

TM: So, it is November 18, 2009. We are in Smith Hall at KU and we're going to be talking with Ann Cobb about a childhood in small town Kansas as a Catholic. So, and I want to say up front this is part of our ongoing project. We're trying to create a public record so don't tell any deep dark secrets that you don't want known. [laughter]

AC: What can I say?

TM: Yeah, as if there are any, of course. So, just by way of introduction Ann's been a friend of mine for very long time and she recently retired from a faculty position over the KU Med Center and since then has pursued what was a sideline for a long time before that, life as an artist, and has been a really active, creative artist since then. And she is an anthropologist and has all kinds of credentials and all kinds of things, but we don't care about any of that today. We're going to talk about childhood in Kansas, growing up Catholic. So, why don't you start out and just say a little bit about your original circumstances, your family and what they did, that kind of thing.

AC: Sure. And you can stop me anytime if I go on too long because I have a tendency to do that.

TM: OK.

AC: So, I don't know if anyone here is from Seneca Kansas or Nemaha County but that's where I grew up, and Seneca at that time was 87% Catholic. That's what people said. I don't know. It wasn't a real statistic I'm sure, but we had a very large Catholic school, both elementary and high school, and a fairly small public elementary and high school. My family, you know, had been Catholic forever. My father's side, his parents were from Germany and German Catholics and my mother's heritage is Czechoslovakian. She of course was raised Catholic as well, and my father had a sister who was a Benedictine nun at a convent in Atchinson and a brother Father Jermaine was a Benedictine monk at Atchinson. So, we were raised, you know, very, very much steeped in the tradition of Catholicism and the community as a Catholic community because, you know, as you can imagine in a small town so much revolved around the school and the church and my mother in particular was very involved. So, my teachers I mean I went to Catholic school from first grade all the way through college so I went to Marymount College in Salina, which no longer exists, for part of my college education and all of our teachers, of course, were nuns at that time and I think Catholic schools now have lots more lay teachers than was the case at that time. So, in terms of context I think you would have to say that in some sense it was a pretty insular kind of situation in terms of worldview and how one should behave and what one's religious duties were and what the rules and regulations were and so on. And beyond my aunt and uncle being religious, you know, members of religious communities my parents again were also very involved with whoever the local priests and nuns were so they would often be at our house for dinner or the nuns of course not because at that time they actually nuns were not allowed, the Benedictine nuns, were not allowed to be in anybody's home without their mother present.

TM: Really?

AC: Yes. So, my aunt's sister Virginia if we had family reunions she could come. She could be outside on the porch, but she could not be in and one of my earliest realizations that my father really did, you know, balk at some of these kinds of [UNKNOWN] in fact used to tease her and say, "Saint Benedict was just crazy. That's just ridiculous." And she would just laugh, you know? They'd have this little argument about it but she stuck to it and, you know, she would always have to be accompanied by another nun. And I think even on the school grounds or, you know, from going from the school to their convent house there that they pretty much, you know, the nuns were together. I mean the priests could go singularly any place they wanted to and come in the house and all that. So, you want to stop me yet?

TM: Nope. Go right ahead.

AC: So, I'm from a family of three additional siblings. There were four of us, and I'm third in line from the oldest. When I was asked to do this today one of the things I thought would be important to mention is I think that when people are raised in a particular religious tradition, even within a family, I do think that you really end up with varying understandings, ideas, senses of what it means to be Catholic or to be some other religion but certainly Catholic. The town also was very much kind of an intermarried community. So, if you said, you know, my last name was Kukleman so everybody knew what family I belonged to. You know, if I said Uphouse you knew who all of those families were and so on and so there was a good deal of social control just in the sense of, you know, first of all the kinds of behaviors that were expected as a young Catholic and also everything that you did was essentially available to be seen and discussed by everybody else. So, you know, kind of ended up walking the narrow because of that. So, what I feel my experience was with Catholicism, one of the things I think, I'm no longer a practicing Catholic and haven't been for a long time. I have two children and I sort of raised them Catholic, but we can talk about that later. One of them certainly doesn't practice Catholicism or any other religion, and my other son sort of does which during my generation you were never sort of a Catholic. You either were or you were not and things were really pretty black and white. But and they were they were for me. I really somehow bought into that worldview that there was a right and wrong and very little gray in between. I do have to say again that my father particularly tended to be a person who questioned so that if we came home with a story from school about, you know, Sister so and so said, "This is the way it has to be." Very often he would say, "No. That's not necessarily, that's not necessarily true," and I think that was probably unusual, you know, among the families that among whom I grew up. So, I was saying that I do think that my siblings have somewhat different experiences in their living out their Catholic faith. I have two brothers that still live in Seneca, and they both are practicing Catholics and their wives are practicing Catholics and I really think that that context has contributed to that. You know, my sister and I both left home and, you know, she eventually went down a very different path than I did but, you know, is no longer Catholic. So, I took it all very seriously, and it was, I think, one of the things that was positive that came out of it for me is kind of an enduring sense of the sacred because, you know, Catholicism does have a lot of there is a lot of ritual and, you know, when you're a small child you can just, you know, just can't wait to get the litany over with because it seems like it takes forever, you know? But as I lived through that, you know, until I was out of college there was something about that and about the teaching that says there are things in this world that are sacred and that there were behaviors that are sacred and that helped me when I was studying anthropology because once I, you know, sort

of broke out of what I think is a pretty closed world view, meaning Catholicism, once I sort of broke out of that then it allowed me to open up to trying to understand other religious traditions and to understand that within those traditions there are things that are very sacred to those folks that may look different from what I consider sacred within my upbringing in my religion as a child but still have some respect for the fact that those things are very meaningful to an individual within his or her own context. Sure you don't want to ask me a question now?

TM: No. Well, I mean I will if you want me to but no go ahead.

AC: OK. I just don't want to be wandering. We'll all right. So, I think that what I could say about growing up in that situation is first of all I did have very supportive, very loving parents so I totally lucked out on that, and, you know, you could bring up questions. You could discuss ideas, religious ideas and so on, with my parents and, you know, get their opinion about it and no problem with that, but by the time I got to be about 14 years old I got to tell this. I was telling Tamara earlier today that the difficult thing for me within Catholicism was also that at some point though the tightness of those beliefs became really very onerous at night I sort of went a little neurotic about it because I don't know if you know that for example you all know that Catholics go to confession and they expect to receive absolution for their sins and so on. So, but what you what you would say in a confessional there is the distinction between mortal sin and venial sin. So, venial sin is, you know, something trivial, you know, maybe I was cranky with my mother or something like that but, you know, didn't do any great harm. So, you know, as a child you would confess that kind of thing. A mortal sin and the catechism that teaches all these things is very specific. There are definitions for all these things, and I was trying to remember this afternoon what the definition of a mortal sin was because I became very hung up on is this a mortal sin or a venial sin. And my sense of guilt that I developed caused me to not really be able to distinguish that very clearly. But a mortal sin is something that is I think a grievous offense the law of God. You must you must it must be something that you do knowingly and willingly. So if someone forced you to do something that you didn't want to do even if it was a, you know, an evil act but they're holding a gun to your head there's less culpability to that. But a mortal sin can send you to hell, like instantly if you die. And so that that whole thing I really got very confused about and so then going to confession which in my case we went to mass every single day because that was part of going to Catholic grade school is you, you know, the bus came to pick you up. You came, you went to mass and so most of the time everybody went to communion and so when I began to be concerned about whether I had sinned or not, you know, you'd be very conspicuous if you weren't going to communion. That means you must have committed a mortal sin, you know?. And so then you got this additional concern about what other people are thinking and so going to confession also became a very painful experience to me because I couldn't make that distinction between those two kinds of sin and, you know, in my heart of hearts I knew really everything was fine but not really you know? So and this went on from the time when I was about 14 years old until I was about 21 actually. I'm embarrassed to say but so I thought I would tell you how it unfolded that I got out of that so to speak because to give you an example of the kind of guilt and concern I had is that, you know, if Tim asked me, "What time is it?" and I glance at my watch and I said, you know, "Its 4:15." I would look at my watch again and think, "Oh my God. It's 4:17," and literally I would worry about the fact that I had lied about it or, you know, so I'm telling you it was pure neurosis and none of my brothers and sisters went through this so. I'm just giving you an extreme example. So what happened is

that finally I went off to college and at some point a really realized that this was crazy. I really had to do something about this and I didn't and I had talked with my uncle, Father Jermaine, and, you know, my parents who were just like, you know, "Don't worry about these things. God does not expect this." And none of that worked. And for some reason, you know, I was I was on this Catholic campus and there was, you know, the priest that was there was my philosophy teacher. I didn't particularly want to go to confession to him but even though I, you know, I don't really necessarily do know who it is or care, you know? I'm sure they don't care who is telling them these things. So I went to downtown to whatever the church was in downtown Salina, and I just remember that the confessionals were closed confessionals with doors, you know, and all that and there was a name on there. It was a Polish name. A priest whose last name started with "W" and a lot of consonants in his name and so I went in and I basically said to him, you know, "This is a problem. I can't tell the difference between these things, and I'm not going to communion because as soon as I have confessed then I'm worried that, you know, within 10 minutes I've committed something." And he said, "OK. Let's do this." And I learned later, and I may be wrong, but he gave me a paradoxical injunction in psychological terms. You know he essentially used the power of his office to cause me to do what it was I was terrified of doing in order to assure me for me to see on my own that there was no harm. So what he said is, "First of all how often have you been going to confession?" You know, "Every week, every week, Father." He said, "All right. First, you can't you may not go to confession any more than every three weeks. You may not go to confession to anyone but me. When you come into the confessional you tell me that you're the person who has gotten all these scruples." And you know scrupulosity really is I mean it is a condition, and he said, "Identify yourself that way and meanwhile," because again we're still going to mass every single day a college as well he said, "Meanwhile during those three weeks you must go to communion every day." And he said, "And then when you come to confession," you know, he said, "Unless you can swear on a stack of Bibles to me that you have committed a mortal sin, you must go to communion." So I did that and I think we did this for about six months and then I was sent to Concordia, Kansas for, you know, for my clinical. I'm taking care of patients when I'm just this mess you know? And so this this Polish priest whose name, you know, I don't remember I told him that would be the last time that I would be, you know, speaking with him and he said, "OK. When you go to Concordia," he said, "You find the chaplain there and you tell him what's been going on and then you identify yourself. You do the same thing that we've been doing." So there was this wonderful Irish priest there whose name again I don't remember but so I started doing that. So by this time I'm about 21, and we went through this for maybe three months. I probably went to confession to him four or five times, and the last time I went I came and I said, "I'm, you know, the one that's scrupulous," and he said, "Yeah, yeah. I know," and he said, "Go on." And there was something about that.

TM: The first priest had communicated with the second one?

AC: No, I had. He had told me that I had to identify myself to the second one and so the second one and I did this for an additional period of time and he got really tired of it and that was it. And I was done with that, and, you know, something about the way they handled, and you know, I have no idea why that those particular priests had those particular skills, you know? Because I'm kind of surprised, looking back on it, that that first Polish priest, as I have to identify, really kind of knew how to handle that. Maybe they were so, you know, it would be easy for me to

say, you know, well Catholicism really made me nuts. But, you know, it was a little of it was a little of the sort of regulations and rules and so on was a part of that but the rest of it just had to do with my particular personality and, you know, the fact that I wanted to do good and so there were some really positive things and in my case some things that were very much a challenge in sort of living through that particular faith. I did go off as a volunteer to Brazil on a Catholic program called People Volunteers for Latin America and lived in Brazil for year and that was when I began to really come into contact with other both other well there was it was mostly Catholics again but lots of different cultural traditions that helped me to, you know, to continue to mature. I think that we do, you know, hopefully we do mature in our faith throughout our lifetime. I think that we learn different ways to handle the challenges and so on and so forth.

TM: Can you tell us a little more about just what Catholic daily life was like? Like I don't know did you wear uniforms to school?

AC: Yeah, OK.

TM: Anything along that line.

AC: Sure. Yeah, no we did not wear uniforms to school. I mean and but the nuns were still inhabits at the time and, you know, there are tons of jokes about, you know, nuns and how mean they are and so on. I loved the nuns, you know, and I think, you know, I found them very warm they had these, you know, these black woolen outfits with a rosary on the side and you could hear them clicking down the hall and, you know, for the most part they were very kind and I'm sure that some of that was because my mother was very involved with them and, you know, my family was very good to them and that sort of thing. But so the kids that went to Catholic schools there was no nothing like uniforms but the day would be, you know, you get up and if you're going to be going to communion that morning my mother would fix us all egg sandwiches, all four of us, egg sandwiches to take and you would go get off the bus, go immediately to I don't remember if we went to the schoolroom and then went to the church but we would go as a group. So you sat with your first grade, second grade, third grade, whatever and then when mass was over and you went to the classroom classes would begin but you would be allowed to eat your, you know, to have your breakfast. And certainly every probably I was going to say every single class that was taught was kind of imbued with the worldview of Catholicism and particularly I suppose history and, you know, certainly no mention of the Inquisition in my education until later. And there would be courses in religion all the way through, you know, all the way through, you know, when you're in grade school its catechism. So you would have catechism classes every single day and the catechisms were like orange, blue, red, purple or something and as you, you know, like first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade so they it's all the same material but, you know, made with a little more sophisticated language and then when you got into high school they had courses in apologetics. You know, how to defend the faith and I remember... I remember going to parties and arguing with people about, you know, adamantly about, you know, giving a Catholic stance on things. And bible history was, you know, more in in grade school but those were mostly the lives well they were stories taken from the bible, but there's a lot of information about lives of the saints and so on. So, and then we did, you know, like a lot of in a lot of faith there's a midweek kind of church gathering or whatever but ours was just Sunday and when I was really small, you know, it was

all of this was really very traditional and some of you may know that in the sixties there was what was called the Second Vatican Council and that was when Pope John the XXIII, I hope that's right.

TM: Mmhmm.

AC: Yeah. Pope John the XXIII who was put in as an interim pope and everybody thought that he was like 80 something. They thought he was going to die. Well he did die, I think, within three years but he absolutely changed the practice of Catholicism in a very short time and by calling this council and that was the point at which the mass was changed from Latin to a vernacular. So, you know, when I was in Brazil people were doing the mass and Portuguese instead of Latin and of course in Seneca, Kansas we were doing in English and, you know, before that almost all of the mass was sung in Latin and, you know, if you had a funeral in was all sung in Latin and that was the point at which nuns were given the freedom as congregations to decide whether they wanted to continue to wear the religious habit or if they wanted to wear, you know, street dress. And it was also a time, so that would've been about 1962-63, and by 1969 I mean one of the things that happened is a lot of religious left their religious life. You know, it's kind of you opened the door and, you know, people then realized they have choices that they didn't really have before. So a lot of people who were priests actually left and married. A lot of nuns left and many of them married, sometimes each other. And so throughout my life I've also been like in my work life at the medical center one of the other faculty members was a religious. She was a nun, Sister Ann Shorfied, and that, you know, by the time I was teaching there, you know, she would just introduce herself as Ann Shorfied and, you know, she didn't, you know, if anyone wanted to know she was a nun that was OK, but she didn't make any deal about it and she was wearing lay clothing and so on. So, let's see a day. So, basically Sunday's were a big thing but they were also, you know, during Lent. The Lenten season was very important, the 40 days of Lent, and so all adults and children fasted in some way or another. Again when I was really a small child everybody fasted every Friday for meat. Nobody had meat on Fridays. After the Vatican council you could have meat on Fridays and the other thing is that if you were going... That was the other reason, you know, your parents sent breakfast with you to class was because if you went to communion you had to actually fast from any food or water from midnight until after the Vatican Council and then after the Vatican Council you could drink water before you took communion but you I don't think you could eat, but now I don't think it makes any difference at all. And I mean that was again an issue of what is sacred and that that is, you know, that if you believe as the church taught you literally are taking the body and blood of Christ into your body by receiving the communion host then, you know, you want your body to be essentially pure and receptive in some way. Food was kind of thought to, you know, secularize that I guess. So, let's see. So then there would also be First Friday was an important religious tradition as well and that was... a lot of people actually went to mass on first Friday. You didn't have to but I think a lot of people would go on the first Friday of the month. There kind of was extra fasting and then we would do the stations of the cross, which are the 12 stations of the cross which are the 12 steps along the way toward Calvary.

TM: 14

AC: What?

TM: 14

AC: No, I think ours were 12.

TM: No...

AC: 14? [laughter] OK.

TM: It's always 14.

AC: I bow to the scholar.

Unknown: [other comment]

AC: Well, let me see. Yeah well I can't... obviously I haven't done the stations of the cross for 40 years so. But there were lots of, you know, what might be concerned, might be considered sort of minor rituals but, you know, in some ways they really were very comforting and it very much, I think, gives a child an identity, you know, as belonging here, you know, with this family with this religious tradition and so on. When it's sort of very tightly controlled like that it also makes it very difficult to deviate from that eventually.

Unknown: That was probably your 12th step.

AC: [laughter] You may be right.

AC: So, let's see. I suppose that the tradition that I probably enjoyed the most even, you know, up into my thirties was Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday because in Palm Sunday, you know, you have the procession and you had, you know, you come home with palms and my mother always, you know, the palms you get are just long and thin like this but sometimes the nuns would weave them into certain shapes and everything and we always had religious pictures, well one or two, in our house and my mother would have, you know, would put the palm behind that and then if there was a terrible, terrible storm as one of the things you would do was you would light the palm and you would, you know, as a prayer for protection.

TM: Burn it?

AC: Uh huh. You would burn the palm. Mmhmm. And you didn't necessarily burn the whole thing in case there was another storm. You know? So yeah but those would be carried into the procession would come out of the church and go around the block and then come back in. And, you know, in other countries of course they're much more elaborate, you know, and they would carry statues and all that kind of thing but then there was a blessing of the Easter candle which is this gigantic probably 5 foot long this big candle that I think burned kind of throughout the year or something. And the litany of the saints which as I said as a child I thought was never ending. Really, you know, it's like a chant and so it became something that I found very beautiful as a young adult. And I think was part of that Holy Saturday ritual and also of course as kids you

didn't have to wait until Easter Sunday to dive into all the candy that you'd been fasting from. You could actually start on Holy Saturday. But that was a thing that children often did was they would give up candy but then, you know, you'd put it in a box or something all during the 40 days and we were always very good about, you know, not touching it and it was just like Halloween is now. Just gorge on the candy that day. So...

TM: OK. Another childhood thing, I presume you had first communion at some point.

AC: Oh yes. Oh yeah.

TM: What was all that like?

AC: That was I think I was very delighted with that as a child.

TM: How old were you?

AC: Seven. You're seven when you take first communion.

TM: OK.

AC: Yeah, you were then. I don't know what you are now.

TM: In that church.

AC: Yeah. Well in all Catholic churches at that time.

TM: In that diocese.

AC: I think everywhere.

TM: No.

AC: No?

TM: Bishops set their own rules.

AC: OK. [laughter] Are you sure in 1959 that they did that?

TM: No, might have been different then.

AC: [laughter]

TM: That was pre council so ...

AC: Yeah, right, right, right. Well anyway, you see that's I think that you're making a really important point because it's what I remember is what I thought it was like then, you know, in terms of, you know, because...

TM: Don't you think that's what we all do? We grow up and we think our experience is everyone's experience.

AC: Absolutely. Exactly. Yeah.

TM: Yeah, I think that's typical.

AC: Well in part of what the Catholic Church taught at the time that I was growing up is that the church is universal. That anywhere in the world if you go to a Catholic mass it's a symbol. It kind of was because it was all in Latin and in that sense it kind of but anyways, then I think you extrapolate that to other situations. So, OK what were we talking about?

TM: First communion.

AC: First communion. OK yes.

TM: At seven.

AC: At seven. Yeah, well ...

TM: Which is when you're supposed to be old enough to understand what's going on, right?

AC: It is. Exactly. You are thought to be of the age of reason is how it was put to us. And so you, at the point, would know what a sin was and was not. So well, you know, the little the little white dresses everybody had the little girls had little white dresses and the boys, you know, I don't know what I don't have any pictures of the boys but, you know, they had little suits of some sort. And my cousin Virginia was like five days difference in age from me and the only picture that I have I have a picture myself in my first communion dress and so, you know, we wore little veils and I think everybody wore the same kind of veil and it was interesting because my mother's there was kind of a ruffle and my mother starched mine so it came like this. And then my cousin's was left soft by her mother and it's just we look really different. And I think you could wear any kind of little dress. What I remember the most, to tell you the truth, was that we wore long white stockings hose with garters and I was terrified that my stockings were going to fall down. But other than that. But, you know, it really was considered, you know, an incredibly important and wonderful event and it was very much celebrated. I don't remember what, you know, I suspect that probably my mother had all the relatives come to the house afterwards. I don't remember it, but I do remember again that, you know, that had to have been one of the most sort of sacred events, and you were prepared for that. You know, by the family but also so you were second grade by the time you were seven so in first grade and I actually got to be one of the, you know, one of the ways that they kind of enhance things was that about four or five first grade girls got to be like almost like little bridesmaids or something I can't remember what we were called. And so I was one of those four when I was six and I think we led the

procession of the, you know, the communicates in. And, you know, we had colorful, long dresses and great big bows, you know, and so, you know, there was a kind of staging of these things and then. So there was, yeah, all the seven sacraments and there are seven, right?

TM: Yep, that's right.

AC: [laughter] Oh, thank you. So first communion was one and confirmation of course was the other. And confirmation was important but I don't remember it as being quite having quite the same emphasis. You did take an additional name when you were confirmed. I don't know if they do that in other churches or not and virtually every girl took the name McMary as their confirmation name.

TM: And that's older right?

AC: That's yeah, I think that was when you're about 12 maybe something like that. And let's see well and of course marriage as one of the sacraments and one of the really important rituals. When I was in my teens, you know, when I was a child and in my teens and so on, you simply did not marry outside the faith so to speak. You know? You were expected to marry at Catholic, and yet there were people in my parents' generation, a few, who actually were in what was called a mixed a marriage but for the person who was not Catholic there was a process which required that person to promise to raise the children Catholic. And, you know, I don't know if you had a sign anything or not but. And then when I got married, I married someone who was not Catholic in by that time, you know, things had loosened up a lot but he still had to go through he still had to go through the...

Unknown: RICA.

AC: Yeah, what did you say?

Unknown: RICA.

AC: RICA.

Unknown: Rites of Initiation into the Catholic something... RICA though.

AC: OK. That's not a term I'm familiar with what but it was you're right. I mean it was something...

Unknown: I'll tell you what it is here in a second. I'll figure it out.

AC: OK. Anyway basically we had to meet with the priest several times and, you know, he did have to make that promise that the children would be raised Catholic, but I remember going to that and by that time I had I had loosened up quite a bit myself and I just I would watch him talk with the priest and would think they're having a theological they're just talking, you know, there's an intellectual discussion. This isn't about instructing him at all, you know? But then he probably wouldn't have stood for that anyway so. Did you think of it?

Unknown: Well A is for Adults. C is for Catholic. I is for Initiation and R is for Rites I believe. That would be the only R I know. It's something like that. It's just for adults to get accepted, get confirmed you just go in like night classes and take one a week for 12 weeks?

AC: That's about right. Yeah.

Unknown: And then you state your intention. And then the next day or the next Sunday you will go to the church and it's kind of like playing high-low in poker. Yes or no or both ways.

AC: Yeah. Yeah. Well so...

TM: So, the process of leaving, so to speak, was pretty long and drawn out it sounds like over quite a bit of time you got looser on it.

AC: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

TM: But you said when you had children you still raised them Catholic to some degree. Say more about that.

AC: OK. OK. Let me tell you what. There was a particular moment at which I really felt I can't believe this anymore, and that was right before I went off to Brazil. I went to mass and this I was in Chicago at the Chicago Maternity Center delivering babies in the home, and I walked down the street to go to mass and at the moment that the priest raised the host, you know, the, you know, you are required to believe that that host is the body and blood of Christ and there was just this there was just this overwhelming feeling that, you know, I simply can't believe that anymore. And so that was kind of the first break and then, you know, other things happened along the way. Second half of your question?

TM: Well raising the children?

AC: Oh, raising the children.

TM: Yeah.

AC: Yeah. So, well then of course I married someone who wasn't Catholic, but both of the boys were baptized and then it was a different experience for each one. There's almost four years difference in their age so we were going of course to the local, you know, to the university, Saint Lawrence Center, and it wasn't father it wasn't Father Vince but whoever the priest was I can't remember. I don't think we had any problem with we just called him and said, you know, we want to we want to get Matthew baptized and so my family came and, you know, we had you have godfather and godmother and so on and, you know, again that used to be something that was very if you agreed to be the godfather or godmother and the parents failed to raise the child Catholic you were supposed to take that responsibility on. I never knew of an instant when anybody did that but that that's really what this symbolic meaning of that was in my, you know, in my experience. So anyway we got Matthew baptized and that was fine and Daniel came along

and we called there was a priest named Father Rossiter, I think, at that time and he asked a few questions. He said, "Well, you know, do you intend to raise the baby Catholic?" And by that time I wasn't sure that I could say I was going to and so I said, "I don't know. I don't know that I am." And he said, "Then why would I baptize him?" And I said, "I want you to."

TM: Wow.

AC: And he reluctantly did baptize him but he was, you know, and I understood his position and let's see... so I took the children to church with me and I went to church at Saint Lawrence Center for until I don't know Daniel was about three. Matt must've been about nine years old and at that point I just thought I can't do this anymore and so I started going to Unity with one of my neighbors for a while and then my son Matt, the older of the two, came to me when he was 12 and of course he had all these Catholic cousins, you know, that he knew although we didn't see them often, but he had Catholic friends, you know, here Lawrence and he came to me and his face was just red and he said, "Mom, I want to take communion." And I said, "Well you can't just do that, you know?" And, you know, we hadn't been going to church for about three or four years. And he said, "I know." And I said, "You'd have to take well you'd have to take instructions." You know? And this is a kid that, you know, doesn't want to listen to anybody. And he said, "I know." I said, "You'll do that?" And he said, "Yes." I said, "Well OK." So, I called up Father Vince and I asked him if, you know, I told him the situation and I asked if he would do the instruction because that's who I knew and he said well yeah he would do that. So we we'd go to the parish house and we're sitting out waiting for Father Vince to open the door and I said, "Now, Matt, I'll let you go in by yourself." And he said, "No. I want..." And I said, "You want me to go in there too?" Which surprised me just because he was a really independent kid and he said, "Yes." And I said, "OK." So, I went in and I sat in there every single time, you know, for the 12 lessons, however long it took for him to get the instructions so he could take communion and again a very verbal kid he never said a word. He listened to every word that Father Vince said. You know? And we had we had a little celebration when he made his first communion and Father Vince came and all of that. And then at that point I thought OK now I've got to be taking this kid to church so I have to resolve some things. So, I went and made an appointment with Father Vince and that day in the newspaper, you know, the pope was quoted I hope I'm not saying too much here.

TM: No, no.

AC: The pope was quoted, you know, about, you know, he was, you know, against divorce, against abortion, against homosexuality, against whatever, you know, and I don't that's a crass way to put it. That isn't exactly how it was but it was essentially what it was and so I took the article with me and when I sat down with Father Vince I said, "These are all the reasons I have problems with being Catholic." And he, you know, he looked at it and said, "Well, you know," and so we talked we talked for quite a while and I just said, you know, this is pretty personal but, you know, I decided that two children was enough for me and I had a tubal ligation after my second child and that was another aspect of that and I said that to Father Vince and he said, "Well, you know, if you we're making that decision again you might make it differently." And I said, "No. I would not."

[laughter]

AC: Absolutely. That's one of the best decisions I've ever made, and he was very sweet and he just said, "Well you know, Ann, I think you're kind of a purist but then so am I. So, you know, bring Matt to church but, you know, just stay at, you know..." He just left up hanging like that and I thought that's good. So I then took Matt to church every Sunday, and I did not participate in the sacraments because for me, you know, and I know it by that time a lot of people would have thought that it was probably OK, you know, to go ahead and participate in the sacraments but I just really wasn't I guess it didn't make any difference to me I guess particularly that I couldn't do that. And, you know, it was just clear-cut for me that way so I didn't. And so Matt went to church for four years. I took him every Sunday and I was telling Tamara that it was time for him to do confirmation lessons and he took all the confirmation lessons and it was harder and harder to get him up for mass. So when he got confirmed I said, "You're 16. I'm not getting you up every Sunday. You get up yourself and you can drive yourself to church. If you want me to go along I'll go but I'm not taking responsibility." And that was the last time he went as far as I know.

TM: Wow.

AC: And I mean that was fine with me. I think it was what he needed and what he wanted to do at the time and I think he, you know, he learned a lot. And actually he married a Catholic young woman, and they've baptized their first child. I don't know whether the second one is going to. I don't know how they're living that out and that's not the issue here, but because I really the other thing that I think about, you know, everything that I'm telling you is like from what 1940 something to, you know, to the present and so there are real generational differences now I think in terms of not only what young people believe but, you know, even what they've been taught and so people live out their faith in a whole variety of ways, and I'm very comfortable with most of that certainly for, you know, what's happened in my family so.

TM: Can you say a little more about your own spiritual progression after that? You mentioned that it sounds like it started with going to Unity.

AC: Yeah, it did.

TM: And what happened after that?

AC: Well, when I started going to Unity it was the relief there was that Unity is so not dogmatic. So it was the exact opposite of Catholicism and it was, you know, in my view it was a very sort of positive belief system but a very open belief system. And, you know, I was also going in part because my friend had been going and she was taking me and so I did that for maybe I probably did that for well maybe those were the years maybe between the time that I stopped taking the kids to Catholic church and before Dan or before Matt decided he wanted to, you know, have communion and so on. So, that was a positive experience for me and then after that well I can't remember exactly the progression, but I just have always done a lot of spiritual reading. Yeah, I did get very involved in some in process work which is [sort of union] in psychology but it's transpersonal psychology which holds essentially that we are spirit. You

know, that psychologically even we are spirit. So, you know, there was a lot of doing things with dreams and so on and I wouldn't call it a religious system but certainly for me it was a spiritual experience to be involved in some really intensive workshops where, you know, people were often dealing with issues of spirituality. And from that I can't remember if the next thing was deciding to study Buddhism and so I've been kind of I certainly wouldn't call myself a Buddhist but I've been ...

Unknown: To call yourself a Buddhist means you're not a Buddhist.

AC: Yes. I know. [laughter] That's exactly right. So, I just I think that in terms of where I am now is that there's just this wonderful range of beliefs that people have, and I think I believe a little bit of all of them. And I don't believe a whole lot of any of them so. So, I think that the need for ritual or the need for attachment to institutional religion is not there for me now, and I'm not seeking that in any way.

TM: So even though in childhood that seemed like that was an important part of it that's simply something that you've moved away from?

AC: Right. You know and as a child of course I didn't really have a choice because, you know, it was all decided for me.

TM: Yeah, right. Right.

AC: And it feels it feels much more comfortable to me to be where I am in terms of belief now and hopefully more open to other people's experience of whatever their spiritual path is and so...

TM: Were your parents fairly much OK with things as you were obviously dropping out? I don't imagine you went and told them that, "I'm not going to have anything more to do with this anymore." But...

AC: Yeah.

TM: It must've been obvious too.

AC: Well, yeah, it does become obvious when you go home and everybody gets up to go to mass and you say, "I think I'll just sleep in with the morning." You don't exactly do that but I mean I'm sure for a while I just went ahead and went to mass when I was there because I didn't want to cause any problems but one of my cousins confronted me and this might be interesting to you in terms of this class because somehow the, you know, in a small town believe me, you know, there's a telegraph and everybody knows even when you're living in Lawrence, Kansas, you know, they somehow my cousin had heard that I was going to Unity. But she confused it with...

TM: Unitarian?

AC: No. With the moonies.

TM: With the moonies?

AC: Yeah what is their ...

Unknown: The Unification ...

TM: The Unification Church.

AC: The Unification Church, yeah.

TM: Wow. That's pretty different. [laughter]

AC: And she came over to see me and we were driving somewhere and she said, "Well, Ann, I'm just going to tell you that I'm really upset about the fact that you've become a moonie." And I said, "What?" And she said, "Well, that's what I heard. Everybody says in Seneca that you're a moonie."

TM: [laughter]

AC: And I thought, "Oh my God." And I so I just said, "No." I mean I don't even remember what I said except I did set her straight that that was not the situation and so on. And then shortly after that I don't remember how it happened, but I was talking my mother got Alzheimer's fairly, you know, during this period that I'm describing now so she was, you know, and she was really very devout and so but I was talking to my father on the phone and apparently he had heard this and he never said anything to me but somehow it came up in our conversation and maybe I called him and told him that I was concerned because I had heard that that was what people at Seneca thought. And he just said to me, "Well do you ever go to Catholic Church anymore?" And I said, "Mmm... No, I don't, dad." And he said, "What do you think your mother would think of that?" And it was just like... You know? But it was also very loving and he never said another word about it to me. And I'm sure he really meant that my mother that it would be hurtful to her and I just think I said, "Well, I don't know, dad." And we dropped it. And that that was and my, you know, my brothers obviously know that I don't go to church and they do and only recently there have been some little intimations of, you know, maybe wanting to discuss that some. I'm pretty I mean if they want to ask me anything I would be fine with that, but I also want to have a sensitivity to what their beliefs are. So, I'm not at all interested in challenging what they believe or anything like that so we, you know, we're sort of living in peaceful coexistence as far as I. They seem to like me I think so and I like them.

TM: OK.

AC: Yeah, so that's worked pretty well.

TM: Well, anything else you can think of you'd like to say?

AC: Oh, gosh. Let me see.

TM: We've been going for almost an hour.

AC: Yeah. [laughter] There was something I thought of when I was telling you that moonie story but I can't... must not have been anything important.

TM: Yeah.

AC: I think that was. Yeah I think that's plenty. [laughter]

TM: OK, maybe that's enough.

AC: You probably think that's plenty too.

Unknown: It was great strategy.

AC: What is?

Unknown: The Unification people, or the Unity people, should say, "Say moonie. Or then think moonie." And then when they find out it's Uni for one of us they won't be near as bad if you just started out with Unification or Unity church.

AC: [laughter] Well you remember how there was so much coverage of that, you know, what 20 or 15 years ago or something and I don't hear anything about that. What is happening with the Unification Church? Do you have any idea?

TM: Well... They're still going.

AC: Are they?

TM: Moon is still alive. He's quite elderly now.

AC: Is he really?

TM: I think he's pretty close to 90. And they're just this week they're having a big showdown family issues. You know they have that newspaper that's influential in Washington, the Washington Times that Moonie owned.

AC: Oh, I didn't know that. Uh huh.

TM: And there's some battles going on over control of that within the Moon family to some degree. I haven't followed it closely.

Unknown2: I believe they named who was going to take over the church after he died.

AC: Oh, did they?

TM: Well he's his one of his sons is heir apparent I think. You may know more about this...

Unknown2: It was in a paper. I read it online. I'm not sure which one.

AC: So their center now is in Washington D.C.? Is that what you said? Washington?

TM: Well... I think Moon still lives in New York State as far as I know.

AC: Oh, OK.

TM: But they have that newspaper which is their biggest public activity.

AC: OK. Do they still have the mass marriages?

TM: Oh yeah.

AC: I remember that was what really hit the press a lot was the mass marriages as I recall. So...

TM: Yeah. Well thank you very much for coming in.

AC: You're welcome. You're welcome!

TM: This is great. Really a lot of fun.

AC: Thank you. Thank you.