church.

(I) You mentioned missionary work that is going on now I think you said only recently has this begun to...

(FC) Yes there has been some fairly energetic missionary work carried on in Central and Eastern Africa and the Greek Church today is a big deal. Making sure ---

(I) You also, something else we don't have on tape is about the close you could come in structure of the Greek Orthodox Church was the Anglican church

(FC) Yes in the sense that...

(I) Start from the beginning and say it for me, what you said.

(FC) In the Orthodox there is no one central figure who holds absolute jurisdiction over the church in the sense that the pope holds jurisdiction over the whole Roman Catholic Church. The Antiochian patriarch in Constantinople enjoys the privilege of honor it's considered a first among equals, but he cannot define dogma he cannot wield jurisdiction over the individual national churches. The church is structured in a decentralized way which is in a sense close to the structure of the Anglican community with each local or national church independent and looks after its own affairs but they all look to the patriarch of Constantinople prime patriarch first bishop of Orthodox.

(I) And this corresponds now to...

(FC) It corresponds roughly to the position of the archbishop of Canterbury. Now I'd like to say a little bit about the nature of Orthodoxy itself, how it differs from Catholicism. With caution. In the Roman Catholic Church the Pope is considered the prime bishop but not only the prime bishop also an infallible authority you can speak --- on matters of faith and morals and ---in the eastern church the faith is preserved from the time of the Apostles without adding anything to it or taking anything away. In matters of uncertainty like in the faith of Rome, these were resolved through--- account in the entire church. In the case of early councils these....

[Tape turns off]

(FC) Starting this explanation over again. The Orthodox Church had preserved faithfully the Apostolic faith and practice from the times of the Apostles and Fathers to the present day. When problems arose in the early church these were not resolved by the creating of one bishop such as the Pope but by the meetings of the entire church. In the --- council erasing all of the churches Christening. In the Orthodox Church we recognize seven – councils the first being 325 A.D. ----

formulated, the second 381 in the concluding portion of the -----, the last council is the council of seven.....

[Tape turns off]

(FC) I can probably check that date for you.

(I) I can probably check that in my encyclopedia anyway that's what did with ---- I think it was 1827 I was not sure it was 1827 the only thing you got wrong is the year the church burned down. It would be in my encyclopedia.

(FC) So we will say 7878 now anyway at which of my --- of my iconoclasm was refuted. Since the...

(I) The iconoclasm is that the worship of icons?

(FC) Yes but the --- said this was adultery.

(I) Oh ok ok.

(FC) The icons are not in fact worshipped.

(I) That goes something in one of the articles.

(FC) Right after the 7th --- council the --- took place about three centuries later and no further councils such as those called by the western church are recognized by the eastern churches in other words there has been no subsequent --- formulation since the 8th century of the eastern church and the faith and worship today is most respects identical to what it was in the 8th century.

(I) Ok I wondered though you know have to go why don't we stop here for now and let me work on this and maybe another time I can talk to you about your experiences in Boston and perhaps get the Cagic family in there a little bit and little more of the personal but this is very good.

[Turns off tape]

(I) What would you like to do at this point more on the church history or more on the theology or more on the, I'm kind of interested in them all.

(FC) I think it should emphasize very much that the claim of Orthodoxy to preserving the Apostolic faith and practice in tack is historically sound and to me is the single greatest attraction to the Orthodox Church. Orthodoxy regards Roman Catholicism as attitude face ---

(I) And I suppose your view point on the Anglicans are pretty much the same?

(FC) Yes, they would be included with the Protestant Orthodox. Of course there are degrees of departures and there are many ways the Anglicans are closer to Orthodox mentality than the Catholics but is a time to be cautious...

(I) As you say I think you have to be careful not to offend people you might be one thing when you are talking and another thing you have pretty much beyond these religious matters. But I like

to get it all because it gives me a better understanding to know. I would rather know it then take it out then...

(FC) Unfortunately Orthodoxy for many decades has sort of a hidden treasure, hidden in the ethnic communities in North America but very little known to most western people, this is changing today. Because you have a young generation growing up in all of the churches who are totally English speaking and are prepared to talk about their faith and their church. And there are also number people, such as myself who are ---who has studied the priesthood throughout the United States now there are quite a large number of priests who are --- of the faith who are not from many of the traditional Orthodox ethnicities. So one of the challenges of the church today is to make the Orthodoxy better known in the western world to spread faith and we are interested in doing this but it not Orthodox practice to --- people into our churches it's definitely not one of our tactics.

(I) What is your own ethnic background?

(FC) English and Irish. And my wife is Italian.

(I) Were you born in Canada?

(FC) Oh yes!

(I) And your parents were?

(FC) No they were in England.

(I) Both of them

(FC)My grandmoth---

(I) So similar to --- background. He is actually 3rd, 2nd generation.

(FC) But Mary's parents were born in Sicily.

(I)Well actually Ken's mother was born in England on the Scottish border.

[Turns off tape]

(FC) I see. Ok another thing I was going to say was that among the various Orthodox jurisdictions which are represented in western world today the Greek --- particularly attractive in the sense that it has persevered without change or translation the writings of the New Testament and writing of the church Fathers because the first two and half centuries of the Christian church were the life of the church was hellenistic like in the sense that everything that has come down to us of the early church has been reclaimed --- the church Fathers were Greek, the language of the early church councils was all Greek.

(I) Now the church Fathers were but they were Roman weren't they?

(FC) Oh no no there are the Latin Fathers and the Greek Fathers the oldest tradition...

(I) Now Mathew, Mark, Luke and John were... what nationality?

(FC) Ok Mathew, Mark, and John were Hebrews. Luke was a Greek.

(I) Oh ok

(FC) But they lived in St. Paul.

(I) And St. Paul was a Hebrew?

(FC) St. Paul was a Hebrew --- but he was Greek speaking then he was captured by the Romans and the Acts of the Apostles and they asked him if he spoke Greek and he said he spoke Greek.

(I) I have to tell you about Pete Hangiers what you told me the service last Sunday and how nice it was because he thought was nice that the was readings and sermons, oh that's the service I should gone to and with a perfectly straight face yes and it would have been all Greek to you.

(FC) [Laughs]

[Tape turns off]

(I) Oh heavens no I would never repeat that.

(FC) I'm kind of his protégée.

(I) No I wouldn't say that because I could see that would be. I seem to be very thin skinned myself and it helps me in writing these. No I could see his feelings would be hurt if I kept that.

(FC) Oh Meletios has been a tremendous help to me teaching me music helping me with the language conduction services, he has been a tremendous help above over and above anything I ever had at the school so I think it would be well somehow to insert that here. And credit to him.

(I) But you took his name

(FC) Yes his name is Meletios Christopheriou. Christophie would be genitive case of Christophious. So in the error of Christ, I took the name Christopher as a sort of a tribute to him.

(I) Yes that I thought.

[Turns off tape]

(FC) March the 25th is of course the weekend of Independence Day when --- throw off the ---- also coincides with the feast of --- which is nature feast--- so both of these things are celebrated on March 25th so.... That's when I was rambling... what else can I tell you? I wonder if this won't be a good point to stop...

[Tape turns off]

(I) Much earlier now it will go back, during your last year of university that you went full time and your supervisor full restate that for me.

(FC) Yes during my last year 1975 76' you know going to college I was supervisor of the----

[Tape unable to pick up the rest of the conversation]

End of tape