

**Father Harry Bury**  
**Narrator**

**Rob Hahn**  
**Interviewer**

**December 11, 2018**

**St. Francis Cabrini Church, Minneapolis, MN**

**HB:** I'm Harry Bury and I'm a priest of the Archdiocese of St. Paul, Minneapolis. I'm retired I guess but I find myself even more busy that before I was retired. The neat thing about being retired is I get to mostly what I perceive as really important and significant to do.

**RH:** I'm Rob Hahn; I'll be asking the questions. We're at the St. Frances Cabrini Church in Minneapolis and today is Tuesday, December 11. Let's start very generically; tell me about how you ended up at the Newman Center in Dinkytown in the mid-'60s.

**HB:** I received a letter from the Archbishop inviting me to go there; I was assigned in 1965 and I was an associate priest. I think maybe they called us assistant priest in those times, and Father George [Garrels 00:59] was the senior priest and Father Don Conroy was also there.

**RH:** I'm going to jump around here but let's start with the music aspect. You introduced or were instrumental—no pun intended—in developing a different type of music at the Newman Center than most Catholics were used to in the pre-Vatican II era.

**HB:** One of the things that we noticed was that not many of the University of Minnesota students were coming to mass to the chapel. We decided to change the music in accordance with what was going on in the late '60s. We moved away from the organ, which incidentally was outlawed in its early days because it was played in bars. Now we introduce the guitars and the piano, drums, and that was looked down on because that also is used in bars.

The energy of the music began to draw students. We went from four masses on a weekend to five o'clock on Saturday, midnight on Saturday night so people could go out on a date and end up going to mass before they went off to bed. Nine o'clock on Sunday morning, 10 o'clock, 11:30 upstairs and down, and 7:30 at night. We had at least seven masses every Sunday and sometimes more.

The people really were attracted to the music, which was in some ways not sacred; it was not so much music that had to do with the vertical—between God and me, but between all of us—the horizontal. So-called secular music like I Get By With a Little Help from My Friends, and that kind of music really drew the students but also helped them to see that Catholicism is really a community. People are brought to union with God through the community and not so much just God and me.

**RH:** There was one individual in particular, Cyril Paul who was a big part of the new type of music; what was he like?

**HB:** He was such a marvelous fellow; very friendly, outgoing, marvelous. He played the bongo drums and he was from the Caribbean and went through St. John's University education. He was the one that really turned it around. It was his spirit that made all the difference. After he left the students followed in his example. He really paved the way for the rest of us.

**RH:** Then there was the connection you had with John Denver.

**HB:** Yes, John was kind enough through Bill Carlson and Nancy Nelson, they suggested they'd have John over for dinner at one of their houses and I was about \$5,000 in debt for bringing people to the Paris Peace Talks—people who couldn't pay their own way, and I just went and borrowed the money. Actually it was more than \$5,000; it was \$10,000.

I had told Bill and Nancy that I didn't know how I was going to pay this money back to the bank because I was making about \$100 a month; that's what priests were paid in those days. They said, "Well, we'll invite him for dinner and then you can ask him if he'd do a concert for you." So, that's what we did and John said, "Yes." He said that he was just starting out by himself; he was no longer with the trio and he said, "I'd like to sing in the new Guthrie Theater and if you just charge as little as you need to make it." So, we charged \$3.00 a ticket; sit anywhere you want, and we got the \$10,000 and John put on a fantastic concert.

From then on we became really good friends and John wrote a new version of "Our Father" that we still sing here at St. Frances Cabrini today.

**RH:** Is that something that he did on his own volition or did you talk to him about it, say, "It would be cool if you'd consider this?"

**HB:** Yeah, I asked him, "Would you be so kind?" And he did. We were good friends over the years. I went out to Aspen and skied with him and his dear wife Annie.

**RH:** If I recall correctly from our previous conversation, when you came to the Newman Center you weren't very aware of or engaged in the Vietnam War. What changed that?

**HB:** Well, there were so many students that came and asked me to help them because they were conscientious objectors; they didn't believe that it was God's will for them to go and kill these Vietnamese people. They needed a minister to write a letter in their behalf saying that they were not just fearful but that they really in conscience didn't believe in killing people.

As I began to write these letters I began to do a lot more research into the war; the more research I did the more I came to the conclusion that not only was the war a mistake but immoral. Then I began to talk against the war; then it got very clear to me that it was easy for me to talk about it but I needed to put my body where my mouth was. Then I started to protest.

**RH:** There was the day of or the day after, somewhere in that area of Kent State and you and a few others did something very unique; tell us about that.

**HB:** Kent State happened on May 4, 1970, and four students were shot, killed on the campus of Kent State and then universities all over the country—students there—went on strike and they refused to go to class. At the University of Minnesota it was the same thing. Many of the Catholic students came to the Newman Center and we began to do some thinking, brainstorming as we called it, like, "What should we do?" They're not in class and they're not in class because of the war; what should we do?

They decided that there was a protest against the ROTC building on campus where students were trained to go into the service and the police were there and the protesters so, we came up with the idea of wearing white armband and going and standing between the students and the police so that there wouldn't be any violence. That's what we began to do.

Then as we met and continued the brainstorming, we came up with the idea that the students would go out and knock on doors and ask people how they felt about the Viet Nam War. In the evening they came back and reported that most people were against it. We thought, "What can

we do?" Then a French professor at the University suggested that she would go to Paris and ask the Vietnamese who were in the peace talks what would they like. She came back and reported that they would like it if we could find 20 or 30 people who were not well-known antiwar activists but ordinary people who thought the war was immoral.

So, we started looking for people to do that and we found about 10 who could pay their own way and about 10 who could pay some and about 10 more or less who couldn't pay anything. Some people from the Native Americans for example. They didn't have any money but we would like someone from the Sioux Tribe or the Chippewa Tribe or somebody like that to be in our delegation.

We had these 30 people and we didn't have enough money so, that's when I went and borrowed the \$10,000. We all went to Paris and spoke with the Vietnamese and came up with a booklet that we wrote on how to get out of the war.

**RH:** Going back to the Kent State day protest, what were your feelings walking in between the students and the police? Was there any sense of fear or dread or did you just feel that this was the right thing to do and you were going to do it?

**HB:** That's such a good question, Rob. I must confess there was a certain amount of defying in me. I was at a point in my conscience where I began to think that we needed to defy what the government was doing. It was a standing up, so to speak. There wasn't much fear. Maybe because I trusted the police that I didn't think they would hurt us and I didn't expect the students to throw rocks at us. Fear was not high on the agenda.

**RH:** Approximately how many people were with you as part of that group?

**HB:** Over a dozen.

**RH:** How long were you there?

**HB:** Periodically throughout the day as long as the police and students were there, we were there.

**RH:** Let's talk about the mood of Dinkytown in the time that you were there, '65 through '70. I think from the late '50s, early '70s, it was called the intellectual capital of the Midwest. What was it about Dinkytown that made it so unique in your opinion?

**HB:** First of all it was a place where students went to shop and to eat off campus and to discuss the major issues of the day. And it was the bookstore that drew people; it was like the center. People loved to go to the bookstore and discuss issues there but there was a movie theater and they showed a lot of brilliant films from outside the country and therefore films that were at least considered anti war, pro peace.

It was an area where people were able to talk to strangers. One didn't have to be afraid in talking to somebody you didn't know—people would be suspect. Sometimes people nowadays in a lot of places, if one is overly friendly people think there's something that you want or that you're trying to get away from them or something. There was never that spirit; it was always a spirit of, "Oh, is it ever nice to know some new person." It was very friendly in that way and that was very similar to Berkeley.

Berkeley was that way too. I remember riding my bike all over Berkeley as I did in Dinkytown and nobody honked at me; they wouldn't honk at bike riders. If you drove your car and the car in front of you stopped to talk to somebody they knew, persons would just wait; they wouldn't

honk. They could finish their conversation and drive on. It was an atmosphere where people were not so much in a hurry, that being in the present, in the now was powerful. It was rich and that's what was worthwhile. You could always do something else later but now is what's important. Dinkytown was like that.

**RH:** In addition to the Vietnam there was the Civil Rights Movement as well. How did the two coexist and what did you see in terms of diversity in Dinkytown civil rights actions, protests, things along those lines?

**HB:** Unfortunately there was still not a lot of people of color at the University so, in Dinkytown we didn't see many either. There were some students on campus but not enough so that they had any kind of collective power, which was too bad. I wasn't aware of it enough—the Civil Rights Act had just been passed and it hadn't really developed and grown at the University. So, we had very few Catholic people of color that came to mass. So, it didn't seem to be a big issue in our work for social justice.

**RH:** There was one black individual known as The Walker; do you remember him? Phil Holland, I think. He would walk around in a suit and tie and dispense different points of advice.

**HB:** Yes, I never got to know him but of course I heard about him a lot. I never met him personally.

**RH:** Let's talk about some other individuals and your relationship with them through the Newman Center and Dinkytown. Senator Eugene McCarthy.

**HB:** Senator Eugene McCarthy was a friend of George [Garrels 16:07], the fellow that was the head of the Newman Center. Periodically he would show up in the evening like about 9:30 or so and we kept a bottle of Jack Daniels for him because that's what he liked to drink. He'd have a drink and his coworker Jerry—I forget his name—he would come with him so, the two of them would show up and we would talk politics until almost midnight. It was in our upper room—a wonderful little table that we sat around, had a drink and enjoyed learning about politics and getting Senator McCarthy's views on things. When he decided to run for president of course I became a big pusher of his and was terribly disappointed when he lost.

**RH:** Dick Gregory was another person who visited the Newman Center.

**HB:** Dick Gregory was a joy; we brought him to the Newman Center and because he was so important and significant we couldn't have the talk at the Newman so, we had it at our barn at the University's basketball court. He was wonderful and he told one joke that was both realistic and also mad us all laugh. He said, "When I arrived here in Minneapolis they couldn't have treated me any better; they picked me up in a limousine and they took me to the best hotel and everybody waited on me and treated me like I was a vice president or something. They seem to like the Negroes but they hate the Indians."

He was right on; that was unfortunately the situation and we are just now beginning to see how badly we have treated the indigenous people.

**RH:** Let's go back to Berkeley; you spent a summer there, so-called summer of love. In addition to what you described earlier how would you compare Berkeley to Dinkytown? Is it fair to make the comparison that Dinkytown was the Midwest equivalent or something close to it?

**HB:** Yes and no; yes in the sense that the spirit that I described of people being very friendly, outgoing, intellectually interesting, they had tables all over the front of the student union; there

must have been 50-60 tables run by all kinds of different organizations with their literature and one could go after class and stop and talk, argue if you want with all these student groups and organizations, which were on the radical side. That was fantastic and that spirit was also to be found in Dinkytown but it was not as large. Berkeley is a huge place and the two at that time were pretty close. The free speech movement Berkeley was known for and that hadn't quite happened yet at the University of Minnesota so, it seemed a little more free.

**RH:** If I recall you came into contact—maybe even became friends with Joan Baez while you were there. What's she like?

**HB:** She was an inspiration to me. I went to her Institute for the Study of Nonviolence in Carmel Valley and she ran this institute in which she trained people in nonviolence. Not her so much but her staff. I remember the weekend I was there to be trained, to learn more at the time that I was studying in Berkeley, she gave a concert on Friday night. I attended and it was the first concert I'd ever been at—outside concert with young people and I was blown away by the way they would be throwing Frisbees at the concert and at the same time her voice and message struck deep into my heart.

The next day in going to the meeting she was there. It was inevitable that she and I would get into not an argument but at least questionable. She was coming down pretty hard on hippies. I tried to say that maybe hippies are the future of our country in one way as they were really coming down on this idea that you needed to get to work at eight o'clock in the morning and work until the work was done and living with watches and time being the most precious thing in the world and that sort of thing. The hippies were not believing in all that kind of thing; they were living in the now so they didn't wear watches and the women didn't shave their legs and they didn't wear shorts but long dresses.

So, there was this difference and they didn't think that work was the most important thing and for Americans, that's really important. That upset a lot of people and so, I would say that maybe that's the future that we're going to come to a time when there won't be enough jobs for everybody. We need to think about other things that we might do that would make life meaningful.

Joan agreed that, "Maybe in the future that would be okay but right now, we need these hippies to be active in stopping this blooming war." I had to agree with that.

**RH:** Let's go back to Dinkytown and we can wrap up quickly. As you look back on your five-and-a-half years there; how did Dinkytown most impact you during that time?

**HB:** I liked the idea that it was one step from the campus and I could meet with people who were not Catholic who were Jewish and secularists and practicing other religions and we were all on the same level. Somebody wasn't better than anybody else; it was an acceptance and appreciation of one another and so, the collar didn't make me holy or better than anybody else. The same with anybody else; because they were professors didn't mean that they were better.

In the classroom people rightly so looked up to the professor but in Dinkytown there was a levelling that was so democratic that it was appreciative. People were accepted for who they were and what they thought. While we argued and didn't agree on everything, it wasn't like today. When people argue they tend to come down on the person they're arguing with; there it seemed like—to use the phrase maybe too often—we agreed to disagree and we perceived that we could learn from somebody who thought differently.

Today I find that people don't come into a conversation with the idea that I could learn from the other person; it's more what I can tell you and teach you. There it was an opportunity for people to be open and willing to listen, to consider what the other has to say, and maybe learn something I hadn't known before. That was really nice.

**RH:** Circle back to your comment about the bookstore; is that the McCosh bookstore you're referring to?

**HB:** I believe so.

**RH:** Do you remember anything about the proprietor, Melvin McCosh?

**HB:** I didn't know Melvin but there was another gentleman there who was a high anti war person whose name I can't think of right now.

**RH:** What am I forgetting to ask about Dinkytown and your time there that you want to add?

**HB:** It was wonderful; I miss it. I really miss that spirit. I know there are a lot of people that look down on the '60s as thinking of it as a terrible time. I think it was a time of amazing growth not only intellectually but also spiritually and emotionally. It was an opportunity to grow up and to meet people in a way that I could learn from them and I really miss it.

*This publication was made possible in part by the people of Minnesota through a grant funded by an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. Any views, findings, opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the State of Minnesota, the Minnesota Historical Society, or the Minnesota Historic Resources Advisory Committee.*



**CLEAN  
WATER  
LAND &  
LEGACY  
AMENDMENT**

