HOLY ROSARY PARISH INTERVIEW

Jerry Martinez

March 4, 2021

Interviewed by Assoc. Prof. Bernadette Hamilton-Brady, Chair, Department of Drama, St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: All right, well, this is indeed a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Martinez, and I appreciate you joining me this evening. Let me just give you a little bit of background. I'm the Chair of the Drama Department at St. Mary's University. And one of the things we are doing is a very, very special project this semester. It's called a devised theatre production, and this is an original show…an original production in which we're going to create a theatrical piece and we're going to be using the stories of the youth at Holy Rosary. We've done surveys and some interviews with them and I thought it would be good to get a perspective from you…about the origins of Holy Rosary, a little bit of history, how the church evolved, who were the pastors over the years…what kind of activities did you do throughout the years and the ones that were pivotal and helped you in your spiritual development and also about the cultural aspects too… of being part of the Holy Rosary community. What kind of events and activities that you did?

So why don't we start …just give me a little bit of your background and and then we'll go from there. How's that sound?

Jerry Martinez: Sounds great…great. Okay, when I guess, I was like six or seven years old… we started participating in CYO at Holy Rosary.

We were fairly new to the neighborhood because homes over here off of Culebra and 36th Street had just been built and a lot of the veterans that were coming back from World War II…were either moving into this brand-new neighborhood because they were going to work at Kelly Field, Lackland because of civil service positions or they were going to go to school at St Mary's University off their GI bill…and basically because of the expansion to the west of San Antonio was happening down Culebra Road towards Southwest Research and all

that. All these veterans are moving over here in this area…Holy Rosary was already established pretty much and I don't exactly remember how old Holy Parish was but it wasn't that very old when we came over here in, I would be, like 57...57…56. [1957…1956]

…and the way we got involved with it was because of the CYO program and my dad took us out there, and the first day, it was like a Sunday, and they asked everybody to, it's like a field day, and the different age groups start practicing different areas and my dad took me and my brother over there to start playing ball and that was back when it was the Texas Leaguers which was five and six, and then the Pee Wee's which was six and seven and that's where we fell in that category.

Coaches select kids, they have a little trial, and then they get selected through the thing. But they didn't have a coach for the eight-and nine-year-olds. So, my dad was there, and he just got picked they asked again and he ended up coaching a team of eight-nine years old, which was two age brackets above my brother and one age bracket above me so that was the start of it and we were there, the whole time.

Until we were 12 years old and in 1963, I think it was Archbishop *[Francis James (1905-1979)]* Furey decided to put another parish out here, which is Holy Family. They split the parish down Culebra Road.

Up to 34th Street, no, all the way up to 36th street, what is now 36th Street.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Right.

Jerry Martinez: On the West end of that was Holy Family. On the East into that you stayed in Holy Rosary but straight down the Culebra Road, all the way up to Callaghan.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Okay.

Jerry Martinez: On the north side stayed Holy Rosary, on the South side became Holy Family.

I forget, they were telling me today, we had a funeral today there was a priest there from those years back.

And one of them mentioned me who the first priest was but I hadn't jotted it down but it was that time, when they did the split… when the archdiocese did the split.

It was the Father Trey Walter. And Father Meyer. And Father Kramer. Holy Rosary had three priests. That's how big the parish extended all the way; I think there was… you could have been from Helotes to come over here.

But Bandera and 410 was like country out there.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: No…yeah?

Jerry Martinez: And those people that lived in that area.On the South side of Bandera, ..were Holy Rosary on the North side that John Marshall High School… I guess the parish to the north of that there wasn't a St Matthews out here, then.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: mm hmm.

Jerry Martinez: But I don't recall where they belong to, maybe St Luke's.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Yes… I went to St. Luke's.

Jerry Martinez: That was St. Luke's, right. That was our neighbor back then on the North and Holy Family on the South, which only families Holy Rosary neighbors and then you know, Little Flower on the east. St. Paul's on the Northeast. Down Gen. McMullen south of Culebra was

St. Jude’s and then there's tons of parishes going to midtown after that but the CYO program back in those days was huge. There was like two or three teams in each age bracket at the time now…they're barely struggling to get any kids involved like back then. And I think that main reason was because the parents that were moving, expanding out here, that I told you about that group of individuals they call the Greatest Generation… the ones that went through the Depression as kids and went to the Second World War, and they raised us, you know, at a different plateau.

And the job that we're doing nowadays, and the job that our kids are doing…nothing compared to what that Greatest Generation did.

But the participation in the programs and the Church has gone down tremendously from back in those days, so that tells you a little bit about the history of how we have slacked off a little bit. I think we're starting to pick it up a little bit better.

But it's not… it doesn't even compare to what it was in those days. The little thing that tells you something is that we had three priests at Holy Rosary and now, and I think it's Father John only, and I think he's moving to.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Yes, Father John… He's going to be the Vice President of Mission and Identity at St. Mary’s University and there's Father Brandon who is the parochial vicar right now. He’s there for a one-year appointment. He was just recently ordained. As a matter of fact, he's got a podcast.

So, how long were you there? You go back and forth from Holy Rosary and Holy Family?

Jerry Martinez: Until 12 years of age which would put us at 1963 and it was like towards the end of the year of 1963 because football season ended. Sports would start in September was football season, flag football, and then after November… September, October, November, December, January, February was basketball season and then baseball season would start after the cold April, May and June and then that was it, it was three sports.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Wow.

Jerry Martinez: Basketball and baseball…there was a little girls softball for the girls…volleyball. There was no soccer like nowadays.

But from ’56…’57 to ’63 when they split…And I think they regretted it, they should have never split up Holy Rosary because that first year we were the city champions in basketball.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Yes, you’ve got to have all the talent together and make it happen.

Jerry Martinez: There was so much talent coming out of the Marianists from St. Mary’s , at Holy Rosary and then you had Central Catholic (high school) with Holy Rosary and pretty much split with Holy Cross (high school) when I was there. I went on to Holy Cross... so it kind of split. We played together in CYO, but then we were adversaries in high school. But because of sports, you know the competitiveness.

Sports here…but now you know I’ve got plenty of friends at Holy Rosary and they've got plenty of friends from Central…they got plenty of friends from Holy Rosary and Holy Family who went to Holy Cross. We've all grown up and now we keep in touch pretty much.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Oh, that's great.

Jerry Martinez: A lot of people that went to St. Mary's and became…. ended up doing very well.

On account of our CYO programs…Because you know the discipline that sports and athletics share…instills… lot of that had to do with it. Now, I can give you some very good memories from Holy Rosary when I went there in the sixth grade.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Okay, please…please do, yes.

Jerry Martinez: Okay, when I was in the sixth grade…At Holy Rosary, you know, Lackland and Medina Base …they were out there in no man's land when I went… And in Medina Base there's some very, very there...used to be…. there still may be. Some very deep and analytical people.

So there's some stuff out there…that's probably top secret and we found out the hard way that there was because there was an explosion out there, like an atomic blast…yeah…when I was in sixth grade. That would make it 19...Let me see…The one plus 69…1957. No, no, no, no… 1962… around then.

Oh, no… whatever year Kennedy got assassinated because John Kennedy got assassinated when an atomic boom at Medina Base blew windows out here at Holy Rosary.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Are you kidding me...Really?

Jerry Martinez: I went to the door, and I remember looking out towards Lackland…it was like a mushroom…like an atomic blast…yeah huge. It was a weapon of mass destruction, but it wasn't loaded.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: There? Were they testing something?

Jerry Martinez: I think it was an accident. It was an accident, because…Kelly Air Force Base right there and it was a depot so ammunition to come into Kelly Air Force Base. When I was in the Air Force, I drove into the Base back and forth, it was a storage facility. Okay, and luckily that blast wasn't loaded with any nuclear chemicals, and it was just, I forget the exact words, it was just an empty bullet is what it was. And it didn't have any gun powder in it and it accidentally blew up there, we saw that much.

From the sixth grade room right there I don't know what it is now, but the back windows facing the church… those classrooms in that first row right there. Okay, and the nuns used to live in the….In the, what do you call the residence with the nuns were?

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Convent?

Jerry Martinez: yeah go right go down the steps. Okay, look to your right that building there…that's where the nuns were…In front of it to the side of the Convent was in the sixth grade classroom and then that blast and then.

I looked out the door one day in the sixth grade teachers, you might want to mention this…Mrs. Cady and Mrs. Grimes. They were parishioners. Very devout very active at Holy Rosary. There was a girl…She was like a hall school crossing guard and she was a student like in the Eighth grade. And I saw her walking in the playground on the asphalt and she was crying…and you know it was…and they made an announcement over the speakers that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Oh gosh. They got the news.

Jerry Martinez: yeah….Those two things stand out… those are major things that happened.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Were you involved in any kind of religious activities? Religious education? Attend Masses?

Jerry Martinez: Like CCD nowadays yeah. Some CCD but no, it was it was Mass every day. It was totally Catholic… very strict…the nuns were very strict. You walk the straight line, you know, but yeah it was very Catholic-based education.. very, very.

I don't think it's like that now at Holy Cross, and Central, Ursuline, Incarnate Word... like it was in those elementary school days, back then, and there was maybe like 300 kids enrolled at Holy Rosary.

I don't think they even have an elementary school.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Yeah…the elementary school is no longer there. I know they use the classrooms there for meetings and all that right now.

Jerry Martinez: That's where we have our have our ACTS meetings there and we do the Sons of Mary there on… Well, whenever Adam says… we gotta slow down because of COVID. Right, yeah, everything is pretty much slowed down….

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: I think they'll be picking up again once everybody's vaccinated, you know, and all that.

Jerry Martinez: The ACTS is picking up too. I've been to like three Holy Rosary ACTS Retreats. We do Tecaboca.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: So…did you have any… can you describe some memorable moments you've had from the ACTS Retreats, I know you can't reveal …because it's personal but was there anything

that happened in those ACTS Retreats that truly moved you or that helped you in your spiritual growth and your faith?

Jerry Martinez: Very much, very much. It's an eye-opening experience and you think to yourself, "Man, have I been missing this?" It's very effective, very effective. I'll do a self-disclosure for you, okay?

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Okay…if you want to… you don't have to.

Jerry Martinez: You can edit it or whatever… I'm a well-liked person, there's nothing that I'm not ashamed of. I'm a recovering alcoholic and drug using individual. And on March 17, I will complete my 24th year of totally absolute recovery.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Oh, congratulations.

Jerry Martinez: that's right… I start my 25th year this March 17 and I had been sober for several years, but there was something missing, you know I I had been doing some non-denominational faith-based stuff. And most common-sense stuff that was working for me and understanding the mentality of AA… "One day at a time". But when I did an ACTS Retreat. That was like the booster that took me to the next level of my recovery…that's how important incorporating the Holy Trinity is to recovery... has done to take it to the next level. To where you're not only feel more secure with yourself but relapses like nowhere…can take your Life…obliterated from the picture. That's what an ACTS Retreat does.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Right.

Jerry Martinez: And pretty much all the guys that go in there all have had some type of issue with alcohol. They all admit, that you know, incorporating faith into recovery is [important], if you don't, it ain't gonna happen. So that's what ACTS does.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: What is it about Holy Rosary that endears that parish to you? What is it about the identity of Holy Rosary that seems to resonate with you?

Jerry Martinez: The fact that my parents… My mom and dad were very active with dad on the field and my mom with the concession stand. That's what they instilled in me at a very young age, and I strayed from that and Holy Rosary…something that stands out for me is that I have kind of gone out there in the world, seeing everything negatively that you can see, and then I've come back full circle to where it started.

That's what Holy Rosary signifies to me…that foundation was already there that was set by my parents, by getting us involved there to come back full circle to that foundation. And to allow them to rest in peace and have eternal life…understanding that they can, at least, rest because during all those years that I was doing all that… running in the wrong direction… they weren't resting but now they are going to be. I attribute the foundation that I gained at Holy Rosary, CYO, and going to school there, participating in Church at that age, and that foundation that I have come back to it. There's individuals that don't have that foundation or something that they can return to from scratch and integrate. I'm very fortunate to have had Father Trey Walter, Father Meyer, and Father Kramer, and the Community of Holy Family. And the people that were there [at Holy Rosary], and to have Holy Rosary in my life and those people who have gone on to do well, you know. You have to come back and say, "Yeah, I want to be like this".

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Well, what is it about being a Marianist Parish that appeals to you as opposed to maybe another church? Is there something about that Marianist Charism that influences you?

Jerry Martinez: Yes, the solidness of that organization. How dedicated and devout the Marianist priests are. They have this community that makes you feel like you want to be a part of.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: How, how so? I'm just curious.

Jerry Martinez: By being right, being faithful. You know, committed. All those things that go along with someone that is paying attention.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Right.

Jerry Martinez: You know…. If you're a part of something…Something that has been there a while and has been proven and has done very good…look at St. Mary's…You've seen pictures…when I was a kid, we used to drive up Cincinnati, the only thing was the big building [St. Louis Hall].

Oh, and the baseball stadium….Oh,I worked at the baseball stadium as a kid when the Texas League was played here, and it was just a college baseball but the Texas professional minor league baseball teams play there… yeah. I worked in the club and I used to shine their shoes and make sure everything was clean and that all their uniforms were by their lockers.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Cool.

Jerry Martinez: For professional baseball to use a university 's stadium. You know, you're part of something that's bigger than yourself and the Community is part of a solid foundation.…a Catholic faith-based foundation.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Let me ask you. Were there any special… any particular memories that you experienced as a youth there? And I know you mentioned about this, the CYO …were there any spiritual

moments or cultural moments that really endeared to you because you are at Holy Rosary?

Jerry Martinez: I'd have to say that when I was younger, maybe not, it was just going with the flow, you know, just being there. But you know after I did a retreat …After I came back and did a retreat as a grown person…what I got from the retreat was the spiritual. That's when it really basically came full-circle.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: I see.

Jerry Martinez: That it had to be that retreat or else it wouldn't have happened.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Right.

Jerry Martinez: To get it to full circle and now we've got this and…now we're on the right track."

Let me tell you I met Archbishop Flores when I was in Germany. He was visiting the Bases and I told him, "Hey, I'm from San Antonio" and he said," Sit right here with me". I got to know him pretty well…I even asked him…I said, "Call my mom when you get home". When you go back home to San Antonio, mark it on your calendar that you met me and that I'm okay. So, then, I got this landline through the Navy ship to call my sister. She said, "What did you tell Bishop Flores ?" and I said I just wanted him to call Mom. And she said, "Because he came by the house."

When I went on my first retreat at St Anthony de Padua because the priests are retired there.

He [Archbishop Flores] was there and the "Jesus" prayer… we're singing as we are walking up to go visit with the retired priests that

are living there, and they said that Archbishop Flores doesn't… he has amnesia and he can't really keep track anymore.

Through that prayer, I was saying, please God, let him recognize it, let him remember. And sure enough, He did what I said. And the custodians …the people that worked in the kitchen there, said, " What did you do? What did you tell him?"

I said it [the 'Jesus' prayer] reminded him of our visit in Germany, and it wasn't anything I said, but most of all, I was praying that this would happen…when you're walking up here…we're walking with our hands on shoulders., blindfolded saying that prayer. That's Faith…that's believing.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: That's special ..very special…very moving.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Well, is there is there anything that. You would like to share that if you were to tell young people today what they should know about holy Rosary? What would you say to them? (

Jerry Martinez: Oh, I would say that Holy Rosary has a beautiful history to it and to get involved there. Try to do your best to keep that tradition going..of being special…And get involved. Participate and do your part…just in that you can help keep a very strong tradition of the Marianist priests that…don't let it fade away don't let it, you know get…To where it's not a community…get involved in there and keep it going to what it once was… and even making it better.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: I would love to share that advice…what you just said. And how we, can help them keep growing and continuing in their Faith, and not to be afraid to do so and it's okay to do so.

Jerry Martinez: Just elaborate to them how good it was and not to let that disappear…to revive it and keep that goal.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Okay, well, I'll be happy to share that with them and be part of this, and I really appreciate your time this evening…But I would love to just have coffee with you sometime and just chat some more about your Faith and your involvement with the Holy Rosary.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Oh, real quick…Was Holy Rosary always established by the Marianists? I'm just curious how all the parishes ,when they get too big, they have offshoots….they move over because I went to St. Luke's and St. Luke's was offshoot of St Paul's.

Jerry Martinez: Correct.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: and St. Paul's…they were an offshoot of, may be, Little Flower. I'm not sure how that how that evolved.

Jerry Martinez: Probably, St. Ann's.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Oh yeah…you're probably right…that makes sense, so Holy Rosary was never an offshoot, was it?

Jerry Martinez: No, cuz San Antonio was expanding West and St. Mary's was there…. St. Mary's used to be nothing but country. San Antonio was expanding West on Culebra and eventually Bandera [Road]. And that era of the Greatest Generation was expanding the city. I went to the Northwest and that's where Holy Rosary came about…Little Flower was probably getting packed into St. Anne's had to do St. Paul's and Little Flower had to probably do Holy Rosary. The archdiocese I mean… probably.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Okay, then that makes sense, I was just curious…you know…because well, when my oldest brother went to St. Mary's and there were times when we would go to Mass at Holy Rosary and I always thought, this is an interesting church…it's a circle. Usually you have a traditional cross configuration, it was a circle, do you know how is that was decided?

Jerry Martinez: I don't know, but that was a that type of architecture in that day, because of, you know, Holmes High School is a circle.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Right.

Jerry Martinez: The architecture…it was new, innovative and Holy Rosary was like a dome. All right?..and then later on, you had the astrodome. That dome and that circle…. architectural stuff was coming up around that time and Holy Rosary used to have a global light on top. I don't think it has anymore...It would shine for miles… that's when it was open out here…..now trees are growing…you could see that lighted dome…the light on top of the dome for miles.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: On the outside?

Jerry Martinez: It was on the roof.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Really, because I know inside the church there's glass window circular window with a Holy Spirit dove that's up there, so that's where the light was?

Jerry Martinez: Yeah. The light was up there, exactly.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Wow.

Jerry Martinez: Let me make one other point.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Yes, please.

Jerry Martinez: The heritage of the Holy Rosary…Its inception, I'm pretty sure, it was mostly German…very, very German. You can research that… it was very German American and German culture-oriented …early on. Early on, it was a lot of parishioners of German descent who were very active at Holy Rosary.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: How did the Hispanic influence come in?

Jerry Martinez: That generation that was coming back from War and they started expanding like…It wasn't Ray Ellison.It was the GI Bills and then Kelly Field and Lackland, you know. So, it was like the Hispanic and German culture environment that meshed very well.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Interesting… I didn't know that.

Jerry Martinez: Check it out. That one was major…about the parish Hispanic culture coming in with the German culture. That was pretty much dominant there and they meshed very well.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: I just find it fascinating….Well, Jerry I don't want to keep you any longer, but do you have any concluding comments or remarks if you'd like to share before I let you go?

Jerry Martinez: Only that I hope that what you're doing and putting together here just keeps up…has some impact and influence on those kids that keeps it going.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: I'm going to try my best, and we're using theatre as a means of telling the story.

Jerry Martinez: That's beautiful.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: And so…my students are really excited about what we're accomplishing here and we want to honor and capture the thoughts, feelings, aspirations, concerns, issues,

whatever, of the Holy Rosary youth and I just wanted to get a little bit of a perspective from you…. about what it was like when you were young…when you were there as a youth at Holy Rosary. I do appreciate your time so very much. I'm glad we were able to connect. Well, you have a great evening, and thank you so much, and get a good night's rest.

Jerry Martinez: I will. Thank you.

Bernadette Hamilton-Brady: Take care. Bye-bye.