

Sisters of St. Clare Interview

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SPEAKERS

Sister Laura Hammel, Tyler Provow, Sr. Dianne Doughty, Mark Prindiville

Tyler Provow 00:01

So, if we could start by both you guys just introducing yourselves. Your both your names and I guess start with how you came to Saginaw.

Sister Laura Hammel 00:14

Okay, my name is Sister Laura Hamel and I'm from originally St. Paul, Minnesota, and moved here to Saginaw in 1991 with the invitation of Bishop Ken Untener to begin a contemplative community.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 00:32

And I'm Diane Doughty. And I came with Laura and two other sisters, who have passed. And that was, you know, like, over 30 years ago. So our first 13 years are with Bishop Ken. And it was a wonderful experience. And the people here in Saginaw have welcomed us just so beautifully. And it's been a very long journey, but it's been a good journey.

Tyler Provow 01:07

So how did that kind of come about? You know, what were you, what was kind of your first mission coming here or what, you know, what was the reason behind coming here to Saginaw?

Sr. Dianne Doughty 01:19

Well, Ken always said Bishop Ken said that he had all the facets of a lot of different vocations. But one thing that he didn't have is he didn't have a contemplative community. And that means a praying community, you know, like monks, what monks do. Well we're nuns. And so he wanted that, what he called a jewel to fill out the different facets of vocation. And so, through a mutual friend, he learned about us, there were four of us at that time, and he was very excited about having us come. And he told us along the way, that when he was asking different people about this possibility, he said, Father Tom Sutton was the greatest supporter. He said, Oh, yeah, that would be great. Bring'em.

Tyler Provow 02:19

Oh, wow. So that connection with Father Tom kind of goes back quite a ways then.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 02:23

I don't think he ever knew that we were told that. But it made me feel very close to him and...

Tyler Provow 02:30

Yeah, I bet.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 02:31

Proud of him. Yeah.

Tyler Provow 02:33

So is there always just four of you guys? Or was there more? How kind of has the dynamic of your, of the four of you shifted over the years? Did, was there ever any, um, how do I want to say thoughts to expand? Or did you try to expand? Or was it just always the four of you guys kind of how was that?

Sister Laura Hammel 02:53

Yeah, we were in the beginning, we were looking to expand, we had five bedrooms in that house that we're in. And we've had a couple inquiries, maybe six or seven. One came for eight months. She was married and had a son. So that was complicated, her commitment. So she decided that it was better to be more involved in the family. So we didn't expand after that. There's, some people say it was because it wasn't a permanent dwelling. You know, as they say, if you make if you build it, they'll come. If it looks like it's safe and secure, you know, it'll come in and we didn't look that safe and secure.

Tyler Provow 03:41

Okay

Sister Laura Hammel 03:42

So I would say there's some truth to that. I don't think that's the whole truth. But we keep building big cathedrals anyway, don't we?

Tyler Provow 03:53

Yeah. Sure.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 03:55

But we came from a monastery from Minnesota; Minneapolis, and at that time, there were probably 16 of us.

Tyler Provow 04:04

Oh, wow. Okay.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 04:05

Yeah. And we had all they had, we had already made a foundation in South Korea. Jeju Island, back in the, seven, early 70s. And then since then, the Asian have a real contemplative spirit about them and they just mushroomed. So then we made a second foundation in Yangyang, which is closer to the north

of Korea. So, but our little community, we had talked over the years about what we call the poverty proposal. And what it was our religious assistant who was a Franciscan priest, and he went around to our different houses. And he said, "you know, I think that you should consider trying something on a smaller scale." Because, you know, the sisters in these monasteries, these huge monasteries that were built for 50. Or we were built for 40 in our monastery, but, you know, we never got 40. But when I entered, we were 26. But then after the renewal years and stuff, a lot of people left and found other ways of serving the Lord. But he would say, you're spending so much time trying to keep up these big buildings. And so we had talked about it in our community, a number of us, and we wanted to, to live simply-er, more simple and not so secure. And so circumstances allowed us to ask permission to do that. And so the four of us, then were invited by Bishop Ken.

Tyler Provow 06:06

Okay. Yeah, that makes sense. I'm sure there was quite a journey down here. How was life different for you guys living up there versus coming down here and starting to do what you were doing down here?

Sr. Dianne Doughty 06:19

Well, living with 16, or whatever that number was, and living with four was very different challenge.

Tyler Provow 06:28

Sure, I bet.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 06:29

Yeah, very different challenge.

Tyler Provow 06:31

I'm sure you get very close to the people that you're living with, when you're obviously in a smaller number as well.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 06:36

And you can't oversee things, you have to deal with things. And. But we had a great, a great group, really.

Sister Laura Hammel 06:49

I think the other thing is, when you're in a more of a home-type atmosphere, it's different, you know, you're gonna end up in the kitchen, no matter what happens.

Tyler Provow 06:58

Sure

Sister Laura Hammel 06:58

That may or may not be true in a big institution, you can, there's a lot of hiding places. So that changes that dynamic of relationships.

Tyler Provow 07:09

Sure.

Sister Laura Hammel 07:09

So that was brand new, but that's how we notice ourselves different from some of our other communities.

Tyler Provow 07:17

Yeah, that makes sense.

Sister Laura Hammel 07:19

Yeah. So.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 07:21

And we structured our life different, you know, in our monastery, because of the Divine Office, which is breaks up the day, the whole day and night. With the Psalms and the prayer of the office. When we came out here with four of us, I think our two older sisters were already deep into a contemplative experience, I think. And pretty soon, it was just too many words. And, but we did pray the office for quite a bit, but then we kind of individually started to pray personally, and, and also there was more quiet in this place. Because we didn't have an intercom system. And we didn't have people at the door and nobody knew us.

Tyler Provow 08:17

Sure.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 08:17

You know. So the lifestyle was just, it was quiet, and it was comfortable. And there was beauty and it was a great contrast.

Sister Laura Hammel 08:31

I would take another twist to your same question and saying we had not having a chaplain, because of the priest shortage. It meant we had to go out to visit the parishes for a mass. Contemplatives tend to be secluded.

Tyler Provow 08:52

Okay.

Sister Laura Hammel 08:53

Because it just means more hermitage type things. But being going going out, we got to know people. And people began to ask us to pray for them and pray for their health or their family, or...Well there's three things that people ask for their children, their health, and their finances. Those are the big ones. And then the job comes after that. But so that was a break from the tradition.

Tyler Provow 09:23

Okay.

Sister Laura Hammel 09:24

So and then following in sort of the manner of Ken, Ken didn't like people staying here. He wanted them to go out, go out in into the field and do what you can. So we sort of picked that up and and he also wanted to...to support ourselves. So we tried a couple of things, but what we did was make Christmas cards in the true Franciscan style. And then go out to the parishes at between Thanksgiving and Advent. And that was a nice way of meeting the priests, that's the leadership, and then praying with the people. And if they liked the cards, they would buy them. It really didn't make any difference, but we were able to meet them. And, but we did have this older sister who was well into her 80s and all we did was put her right there. People felt so sorry for her because they're she would, they've she reminded them of their teachers in school, you know. But of course, the younger generation doesn't have that anymore.

Tyler Provow 10:27

Right, yeah.

Tyler Provow 10:28

Very different.

Sister Laura Hammel 10:28

So...

Sister Laura Hammel 10:28

That was a, that was one of those things that you have to take advantage of what's there. So that was really a break from our traditional way. Because people just they live on, we live on donations.

Tyler Provow 10:41

Oh, okay.

Sister Laura Hammel 10:42

So that's a big deal. And that means you have to be careful. And also cog... What was really hard in the beginning, was just to give you a feel for that is the health insurance. So you can imagine paying four people's health insurance, when we got here. And everything was paid for us there. And everything was taken care of. All of a sudden, it's in your lap. So it that was a very, it was like \$1,000 a month for the four of us. So you can imagine that was stressful.

Tyler Provow 11:17

Oh, sure.

Sister Laura Hammel 11:18

So that's, that's that was the beginning. And of course, the people helped us and we were able to get into government health care, as well as you know, by our own. So that was where I wouldn't you agree that we were really different from some of the other places?

Sr. Dianne Doughty 11:36

Oh, yeah.

Sister Laura Hammel 11:37

And most of the other places will build right away in order to get established, as I said before, you kind of get an image. And we didn't build. Mainly because Ken didn't really feel that there was enough money here to do that. And I suspect he was right. We never tested it.

Tyler Provow 11:55

Sure.

Sister Laura Hammel 11:56

But also, I wouldn't do it without bishop's permission, you know.

Sister Laura Hammel 12:01

But he wasn't that kind of guy. He was, if you think you can do it, he'd let you do it. But he wasn't, he wasn't of that mind.

Tyler Provow 12:01

Yeah.

Tyler Provow 12:10

Yeah.

Sister Laura Hammel 12:12

So anyway, that just tells you how it's different. And how Saginaw, for us, was different. And we came into a place that was open. It wasn't closed. So it was a you know, in this...well... we came in the 90s. But it was that openness that was happening at that point. And so it was not unusual to see priests and religious everywhere. And they were more of us. And I was gonna say something. Yeah, one of the things we found out as we visited each of the parishes, there was 110 at that point, and we visited most of them. And we found that because he was here so long, 25 years, he lived in the soul of the people. They knew stories about him personal stories. You know, that's amazing. Even if he was just anybody, the mayor, it would have been fantastic. But, you know, the bishops are usually pretty aloof. And so he was it was always like, a meeting point with people.

Tyler Provow 13:23

Yeah. Yeah, it seems as I've kind of gotten acclimated and talk to more people, everybody seems to have fond memories or stories about Bishop Ken. And I'm sure the other bishops were great, but it seems like he was the one that really sticks out for this diocese.

Sister Laura Hammel 13:40

He was charismatic. Yes. And the other thing I've come to see we, our generation likes to talk about him. Because he was just a ton of fun. He didn't take himself very seriously. But he also, it was a

different it was a good time for us in the church. There was room for us in the church. And then when the other bishops came that changed. I think we can leave it there. But...

Tyler Provow 14:06

Sure.

Sister Laura Hammel 14:08

So you can remember certain classes and certain situations in your growing up were more alive than other times?

Tyler Provow 14:15

Oh, definitely.

Sister Laura Hammel 14:16

Yeah. And some of them were just because people were characters. And they didn't take themselves real seriously. So but a deeply religious man, deeply religious.

Tyler Provow 14:32

Going back even before, what did you guys do? What was your childhood like? And what did you do before joining the Poor Claire Sisters?

Sr. Dianne Doughty 14:43

Well, my life is so boring. You go ahead.

Sister Laura Hammel 14:48

Well, you know, I feel like I'm talking a lot here. But by my age, you can tell that I grew up in sort of the the ghetto of Catholicism. We were very parochial, you know, and so the Catholic area, and the Protestant area and all that. And so we went, I went to a Catholic school and high school, and I was always attracted to the nuns, I think, because of their, well, I had special needs. I had trouble reading because of hearing difficulty. So there was help, you know, it was somebody was helpful. So it wasn't unusual to have vocations, so to speak, or to have people marry, it was more unusual that people go to college, that was more unusual. So, but I went on to technical training, I was a lab technician in the local hospital, and for a couple of years and went to school, to college, sort of when I could, you know, you have to kind of work your schedule around your work. And then I just got tired of that, and I went to the Peace Corps for a while. And that was good, is terribly lonely, but it was a good experience to see poverty, and I mean really poverty, real poverty. Until live, I don't do very well, being a tourist. I do better with more time in any one place. Mostly to get used to the people so I can feel what it's like. And so when I came back, nothing fit right again. You know, once you had a change, uh, I mean experience a change issue. Things just don't fit right. And again, have a kid and you'll know what that means. You know.

Tyler Provow 16:43

I have a six month old, right now.

Sister Laura Hammel 16:45

Oh, yeah, then you get it.

Tyler Provow 16:46

Things have been changing.

Sister Laura Hammel 16:47

Your whole perspective on a lot of things changes.

Tyler Provow 16:50

Yeah.

Sister Laura Hammel 16:51

So I went to St. Catherine's, which is a girl, a woman's college. And what was good for us at that point is we had what we'd call now segregated schools. But it what that means for us is that when women were with women, they encouraged women leadership, where men would just take over the guys would just do it everybody expected there would be a male President of the class, right? Well, that wasn't the expectation with female. And that was one of the things that we don't have the same anymore. But hopefully, that's balancing out, I see that more balancing out than it did in our time.

Tyler Provow 17:30

Sure.

Sister Laura Hammel 17:31

So anyway, went to St. Catherine's. And during that time, I met Dianne, who was going back to school herself, I would have been about 37, 27...27. And then I went one year and met her and then went to University of Chicago for a master's. And then after I came back from that, I just kind of wandered around for a while. And then I decided to join the monastery. So that's how I came.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 18:05

Yeah, I think, by the way, I saw Tunisia the other day in the news for some, but I can't pull it up right now. That's where you were right.

Sister Laura Hammel 18:13

Yeah.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 18:14

Yeah. Well, I graduated from grade school, and I went to a Catholic school. And then I went to high school, all girls Catholic school. And then I went to, I left home about 80 miles north, and went to a regular college. I don't know what I guess it was called a teaching school. Because I was thinking I'd probably be a teacher. And so I went from home to a dorm. And then I felt, I always, I always had some desire to serve the Lord in some way. I knew I wasn't called to the mission, mission life. I just somehow knew that. But I had Dominican Sisters in grade school, and they would take us down to Sinsinawa, you know, where their mother house was, and everything about it was just kind of beautiful to me. And that

we had Good Shepherd sisters in the city. But I was influenced by something I had read about the contemplative life and the value of seeking the face of God through Christ, getting to know him and that somehow this was going to make a big difference in the world. And I, I bought that at that time. I mean, I was I wanted that. So I went out and I visited a Carmelite community in North Minneapolis,

Sister Laura Hammel 18:30

North St. Paul

Sr. Dianne Doughty 18:56

North St. Paul, excuse me, and all I knew I wasn't going to be able to keep the rule the way she described or if I couldn't keep it, my dad would have had a fit, you know. So then I visited the Poor Clares and it was just wonderful. And so I applied, and I didn't go back to college then. So I entered and when I entered the community, we were like 26 members, it was a big, big community. And I loved everything about it. But as we got into, like, we're after the Vatican Council and stuff, you know, where you, all of a sudden, we could talk to one another, you know, we had big silence times and stuff. When you start seeing the humanity of others, not just their glorious countenance, it was a big challenge for me. And I entered young. I mean, I had one year of college, and then I entered. So I had a lot of growing up to do.

Tyler Provow 21:04

Sure.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 21:05

And they were very loving, and compassionate and good to me. And my parents were living in the same city. And I had one brother, and he was in the service, but it was kind of all family, like the sisters knew my family and my family knew the sisters. And so it was good. It was very good. And then later on, a number of sisters went back to college, who had had some college, because what the older sisters realized was, when you enter, with not very much development that way, that down the road, you're going to need it. And so they started a house of studies for contemplative women. And that was in the 70s. And it was in a town south of the Twin Cities. And sisters came from all over the country, you know, the East and the West. And it was just wonderful. That year, I only went for a year. But that gave me then two years of college. So then they wanted me to be in a position of helping form the new people. So they said well, why don't you go back and get your get your degree. So I went to St. Catherine's, they're right in town. Well in St. Paul, and graduated from there. And then when I came out here, Bishop Ken had just sent Father TJ, to Camp Mark Seven, which was a study program in the summer, to learn sign language to serve the deaf. And when when he told me that, and he had just done a census, in the diocese of the deaf membership, and I had always wanted to be an interpreter. And so Ken really encouraged me. So I went down to Lansing for a bit, and then I came down to Flint, and then finally graduated with two associate degrees in Deaf Studies and Interpreting. Yeah.

Tyler Provow 23:25

Oh wow

Sr. Dianne Doughty 23:26

So probably before you two came to the diocese, we had a deaf population. It wasn't large, but they were an older group, and the younger men, that really, we didn't have any deaf women. But we had four or five young men. Then they all went off to college, and the older people started to die off, you know. So I think it says in the directory that probably Father TJ is still sacramental, um, you know, what you call him a spiritual guide or something for the deaf?

Tyler Provow 24:05

Okay.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 24:06

Yeah, I'm not sure who else has mentioned maybe Mary Maselli.

Mark Prindiville 24:10

I'll have to look that up now.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 24:11

Yeah. And it was it really was a ministry, it was wonderful. And I only did the I only did mass. I was never skilled, I was too old when I started. And it's a hard language. And...

Tyler Provow 24:25

Oh I bet.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 24:26

Yeah, yeah. And so I just like, I couldn't do medical and I and I never got certified. Deliberately. I didn't think I could really pass it. But um, but I loved doing the mass. And then it just got too much. Like when sometimes we'd have a priest that would type up his homily and give it to one of the interpreters ahead of time and that was wonderful. And then you'd get the music, you know, and so you could really be preparing for it. And then we got a priest, who was real big talker, but never typed anything and never gave us anything. And I would look out at the deaf and they would be. And I think this is demoralizing. I can't interpret him well, no wonder they aren't getting it either. So I just said, I don't think I can do this. But where I feel badly about it is that they do call and ask me to do like a wake or a funeral service. And but it's I'm just not skilled enough. Because I'd have to, I'd have to listen to a speaking person, and then put it out to the deaf and I just be afraid that I would just not. It's it's too big a skill.

Tyler Provow 25:50

Sure. Yeah. Very challenging.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 25:52

Yeah.

Tyler Provow 25:52

Very interesting, though that...

Sr. Dianne Doughty 25:54

I love it.

Tyler Provow 25:55

Certainly a need. That probably goes unaddressed in a lot of communities.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 25:59

Oh, for sure.

Tyler Provow 26:01

So...

Sr. Dianne Doughty 26:01

For sure. And I don't know, for a long time two of the interpreters went up to St. Brigid's. And I think I was Len Wachowski, and they had a good size deaf community. But they didn't want to come to Saginaw. You know, for mass. So it was it was split. So everybody got older, and it was too much.

Tyler Provow 26:33

Yeah. Yeah. Especially I'm sure you know, doing all that stuff with your hands. It gets hard to keep up with for sure.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 26:39

Yeah.

Tyler Provow 26:39

So that's very interesting. What are some practices or devotions that you've developed over your years of service?

Sister Laura Hammel 26:51

I liked that question. I kind of thought that was an interesting question. And certainly in the beginning, I don't use this word pejoratively, but more pious, it felt good. That's what I mean by pious when it feels good. Then after a while, it gets boring. So don't quote me on that.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 27:16

Tape recorder *laughs*

Sister Laura Hammel 27:17

I know *laughs* And I signed a paper that said he could use it. But you have to work at and I suspect this is true in marriages too, you have to work at making it work. What is it was the first draw. And for me, it was believing there was something more to life. You're gonna laugh at this, at least I laugh at myself about this. So I worked in a laboratory where you do the same thing over and over and over. And I said, I gotta get out of here and see what's out there in the world. And then I joined a monastery, they did the same thing over and over. Who's dumber now, hmm?. But what I want to say is you felt different. And well, one was stamping out disease and saving people, but and that felt good, it was good when there was good things happening for people. Another way, this way, I, you know, at the risk

of sounding, repetitious Ken was, that charismatic guy who could sort of make it make Christianity feel real, as opposed to just in church. And my way of saying it is, he would say, "Come along, anybody can come along," and just join what we're doing. If you want to come if I if you want to help out, he did a lot of social work. And if you're Catholic, fine, if you're not fine, if you want to join the faith, we'll accept you and welcome you. If you don't want to, that's just fine. But everybody was welcome. I don't feel quite that same way right now. And in the example I could give you is where I get very embarrassed is when the priest says I'm sorry, if you're not Catholic, don't come up to for Communion. And it particularly at the most sensitive times, like weddings, or I mean, like funerals, you know, that's, again, another abrasive feeling. I'm not saying I'm not taking any theological point. It's just a feeling at a vulnerable time. So and then after, as you get older, in community, people started to get sicker because you get older. So and things happen, you know, their voice cracks, you can't hear, you sneeze a lot. You're just uncomfortable. You're not staying awake. I mean, I think you've probably seen the picture. And so you have to adjust to people's needs. You just can't keep running like a car all the time, forever and ever and it's not a machine. It's an organic process. So it became more interior. And also more revealing, because you couldn't put it out there. And that's also part of community. Sure, well, you're married. Are you married?

Mark Prindiville 30:11

I'm not.

Sister Laura Hammel 30:12

Oh, you're a lucky guy. Well, I mean by that is, you well being with. living with somebody intimately, they also tell you what they think.

Mark Prindiville 30:23

Sure.

Sister Laura Hammel 30:25

You know what that means?

Tyler Provow 30:26

Oh, yeah.

Sister Laura Hammel 30:26

And what that means is you have to change. And, and you have to do some, honesty with that. And so, that's part of community and honesty comes with, "why do you want to do that?" I mean, do you want to just change for change sake? I mean, you have to come to a conclusion that yeah it's worth, it's worth it to have the good always win out. And I think ultimately, now, and this is over a lot of years, you know, I believe that, what the reality is, is I see more my friends die, is I'm not the sole...I didn't create myself. I'm not the end result. I think there's were, "I sort of find a conflict with the world." The narcissism of pleasure. And I don't say that in any pejorative way. But that's what we are, we're a consumer society. And the other way of saying, "That's not, that's not going to get me any further." Me personally. It's going to be more humility, it's going to be more, you know, the truth about living with somebody and being honest. And those are, are not necessarily religious values. But they are. That's what changes

us. And makes us more willing to go out to community, I think. And when you're, when you're can be selfless enough to go out to community, that's when life...I think starts taking out some more meaning. Otherwise, it does become sort of self absorption. And I speak only for myself, not for other people. But that's a, that's, that's a, that's a big learning curve. Very big learning curve. So that's how I would answer that question.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 32:34

Well, devotion that I have developed here, because I learned about it after Pope Francis was Pope. And that is I have a real devotion to Our Lady the Undoer of Knots. Do you know that title?

Tyler Provow 32:51

I don't.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 32:52

Do you, Mark?

Mark Prindiville 32:53

Nuh-uh

Sr. Dianne Doughty 32:53

Okay. Well, I didn't either. But it's Pope Francis's favorite mantra. You know, mantra meaning that he repeats this over and over. And I think he was in like, not Indonesia, but some country where they have this devotion to Our Lady the Undoer of Knots. And so he has promoted this. And he has little cards and you know, there's pictures and when you were talking about Father Jozwiak, one time we went to visit him and bring him something and I leant over and here was this pillow. And it was Our Lady the Undoer of Knots. Somebody had made him...and I just squealed I was, I said, Father where did you get this? About a week later, he comes to the door with the pillow, he said this belongs to you.

Tyler Provow 33:55

How nice of him.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 33:56

Wasn't that so sweet. But it's um, and I try to I do I do the our, what we have a prayer line, a confidential prayer line. And not everybody asks for a response, but when they do, I try to insert where I can anything about our lady, our blessed mother, because the knots are the things that we deal with in our life, you know. Addictions or divorce or, um, any anything, but it's a knot. And the idea is that she will help remove those knots and bring us closer to Jesus. And I do find that true. And I love, I've always I've always felt a closeness to our Blessed Mother. But this one coming out here because I never heard of it either. But if you Google it, you'll find a lot about it.

Tyler Provow 34:58

I'll have to do that.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 34:59

Yeah. Yeah. And when I was, we were in Santa Fe, New Mexico, for a retreat. And I was talking about our lady of the undoer and she said, "oh, gotta come to this church!" She said, right in their yard, they've got this gorgeous statue of Our Lady of the Undoer of Knots. And so those, you know, like, it's a belt, kind of, but it goes this way. And the knots, you can see them.

Tyler Provow 35:29

Oh, okay.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 35:29

Yeah. So that that would be a new, kind of new devotion. But when I was a kid, I loved Our Lady Perpetual Health. We have the, every Wednesday night, we have that service. But I, I've lost that now. And the other thing I like a lot, is the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. And I was introduced to it. And I don't remember who did this, Laura. But it's sung. And so, like one time, myself and one of our other sisters, who's now gone, but we made a retreat together. And that was what we did every day, we listened to the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. And I didn't, I don't think I knew about that when I was in the monastery either. So those are two pretty standard devotions, now.

Tyler Provow 36:48

Can you describe some of the different types of communities you've served over the years? I know you touched on the deaf community and that, but what what kind of other communities have you guys served over the years?

Sister Laura Hammel 37:04

Well, I, I came at the same time that computers were coming out. So I helped some people get, get started on computing, some of the diocese secretaries and stuff like that. Just I just had a very, very curious feel about what computers could do. And so that's one of the things that was odd. I wanted to ask, to answer this in the sense of "what surprised you about religious life?" It's not one thing.

Tyler Provow 37:38

Sure

Sister Laura Hammel 37:39

You have to do many things. Like, for instance, coming out here and trying to support yourself, which you had no idea how to do that. You have to do things that you didn't really expect to do, for instance, create 20 years of Christmas cards. You have any idea what that's like, and you can't use Rudolph, because they're religious cards.

Tyler Provow 38:06

Sure.

Sister Laura Hammel 38:09

And then visiting parishes to get known, how to, how to craft an elevator speech. Doing development work is really basically a new word that we found. That was how to get known and how to get supported. I mean, that would not have been part of my thoughts of contemplative life. You think

Thomas Merton thought about those things? No, he just went to took little trips over and visited the Buddha. But everything was taken care of for him, you know. So I would, and then writing, we did some mission work in the diocese, because we were missioned here by Ken. And so it meant crafting a homily that would be interesting to the people in the pew. And now we've sat in the pew for how many years, and we weren't interested. So, how to take that critique now and make it different. So those are, so then you get up and you kind of expose yourself like that. And, again, we weren't used to public speaking. And so as you can see, it was a lot of feeling in the dark. Moving around, in however, you felt the Spirit might be calling you to, "how can we give spirituality in a way that's more contemporary?" And that is a very loose, elusive answer. So, I wanted to answer that question in the same way that say, when you said, "what surprises you?" And also before we get too, too close to the end, I want to take another question that you said

Tyler Provow 39:57

Yeah, absolutely.

Sister Laura Hammel 39:58

The monumental shifts...You know, we grew up in, Dianne, I grew up, as I said, in the more the parochial era. And nowadays, I think they would call them immigrant communities. And so that was our community. So what you breathe, what, how you breathe the world, you know? Like, if you go down to Detroit, they're going to have the Muslim community. And they have their own stores, their own mosques, and everything else. And that's their community. But you know, as it, as we grew more into the culture, we grew away from those communities. But what happened here, what we found here, and what we didn't have in Minnesota, which was very Catholic, it's Irish Catholic. Here, they had, they had a particular style of, when we got here we noticed it, of encouraging leadership among the lay people. They didn't keep it exclusively in the hierarchy. And what examples I would give that is the lay ministry. And just tons of ways that the pastor, his job was not to run the parish, his job was to get the people to run the parish. And that has sort of not been, kept a follow, follow, that's not followed through. And, again, it's not worth saying what we think about it, but you're asking for a contrast. For instance, we go to church now, and this could be COVID too, there isn't anybody else helping the priest, the priest does everything.

Tyler Provow 41:48

Okay

Sister Laura Hammel 41:49

Like no altar girls, or altar boys? There may be a reader, but now it's the same reader for maybe two readings, and maybe one other one for the petition. But can you see what I'm getting at?

Tyler Provow 42:01

Yeah.

Sister Laura Hammel 42:02

And there's just not that encouragement. And maybe there's you know, maybe the kids, the kids were more...Is that me? Are you? Oh, you're ringing.

Mark Prindiville 42:13

That's not me.

Sister Laura Hammel 42:15

Oh, that's me ringing. Decline. So the idea is, I don't mean to make this, there was a difference between we, when we went to church. And it was, it was conformity, we conformed. And whatever Father said Father did, and the secrecy. I mean, that comes out in sort of the pedophilia and out of the secrecy. And then there was an opening. And we kind of got here at the opening, when there was a sharing of things. And then it's now because, I think because of coming back into the what was held secret is now being known. There's again, that sort of caving in on itself. And that's just an opinion. But that's what I miss. Some of the different voices in the community.

Tyler Provow 43:21

Sure.

Sister Laura Hammel 43:22

So I wanted to, to say something about it. Did you want to say something about Dianne?

Sr. Dianne Doughty 43:28

Well, I went through the spiritual direction program in in the lay ministry service with Sister Roberta and Sister, um...

Sister Laura Hammel 43:40

Jo.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 43:41

Jo Gaucher. So, over the years, I have been doing some spiritual direction with priests, men, and religious sisters and lay people. And that has been very rewarding. So that's kind of dipping into other people. One thing I wanted to go back to and just explain, when we came here, this diocese had never had a contemplative community. And so, Ken made it clear to us that we're going to have to make ourselves known. You know, like the Trappists have wine, and the nuns have chocolates, and, you know, that's how you get to know these people. And, but we didn't want to put any more calories into the community if we didn't have to.

Tyler Provow 44:41

Sure.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 44:41

So we came up with our fragrant blessing oil.

Tyler Provow 44:47

Okay.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 44:48

And that oil is all over the country and internationally. And the idea was to enable people to pray with each other. And then parents started telling us that, you know, they were blessing their kids with the oil at night because the kids were having nightmares or some, you know, and because St. Clare was our mother foundress, back in the 1200s, she really had gifts of healing. And then of course, we know what Jesus had. So I think we're in the right line for a healing ministry. So on occasion, we have been asked to go to the bedside of somebody who is dying, or who is very ill, and pray with them and and maybe use their oil. But that that would be, I don't know of any other communities. Well we do socialize with other religious communities. Like the Missiondell Sisters here, we socialize with them a bit. Yeah. And, um, I can't think of anybody else.

Sister Laura Hammel 46:04

Near, well, there used to be a lot more religious here than there are now.

Tyler Provow 46:08

Sure. Is it, kind of bouncing off of Laura's question that she wanted to answer, Is there anything that surprised you about religious life?

Sr. Dianne Doughty 46:23

Mhm

Sister Laura Hammel 46:26

Would you like to share that sister?

Sr. Dianne Doughty 46:28

Well, maybe not that what I'm thinking, but. Yeah, I guess, sometimes I've been surprised at the challenge of interpersonal differences. You know, that chair, it's one thing to have charity, and to have compassion, and mercy. But when it gets where it feels like, bitter, or hard or something. I know, it's everybody's journey, so no matter what, where we're at, on the journey, the Holy Spirit is doing the work that needs to be done. But I think that, just remember, after I made first vows, and then I would come to a chapter meeting, and two sisters were just really at each other. And not physically, but I mean, really, in different camps or different perspectives. And I was really freaked out. I don't know what I thought, I guess I was hoping that it was more peaceful. But that I, that I had to grow up and realize that this is what it is, it is what it is. And you can't judge, you know, somebody might have a disagreement with somebody else. But it doesn't make one better than the other or worse than the other, you know. So, I think those surprises me, and and then we belong to a bigger group. We belong to a federation of Poor Clares. And so over the years, different sisters would travel and visit different monasteries, you know, because we didn't go out very much. And it was kind of a thrill, you know. And I remember being real surprised when one of the sisters was dying in one of our other monasteries. And I knew this sister, but the people were saying, "oh her death was so awful, it was just painful." I said, "well, what, what was..." the I knew nothing about death at that point. And I said, "well, what, what made it so difficult?" "Oh, I think she just, she just didn't think God was gonna, you know, protect her, or save her or something." And I remember just being sickened by that, that I thought, live your whole life

close to the Lord Jesus. And then at death, you're falling apart because you can't. So that was that was a big thing.

Tyler Provow 48:59

Sure.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 49:24

I've since gotten over it.

Sister Laura Hammel 49:27

Thank God.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 49:27

Yeah.

Tyler Provow 49:29

I'm sure that would be difficult at the time, though.

Sister Laura Hammel 49:31

Oh, you were such good feedback.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 49:33

Yeah, thank you.

Tyler Provow 49:34

Hey, you're welcome.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 49:35

Well, well, it was. I don't think I've even told you about that. You don't even know the system I'm talking about I don't think.

Sister Laura Hammel 49:42

Yeah.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 49:43

Anyway.

Sister Laura Hammel 49:45

You also asked another question here that I think is helpful. And that is "what, what would you do next?"

Tyler Provow 49:50

Yeah.

Sister Laura Hammel 49:53

You know, we'd have to say that Saginaw formed us. We're, we are who we are, and we look different than a lot of our other sisters because of coming here. And now that we're just two, we've been asked to leave. And so we had to look for another community. But this is very common in the sense that there aren't people coming to this way of life, I think there's something else burgeoning. We just don't recognize it, because we're too close to it, or it's too new. And, what has been helpful for us is, and another religious community, an active community, people who were mostly in medical fields, kind of have room now in their mother house, and they offered us a place that we could have a more quiet and solitude than we've ever had. You know, it sounds, now we think, "Oh, my God, what's gonna happen?" So, there's, it's, you can feel the decline. And, you know, I may be the one saying, "Oh, God, he's out there." But I think we have to feel that just as God has led us through these different stages, that, that we will mature gracefully, and, and come to our end with, with dignity and peace without necessarily success, meaning success being growing and expanding, and everything else. But the depths of the spirituality that I have, I wouldn't give up. I don't know if I can explain it any better than that. But I think you know, the depth of the love you have for whatever you're doing, has to be your reason for doing it. Otherwise, move on, move on, and find it. So that's, so what do you do next? I think I'm longing to have the time to kind of read what some other people have experienced, more contemporary things, as opposed to the classical things. And because I think so much is changing. And it's not necessarily coming from monastic groups, it's coming from scholars, people who are out there experimenting with things and doing things. And I think it'll be a meshing of Christianity and some other openings to other ways of coming to let your spirit be free enough. Or let your spirit be unself...grow past your selfishness, if I put it in a real crass way. So that's, that's kind of what I hope for. Haven't been able to do that because in some ways, having to support yourself is kind of selfish, in the sense. You got to eat and you got these other people that have taken vows with you. And you're all responsible for each other to get yourself...keep the life going, you know what it mean? I mean, you know what, it's like, you gotta...would you'd go to this job if you're, I don't mean this job here, but would you go to this job if you didn't have to eat? You know what I mean? It's, so now to finding the that that voice. A voice that you may have not heard, because you're so deep into the the nitty gritty of it.

Tyler Provow 53:28

Yeah, I can understand that.

Sister Laura Hammel 53:29

Okay. So I'm done. That's my story.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 53:33

And you're sticking to it.

Sister Laura Hammel 53:35

For today. Something new may be revealed.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 53:39

I'm sure there will be new things.

Sister Laura Hammel 53:42

Yeah, that's the nice thing is there's never an ending to the revelation.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 53:46

That's right. And we're evolving. They kept saying that over the Holy Week services, you know, yes, we're looking at Christ 2000 years ago, but what happened there is happening today, you know, in our evolution, putting on the mind of Christ and taking whatever comes. I am, I am so grateful. And I'll never be able to be grateful enough for what God has done with this transition. You know, I mean, at first, it was extremely painful to think like, we're going to leave Saginaw? We're here for our lives, you know. But the Spirit has really helped us let go, helped me let go, and just go with where the Spirit is moving. And, and I can't think of a better place than this Franciscan group of women who are very dedicated but they're very warm hearted. And in their history, they're from Germany, back in the 1800s. And we've been told that their motherhouse in Germany, the beginnings, that they gave hospitality to a Poor Clare community, there in Germany. So this is part of their history, their precedent. And that just thrills me. I just I think God is just so in this.

Tyler Provow 55:27

Yeah.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 55:28

And I see so many signs. And I think I feel to that our our dear sisters... I just feel and with Ken, too, that they're interceding for us from another vantage point. So it's kind of exciting. So I'm just... what is the question? What do you do next? What happens next?

Tyler Provow 55:56

Yeah, what will you do next?

Sister Laura Hammel 56:01

Well, right now we're trying to pack up our tent, and all our pots so that we can move on and you probably know what that's like.

Tyler Provow 56:10

Yeah, just having moved here, a couple of years ago. Moving is never fun. And I'm the packing is the worst. I hate it. And, so I don't envy you guys. You have to pack right now.

Sister Laura Hammel 56:25

Don't live in your house for thirty three years before you start packing up. oh,

Tyler Provow 56:29

Yeah.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 56:31

Okay.

Tyler Provow 56:31

Well, is there anything else that I've glossed over or that you guys would like to add? You know, anything about your journey about your time here, about the impact that Saginaw's had on you guys, or that you feel you've had on Saginaw?

Sr. Dianne Doughty 56:50

Well, you know, our life is a bit hidden in a way, except that we did go, made an effort to meet the different parishes, but I think now facing leaving, part of being overwhelmed is the way people are expressing their, their appreciation. It's because they really believe in a life of prayer life, and the power of Christ interceding for us, for all of us. And so that is really like today at the funeral. There were a couple people that said, "Oh, we're gonna miss you." You know, they wouldn't have that opportunity to express that. Unless, I guess that we were leaving. So yeah, Saginaw is, it will just live in our, in my heart forever.

Sister Laura Hammel 57:54

In our minds, we're not...everything is staying the same except for living in a new place.

Tyler Provow 58:00

Sure.

Sister Laura Hammel 58:00

We're still the Poor Clares of Saginaw. But, yeah, I mean, it's been a it's been a bitrite...it's been quite a journey.

Tyler Provow 58:14

Yeah, I bet. Well, I appreciate your guys's time and your service to the Diocese of Saginaw. And I wish you guys the best in your transition. And I'm sure everything will work out for you. Like you say, God's got a plan and even though it might be tough, you know, it seems like you guys have had a lot of tough journeys and stressful moments and it always you know, has worked out the way it should and so that should continue.

Sr. Dianne Doughty 58:44

Yeah, that's well said.

Sister Laura Hammel 58:46

So tell me what was your degree and when you went to school?

Tyler Provow 58:49

Psychology

Sister Laura Hammel 58:50

Ah, we did we guessed that right, didn't we?