John Ignatius Reardon OP Interview

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0:00:06 - Interviewer

Province, we came from the very beginning with a lot of parishes. We have just about every parish right now that we had when the province was founded in 39. But as I've done a graphical history of apostolates, what I found is that, I guess it was in 1950 we started Albuquerque?

0:00:24 - Fr. John Ignatius Reardon, OP

Yes.

0:00:24 - Interviewer

All right. And did you go there with Dave Butler, or did you go there the year after?

0:00:28 - Fr. John Ignatius Reardon, OP

Damien Goggins and I were the first to go to Albuquerque in 1950.

0:00:35 - Interviewer

As you can recall it in the history of the prophets, where has that gone? Was Albuquerque the first?

0:00:42 - Fr. John Ignatius Reardon, OP

No, no. From what I understand from Damien Goggins, who, Lord rest his soul, is now dead, we had the Newman apostolate at Rice University when Damien was an assistant pastor with Eugene Cavanaugh, and I think that this is accurate, following Damien's return from South America. He was assigned to Houston. And I think it was Eugene Cavanaugh who was pastor at that time. Whatever. Damien was familiar with the Newman apostolate through Rice University.

As far as I know, this was our first contact with Newman apostolates, though I could be inaccurate.

Maybe over in Louisiana we were in it before, but I don't think so.

What was Damien's year with... Well, sometime... Sometime in the late... After World War II, I think. Now, Damien was not in South America during World War II. I don't know where he was in World War II. But I do... Except I know where he was in World War II. He was pastor in Madison.

Blessed Sacrament. Then from there, I think he went to Holy Rosary in Houston. And in going to Holy Rosary in Houston, he... Became associated with Rice University and the Newman work there. Actually, he was half associated with Newman work at the University Wisconsin when he was pastor at Blessed Sacrament. But it was, it was only by association, not by actual assignment, etc. etc.

But then, in 1950, we became. Damien met someplace Archbishop Edwin Vincent Byrne, who is now dead but was at that time the Archbishop of Albuquerque, Santa Fe.

And he was looking for somebody, a religious group of men, to come and take over the University of New Mexico. And Damien was ready to leave Holy Rosary in Houston and figured that this would be a good spot and so forth and so on, a challenge for him. And he made the overtures and said, yes, he could be interested in that and so forth and so on. And he went to Edward L. Hughes and Hughes said, fine, whatever was involved was done.

By 1950, the thing was completed. Negotiations with the archdiocese and so forth, whatever they were, and I don't know that, were completed. And Damien went early in the summer down to begin. And I was told, I forget exactly when, but I was told shortly after faculties And maybe while I was spending the summer out in Denver, helping out there for six weeks, that I was to go.

0:03:58 - Interviewer

So it was your first assignment?

0:03:59 - Fr. John Ignatius Reardon, OP

So it was my very first assignment. And I have to admit that I went with some misgivings, though I had met Damien at St. Pius during the May Novena. And I liked the man in this and this and this. He was 25 years my senior. 1950 was his silver jubilee. And I didn't know how it would be to go as a young priest with a man that many years my senior. And I have to say that in three years' time, no one outside of Hiram Walker himself could have treated me with as much kindness and goodness as that man did for me in those three years.

It was a good experience. A tremendous experience. Tremendous experience. He reamed me out once a year.

But I had it coming. but he really read me.

But I had it coming each trip, and I learned a tremendous amount from him, both in terms of the history of the province and in terms of work as a priest and so forth and so on. And we worked.

And he matched me hour for hour and effort for effort. And I was amazed at his stamina. So all I can say is I had three great years. Did you leave there and go to another Newman Center? No. By the end of the third year, he was ready. It's an interesting story, this is. Damien was ready to go after three years. He was really very tired. And it was. It was tremendous work. As for example, I weighed 175 pounds when I went there the first year.

And by the end of the year, I weighed 160. We had no money when we really worked our full heads off, which was fine. No complaints, but we worked. And he didn't know how long he'd keep that up, and in retrospect, I can understand that. But it just so happened that in 1953, Father Hughes, the provincial at the time, came down And we had visitation, et cetera, et cetera. And in driving him to Tucumcari and up to Roy for the Adrian sisters whom he wished to visit, which was fine, well, you know, as only Edward L. Hughes could do, he says, Ignatius, how are you getting along? And I told him exactly how I was getting along.

Fine, except that I said, you need a guy with academic credentials here, not a me. And he said, well, with the cigar in his mouth. And he said, who do we have? I said, you've got Richard Butler coming back from Rome, and he's just, I would think, just a perfect possibility. Well, Damien, toward the end of the summer, or in July, Damien, and we were teaching out at the college, St. Joseph's College, which is now the College of Albuquerque. Damien called me and he said, I have news for you.

You're being reassigned. And I said, where? And he told me, to St. Catherine's College in St. Paul. And that's how I got there. And Richard Butler came.

And Damien was not pleased. He thought he would be reassigned and so forth and so on. But anyhow, that's what happened there. No, and Albuquerque was the only Newman... campus ministry assignment I ever had. Because after St. Catherine's, then I went to Fenwick. And I was at Fenwick for seven years.

And then two years on the mission band, and then five years at Bishop Lynch.

0:08:01 - Interviewer

Obviously, we took other Newman Apostolates after that. Sure. Do you know the reasoning behind taking the Newman Apostolates?

0:08:11 - Fr. John Ignatius Reardon, OP

The best reason that I can come up with is... We were disenchanted. There were a group in the province who were disenchanted with the idea that we were expending so many men teaching women. For better or for worse, this was the frame of mind. Valid or invalid, I'm not going to argue that. But this was a large size of frame of reference in the province in those days. And I say that in the 50s. There were others that argued equally for the importance of such an apostolate, too.

But in the meantime, the Newman apostolate was bubbling up as something quite acceptable in the 50s, which it did not have in the 40s or even the 30s at its inception.

All of a sudden, we realized after World War II that it was an impossibility to educate are Catholic youngsters in Catholic colleges. The church couldn't afford it. So therefore, if they're going to go to the universities, we'd better send priests there in this Newman apostolate, which was the only format that was available. And there was a man, I forget his name, Keough, I think his name is, who started all this back in the 30s at a temple in Philadelphia. I'm pretty sure this is where its inception, but anyhow, this is where it, how it got and it just became popular.

So get in on it. And why not us, if we're as competent theologically and philosophically as we claim to be? And I hold that we were and are?

So this is how really this spread. And because bishops were looking for people to take over these places with reasonable competence, we almost had our choice to go any place we wanted. This is about the size of it. There are some accurate details I'm sure I'm missing, but that's the general idea.

0:10:21 - Interviewer

If there was a man in the province, just in your history, you span just about the whole history of the province.

0:10:25 - Fr. John Ignatius Reardon, OP

Just about.

0:10:27 - Interviewer

If you could name one person who had an influence on your life, who would that be?

0:10:31 - Fr. John Ignatius Reardon, OP

Bernard Walker. Without a doubt. Without a doubt. No question. He was my student master. Hire him if you don't mind. But as Gilbert Graham said, he's an old woman, but he's a good old woman. The man never spied. The man trusted. The man gave example. The man had common sense. The man did not... Pre-judge? And if there is anything about him, he's a holy man with brains and and I was blessed to have him as a student master.

Yeah, oh yeah, no, that this, this man, this man, and and I speak right in here, and I hope that this province.

And boy, I'm going to be right at the head of this damn list at this forum. Excuse my language, but at the forum to let him know what his men think of him.

0:11:42 - Interviewer

From what I'm gathering, it may become a real tribute.

0:11:46 - Fr. John Ignatius Reardon, OP

Oh boy, I hope it is. I don't care what else happens. This is his golden jubilee. He isn't going to live long. And he should be honored. And it's a shame that Nick Walsh is not able to stand beside him. But nevertheless, this man is one of the two. You speak to other men, those ahead of me, and you're going to find that George Kinsella was as much of a factor in the development of those men who were ahead of me in the studium. There's no doubt of this. I happened to have Bernard Walker. And I'm blessed for it.

0:12:30 - Interviewer

If you had a minute to say something to the entire province in terms of the future, what would you want to tell them?

0:12:38 - Fr. John Ignatius Reardon, OP

Don't give up.

Divide and grow.

0:12:44 - Interviewer

In what directions?

0:12:48 - Fr. John Ignatius Reardon, OP

You can only divide territory.

If you divide people, we're dead. But if you divide territory and put people together to grow, that's fine. I think we are stagnant. We're too big, and to be very blunt and frank, we live in fear for dividing. No, we aren't going to, and we do not have an immediate source of vocations either for a northern province or a southern province. But I am convinced in my mind that there would be a vast percentage who would get off their duffs and go to work if we divided the province.

I happen to be one of them who's sitting on my duff because it's easy and I'm lazy. You can publish this. It's all right with me.

I don't care how poor we are. Good grief, we had baked lettuce in the studio. I was poor in Galveston. I was poor in Albuquerque. I didn't have dime one. We were poor in the 1960s in Dallas. You know, what's poverty? I live very comfortably, fine. I like it. If I'm poor, I've got to go to work. And as Jack Lyons, Lord rest his soul, said back in the 50s when he lived, when I was at Fenwick and he was on the mission band and living at Fenwick, he said, I fear the day when this province is out of debt.

We're out of debt and we're stagnant.

I'm sorry about that, guys, but we are. That's all I have to say