

SS014

Interviewer #1- Tell me about, did you grow up in Chicago?

Father James Lyke- Yes, born and raised in Chicago.

Interviewer #1- What part?

Father James Lyke- South side.

Interviewer #1- Where about in south side?

Father James Lyke- About 4 blocks south of (unrecognizable) Park.

Interviewer #1- Where did you go to school?

Father James Lyke- I went to only a year, one year at St. Phillip High School in Chicago.

Interviewer #1- (Interview speaking to softly)

Father James Lyke- No, we are all converts, everyone except one brother.

Interviewer #1- How big is your family?

Father James Lyke- 3 sisters and 2 brothers.

Interviewer #1- You've got a bonanza for the church.

Father James Lyke- One year to St. Phillips and then the rest of the time is 5 years at Oklahoma, 3 years at (unrecognizable) of Angels in Cleveland and 4 years in Teutopolis, Illinois.

Interviewer #1- (Muffled with lots of background noise)

Father James Lyke- Yes, 4 years at the (unrecognizable)

Interviewer #1- And then you went back to Chicago.

Father James Lyke- Then we were ordained our third year theology and I spent another year of studies after, you know, my fourth year in Teutopolis. And then my first assignment was to teach high school in an all white suburb of Cleveland and then after that I was sent here to Memphis.

Interviewer #1- Mostly you had been practicing in Chicago?

Father James Lyke- No, never did, not as a priest. I taught remedial English one summer in Chicago.

Interviewer #1- Did they purposely send a black priest to Memphis?

Father James Lyke- Well I wanted to work in the black community and I could have gone to Louisiana or Chicago or here and I chose Memphis

Interviewer #1- Had you been here before?

Father James Lyke- No, but I had read the history of St. Augustan Parish in Memphis and that is what attracted me. Maybe it seems almost romantic.

Interviewer #1- I didn't even know there was a St. Augustan Parish in Memphis.

Father James Lyke- Well I mean I wasn't that familiar with the exact history myself, but when I was in bishop, they had yearbooks of the high school, St. Augustan, the church and the parish and all that and it's just sounded attractive to me so I chose Memphis. The other reason was everyone I know and all my relatives are in Chicago and I thought it would be good to get away from the Chicago scene so that I could work undistracted.

Interviewer #1- Are your people from southward?

Father James Lyke- My mother is from Kentucky but all of my family was raised in Chicago, brothers and sisters.

Interviewer #1- Well, (muffled) generalization, I suppose you like doing parish work in Memphis.

Father James Lyke- That puts my head on a block.

Interviewer #1- I love it. I am mad for doing parish work in Memphis. Have you found it challenging? How's that? Father Lyke says he has found Memphis one of the most challenging situations.

Father James Lyke- What could I say that would clear me?

Interviewer #1- Well I don't even know (muffled)

Father James Lyke- I don't know. We don't know, I should say. All, with the exception of singing (?), most of the black people came through St. Augustan (lots of background noise) so actually a large number of our people; I would say we have at least 300 families that I would (?). We really don't know how many.

Interviewer #1- You don't do parish visitations, if that what you're saying?

Father James Lyke- I guess you could say that. Although the last census was just 2 years ago, and Father Theodore tells me about 300 families. I don't think the census really (?) because when you talk about taking a census of someone's parish, you are not talking about (?) you know like you talk about St. Louis or the people around St. Louis. When you talk about St. Thomas, I would say most of our people are not in the immediate area around us. You know they are from all over. And of course until integration of the churches took place, you had people from England who was black here in St. Thomas.

Interviewer #1- (Unrecognizable)

Father James Lyke- I would say a good number, yes. I don't know how many they have at Immaculate Conception for example or St. Josephs Epis. You know maybe even the other churches have, like St. John on Lamar I think has (muffled) so I think because of that situation it might be difficult to determine exactly how big the parish is.

Interviewer #1- Well, when you came here, was the understanding that you were supposed to hang loose in the parish situation?

Father James Lyke- That is in fact what I am doing. But again, I am sure you are going to print this, the thing is you know what this involves is your concept of ministry. Fortunately, Ted has understood that I don't fit in a traditional (?) parish. This whole situation is kind of a problem we haven't resolved yet because perhaps many of the things, you know, as a priest that many people think I should be doing, I'm not doing. Had we gone door to door I would have become closely involved with (?) and that presents a big problem because most of our kids who are Catholic really go to our school, we don't have a large percentage of our kids who are not in the school; (?) or high. So really I spend most of my times in the (?). This is taking some time. It's kind of one of those things like when great work happens, we are very much a part of that.

Interviewer #1- (Interview speaking to softly)

Father James Lyke- You know, not really knowing too much about the draft, the angle I take on it, like I told Neal, one of the guys had mentioned that he had a student who was kind of hung up on morality of the thing wanted to clear his mind on that angle of the situation. If some of the students might feel it is the right thing to do. To try to find these different outs in the law. With a number of my moral gymnastics, I sufficiently cleared the mind of a black person. As a matter of fact, one kid who has been recommended to me, he hasn't come yet, is not really taking my time, lets put it that way. My name is on the list. When it's time to get down to the legal angle of the thing, (lots of background noise) has really been working at it because I really don't have the time to do the reading on it.

Interviewer #1- And what is your philosophy? They should go to jail or go to camp?

Father James Lyke- I think you really raise a big issue when you talk about black men going to the service. And you know it's has similarities to the whole problem of

restitution. People, America owes black people something (?) and restitution and seeing that the situation the country is such, that black people still, as a whole, do not enjoy their rights and their freedom. I just think this raises the whole question of, well as a matter of fact I probably would practically. (Interviewer interrupted by children) No I mean I just really think you have a good question. Morally speaking, should a black person serve in the military service to fight for America because everything America proclaims to be, she is not for a black man, and I think that is a real issue. I would see no difficulty in any young, black person feeling morally obliged not to go to the service. In that he is putting his life on the line for principles, I shouldn't put it that way because I have a problem with the word itself, What I want to say is, even if you were to grant some justification to the war, he is not enjoying in fact, what you are trying to justify.

Interviewer #1- (Interviewer speaking too low) paying the price for your civil disobedience and that type thing?

Father James Lyke- Well I think that this a question, on a practical level (?). I would say that if a black person chooses not to accept the draft, refuses to go to the military service, then he has the practical problem of working out what is going to happen to him, should he be arrested. Now, if he chooses to go to Canada I see that he is completely justified in going. Now on the other hand, when you have got the problem with white student who thinks the war is immoral and on that basis, if he refuses, I think the black man has a double problem there. I think he has the problem of the war itself and he also has the problem of, as a black person, going into that war.

Interviewer #1- Yes.

Father James Lyke- So that if he sees some moral justification to the war, he still has the other problem of, do I as a black man go over and fight. I would never pose a question in dual fashion probably because I am so convinced that the war itself isn't justified.

Interviewer #1- So you're draft counseling, your great boycott and your (?) solving. Are you working for the marriage of the clergy? Are you going for the whole gamut? How do you find the black leadership being characterized, or who would you say, or can you even answer that question?

Father James Lyke- Well I don't think I would want to be quoted on it because it is divisive to point it out.

Interviewer #1- Various factions?

Father James Lyke- I don't even think I would use the word factions that you just had. Many people in the black community who are wonderful leaders, really and I think that's true. I think any black person who wants to get involved can choose his camp and do real good stuff. You know, the NAACP is doing a great thing in terms of education and that is currently going on now. Certainly, the union is doing a terrific job and of course that

involves Jackson, (?). And you have got a number of people doing their own thing in a good way. And I think that you can rally around these people.

Interviewer #1- (Interviewer speaking too softly)

Father James Lyke- You have got a number of people, I mean, no one in the black community can say I am looking for a leader and that's why I am not involved because there are plenty of leaders. Again, I wouldn't want to be quoted on this, but I would like to see, it would be wonderful if there could be more coordination of all these efforts. I mean, just that coordination, the leaders who don't sit down together enough. Come and serve and function.

Interviewer #1- (Interviewer speaking too softly) the leadership here is almost all nonviolent (muffled)

Father James Lyke- Of course I think the whole, you know, I think often we oppose the words violent and non violent and I think so many of the actions of "violent people" are not violent as such they are self defense. And again, this is morally justifiable. No one said that anybody has to be non violent and everyone has a moral right to self-defense and I think certain groups would emphasize the point of self-defense. For example, the black panthers will emphasize heavily the issue of self-defense.

Interviewer #1- The Black panthers... (Speaking too softly).

Father James Lyke- Yea, but again not to quote me. You know the (?).

Interviewer #1- Yea.

Father James Lyke- I don't know that you can exactly call them (?) group. I mean the big question is who are the invaders? (Muffled).

Interviewer #1- Yes, right. We have got a couple of great (too soft).

Father James Lyke- The whole question of the dichotomy is misleading violent and nonviolent. I think many of the people who have been called violent are in fact people who believe that we have a moral right to our self-defense.

Interviewer #1- Do you?

Father James Lyke- I don't think that you can get around the concept. I think it is a moral concept. Its self-defense. Anyone hits you or strikes you; you have the moral right to strike back.

Interviewer #1- As a priest?

Father James Lyke- As a person.

Interviewer #1- Is a person a priest? Is a priest a person?

Father James Lyke- Sure. I mean, you are asking a theoretical question. I myself, you know I, adhere to the philosophy of nonviolence. It is intimately tied up with Christianity. But the point I think I would like to make is that so often the dichotomy is made between violence and nonviolence and I just don't think that is the issue really. I think the issue is self-defense and the white community so often sees that as violence. So that a policeman is practicing police brutality, the question comes, well do I have to take that step and I would say no. Now in terms of real violence, I would raise the issue of, is war or violence ever justified? Because to me violence is wrong, whether it is in Vietnam or whether its here. In terms of Christ's precept; you live by the sword, you perish by the sword. But even on a more philosophical level, I think the only violence has done historically, is reduce itself. I think this is the terrible thing about violence. I think this is probably the insight that Christ gives us into human nature. If this is the way you choose to structure your human relationships, the only you will do is destroy yourself.

Interviewer #1- (Interviewer speaking too softly) (Several things in this paragraph are very unrecognizable because of how softly the interviewer speaks). The national council of churches... on violence and nonviolence... court last January... themselves into kind of a box. They had said the rioting last year where property was burned and that could be justifiable on all kinds of accounts... the black community... So they would allow that type of violence. They would allow burning up stores and that kind of thing. It appears to me that you can open the door and prove that burning up stores. In Chicago when you burned up stores, you had all these people living above the stores that you didn't mean to burn up but you did burn out. What kind of (unrecognizable) I can see the reasoning but in practical application, it appears to me to very shifting. If you can limit your violence to burning a store and nothing else, but I don't think it is possible, practically.

Father James Lyke- Well I think that is where the real issue comes. If you are talking about violence in the black community, to what use is being violent to yourself. I think that is the issue. I think the real violence is the violence that America is ...

Interviewer #1- Well this of course, is the basis on which this report was based. The violence of the slumlord is doing such violence because you burn a store, you haven't really come anywhere near the type of violence (unrecognizable) is practicing.

Father James Lyke- See I think on moral grounds, for people to really understand the pressures inside the black community as a result of this exploitation has no difficulty objectively speaking, justifying, say driving whites out of the black community because all they are doing it (unrecognizable). But then again, when you bring this down into the practical, when you just burn down blocks in the black community, what have you done? But hurt black people. So that you have got to really find another way.

Interviewer #1- It appears to me, from the outside looking in, that the black community has made it really difficult and its going to take a long time of struggles. Basically, I think

they have made it (unrecognizable). It appears to me that the white community is (unrecognizable).

Father James Lyke- Of course, my feeling is that this has always been the case. The real sick people are in the white community.

Interviewer #1- Yes, but I think (background noise) exploited.

Father James Lyke- Yes, this is a certain sickness to.

Interviewer #1- That the black is beautiful thing can't be healthy.

Father James Lyke- Oh yea, oh yea. The black community is together today. Despite diverging philosophies, there is a common understanding of what has happened to us as black people. All of which comes a sense of unity and togetherness.

Interviewer #1- Is there a feeling in the black community (unrecognizable)

Father James Lyke- Right.

Interviewer #1- (Interviewer speaking to softly). What she found in the white community, I think she said black (unrecognizable) was on the bottom but was on his way to the top. The white community was on top (unrecognizable) stay on top.

Father James Lyke- I think this happens anytime when people are exposed to truth and refuses to acknowledge it. The only result of that can be a real moral degradation. There might be all kinds of symbols or appearances of health, which any one who is superficial would get, noticing the difference between South Memphis and East Memphis. But any one who looks for deeper human value will see it that there is real sickness out there. There is real sickness in the government though that fails to really develop programs to create healthy communications. Any one, who doesn't come to grips with that issue, is really sick.

Interviewer #1- Did you know before you came here that (unrecognizable) extremely open-type bishop?

Father James Lyke- Yes. In fact I have seen a few bishops like that. I just don't know that I could count on my hand any of the bishops here in this situation march in April (unrecognizable) praise Dr. King and really let his people know exactly where he stands when it comes to the issue of social justice. I think the worst thing that we can say about any Christian community is that we really don't know where they stand because that is really saying exactly where we stand, whereas with Bishop Durrett, you know where he stands.

Interviewer #1- Have you found that since you came to school here there has been a difference in the black community?

Father James Lyke-I wouldn't be the (Unrecognizable)

Interviewer #1- Some segments

Father James Lyke- Some segments.

Interviewer #1- Unrecognizable.