

Transcript of Sister Kathleen Eiler's Interview

Interviewer: Alyssa Praechter

Interviewer: Whew. Are you comfortable?

Sister Kathy: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sister Kathy: Okay.

(laughter)

(silence)

Interviewer: Okay. What name do you go by?

Sister Kathy: I go by Kathleen, Kathleen Eiler.

Interviewer: What is your baptismal name?

Sister Kathy: My baptismal name is also Kathleen. Um, and that's also my religious name. I entered the community after Vatican II, entered in '79, and at that time, people were not taking another name,[inaudible 00:01:03] just one.

Interviewer: Okay. When were you born?

Sister Kathy: When was I born? I was born on August 11, 1942, um ... In [inaudible 00:01:15], Missouri. It's, um, in [inaudible 00:01:20] County. And we had a small house there, and, um, and we, we lived there for about 5 years. And the house wasn't quite big enough for a family at that point, and so we moved to Imperial, Missouri, on a small farm. And, so, I spent, I believe, most of my life on the farm. We just ...

Interviewer: Were you raised in a Catholic family?

Sister Kathy: Yes. We were a very Catholic family, [00:02:00] um ... we just automatically, you know, went to two hour mass on Sundays. Holy days were celebrated, um. We always said meal prayers. And it was just important for us to be involved in church. Um, I was always in the choir, grade school choir, and I continued in the choir later on. Um, for many years, Mom was the artist, and so we just, you know, spent a lot of, uh, time, involved in church activities and church was very ... a part of the family.

Interviewer: [inaudible 00:02:43] Are there other Catholic sisters or clergy in your family?

Sister Kathy: Um ... Not in my immediate family, but my mom has, um two sisters who are Franciscan Sisters of Mary. And, you know, we would visit them at different times, um. And then I used to write to them, and they would write back, and, um send me a homily card or two, in each letter. So, I did have contact, you know, with [inaudible 00:03:17] who were in community. Um ... and, you know, just shared different things with them.

Interviewer: Very cool. Please tell me who was in your family of fortune.

Sister Kathy: Okay, we're, we're a family of 8, um ... Mom and dad and 6 children, um ... and then an older sister and four younger brothers. So I'm the second in the family. And, um, there were several [inaudible 00:03:48] the house had got too small, we got too big ... Family got to big, whichever way we want to say it. Um, we moved to the, a farmhouse, which was large. And the first 5 [00:04:00] of us were learning boatfill. And my youngest brother, Mark, was born after we moved out to the farm.

Interviewer: What is the name of the community you belong to?

Sister Kathy: I belong to the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet, from St. Louis.

Interviewer: Where's your mother house located?

Sister Kathy: Um, our mother house is in, um St. Louis. In an area called Carondelet. And it's an area in south St. Louis, um, Missouri. And, um ... It's a, it's still a very, um, very poor area in St. Louis. Uh, our mother house is still there, we do have xx living there, um ... Mainly there are offices for all the different ministries, um ... And it was very [inaudible 00:04:55].

Interviewer: How long have you been a sister?

Sister Kathy: I've been a sister for 35 years. I had been in a different community, after high school, um, and did not stay, I was on the brink of the [inaudible 00:05:16] years. And, and had a second call to the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

Interviewer: Briefly describe the types of ministries you've been involved in.

Sister Kathy: Um, most to find a li ... If I was in education, elementary education. I've been a teacher, um ... I've been a [inaudible 00:05:36] principle. Um, after I left education, I'd never been schooled for clergy [inaudible 00:05:46], I decided I needed to change. And at that time, when I began

to work as a receptionist/secretary at the finance office in my mother house. Um,[00:06:00] feeling relieved for a little more contact, after being in education for so long, I, um went to Saint Joseph's Academy as an administrative assistant for a couple of years. Its [inaudible 00:06:16] something was. Um, so I asked June [inaudible 00:06:22] been in spiritual correction. So [inaudible 00:06:24] in spiritual correction, I did see CSJ here, which is home-care for people, so they can stay in their house longer. So, that's my main ministries.

Interviewer: Okay. When did you first consider a religious vocation for yourself?

Sister Kathy: Um, well my very first thought of becoming a sister was when I was in 5th grade. Um, I had a sister who was a young sisters, a teacher, we had self-contained classrooms. And, um, she was just so vivacious, and joyful, and ... I just, she had a laugh that was so infectious. And, I just wanted that same joy that I saw her having. And I think just seeing her ... We were on the second bus route, going home from school, and she would come out with ... And play ball with us after school, as we waited for the bus. And we just got off on her, she was just so happy.

Interviewer: (chuckles)

Sister Kathy: And that's something that I was, I wanted.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Sister Kathy: So that was my first, you know, um, desire. And then, um, I really decided, definitely when I was a sophomore in high school. Decided that I [00:08:00] wanted to enter the Marionite Sisters. We had a vocation day at school, and, I was just thoroughly impressed. I was familiar with every... [Marioness' 00:08:12] church because Mom and Dad always had them carrying [inaudible 00:08:17] around house. And so, I read it cover to cover, and when I actually met the sisters, I was like, "That's it, that's what I want." Um, and so I did follow that path. And, so that was where the first initial, um ... Yes this is what I want.

And then, and then that, after high school, I did enter Marion House, and stayed for 2 and a half years. They kinda felt that I did not have a foreign mission vocation, so, it doesn't mean we don't have one, but they didn't feel I had one to their community. And so I was feeling, well okay then, and I had to decide what to do.

And I taught, I wanted to teach. And, uh, so someone told me about a teaching position they thought would be great, so I started teaching. Um,

then I taught for 12 years before this thought of a second call came. And uh, so then, I had to do that, to serve Him, so, um ...

Interviewer: That's good. What has surprised you most about religious life?

Sister Kathy: Uh, I'm not sure [inaudible 00:09:52] as the weeks go by, I think. I think so much is ... [00:10:00] I was living pretty much the life of a sister before I entered. Prayer was important, um, I live with my, uh, real sister, blood sister. And I was teaching, I loved, and I just continued. And once I entered the community, uh ... What was the most surprising? Um, oh I guess maybe that things working anymore as when I first came in. I mean, there is a difference in the support of the community, and that is something, I, you know, is so important. And, um, that, in community you're a part of something bigger than yourself. Um, there's just a lot of, um, a lot of support, it's that.

Interviewer: Growing up, in what ways were you connected to women religious?

Sister Kathy: Well, besides my two aunts in the community, [inaudible 00:11:09], and my sisters, um ... I think that I had little sisters in grade school, went to Catholic grade school, went to Catholic high school. And then in high, almost all my teachers were sisters. Um, in grade school I had one lame person as a teacher. In high school, [inaudible 00:11:29] was the PE teacher. Um, and then, even in college, my, uh, sisters, so ... I guess I got around them more, like, you know ...

Interviewer: Yeah, right. Who influenced your decision to pursue a religious vocation?

Sister Kathy: Well, I ... I feel that my second, when my second call [00:12:00] came, I didn't have a call to a specific community. The first time, I knew I wanted to go to Marion, there was just no doubt where I wanted to go. Um, and everyone at home 12 years, and this call comes again. And it's like, yeah, you can't be serious, you know? Um, and I really didn't know what community. 'Cos it was just a call to religious life, it's, but it wasn't to a specific community. So I know when to search. I read about many, many different communities, and (coughs) I wrote down 8 that I felt were possibilities. And, I, after a time I just felt that 8 communities was too many. So I read though those 8 again, and I whittled it down to 3. And I visited those 3 communities. And after I [inaudible 00:13:11] then I was down to 2. And, I could not make a decision.

Those 2 groups were sisters I had taught with, um. The one community was sisters which I taught with my first 3 years of teaching. And then, um, the last 3 years were with Sisters of Saint Joseph. It was 2 communities

that it came down to. I knew sisters in both, and I talked to them, but I couldn't decide which one was the right one for me. And so, I just got tired of thinking, and I said, "God, I think one day, you're going to pull me one direction or another. Cos I don't know where you want me. And, I kinda just let go, and [00:14:00] quit trying to make a decision. And, there just seemed to be a gradual pull to the Sisters of Saint Joseph. So I really feel like it's God who influenced my vocation, because I really didn't know where I was supposed to be. And, I mean, I felt a great peace while making the decision. I was hard making a decision, maybe that pull ... Surrendering, and that God-made choice, is what made it seem to be the correct place.

Interviewer: What are the greatest blessings of religious life?

Sister Kathy: Hmm... I think the greatest blessings are, you know, being a part of something so much bigger than myself. Um, I feel like each of us is called to do something special in life. God has a plan for us. Um, and there are things that we are called to do. And I think have more influence, maybe it's community, rather than it's an individual. And, I think there is so much that is accomplished by being part of the community. Um, and also, just being, um, being together with a group of people who are like-minded, who feel like prayer is important. Um, as in, it needs to be an important part of our lives. And we end up becoming a family, we're supportive of one another. Um, we just have such a large family, you know ... It is very supportive. Um, yeah, I lost [00:16:00] my train of thought.

Interviewer: What are the greatest challenges of religious life?

Sister Kathy: Um, I think the greatest challenges are much the same as for anyone. Uh, learning how to , to live with people, to accept people as they are, to comfort them, to be open to being challenged. Um, to being challenged to grow. Um, there are definitely a lot of challenges. Um, when, when you've felt lonely. Sometimes there are personalities that truly rub you the wrong way, and you need to learn how to, to live with them in another way. Um, so, there are certain challenges.

Also, like working with schedules, so we can find time to be together for meals, to, to pray together. Um, yeah, we are a [inaudible 00:17:05] community so, our ministries are important to us. But we also need find a way to, um, to community to life, as a part of our way of [inaudible 00:17:23].

Interviewer: Thanks. What would you like to share about you process of discernment?

Sister Kathy: Um, well, let's, that's interesting. (chuckles) In the process of discernment for me, um, with the second call, I had to adjust to the idea of becoming a religious a second time. Um, I, I thought I was gonna be a lay person, I, I tried religious life. So what else, you know, [00:18:00] does God in mind, you know. And it was hard for me to even accept the fact that here I am, 34, 35 years old, trying to decide what religious community I should be going to. Or even just adjusting to the idea that I'd received a call. But I think it's really important to pray to know what God wants, and then to be sure you're sharing your journey with someone who can, is walking with you. They're not gonna give you answers, but, walking with you until you feel better confidence in yourself. That okay, it's okay. You know, I can do this. Um, and for me, I had to be ready to accept the fact that if I didn't make it a second time, if I would be okay. And if God's gonna make this call, I'll give it a try, if it's not for me, that's fine. But it looks like God [inaudible 00:19:13].

Interviewer: What kind of reactions did you get from friends and relatives when you told them you were going to become a sister?

Sister Kathy: I think the very first reaction was a little bit of a surprise, but then various people ... I think they saw how important, uh, I'd been teaching. I was teaching at elementary schools. And, um, I was involved in church. Um, and I think that they knew the sister heart, and they could all see that would be a good fit. So, I was, I really did have support of family, and, um, you [00:20:00] know friends, relatives. Um, my dad had already passed away with Father Andrew. And the second time, so I didn't hear his word, but I felt [inaudible 00:20:13].

Interviewer: When did you take your final vows?

Sister Kathy: I took final vows, um, on November 18, 1988. Um, so I was in, I had gone through one [inaudible 00:20:35] initiate in six years in temporary [inaudible 00:20:36], and then final commitment. Um, I was, I knew I wanted to do that, [inaudible 00:20:47] bit of thought. Um, I don't know exactly how this all happened, but it landed on the feast of Saint [inaudible 00:20:56] and she's the Saint Louis [inaudible 00:21:00] soul, who's just special day, I got to celebrate that.

Interviewer: How does discernment influence your life in an ongoing way?

Sister Kathy: I feel like we are always in discernment. Um, we're always trying to know what God wants of us. And sometimes we discern smaller steps. Doesn't make, you know, a big step. And you continue to listen too, because all of .. Because our next step. There was a time when I felt that I really was

called to be a spiritual director. And so I asked permission to, you know, go at that, a different train. So, there [00:22:00] was that other call, it was saying, "I think this is what your next step should be." Um, and then was, was different ministries. I was involved in CSJ here, I was a discern, discerning process into something I could do and would love to do.

So, um, you know I think we're always discerning, you know. Where are we going to live, who are we going to live with? Um, what is my next, what is my continuing ministry? Um, and so I think we're always in the process of discernment, in some way.

Interviewer: How is your community organized and structured?

Sister Kathy: Um, well, I live in a small community called Fiat House. And Fiat house is a house of discernment. We try to have, um, 3 sisters and 3 or 4 young women living with us. The whole purpose of our house is to give back people a place to stay, while they're discerning their next step. Most of the people are, um, out of college or close to being out of college. And some of the women, they're trying to decide their next step. And, so we've given them a space where they can be [inaudible 00:23:43], where they can pray together, um return [inaudible 00:23:48] to you. But the point is to, um, give people a place of [00:24:00] experience and community, in a supportive prayerful community. Um, and it's just, you know, interesting and challenging.

Um, we've been here, in this house for 5 years and right now there's 1 other sister with me. We had 2, 2 others, um one decided that she needed change because of the steps in our house, she was [inaudible 00:24:30] had some knee surgeries, was about to have her second when we realized it. And so, right now we're two. Two sisters and two young women. Um, one young woman is a junior, um, in college, and trying to decide her next steps. And, so it's again trying to decide exactly, she should be doing ...

So really, I think we're a pretty normal community where we, we each have our own personal prayer time, um, and we try to eat together, um, most nights. Some nights one is missing another night another persons missing. Um, and we pray together after dinner. And we have different responsibilities in the house.

When a new person comes in, we gather and talk about, you know, change thing, how do we want to do and pray in the same way we are, the same time we are, do we need to change anything? Um, and so the

other day we changed the chores that we do. Um, but we all share in responsibilities of the house.

Interviewer: What is your current role in the [00:26:00] community?

Sister Kathy: I'm [inaudible 00:26:01] I think just being a member in the community. Um, I'm not in charge of anybody, no. We just share the responsibilities, and pitch in and help out with whatever needs to be done. If someone isn't going to be able to do their chore, or it bothers us too much that it's not done, we go ahead and do it, you know? But it's, it's been for 3, 2, a lot of things. And we do meet and talk about, um, maybe you should say ones that I had. We haven't done it since the last person moved in, but we put up a list. What is it we need to talk about? And we had [inaudible 00:26:56]. So it's important that we communicate.

Interviewer: How much flexibility do you have to choose where to live, what work or pursuit?

Sister Kathy: Um, well there is quite a bit of flexibility, um, in where we live. If we [inaudible 00:27:20], we tend to do that. Um, but there is a lot of flexibility in our living situations.

Our ministries, if you want to change your ministry, you would talk to someone in [inaudible 00:27:41], and just call down what we are given to serving, what we think God is calling us to do next. And, uh, if that needs education, um, or some training, you ask permission to do that. You day you would like to do [inaudible 00:27:57] um, and then [00:28:00] you talk about it and see if they think it's a good fit or not. Many conversations about that, about ministry changes. Um, you know, what is, you know what is God calling us to do? What do we feel god is calling us to do? Um, and that is also a deal between [inaudible 00:28:21]. And so, uh, by talking to leadership, someone in leadership, who can have the guidance that we need to start a new ministry.

Interviewer: What are the challenges you find living in community?

Sister Kathy: Again, I think the challenges are the same as living with a family. You know, learning how to communicate, um, accepting one another. Um, disputes, [inaudible 00:28:57]. Um, you know, how do you love that one sister or whoever's driving you crazy? Um, you need to do that in community also. Um, how do we, how do we love one another? How do we see God in one another? Um... Yeah, it's important that we just [inaudible 00:29:23] strive to be the best person we can be. And, there are challenges. But it's, it's important that we take that time to love, and

share, have fun together. So, I think the challenges are you know, the same as almost any home.

Interviewer: What are the joys?

Sister Kathy: I think the joys are just being able to be together, um, pray together, eat together. Um, [00:30:00] we seek support and give support, while we're there. I just have no desire to, to be alone, or live alone. I just, I wanted to, and ... There's just joy in doing some things together, um, besides our prayer, our meal, our meals together, working together, doing some cleaning or vigils or whatever. And then having game nights, fun nights. And it's just such a joy, for me, being in a house with some younger people to, to just turn your life around. And, you know, it's, I mean, some of the are young enough to be my grandchildren, so, you know, so, but it's just good to hear all that, that laughter and youth, youthfulness.

Interviewer: Tell me about your educational journey.

Sister Kathy: Um, I've had grade school, high school, college. I graduated from college in St. Louis. And then, after, um, after I was in the community and had been teaching for some years, I felt I wanted to be a principal, so I asked if I could get my masters, uh, in education. In 1987 I think it was, I completed my masters in elementary, uh, administration and leadership. And then was ..[00:32:00] . I also, after that [inaudible 00:32:02] as a layperson, um, I took a lot of classes in theology, and, um in scripture. And got an initial DRV, and that, that meant that I had the equivalent of classes RNDRE, Director of Religious Ed, but I am not taken as a program. So I have my hours in theology and [inaudible 00:32:36].

Interviewer: Did you go to Catholic schools?

Sister Kathy: Yes. I went through, yeah, all the schools. Grade school, high school, college, and my masters program.

Interviewer: So, your highest level of education is a masters in education?

Sister Kathy: I have a masters, yes. My highest level is a masters of education.

Interviewer: Could you take me through your ministries and positions?

Sister Kathy: Ministries and positions. Um, teachers, I was a teacher in elementary schools, through uh, about 25 years, and that includes the time before entering the community. And then, after being a teacher I was [inaudible 00:33:25]. And I'm leaving, um, elementary education, and to be here a

sabbatical year, went to a program, and also just had some time to visit sisters who wanted to know more about our community. Um, after that, I worked in finance at the mother house as a secretary and receptionist, um, for a few years. Uh, after that, I was an administrative [00:34:00] assistant at St. Joseph's academy in St. Louis.

Um, it was toward the end of my time there that I asked permission to, um, become a spiritual director. And, then I did, I did that. At the same time I was working as a spiritual director I was working as a CSJ here, which is home care for the elderly. Um, and that was really, um, very interesting and rewarding work. Um, to be with people in their homes, you just see ... Doing whatever they needed so they can stay there longer. Um, and I, I was asked in 2010 to be part of vocation ministry. And I'm still partially offer that now. I continue to busy student retreats at colleges, so I've been involved in that and a few other things involved in ministry.

I'm a spiritual director. And one of my ministries is making greeting cards and jellies and pickles, and sewing. There's still part of the farm in me. Growing up on the farm, we did all kinds of canning and making jellies, and whatnot. And so that still is something that I really enjoy doing. So, so my ministries right now are: spiritual direction, retreat work at colleges, um, helping in the vocation office, and my idle [00:36:00] hobbies.

Interviewer: Were there key turning points in your ministries?

Sister Kathy: I, I don't think you're allowed to answer that, because it's ... The number of turning points, you know, leaving education, was just ... I needed to do something different. And um, and then the desire to be a spiritual director, which is a ministry that I really do like. Um, I think it's just a real opportunity for me to walk with people on their journey, and to, um, just see their growth. Just by having somebody to talk with about what's going on in their life. And how they're handling things, and what is it, you know ... I, just to see a change in them, over a period of time. And finding peace seeing their [brokenless 00:37:12] selves. There's a real joy in that.

Interviewer: What has been the most gratifying work you have done?

Sister Kathy: Uh, again, I find that hard to answer because I think there's been a lot of gratification in almost everything. But, um, I enjoyed being a teacher. Um, in education I really ... As a principal, I really liked being able to work with the faculty to, you know create that core Christian atmosphere for the school. Um, sometimes it was hard work, but there's just a [00:38:00]

real, a satisfaction to working with faculty and with teachers to help create an atmosphere to the school that is [inaudible 00:38:14]. Um, I find spiritual direction very gratifying.

Um, one of the most gratifying things probably would be NCSJ care, an elderly couple that I, um took care of. I used to go in there twice a week. Um, and, I mean just a lovely old couple. And, um, the missus was beginning to have dementia, and he was trying to take care of her. And he just couldn't keep up anymore. And so, um, I would just, it was so neat to be with them. I would clean the house, and change the beds, then a lot of times I would physically aid him. She was not very communicative.

But, she was, they were old. They were probably in their early 80s. But he was just so alert, he was sharing stories. I mean, he could relate so much to what I was sharing, because of my time on the farm. And so we just got into some really good, good discussions. And although I was there to help them in their house, I think I was also helping him so much, just by being there and listening. And, still get the work done, but just to go try and help them stay in their own home.

Interviewer: What do you consider your most [00:40:00] important contributions of your ministry?

Sister Kathy: Um, my ministry, my ministries. Um, most important contribution? I don't just mean myself, I guess in being there, for people. I mean, I think all the ministries are important. Whether it happens in education, spiritual direction, office work, um, what's so important is that we are trying to see God in all people, you know? Um, and it's a challenge. Sometimes it's not easy, but ... Can you do the question again?

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, what do you consider your most important contributions of your ministry?

Sister Kathy: I can't think ... Yeah, I guess it would be being ... The number of people I was able to influence in education. And, you don't know that we have influenced people, but there is such, uh, a joy in having somebody fight really hard, who you've taught [inaudible 00:41:28]. And it's, just to see the people say I made a difference in their life. So, I can just, uh, be who I am. Cos [inaudible 00:41:43].

Interviewer: Please share an example of a ministerial experience that brought you joy.

Sister Kathy: Um, I probably just shared that. Uh, with the elderly couple that .. [00:42:00] . Um, and also I think the walking with someone with spiritual

direction. Um, I was just trying to do that. To give part of someone else's journey, and to see how God has touched their lives. To see them come to a great peace and acceptance in themselves. Um, I think that's a real joy.

Interviewer: Tell me about your community's prayer life and spirituality.

Sister Kathy: Um, the, the, I assume you're talking about the larger community there. Um, our community does not have a set way of praying together. Um, each, you know, the community is gonna decide ... The local communities decide how they want to create that. And, we have one prayer that is the sharing of the heart, and we try and do that on a regular basis. And it's simply, that sharing of where God, where we've seen God in our life in the last week. Um, so that is one form of prayer that we have, when we get together, almost all the time, is that sharing of the heart.

Um, where have I seen God, in my ministry? Listening to nature. Where do I find God? Our call is listening to God, in all things. And whether that is in people, in nature, in all of creation, we see him. We also see [00:44:00] God in ourselves. So where do we find God? I guess I would say that is one of our ways of praying. But God is everywhere, so, our call is to find God in all his things.

Interviewer: What sort of theological education did you receive?

Sister Kathy: Um, well I, when I was in [Mary of the Light 00:44:28], classes in scripture, theology, philosophy. Um, and then after that at [U2 00:44:37] and I took 3 courses to that. And then my DRE, my initial DRE. I was just always interested in, in religious studies. So, mainly it would have been through those various courses. Um, but I've also done a lot of reading. So, I, I just ... Trying to keep up, my head, it's, spiritual life has just been important to me, so I've tried to do a lot of reading. Um, besides my own here.

Interviewer: Is there someone special, living or dead, from within or outside of the church, who has influenced your spiritual life?

Sister Kathy: I think one person who has really influenced me is, um, Thomas Merton. Um, I guess, I just see him as someone who was so in touch with God, um, and saw God everywhere. And, some of his writing, I m- ... I love his story, as someone who, uh, was really searching for God for a long time and didn't know that's what he was searching for. He [00:46:00] became a Trapist, and um ... I think what really appealed to me, since I grew up on a farm, is how he saw God in all things.

Uh, I just remember this one little story, uh with we ... He's talking about, or one of the writings he's done. He talks about the song of the bird. The bird is praising God by singing, because that's what it was called to do. He says that yellow far above the side of the road, that many people don't notice it's praising God, because that's what it's supposed to do. Um, and watching a little, a newborn calf. You know, trying to get up on its feet. It's doing what it's supposed to do. And so I just think of each person as this swallow and each person is doing what God called them to do.

I mean it's just so positive, and, uh, a positive way of looking at meaning. You are God's creation, so, [inaudible 00:47:26]

Interviewer: In your view, how did Vatican II change things for women religious in the, in the US?

Sister Kathy: View, well I was not in religious life right after Vatican II. I think there is definitely, it did, definitely did make big change. I think it opened up to people, to sisters far more than so many were... [00:48:00] And mainly with education and nursing, and some social work, and ministries to the poor, but, as laypeople were more and more able to take over many of our ministries ... You know, it's that call to do something different. Um, but, Vatican II definitely changed, um, changed religious life. Because we were told to go back and look at our roots and our founding. And people found things that they didn't know, hadn't heard of before. And our communities, sometimes we're still finding some documents that are They might have something that ...

Interviewer: What do you see as the role of women religious in the 21st century?

Sister Kathy: I really think our role is the same as it has been. Um, that we are to give out permission or custom. To bring the good news to people, and maybe in a little different way than it had been in the past. But, I think we are a beacon of hope to so many people. Um, and, we need to continue that. We need to continue doing, reach out to people. Um ...

Interviewer: What are your hopes for women religious in the future?

Sister Kathy: Well, my biggest hope is that they continue, that religious communities ... I think religious, we will always be there. Uh, I pray that those communities that God, [00:50:00] you know, is a blessing and wants to continue will do so. There are many good communities. I think there, um ... there's just a lot [inaudible 00:50:21]. We're needed to continue the work of the church, the work of Jesus. [inaudible 00:50:28]

Interviewer: What is at the center of religious life that nobly pass along to the next generation of sisters?

Sister Kathy: I think that there is a real need for religious life today, and that there is a place for it. Um, that you should not be afraid to consider it. Um, God pulls us in many different diversions. And I think it's important just to be open to the call. Uh, I think there are many calls out there. And that I think, in that whole discerning, it's just important to be open to what God wants me, and ask that. "God, what do you want me to do?" Or "What do you want to say to me? How do you want to work with me?" Um, there is need for, you know, just... I have, I'm very hopeful that there's gonna be a continuation of religious life.

Interviewer: Does your religious institute have a community symbol to recognize your profession?

Sister Kathy: Um, we do not have just one symbol. Um, many of us do wear the cross that [00:52:00] I'm wearing, that has "CSJ" written on it. Some wear a Fleur de Lys, and the Fleur de Lys is the symbol of our founding, from France. Um, our sisters were sent to the United States coming over France. And, France symbol's that Fleur de Lys, and so then many of our sisters do, you know, wear the Fleur de Lys, as a symbol.

Interviewer: Is it important for you to have a visible community symbol?

Sister Kathy: Um, if we're talking about, you know, the cross or the pin, I would like to see us have that. But is it important for me to have a symbol other than that? I-I do not feel that we need to have a habit, or anything. We are one with the people. Um, and I think there are many things that we are able to do because we are of them.

Interviewer: Has your congregation worn a habit?

Sister Kathy: Yes, the sisters used to wear a habit. Um, after Vatican II they made changes. I was not in the community at the time. I entered in 1979. And so, at the time I entered, the sisters were not receiving the habit. And, so I didn't, you know, um ... But yes, they had a habit, and I think the sisters looked beautiful in it.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share? [00:54:00] Well thank you.

Sister Kathy: I don't know.

Speaker 3: All right. How long was that?

Interviewer: Uh, 53:32

Sister Kathy: Is that enough?

Interviewer: Yeah. That's perfect.

Speaker 3: Yeah, that's about the hour actually, that we've got to right now. Because we had one ...

Interviewer: An hour and 40 minutes.

Speaker 3: Yeah. It took superbly long. And then we had one that was like half an hour or something.

Interviewer: (same time as above speaker 3) Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you're right there, it's perfect. Perfect timing. You did really good.

Sister Kathy: (laughter)

Interviewer: It was like really interesting, it really was.

Speaker 3: Yeah, great.