

Autobiographical Sketch:

Gordon James MacRae

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I was born to Alan MacRae and Sophie Kavanagh MacRae on April 9, 1953, in Beverly, Massachusetts. There were four children in my family: Mark, born in June of 1951, Deborah, born in December of 1954 and Scott, born in February of 1959. At the time of my birth, my parents lived in Danvers, Mass. My father, a machinist by trade, is a native of Lynn, and my mother is a native of St. John's, Newfoundland. She became a United States citizen about eight years after my birth. In 1954 my family moved to West Lynn, and moved again to East Lynn in 1956. In 1958 I began school at Ingalls Elementary School in Lynn. I remember little of the school except that I enjoyed it, and I was an average student. The only activity I can remember being involved in during grammar school was cub scouts.

My parents were both baptized Catholic, but neither of them practiced Catholicism. Though my brothers and sister and I were also baptized, we did not attend Mass or religious education classes. I can vaguely remember attending a few classes and making my first Communion in the second grade, but it was the only time I can remember being in a Church. In 1961 my uncle, Fr. George MacRae SJ, was ordained to the priesthood. My family attended his ordination and First Mass, both of which had a marked impression on me though I did not even consider the priesthood for myself at that time. I had only seen my uncle once or twice prior to his ordination, but we became close in the years after.

In 1964 I enrolled in grades seven through nine at Eastern Junior High School. The following three years proved to be difficult ones. I had a severe dental defect which effected my speech and eating habits the correction of which proved to be very tedious and costly. I had corrective surgery and then wore braces and various other hardware for the next three years. I disliked every minute of it, but my parents were very supportive. The problem did not seem to interfere with my activity very much since my older brother and I were both very involved in boy scouts and several school sports. I became a patrol leader in boy scouts and won several awards in that organization.

There were also some family difficulties during those years. My parents separated for several months while I was in the seventh grade. I did not really understand it at the time, but both of my parents had drinking problems. They reunited, but separated again several times during those years. The problem seemed to manifest itself suddenly since my family was quite close and quite happy during my grammar school years. I lived with various relatives while in the seventh grade, and had to change schools a few times, however I was fortunate enough to be able to adjust quickly. When I was in the ninth grade my parents

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him a few times there, and became interested in the Capuchins. I applied for admission and was accepted after an interview with the vocation director and after having submitted a few letters of recommendation. There was no other screening process at the time. In April of 1970 I turned seventeen and then graduated from high school the following month. In September I entered Novitiate with the Capuchins. A few months later my parents divorced and my father remarried. I was in novitiate for eight months when I decided that I simply was not prepared to take vows in religious life. Upon consultation with my novice master, and with my uncle who visited me weekly, I withdrew from the novitiate with the intention that I may reapply in a few years. I was still seventeen at the time. I then went to work full time for my father as a machinist and went to school part time at North Shore Community College in Beverly, Massachusetts.

For the next few years I held several posts in my parish. My pastor, Rev. Joseph Massaro, who was also a very close friend, appointed me to the parish council and I served on that board for the next four years. I was also CCD coordinator for one year and I was appointed to the parish financial board by the president of the parish council. We began an adult program of Christian renewal in the parish consisting of weekend retreats on a monthly basis, and I became a team member for that program under the direction of Fr. Anthony Nuccio CSS, also a very close friend. (Fr. Nuccio is now General Secretary for the Stigmatine Order in Rome).

I still felt very strongly that I had a vocation and decided to again pursue that calling. In 1972 I applied for admission to the non-resident postulancy program in the Capuchin Order. I underwent a screening process of psychological testing and several interviews, and was accepted to the program. I remained in that program for two years and then applied and was accepted to the Capuchin novitiate in Milton, Mass. in 1974. Upon completion of novitiate in 1975 I was admitted to simple profession in the Capuchin Order. I professed temporary vows for one year at St. Pius X Friary in Middletown, Connecticut. I was assigned to St. Anthony Friary in Hudson for studies at St. Anselm's College where I majored in Psychology. I renewed my temporary Vows in 1976 and again in 1977 at St. Anthony Friary.

While I was in novitiate my father suffered a severe heart attack. His condition steadily worsened over the next few years, and late in 1977 he suffered a stroke and underwent extensive surgery. He was unable to work for the three years following his heart attack and was forced to sever all ties with the company he managed. He was able to attend school, however, and recieved a degree in alcoholism counseling. He is currently a staff counselor in the alcoholism treatment program at Soldiers Home Hospital in Chelsea, Mass. In 1976 my mother also remarried, and in 1977 she also became quite ill and was hospitalized for extensive surgery.

From May to August of 1976 I was assigned a summer apostolate at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Groveton, New Hampshire at

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the request of the pastor, Fr. Robert Simard. Both the Pastor and I felt that I was very effective there, and I found the apostolate to be an extremely rewarding experience.

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For the following two years I began to experience some discomfort in my life as a Capuchin, though I never really doubted that I have a vocation to the priesthood. After much prayer and deliberation of the matter with my spiritual director and the Capuchin director of formation, Fr. John McHugh, I decided to seek other possibilities for fulfilling what I believe to be a vocation to the priesthood. Since I have lived and worked in the Diocese of Manchester for the last three years, I decided to look there first, and finally decided to formally seek admission to the Diocese. I am very comfortable and confident in this decision.

Though I am originally from the Archdiocese of Boston, I decided to seek admission to the Diocese of Manchester for two very basic reasons. I feel that, because of the rapid growth of the Catholic population in this Diocese, there is a great need for priests here and that need may become greater in the future. I also feel that, having lived here for three years, I would be more at home and much more effective as a priest here than in a larger, more metropolitan diocese. I believe that my own temperament would be much more suited to life here than in larger, more urban areas.

I see a sense of poverty, though not necessarily a physical poverty, in many areas of New Hampshire, particularly in the North Country, and I feel a strong desire and call to answer to that poverty. I recognize the fact that my personal and family background is probably not that of the average applicant to the Diocese of New Hampshire however I feel that many of the seemingly negative conditions in my life have had a very constructive influence on me. Though I do not feel especially gifted in any particular areas, I have been able to effectively employ my own experience in these conditions with other people, especially young people, who are faced with similar circumstances. I perceive the life of a priest in this diocese as not only appealing, but also challenging. I feel quite confident in my desire to participate in that challenge.

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