

2014-1

A Conversation with Rev. Marvin O'Connell

— led by Rev. Jim Connelly, CSC

[Note: There wasn't any formal paper presentation. Jim Connelly posed leading questions and Marvin O'Connell also answered questions from the audience. These are summary notes taken by Chris Kuhn, CSC during the "Conversation."]

Jim Connelly introduced Marvin and his many accomplishments as a History Professor at the University of Notre Dame, whose research interests are in the Counter Reformation, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the History of the U.S. Church.

Among the comments made by Marvin O'Connell:

— When asked to write the biography of Edward Sorin by Father Theodore Hesburgh, he found Sorin to be a "wonderfully fascinating" man who did have his "warts." Sorin was heroic but flawed.

— Sources used by Marvin O'Connell were the 'Sorin Chronicles', his Circular Letters, the Catta brothers Biography of Basil Moreau (which was very anti-Sorin).

— Sorin was a Frenchman but from Western France. The 'West' was much more religious than Paris and was reactionary to the Enlightenment.

— Sorin did not come to Indiana to found a University. He was a missionary to the Indians, Freemasons and Protestants.

— Notre Dame was an accident. He found out he was in charge of immigrant Catholics. He saw the University as support to his work.

— Sorin founded many works (schools run by the H.C. Brothers) which ministered to the wider Church as missionaries.

— Marvin O'Connell once asked Fr Louis Putz: Why did Sorin and Moreau fight? Fr Putz responded: "Sorin was a nobleman and Moreau was a peasant."

— Sorin's Education: He was educated at a Jesuit Seminary, educated at the Major Seminary in Le Mans where he met Fr Moreau who taught there.

— Sorin was good with kids and a good fund raiser. Moreau invited Sorin to join his Auxiliary priests. Moreau had great ambitions for a worldwide congregation of priests, brothers, and sisters.

— Fr Bill Blum asked: "Why did Sorin refuse Moreau's assigning him to be bishop in Bengal? O'Connell responded: Sorin said the mission in Indiana could not survive without him. Sorin did come around later to accepting the assignment and Moreau

said, "You don't have to go."

- Sorin was comfortable in "his own skin." He did not resent subordinates' successes, such as William Corby, Peter Cooney, Sr. Angela Gillespie.
- Sorin's spirituality was very "19th Century not very scriptural or with a liturgical basis, but very Marian devotional which was central."
- Hyperbole was Sorin's style. He exaggerated everything.