

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Perhaps you could say something about your early life in rural Ireland, and your upbringing and so on.

Bernard Lynch: Oh my gosh, alright. Yes. I'm, "Oh my gosh," because it's a long time ago. And also I've been out of Ireland for 50 years, which is a very long time. And...I guess it wasn't in any way different than a girl or boy growing up in any rural, well, I grew up in a town, a small town, a market town in the 50s. Ireland was very poor - as my father used to say, when the English were here, there were some rich, now we're all poor." So I knew that, but because everybody on my street, you know, there was no "class distinction"; the doctor or lawyers' daughters or sons mixed with the labourer/carpenters' families. And the church was very central to our lives, and became the sort of Broadway theatre of our youth.

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: Everything happened around the church. I would guess, looking back, part of the reason is because it was free, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah, and very powerful as well.

Bernard Lynch: Well, it was very powerful, but of course, we didn't have that sense until much later, although you would have to be blind not to know that the Bishop, as he was called, the Lord Bishop, lived in a place, and the rest of us lived in ordinary houses, and he was addressed as, "My Lord," and priests... in my experience, the priests were the ones who attracted me to priesthood, they were very good men. I had no bad experience of priesthood, even though I was an altar boy from the age of eight, and spent a lot of my time around the cathedral, serving and taking care of priests. They were very good, very generous, very committed. And materially not well off, but better off than the rest of us, you know, they had central heating, we didn't. But there was no ostentatiousness of any kind.

Interviewer: It's quite interesting how this, you know, we're much more aware now of some of the abusive activities of clergy; were you aware of any of that going on?

Bernard Lynch: No, there wasn't anything in my town, nor has there been any charge brought whatsoever.

Interviewer: Right, okay.

Bernard Lynch: And I would be surprised if there was. There were...what would I say, I was going to use...they were a very spartan kind of strict...not austere, but unworldly kind of men. And we also had monks in the town, Franciscan monks, you know, a town that had been founded by the Franciscans and on a beautiful abbey that was destroyed during the Cromwellian invasion, ruins still there. But they came back to the town after Catholic emancipation, and built another church, and they were the favoured monks for confession and spiritual direction. And all the property and schools and hospitals and orphanages were all ran by nuns, priests, brothers.

Interviewer: So it sounds like that was a very positive experience, positive role models and...

Bernard Lynch: Well, certainly of the church side. The school side, that was run by the Christian brothers, was not.

Interviewer: Yeah. They have another reputation, don't they?

Bernard Lynch: It was a negative experience, as a fellow Irishman would say, George Bernard Shaw, my schooling spoiled my education. I couldn't wait to get out of grammar school or high school, primary school, I mean, to say I didn't like it is an understatement. They were cruel. While there was some sexual abuse that I was aware of, the primary abuse, in my mind, was the psychoemotional/physical cruelty exercised by some of these men, religious and lay.

[00:05:24]

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: I mean, to be beaten was an automatic, you know, I mean, you were beaten for looking crook. And with the resulting consequence that when I went to college - and this may sound a bit pretentious, but I was surprised to discover I was intelligent.

Interviewer: Right, yeah.

Rs[p Because I had no problem, where in school, I lived in dread.

Interviewer: Right. So it's an awful model of education, isn't it?

Bernard Lynch: Oh, the worst

Interviewer: I was aware of in the 80s, with friends in Dublin who I went to, I presume, other schools, and it was still going on, it was extraordinary.

Bernard Lynch: Yes, yes. I have no doubt that some of these men were sadists, and got sexual pleasure from beating boys.

Interviewer: Yeah. So sense of vocation began to...?

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, you see, that was parallel then with the priests, who were not physically abusive in any way, shape or form. You were holy men, ordinary men, and did our job and brought us to God, whatever that means. I mean, they certainly did that, however one perceives, and you know, because of course, I fell in love with the ritual, especially the pre-Vatican 2 ritual of the Tridentine Mass, and as we say here in England, the smells and bells and wonderful vestments, you know, every requiem... Everyone who died in the town, there was only 8000 people in the town, but everyone had a solemn requiem mass, irrespective of their class or material.

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: So you had a solemn Gregorian mass with three priests and an MC and servers and a choir.

Interviewer: That's quite a theological statement really, isn't it, about the nature of humanity and life after death and all of that sort of thing.

Bernard Lynch: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: I mean, that wouldn't happen now for all kinds of reasons and, you know, altar boy...altar boys would be allowed out of school to serve the requiem mass, depending if

it was from your neighbourhood, "Oh, you go, Mark," and it was my neighbourhood, I got one, you know. It was very...it sounds a bit romantic, and it was, it was.

Interviewer: But I suppose it's a small community, gathered around a church, that kind of is...it functions through the activities of the church, so it's right and proper, isn't it?

Bernard Lynch: Yes, yes, and it's...the Irish have a particular relationship to death, and still have, I mean, for the Irish, between life and death, there is no between, and as Shaughnessy the poet said, "All our wakes are merry and all our weddings are sad," and we really celebrate death. And still do, people still do, it's a lovely aspect of the culture. That has died out in major cities like Dublin, say, or make Cork, Belfast, I'm not sure, but is certainly still alive in smaller towns and rural areas, that one has to be waked properly, one has to attend the funeral, one has to have a proper funeral, you know, proper time given to sit with the corpse, children have to see it and kiss goodbye, all that kind of... it's familiar, it's not removed from, and there is all the devotion to it. I mean, the dead are not only prayed too, they're prayed to as well as being prayed for, they're very much a live part...

[00:09:47]

Interviewer: I used to teach on a course for bereavement counsellors, and I used to tell a story of my great aunt's funeral in Dublin which contained all the various bits that you've described, and I was an Englishman, I was quite taken aback by the whole thing. But it was just part of the way things happened in the 90s, I suppose.

Bernard Lynch: Sure.

Interviewer: So, yeah, it was a good way of saying goodbye to a very dear great aunt as well.

Bernard Lynch: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: So college, where was that and...?

Bernard Lynch: Novitiate, then, yes, so that's where I started, I was in Galway, I was born in Ennis, County Clare, in a very remote part of Galway County on the coast, 2000 acres of land given to my order, the SMA Society of African Missions, by the count, for the use of the Society to train young men to go to Africa.

Interviewer: And what sort of put the idea of Africa in your mind?

Bernard Lynch: Well, of course, the concept of Africa was Tarzan and Jane, you know, I couldn't...I had never seen a black person growing up, you know, I saw pictures, I'd never seen a real life... So I had this very fanciful idea of going to Africa as a kid and working in the jungles, working with black people to bring them to Jesus Christ and to teach and educate. And of course, it turned out very different, but what attracted me apart from that kind of childish notion was during the latter stages of my secondary school education, different missionaries and priests would come into the school to recruit, to speak to the senior students about the possibility of becoming a priest. And the priest who came from the Society of African Missions, Father William Sullivan, and he, a young man, a very attractive young man, I remember still, and I was in my teens myself. And he had a patch on his trousers that was...the seat of his trousers was patched, and that was kind of very unusual for a priest. But it spoke to me of poverty.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: A kind of down at heel sort of guy, and...

Interviewer: And that was attractive in a different kind of way?

Bernard Lynch: That was attractive to me because priests had come from Florida and California and they were promising, you know, automobiles and a lovely lifestyle, and of course, we didn't even have an automobile in my home, because we couldn't afford it. And that turned me off, whereas this man came in and I thought he was one of us, and with my very idealistic notion of the gospel, I felt that he was nearer to the gospel than these guys who drove up in, you know, big cars and... So I signed up with him, at 17, I guess.

Interviewer: Did any of your contemporaries do the same thing?

Bernard Lynch: They did, there was another guy in my class. I didn't know he had because it was all done, you get a card, everybody got a card, and you could put down, like, interested/maybe/not interested, and you hand them back confidentially to the priest or to the schoolmaster. And I didn't know this other guy in the class had signed up until we met at the railway station to go to the novitiate.

[00:14:24]

Interviewer: Gosh.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah. There were 26 of us.

Interviewer: 26 in your intake?

Bernard Lynch: In my intake.

Interviewer: Right, and how many of your temporaries from school also explored some kind of religious life or priesthood?

Bernard Lynch: There were two others, so there would have been four out of a class of maybe 120.

Interviewer: Right, okay.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah.

Interviewer: Now they're lucky if they get four vocations across the whole country.

Bernard Lynch: Exactly, and we were only one secondary school, there was another one where it would have more recruits.

Interviewer: So you arrive with your friend from school in the novitiate and what was the experience like?

Bernard Lynch: It was heaven on earth. I mean, I think I'm safe in saying that I could still say it was the happiest year of my life. It was pure, unadulterated bliss.

Interviewer: And what were the components that...?

Bernard Lynch: The ingredients were simply complete brainwashing on their part, with absolute belief on my part.

Interviewer: Right, so you haven't got your critical faculties kind of honed...

Bernard Lynch: Exactly, I mean, the novice master basically, I mean, we were educated in the Ignatian exercises, those were the dialectic of our spiritual formation. And obedience

was the litmus test of Ignatians and of belongingness to Christ according to Ignatius, and obedience to the will of God. So of course, the superior, the novice master voiced the will of God. So whatever he said was the rule, was the explicit expression of the will of God. The bell...so all you had to do was obey.

Interviewer: And there was nothing kind of, nothing that might make you feel revolutionary in the slightest?

Bernard Lynch: Nothing. Nothing. There wasn't at that stage. That came very soon afterwards, but that first year was devoted primarily to prayer, spiritual exercises, learning to meditate, examining of conscience, 30 day retreat, study of English literature, ascetical theology, elocution, manual labour, you know, the usual things. It was very monastic. There was silence a lot of the time, and we couldn't have any visitors or parents or family.

Interviewer: For the whole year?

Bernard Lynch: For the whole year. And we couldn't listen to the radio, we hadn't a clue, television, newspapers, all forbidden. Our mail was read coming in and going out. So it was a very hermetically sealed environment, 26 young fellows, testosterone very high, lots of games to keep us in our...

[00:17:54]

Interviewer: Under control.

Bernard Lynch: Yes, to keep the testosterone in check, and of course, any kind of intimate friendship was forbidden, and quite closely watched. The rule was numquam duo, semper tres - never two, always three. So if you were seen with the one student once too often, you'd be immediately checked, and if you didn't conform, you were out on your ear.

Interviewer: And was anybody...?

Bernard Lynch: No, well, I did have my own intimate friend and it became kind of them and us, we kind of...what would you say, it led to the...cowboys and Indians sort of affair, you know, that it heightened the friendship, if anything, but you wouldn't be seen...

Interviewer: Because it was illicit and...?

Bernard Lynch: Oh, we would meet occasionally, or yeah, but nothing in any way sexual or affectional in any physical sense.

Interviewer: Right. So over the year on the Galway coast, with the wind from the Atlantic...

Bernard Lynch: Yes, lots of swims, so the summer in the Atlantic. And then summer vacation and then the theologate, the major seminary, which happened to be in Northern Ireland, and I'd never been to the north of Ireland, I mean... As far as I was concerned, it was another part of Ireland, but it was under British control and I...it was never talked about. Now, this was pre-1969, it was not discussed.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And arriving there, I mean, because it was Ireland, there was no great difference except that they had better roads, and they had, which you learned very quickly, a far better health service, of which we were now able to participate in.

Interviewer: And where were you based in Northern Ireland?

Bernard Lynch

Bernard Lynch: There was and still is a college, former manorial house belonging to an Ennis family, that was their surname, Ennis, that we had bought in the 1920s in secret because there were huge protests by the local community to having a priest factory, as they called it, and it was...it is a beautiful, beautiful, one of the Palladian English/Irish houses, with its own private lake and gardens and...

Interviewer: And where is it in...?

Bernard Lynch: It's just outside Newry, between Newry and Belfast, 26 miles from Belfast.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And there we starting philosophy, two years' philosophy.

Interviewer: So at what time did you become a novice, I mean, is that...?

Bernard Lynch: Well, I mean, you become a novice as soon as you enter.

Interviewer: Okay, so first vows...

Bernard Lynch: Well, at the end of the first year. At the end of the novitiate, if you are admitted, you're given, well, we didn't take vows, we just took an oath, because we were, are a society of secular priests brought together by a Frenchman, de Marion Brésillac, primarily to go with the French colonies for the evangelisation of Africa. But because we were/are English speaking, they used us to go with the British colonies and that's why we were founded on the back of the French foundation. And we had six years there in Dromantine, outside Belfast. Again, I must say they were very good years, but they weren't as plain sailing as in the novitiate, I mean, we got what I would say was a wonderful education, you know, we had everyone from Honest to God, through True Resurrection, by Williams.

[00:23:04]

Interviewer: That's much more enlightened than I would have expected it to be.

Bernard Lynch: It was excellent.

Interviewer: I would have thought that Honest to God would be prescribed reading...proscribed.

Bernard Lynch: Au contraire. Our English literature, we had Lady Chatterley.

Interviewer: Right, gosh. And is that...would that be a function of the wider church or just of your order?

Bernard Lynch: No, I mean, as you know, orders are very separate and very independent and it's really up to the particular professor of English literature if he wants to you read D.H. Lawrence of, yeah, and the same with our dogmatics professor, he was...brilliant, probably the most brilliant man I've ever met, but he was very open to all the new theology coming in, Vatican 2, ecumenism, C.H. Daw, Henry (inaudible 00:24:02), who else did he have... Who's the other great English theologian? It was Charles Davis at the time.

Interviewer: I'm trying to remember the title of Harry Williams' autobiography, *Here I Am*, or something like that, where he's quite overt about his sexuality and it made me wonder about how the educational establishment would have responded to questions about

sexuality? If they, you know, they welcome Williams in his theological vein, would they have done in his more autobiographical?

Bernard Lynch: Theological yes, sexuality in mass was simply ignored.

Interviewer: Right, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: We came out of seven years of what I would consider one of the best educations available to students for priesthood, as ignorant of sexuality as we went into it.

Interviewer: Yeah, which is not surprising really, is it?

Bernard Lynch: It was never discussed. In modern theology, it was kind of slid over, usually in Latin, and it just...

Interviewer: Just to aid the understanding?

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, I mean, basically about sin and how to, you know, how serious is this, that an the other, you know, and what's forbidden and what's not. But in terms of any kind of knowledge even of our own bodies, I mean, it's quite...I left seminary and I didn't know what a blowjob was. If you'd said it to me, I might have thought it was a cocktail. It probably is. (Laughter). And that was really wrong, because now at the age of 24, I was ordained and hearing confessions. And I had women and men coming to me saying, after the issue of the *Humanae Vitae*, in cyclical, talking about their sex lives. And I had the knowledge of an adolescent.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: That, you know, you get on the street.

Interviewer: Yeah, kind of arrested development.

[00:26:45]

Bernard Lynch: And I had no...it was the one time in my life I was at a shrine, the Marian shrine in Ireland, Knock, County Mayo, doing summer relief work, which was primarily at that time, hearing confessions. And I remember listening to these confessions, one after the other for hours, and particularly women with large families saying, "Father, I just can't have any more children. My husband comes home, demanding their marital rights," as that's the way it was at the time, "And if I had another baby, I won't be able to cope." So I was just completely flabbergasted and totally at sea as to what to say to these people. And I remember coming out of the church and saying to a senior priest who happened to be a very good man and a very good friend, saying, "Father, I'm not doing this anymore. This is crazy. Not only the teaching, but putting someone like me in there."

Interviewer: And what was his response?

Bernard Lynch: And he said...eh was very good, he was much older, he said, "Bernard, you're a good man, you're a good priest, and this is why you will stay. Tell them to follow their conscience."

Interviewer: It's a very interesting response, isn't it, quite a...bit of unpacking really. How does the conscience relate to teachings of the church?

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, "Tell them to follow their conscience and that God loves them, don't tell them anything else."

Interviewer: Right. Hmm.

Bernard Lynch: And so I kind of...I had a conversion there as well, but if that's how he felt, whom I adored actually, as an intellect and as a good priest, well, the crack between the magisterium and lived experience opened.

Interviewer: Just a little bit.

Bernard Lynch: Just a little bit.

Interviewer: Yeah, very interesting. So what was the experience of being in the North, like, you know, for six years?

Bernard Lynch: Well, again, we were, you know, more or less a hermetically sealed community, with very little access to the outside. I mean, we would now have been able to go to Belfast or Derry or wherever on occasion, and every year we'd have some kind of organised tour, all the glens of Antrim, Cushendall or whatever, beautiful parts...

Interviewer: Yeah, lovely.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, all of the north. And remember, it was pre-1969, we arrived there in '66, and '69, The Troubles, which really shocked us, shocked me, because I didn't know there was discrimination, and the young men that came from the north of Ireland who were studying with us talked very little about it. And occasionally we would hear negative about B Specials, or... I remember the first or second time I went to Belfast and I was walking along the streets, and someone called me an f-ing papist, and I didn't even know what it was, you know, I turned to the guy and said, "What's wrong?" and he said, "It's just an anti-Catholic," you know. So when the Trouble broke out, I think my first memory was the March in Burntollet, where they were marching for civil rights and they were attacked, the civil rights people, by... And I don't think they knew anything about it here either, you know, I mean obviously certain people did, those in the know, but the general populace. So when it came on the BBC, as we had BBC television in seminary, and this whole thing opened, I was shocked to think that people would be discriminated against for jobs, housing and voting, simply because...

[00:32:03]

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: Because the boy beside me in school was a Protestant, and at this point, two presidents of the republic had been Protestants, and apart from he not being of my religion, David Baker, we used to call him Bubbles, he would be excused from religion class.

Interviewer: At school.

Bernard Lynch: At school.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: But that was the only difference. So when the civil rights went from civil rights to violence, it was very overpowering because I had known in the north one of my best friends, Ronny Pollock, a Protestant unionist, but not in any way sectarian - if I was his friend, I mean, he wasn't sectarian, not in any way. And it now became dangerous to visit his house.

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: And he told me, you know, that on both sides I would be attacked if I visited. And I suppose the turning point in my first political activism was the infamous Derry Bloody Sunday, when the following Sunday, after that, there was a massive protest march in Newry. I'm not quite sure how this came about, but everybody, including the priests, which was very unusual, in the seminary, was bussed into Newry, even though the march was illegal, and there were helicopters overhead blaring that, "You can be arrested, you are breaking the law," and thousands upon thousands of people, from both sides of it, defy the law and marched, and said, "This is not good enough." That was my first taste of, I suppose, political activism.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: I was very glad to leave the north, that was 1972, I think.

Interviewer: Glad because...?

Bernard Lynch: I could see how it was going from bad to worse, and people were being forced to take sides.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And I could see no end to it, you know, so I left it, by orders really, not by choice, orders that I had to leave, I had to go on and go to Africa.

Interviewer: It was the right time to...

Bernard Lynch: It was, yes, it suited me, I didn't want to be there, I didn't want to be there. Because by nature, I suppose I would have wanted to be involved and it would have taken a very...and I was very young and very naïve and very idealistic and it would have taken a very mature man like John Hume or one of the...Austin Currie on the other side, who had that political sensibility to be able to state a course and work for resolution.

Interviewer: Yeah, so when you say you'd want to be involved, you want to sit in the gap and...?

Bernard Lynch: I had been educated at that point, primarily in the school of Catholicism was a work of social justice, to be Christ was to be just, and justice after Vatican 2 meant doing justice, seeking justice, not just talking about it. It wasn't about baptising black babies, it wasn't about going to mass. Human communion was holy communion, the magic was dying, it was still there, but it wasn't a surrogate for human behaviour, and for calling the best in all of us in relationship to human behaviour. And that, you know, was, in our education, the message of Vatican 2, "Get our of your convents, get out of your monasteries, get out of your cosy pie in the sky when you die."

[00:37:48]

Interviewer: Totally face the congregation?

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, and get a pound on the ground when you round for everybody, rather than pie in the sky when you die. I remember the canon law professor, (inaudible 00:38:00), which was I thought and has stuck with me ever since, you know, "Better a pound on the ground when you're round than pie in the sky when you die." And a lot of the old Catholicism was pie in the sky when you die, you know. And so even in Africa then, it was all about education and opening co-operatives and hospitals and it wasn't anything which is kind of very childish notion that I had in Ennis, it was doing humanitarian work.

Interviewer: Yeah. There seems to me to be something of a link really between the kind of liberal education – and I don't mean that in it's, you know, but the more liberal education that you'd received and the wakening of the social justice issues in you. And there seems to be a Milne. Does that continue on into Africa, is that...?

Bernard Lynch: Yes, it did, I mean, when I went there, I think Zambia had been a British colony up to 1965, and I went there in 1972, so it wasn't that long after.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: It was still very British, and we had very good relations with the ex-pats, even though we lived with the Africans, and the ex-pats lived in their compounds, the ex-pats by and large were very good to us, they would help us to build schools, they would help us to build co-operatives, they would help us to build hospitals. And, you know, they weren't Catholic and they couldn't care less, you know, in fact, most of them were at least culturally Anglican, but they were very good people, in my experience, and very, very helpful to use the churches, not just ours, but whatever churches to do what they could, in my time, for the local community. But there still was residual racism and prejudice and they had very luxuriant houses by comparison to the rest, and swimming pools and servants and all that. Coming here many years later, I met them and I'm still friends with them, and you know, when I met them in Africa, I mean, one would think that they were first cousins of the Queen, or their middle name was Windsor, and I now discover, well, they're from up the road Liverpool somewhere, you know. And fair enough, you know, and maybe that's why they were, the ones I met, compassionate, but enjoying the very good life they had, you know. So they had both, and some of them, whilst racist, I remember the play I put on, with all black kids, I had no place to put it on, I don't even remember the name of it... And I asked...the Lenthall Theatre was the ex-pats' theatre, and it was a beautiful theatre, I mean, as nice as any you've seen, and there never had been a black... And I just went, and I said, you know, Tony and Lyn Osper were the people in charge, and I said, "I'd like to..." and they said, "We'll take it to the committee." And they did and they came back and they said yes.

Interviewer: I wasn't entirely sure how you were going to answer that, yeah, that's good.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, they said yes, "And we'll help you put it on." And again, there was that kind of, you know, on my part, because I remember my parish priest saying, you know, "They won't, you know, there's only so far they'll go," and I thought, "Let's try."

Interviewer: If you don't ask.

Bernard Lynch: If you don't ask. Now, I had cultivated good relations with them, I mean, I was quite political, I had visited them home and I had had them, particularly those people, to our church, which was a ramshackle church in a place called Kabushi(?), it had a really... an earth floor, huge, you know, galvanised roof with a kind of mud walls, nothing you'd seen, nothing like in anywhere in Europe. And I remember inviting them, I said, "Why don't you come to one of our services?" And they had a beautiful cathedral, an Anglican cathedral, you know, a cathedral that they hold the nativity, a beautiful, beautiful church, and I said, "Come on, they're not going to bite you." And I remember them coming, and they were the first white people in my church, 20,000 black families. And I remember when they came in, Lynn and Tony, everybody stood up and started clapping. And they were completely overwhelmed, and the people came and presented them with yams and... And I remember Lynn saying, "I feel like the queen," and I said, "Enjoy it." So I cultivated a good relationship with them and they could see how genuinely appreciative the people were of their presence amongst them, you know. They not being missionaries or, you know, but... So the social justice continued in its own way.

[00:44:31]

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And...

Interviewer: How long were you in Africa for?

Bernard Lynch: I was there for two years, and it was there I first real; Ly became aware of how unhappy I was inside, in relationship to my sexuality. I couldn't do anything about it, I couldn't even find an empathetic priest, which I had found in Dublin, which I had found in the North of Ireland, there were so many of them. Or even an empathetic laywoman or layman. And I tried, God knows that I tried, and I even attempted to speak and it was like talking to a wall, it was very, very painful.

Interviewer: Was that Africa or Catholicism or a mixture of the two or...? Because if you'd found the people to relate to in Ireland, why was it there weren't any in Africa, I wonder?

Bernard Lynch: Well, in liberal Ireland and priesthood, like England and priesthood, whatever side of the fence you're talking denominationally, there are many, many more of priests, monks. In Africa, I mean, I was one priest for 20,000 families.

Interviewer: Okay, right. So there wasn't the same networking.

Bernard Lynch: You know, it was huge demands, and it wasn't simply sacramental, if you know what I mean, I delivered a baby, or helped to do a caesarean operation.

Interviewer: Oh right.

Bernard Lynch: You know, I supervised school, I mean, it was nonstop, and I was very young and had lots of energy. But inside, there was this gnawing of...there was something wrong and... I felt attracted to my own gender, but I hadn't done anything about it, and I hadn't even got the language, homosexual or gay, you know, I mean, obviously masturbation fantasies were as far as I got. SO I requested that I would leave, even though I was doing so well, according to everybody.

Interviewer: Leaving Africa or leaving...

Bernard Lynch: Leave Africa, to return to Ireland to...well, simply, I was very vague about it, to re-evaluate my spiritual life or my relationship to Africa and the priesthood, but I definitely got across to my superiors that I'm not happy and I can't stay on much longer. And they, in their own long history in Africa, over 100 years, you know, they have had a long and a lot of experience of men breaking down, for all kinds of, you know, turning to alcohol etc., and they don't want that, you know, they don't want it, so they try to say, "Well, we'll get you out of here as soon as we can." So I came back and I went to our major seminary, which at this time had transferred from the north of Ireland to Dublin, you know, (inaudible 00:48:21), founded by Elizabeth I, to keep the Irish from being revolutionary. Didn't succeed. And I went there and spoke to man that I had known in seminary and I basically confessed to him everything that was going on, same sex attraction, masturbatory fantasies, etc. etc., an thank goodness he turned out to be straight. I say that deliberately because my best priest friends have been straight priest friends.

[00:49:05]

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: Is that a surprise? When they're at home with their sexuality, I suppose is really what I'm saying. If one approaches a woman or a man who's not at home, then it's more trouble.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: He was straight and he was at home in his straightness, and he said, you know, "Would you like to go and study psychology?" which of course, is kind of, like, everybody studying psychology needs help. And I'm sure he was thinking that. And I said, "I would, yeah," because I was interested in the subject, so I ended up going to Boston, they had a very good MSc in psychology and I said, "Yeah." I've been to the States in '69 to work in order to pay for my education in seminary, because we had to contribute, and I worked in New York as a singing waiter, believe it or not.

Interviewer: Right, gosh.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, my first Broadway appearance, but not my last, I hope. But the time there was wonderful, so I said yes, and of course, we had to jump all kinds of hurdles, it's not...The Catholic church is an army.

Interviewer: Did the order have a base in Boston or...?

Bernard Lynch: Yes, we had places all over the world, the order, but I mean, you don't just jump in to do an MS in psychology because you're having problems. But he was able, through his authority, he was a superior in our college and therefore he had rank and he was able to use it. And I ended up going back to New York, Boston, New York asked could we send a priest, the New York Archdiocese, could our order send a priest who would like to study in New York, and they would take care of him, give him a place to live, and a stipend, as long as he would do some parish work and help out, and he could also go to school. So I switched from Boston College to Fordham University in New York City, where I arrived in August 1975. And I've told you this piece before, I think, but it doesn't matter. I went to the university and the mentor, Father Tom Hennessey, SJ, he saw my credits, because things are done in credits there, as you know, and he said, "Okay, we want you to get a B+. A average, which you seemingly will have no problem, but you will also, in order to be admitted, and this is my instruction," - very Jesuitical, non-directive, "My instruction," "You will have to go into therapy, and if you need help in finding someone, I'll find." And of course, he knew, I mean, he was probably a qualified psychologist himself, so he could see between the lines, which wasn't very difficult. So I entered into psychoanalysis for two years, and it was there I uncovered what was bothering me, and named it as gay and came out as gay.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And that was very difficult, very difficult, because that was 1975/76 and the American Psychiatric Association had just declassified on sexuality as an illness. And the lid came off, and of course, I couldn't have been in a better city at a better time, and I got very involved - and I'm making a little detour. At that same time, a man contacted me from Ireland who had been this professor in seminary who introduced me to all these great theologians, Anglican and Catholic, and I've already said, the most brilliant man I've ever met, Peter O'Connell. He phoned me in my rectory to know could he come and see me. And I don't know what's the right euphemism here, whether this was the mountain coming to Mohammed or Mohammed coming... I suppose it was the mountain coming to Mohammed - to know, could I help him. I was... "I would do anything for you, but me help you? You're my hero, my professor, my confessor, my inspiration." He said, "Yes, I have to come and speak to you." So I arranged that he could come to speak to me and I ranged accommodation for him, and basically he came out to me as gay.

[00:55:16]

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: Which, you know, just below the top of my head off. I had no idea. And he had saved me in seminary from being thrown out when I was caught in sexual play with another student. And the automatic was dismissal, whether it was another man or woman, it didn't matter.

Interviewer: Okay.

Bernard Lynch: And he didn't dismiss me, because he now told me that he knew he was gay himself.

Interviewer: And were you the first person that he told, or...why did he come to you?

Bernard Lynch: I don't think I was the first person he told, but I think he had remembered that incident and it didn't take rocket science for him to gauge, I mean, I had left Africa unhappy, that would have gone out amongst the brethren, you know how incestuous orders and clerics and all this can be. That would have gone out, and, "Now he's gone to study psychology."

Interviewer: It's a pattern.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah. So he came to see me and he was now teaching here in London at the Milton Institute, drinking very heavily, very unhappy, had had several opportunities to complete his doctoral studies in Leuven, in Rome, in Dublin, Oxford, wherever he wanted to, he had the intelligence, number one, and he had the qualifications, but just couldn't, he was blocked because of...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: So this was very pertinent to your interview, I think. I said, "You've got to find someone in England," and I didn't know England, I mean, I'd been, but I didn't know, I didn't know London, I'd been, but... I said, "You've got to find someone in London to whom you can speak, a therapist, someone who, if possible, is both theology and psychology, a priest."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: "But don't go near a Catholic priest."

Interviewer: And did he take your advice?

Bernard Lynch: I said, "Don't go near a Catholic priest," I said, "You're older than me, you're brighter than me, you're more experienced than me, but from my limited experience, stay away. They're trouble. Arrested development." And between jigs and reels, and this was very on target, who did he find? Jim Cotter.

Interviewer: Oh, right.

Bernard Lynch: My introduction to LGCM, my introduction to Malcolm Johnson, my introduction to Richard Kirker, my introduction to Eric James, my introduction to the clique of cliques within the Anglican community.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And what a wonderful introduction that was. So he went to Jim, whom he used to call, "Daddy Cotter," instead of Father Cotter. And Jim was very helpful to him, including John Lee, who is another great man.

Interviewer: Right, yeah, yeah.

[00:59:11]

Bernard Lynch: And I came over here, to Peter, in the summer of '79, and he was resident in our house, SMA here, seeing Jim Cotter, attending church at St Botolph's, where Malcolm Johnson was the area dean of London. And he brought me to meet both Malcolm, John Lee was there.

Interviewer: John was working for Malcolm at the time.

Bernard Lynch: As curate.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And Jim Cotter was always doing his own thing somewhere. I think he was something to Anglican students in...just outside London. He hadn't completely moved out, as he did...he was still more attached to the institution. And I met Richard Kirker, and I joined LGCM.

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: I had now joined Dignity in New York, but LGCM was the nearest thing to it here, albeit they had very different...what would you say, very different babies.

Interviewer: Different organisations, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: Very different. And kept up my membership over...even though I was a resident living in New York, and got all the, you know, the Thomas Harding lectures sent to me, because they used to make pamphlets of them.

Interviewer: Oh right, okay.

Bernard Lynch: Brought everything that... I remember that he was the first major theologian of any mainland church to write something on theology and same sex, he was dead not that long ago, very simple pastoral book, priest...

Interviewer: No, it's not ringing any bells.

Bernard Lynch: Very famous.

Interviewer: Not Jack Dominion?

Bernard Lynch: No, he's Catholic, this is an Anglican man...

Interviewer: Right. I can't think.

Bernard Lynch: I can't think of it again. So Peter saw Jim as his counsellor, and eventually with Jim and John Lee's support, Malcolm in the distant, Malcolm didn't do that kind of work that Jim did. He, Peter, took a leave of absence from priesthood and decided to come and live in New York, where he died of AIDS, unfortunately, in about two years. And he came to New York and died of AIDS, which is a whole other story. And I continued my work in New York. And we're up to where now...I had been in New York and so my link into

LGCM, which is very important and how I got involved and how I got...and I said this at Jim Cotter's funeral, which I had a few words to say at in St Martin's...not the funeral, I was at the funeral in Aberdaron, I think.

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Bernard Lynch: And I went to that, but I also spoke at St Martin-in-the-Fields, the memorial, and I emphasised, as Jim asked me, god rest him, and if he is not resting with god, there is no god, he was such a good man. Taught me how to live and die, Jim Cotter, I was with him two weeks before he died.

[01:03:40]

Interviewer: I never met him, but his writings are just...

Bernard Lynch: Oh, (inaudible 01:03:44). He was no saint in that kind of crazy sense of the world, a very human saint, but he was a really, really humble, good priest, and he, I said, "I hope you know," speaking to the congregation, "That he was important in the Church of England, but he was co-equally important in the Church of Rome, when we couldn't find a priest to equal him that would listen to our story about what it was to be human and gay. He was there in the front lines, and he took us in and he didn't know a lot himself, he was struggling, he was being both his own mentor and our counsel."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And this was way back in the 70s, and you know, it was well taken, because it was well meant, but he was, he was a prophet in his own right.

Interviewer: But there's something about your generation, I think, and I was having a conversation with Malcolm as well, where every step was a learning experience for you and for the whole church, and that, to even my generation, I kind of...I suppose I think, you know, if you hadn't had the courage to take the steps, then we would actually now be in a completely different place, and that was very much the case in Malcolm's story as well, so, yeah, thank you. So New York, and your first reference to AIDS, and that became a really kind of important...

Bernard Lynch: That became the apotheosis, I mean, people who will look at this or listen to this afterwards, may giggle if they know my story, because I wasn't a radical and I wasn't really into political activism ta that level. One could say, you know, the personal is political and everything I did, from protesting in Newry to protesting, you know, the exclusion of black people from the Lenthall Theatre, but AIDS really, really put me on the barricades, particularly in relationship to the church, the Catholic church, obviously, but all churches and all religion, where hundreds of men around me were dying, and they were blamed for this, by the papists, the first words in the Vatican, "AIDS is the natural results of unnatural acts," you know, outrageous.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And so, because I was so close to...I was theological advisor to Dignity in New York, an organisation at the time of 1500 people, by the time in left in 1992, 600 of them had died of AIDS, and as you know, I founded the first AIDS ministry and was part of the MIRAS taskforce on AIDs. And I couldn't see an end to it, I couldn't see any kind of...The word courage completely lost me, it was not in my vocabulary, because I was at war. And not a war of my own making. I was at war trying to save, in whatever little way I could, the dignity of my dying brothers, who were being labelled as sick, sinful, and undergoing the punishment. And that was on the ecclesiastical level. On the secular level, they were being thrown out of jobs as soon as they were diagnosed, they were

being thrown out of their housing, their apartments, they were abandoned, in many cases, by their families, you know... The ashes of the youngest guy who died are on my mother's grave in Ireland because his parents wouldn't accept him. And that was not an exceptional case. So I went to City Hall in New York in 1986 to testify against Cardinal O'Connor, for the Gay Rights Bill, which simply meant...it had nothing to do with sexual or genital activity, it was really, you know, it still irks me, it had only to do with jobs and housing, and he objected to it, "Because it would promote a lifestyle."

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: And his objection was so efficacious because of the political control the church had and still has despite all the scandals - in New York, he stopped the bill going through 10 times, 10 years, 10 successive years. And moi, from Ennis, County Clare, you know, from nowhere, and going nowhere obviously, I didn't know that at the time, I went to City Hall, dressed in my teddy bear suit, my Roman Carter. And of course, as soon as I go in, everybody thinks I'm there for the Cardinal, and the place is mobbed. So I'm escorted by the sergeant-at-arms to sit amongst all the right-wingers - Hasidic Jews, evangelicals, you know, and I'm sitting there, petrified, and you know, you have to be called up and I had registered to be called up, and I remember my own testimony, at the beginning of it, saying, you know, I was there as a Roman Catholic priest of good standing, and I'm here today to testify to the gospel." Clap, clap, clap, from everyone except those for the bill, "Which to me, means social justice, the co-equality of all the people, that's the gospel of Christ," I said in very simple language, "And I today, as an American citizen by choice, I vote for the values of our founding fathers, that all men and women are created equal, and I ask you to vote with me and our founding fathers. Thank you very much." Well, the right wing made a dash for the dash, no pun intended, really, because it's true, and I had two armed police escort me all the way from the podium to my home in the Bronx.

[01:11:40]

Interviewer: Wow.

Bernard Lynch: So vociferous was the reaction. And I'm not saying, I'm not even suggesting that was the linchpin on the passage, but I can say, in humility, which is true, it had a major impact.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: But it was the beginning of the end for me.

Interviewer: Yes, I was going to say, that was the last time you stood up in good standing.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah. Headline on all networks, ABC, NBC, CBS, "Priest opposes Cardinal on bill, bill passes."

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: And collapsing the two into one, you know, which I'd say was not true, there were other people opposing...

Interviewer: Yeah, sure, but there's a fascinating link there between the founding fathers and the powerful institutions of the state. And you know, to people...people never like having their attention drawn to those kind of comparisons, do they?

Bernard Lynch: Especially by a foreigner.

Interviewer: Yeah, quite.

Bernard Lynch: Who has become an adopted son.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I imagine the Cardinal probably originated, his line originated from Ireland at some point, judging by his name?

Bernard Lynch: I guess...

Interviewer: Adopted son...

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, probably.

Interviewer: Probably a couple of generations on.

Bernard Lynch: But I mean, his line on the bill was, "God's will cannot be changed." And he equating his will and god's will.

[01:13:15]

Interviewer: Yeah, which takes us back to another part of your life, doesn't it? Right, so what was the kind of...the knowledge of your role in that is kind of...

Bernard Lynch: Immediately, of course, that's putting me to the first, the front (inaudible 01:13:36) and they were now trying to get me out of New York, meeting the Catholic church. And my order, which is not one of the more powerful orders in the church, like the Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans. Small order, French order... I was commandeered to report to Rome and I had no choice, so I was...

Interviewer: So it was a different set of policemen who escorted you from New York to Rome?

Bernard Lynch: Yeah. Sent to Rome, and I was ordered to stay there, in our house, we have... every religious has an HQ, which was very comfortable, because my own people protected me, and I went to school at the Greg, the Gregorian, and the...what is it, the Dominican College counselled me again. And I went to school there, doing courses in spirituality, a course in French, a course in theology, and I was... The Vatican had issued a degree through Cardinal Ratzinger, who was then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And he asked me to sign this before I would be allowed to continue, this decree. And the decree came to my superior general, and before he handed it to me, he said, "This is political, and you will sign it."

Interviewer: And what did the decree say?

Bernard Lynch: Well, I hadn't seen it yet. So I said, "It's political, I will sign it, but I want to know what it says." "Well," he says, "You can read it," you had an English translation, it's in Latin, but I had an English translation to make sure I... That I would be true to the church in matters of faith and doctrine. And I said, "I have no problem with faith and doctrine." He said, "Then, sign it, and it'll get us off the hook." "Okay, I'll sign it." After signing it, I was invited by others who were at the generalate, to concelebrate mass with John Paul II, privately, in his private chapel at the papal palace, which is an extraordinary privilege, if you can imagine, it's like being invited by the Queen to her private apartments.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And particularly coming from, you know, you can bring your father, mother...and you can (inaudible 01:16:59), the whole shebang, and the invitation had been sent to my father as well. And I said to the superior general, I said, "Father, I am grateful, I cannot say I'm honoured because I don't feel honoured, but I cannot go. This man, whom we call the Holy Father, has been responsible for the sole murder of many of the men I've seen die. It was he who signed the Ratzinger letter saying that we were disordered in our nature, evil in our love, and that we deserved what we go in terms of AIDS, natural result." I said, "I can't go." And he knew me, and he said, "Okay, Bernard."

Interviewer: Was there any comeback from...any wider revealed on that or...?

Bernard Lynch: Well, I suppose they knew I was on a road to where I've ended up, but they didn't think for a moment it would be as pernicious as it actually turned out. Because now meanwhile, back at the ranch in New York, the church, with the FBI, were looking for a young man to accuse me of sexual abuse.

Interviewer: Can we just stop before we go there, did this...the declaration that you had to sign, the superior general saw that as a political move. I get a sense that that's how you saw it, that you were actually being true, it was how you understood...?

[01:19:05]

Bernard Lynch: I understood I was being true, if it said specifically, "YOU don't talk about homosexuality or you..." I couldn't have signed.

Interviewer: No, no, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: I thought it was general enough and vague enough that I could be Jesuitical to sign it and say, "If this allows me to continue preaching about the freedom of gay people, I'll do it."

Interviewer: But that's not how Ratzinger put it, is it? So...yeah. I was questioning, because I didn't see you signing something as a political gesture.

Bernard Lynch: No, no, I believed it would give me, and it did for a period of time, give me space to continue my work.

Interviewer: Okay, so back to New York and the FBI and the story that last time you told me, had me in tears...

Bernard Lynch: Yes, I won't do the tears...I've just seen the movie, Priest on Trial, which was shown here for the Lesbian and Gay History Month, and yes, I was, after completing this year in exile at the Vatican, and I had returned to Ireland, to my local superiors, to be reassigned and to negotiate with them, I returned to New York, at some level to continue my AIDS ministry, which was now in suspension, but I'd kept my apartment in the Bronx, and I had...the AIDS ministry had continued in my absence, obviously I wasn't the only one in it, I wasn't...while I was important, I wasn't essential to its continuous existence. And while I was in Dublin on retreat, I got a phone call from my local superior saying that the FBI were looking for me. And from the Vatican to the FBI, what's going on here? This was becoming a Broadway musical of the worst kind.

Interviewer: It's alright, because you'd been a singing waiter, so...

Bernard Lynch: Exactly, exactly, another notch.

Interviewer: Well equipped.

Bernard Lynch: Exactly. My name in lights, or in fire, if you want. So he said, "Why are the FBI looking for you?" and I said, "You're asking me?" and he said, I'm not joking here, "Have you ever been involved in Noraid?" Noraid being...

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, the Northern Ireland...

Bernard Lynch: The sort of Nationalist Sinn Fein, supporting violence actually, as well as politics, as Sinn Fein did at that time.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And I said to him, "Absolutely not," I said, "I don't subscribe to violence in any way." I said, "I've done protests for human rights, but..." I said, "I can't think of anything else." He said, "Neither can I, but we'll find out." So we did - that they had found basically this boy...well, firstly they said, the Bronx DA's office really, that they'd found several boys who had been before a grand jury and given evidence that they had been molested by me, and that I was a fugitive from justice. I knew this was coming, that I left the country.

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: And there was a warrant out for my arrest and they were doing inquiries as to whether there was an extradition treaty between Ireland and the United States, and if I was in the Vatican, which they thought I was right now, hiding out, they didn't know about the situation. So all this was published on States television and press. So I was flabbergasted, I mean, at the time...this is beyond my comprehension. But it began to sink in very quickly.

[01:23:53]

Interviewer: That it was serious.

Bernard Lynch: Because now the Irish media, that even then, loved to knock the church because the church was so powerful. So headlines in all the newspapers, "AIDS priest on sex abuse charges," that's what they called me then, "AIDS priest on the run," "AIDS priest hiding out in the Vatican," "AIDS priest..." Every day, something new. A picture of my father coming out of his home, with a caption over his head - he never did, never would speak to media, "My son is no monster," terrible stuff. So I was just beside myself, and slowly but surely, I realised this was payback time by the powers that be, and big time.

Interviewer: And a very clear indication of the power that the Cardinal had in New York at the time.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, yeah. So my order, my own religious order, the superior, Conn Murphy, of course called me to the headquarters and asked me a very simple question, the same question my father had asked, literally a day or so before, the same kind of man, a farmer's son himself, as is my father, and so was my (inaudible 01:25:42), which is kind of of the earth, "Did you do it, like?" you know, "Did you do it, like?" It wasn't, "Did you do it?" it was, "Did you do it, like?" And then qualified by, "We're all human," as my father said, "We're all human." And I just looked at my provincial, as I did to my father, and said, "No dad," or to the provincial, "No father, I didn't do it. I never had sex with a student at my school." And he saw me and said, "I believe you."

Interviewer: How did it feel to be asked the question?

Bernard Lynch: Good. It's the ultimate question, it was very direct.

Bernard Lynch

Interviewer: Sure, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And I mean, on that kind of person, I find it very hard to lie. I'm no saint, I'm not saying I haven't fibbed, you know, but you ask me a direct question, I find it impossible.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah. And even more impossible to live with it. So I appreciated the directness of it. And the opportunity to be honest. Because this was not bullshit, like, you can fib around stuff that is.

Interviewer: I mean, this is a serious accusation.

Bernard Lynch: This was huge, and even much bigger than I'd realised. And as soon as I said it to the provincial, he said, "I believe you." Then a friend of mine, a priest in Ireland, not of my order, who had now taken me in as a refugee, because I was trying to escape media, and they had my father's house surrounded, they had my sister's/brother's houses, to see would I be there. You know the way media are.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And particularly seeing I was a big name in Ireland at that time on the AIDS question. This priest gave me hiding, and eventually he pressed, with my provincial, on the order that this was big time and I would need every help I could get. So they found a lawyer, a barrister in Dublin, top notch, through the system, as the church has a system, and he subsequently found my attorney in New York. Now he, on the advice of the attorney in New York, said to both my provincial and the vice-provincial, and so the three of us sitting there, like the three bears. He said, "YOU pay me, my advice to you, Father Lynch, change your name, change your passport, and go live in England."

[01:29:04]

Interviewer: Gosh.

Bernard Lynch: He said, "You haven't a hope. Your prosecution has been authorised by the attorney general of the United States itself, Edward Meese," and he said, "Father, it's not about you at all, you say you didn't do it, it's not about you. You're up against the two greatest institutions, powerful, the FBI and the Catholic Church, and you have no hope." And he said it, and I remember saying, "But sir, I didn't do it." He said, "Oh, but that's nothing to do with it," and he said...and then he changes, this is funny, he's, like, "Why are you doing all this anyway? Like, you're suffering," and I'm looking at him, like, and I discover afterwards, of course, a real hardnosed barrister... He said, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?" I said, "Yeah," I'm half insulted, I said, "Of course I do." And he said, "You're the first priest I met who does." And he said, "You know what happened to him." And the two other men are...and he then said to me, "You want to go back there?" and I said, "Yes," and I said, "I'll go back, I have to go back," and he said, "You'll get 15 years in jail, guaranteed." I said, "Okay." So I was...my return to New York, and that almost 12 months later, I was not only declared not guilty but exonerated and the crimes...it turned out it was only one boy made the accusation and admitted on the stand he had been forced and promise \$5million if he would do it, that I would never come back, that I would...

Interviewer: And so what made him change his mind, do you know, the boy?

Bernard Lynch: What made him change his mind in what sense?

Interviewer: Why did he testify on your behalf ultimately?

Bernard Lynch: Why did he testify in the first place?

Interviewer: Well, no, what had brought about the change in him that made him tell the truth? Because I mean, \$5million, it's quite an attractive proposition really, isn't it?

Bernard Lynch: It is, but when he was questioned on the stand.

Interviewer: Right, okay, so it was the questioning that...

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, you know, he was caught in the labyrinth, and that's it the documentary, that's for anybody to see, made by Channel 4, and it's actual stuff from, I mean, it's recording, and recording by him.

Interviewer: SO basically his story fell apart because it wasn't true?

Bernard Lynch: He lied three times.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: Completely fell apart, and then he asked if it would stop, and the prosecuting...no, the defence wouldn't let it stop, he said, "No, you have brought these charges, we're going to see this through."

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: And eventually he refused to go back on the stand.

Interviewer: And how did the cardinal and all his men respond to this?

Bernard Lynch: Well, of course, the Catholic church, as always, is not involved.

[01:32:48]

Interviewer: Right, okay, so this is an arm's length thing, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: We, meaning my defence team, tried very hard, had a very powerful attorney, Michael Kennedy, to get my file. We knew that the Cardinal had sent me to the Vatican, we knew that the Cardinal had tried to have me deported, stripped, and couldn't because I had become a citizen, he tried to have me sent to Africa, we knew that it was the Cardinal, his office put out the word in the media that I was a fugitive from justice. A nun, Sister Karen Colleen, it's on the documentary, had called the television programme and said, you know, "Where did you get this information?" and the person said, "From the chancery, a spokesperson for the archdiocese of..."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: But we could never get my file. They got a more powerful lawyer to quash the subpoena. I would imagine, if you want to, Mark, or anybody subsequently when I'm long gone to my eternal...

Interviewer: It will still be there,.

Bernard Lynch: You can now subpoena it again, and it might well, and it's happened since, they could not deny you that kind of request.

Interviewer: But it might well have been...

Bernard Lynch: At the time, they could.

Interviewer: It might well have been weeded quite heavily by now.

Bernard Lynch: Yes. Good. Good thinking.

Interviewer: When I was a bishop's chaplain, I weeded lots of files, so... I know that it happened. So the trial comes to an end, I mean, so that lifted...

Bernard Lynch: Pretty (inaudible 01:34:53).

Interviewer: Yes. But there was always, you know, as your lawyer said, there was the change that you would actually be convicted and so, you know, that justice is done is a good thing.

Bernard Lynch: Yes, it was a real possibility. I mean, what turned the tables was at the Christmas time, 1988 Christmas, you see, my passport was taken, I was under house arrest, I couldn't leave the country, and what they tried to do in the States, something we don't have here, in Ireland, in our legal system, because they're the same in many ways, they try to get you to plea bargain.

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: So if you plea bargain, you know what it is?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: To a lesser charge, you know, the judge said to me, Judge Burton Roberts, he said, "Father Lynch, if you just plea bargain now, would you just agree that, you know, maybe you didn't do all of that, but you know, you made a pass at him, I will dismiss the case and you can walk out of this room with your passport and go home and see your mother for Christmas." He didn't know my mother passed away. "And we'll all be well." And I was called to the bench with the prosecution and the defence and I said, "Your honour," I said, "I didn't do it." And he roars at me, "What has that to do with anything, of course you say you didn't do it, isn't that what they all say?" you see. And I said, "But I didn't, your honour." The principal at my school died of AIDS, my best friend at the school died of AIDS, his brother had led a witch hunt, started an organisation called SAFE, and he said to me, "What is SAFE?" and I said to him, "It's an acronym, your honour, for Students Against Faggots in Education." He said, "What?" I said, "Yes." "That organisation exists in your school?" So he turns to the prosecuting attorney, Sean Walsh, and he says, "Mr Walsh, is Father Lynch telling the truth? Do you know of SAFE?" And Walsh said, "Yes, your honour." So I remember him sitting back and saying, "We're going to trial, Father Lynch, you are going to trial, there will be no plea bargaining, you can have your passport, but we will go to trial, and you will get a fair trial."

[01:37:42]

Interviewer: Right.

Bernard Lynch: That's what changed it.

Interviewer: That's an extraordinary story. Yeah. And you've told different bits of the story today, so it's...yeah, thank you.

Bernard Lynch: If I may say so, with respect, it's on YouTube, you ought to...

Interviewer: Yes, I'm sorry, I must do, I should have done. I've had plenty opportunities to have done so, but...

Bernard Lynch: Yeah, and I mean, that's not a request, it's you will be...you will be blown away, I guarantee.

Interviewer: I'd much rather hear it from you.

Bernard Lynch: Okay. Well, now that you've heard it, you know, it makes...the spotlight, at a level, easier viewing, believe that or not. When you see what the Catholic Church did to try and destroy me because I was trying to do some good. And what it did in the Spotlight to cover up all the destroyers because they were churches and men.

Interviewer: Yeah, gosh, that's a...a stark comparison.

Bernard Lynch: They knew what they were doing, it was the perfect crime. And...

Interviewer: But it's not just the Roman Church, I mean, this is very widespread.

Bernard Lynch: Oh, sure, sure.

Interviewer: And the cover up is incredible.

Bernard Lynch: And I remember the judge before he changed his tune, roaring at me again, you know, "You will get 15 years for this if you don't, and you know what happens to men like you when they go to jail. You have worked with AIDs, you will get AIDS, Father Lynch." That's what he said.

Interviewer: Gosh.

Bernard Lynch: Yes. So I don't know, maybe my guardian angel, if you believe in guardian angels, you know.

Interviewer: Well, I mean, it's the upholding of social justice, isn't it, and it's not always the case, but truth, truth then reigns.

Bernard Lynch: Well, there is a guy interviewed on the documentary, a man, a black American, African American, by Bob Teague, and he's brilliant. In the documentary that Channel 4 did, they did such, I mean, I am so grateful to Channel 4 that this is on record, it's not something I wrote, this is not anecdotal. I'm in it, but they, and we had a wonderful team, it had all the major players, including the Cardinal, all the major players.

Interviewer: Oh right, okay.

[01:40:45]

Bernard Lynch: All the major players. But this guy, a journalist, a black journalist in New York says, "Oh, as soon as he came into the court, we said, 'Here's a dirty old man', you know, he's been caught and we need to hang him out to dry. Catholic priests celebrate, ha, ha, ha, who believes that anyway?" And you know, then he goes on and he says, "When we see what's happening and we see him come out and, you know..." I won't spoil it, but anyway.

Interviewer: I must get onto YouTube. So trial's over, still in New York?

Bernard Lynch: Trial's over, I am absolutely destroyed. That's one of the most understated...

Interviewer: Yeah, sure, sure.

Bernard Lynch: Totally. I mean, I have no insides. I remember speaking at, again, my great Anglican communion friends, at the Church in Piccadilly, Donald Reeves was the pastor.

Interviewer: At St James, yeah.

Bernard Lynch: Yes. And I was, very soon after him, because you see, they had the Channel 4 documentary here and that was covered in the press here, and I was, you know, famous/infamous, so everybody wanted me to speak, and I did speak. And I remember him saying to me, "Are you alright?" I said, "No." He said, "You need help." Donald said that to me. I said, "Yeah, I do." But it wasn't a help that could...I was in therapy, you know, John Lee found a great therapist for me, and John was very good to me, Malcolm was very good to me. I came here to get away from New York so that I wouldn't be wheeled out every time there was, you know...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: And I already had connections here, so I came and I got a job in CARA, with Dave Randall, another great man, and his partner, Charles Sofianos. And I did AIDS work and I was quite happy doing that because it was my thing, and it took my mind off of me. And sometimes you can give to others what you're most looking for yourself, in love and compassion, and so I was quite effective in doing it. But I was still very empty but they were all extraordinarily helpful and brotherly/sisterly to me, in every way, and what happened was I was here a year, and I was out at a birthday party in 1993, and I was the cause celebre of the birthday party, sitting by the guy whose birthday it was, 24 year old, Richard Craig, and he had all these friends there, and this guy comes in, Billy Desmond, looking - as I've told him since, like an Aer Lingus hostess. And he comes up to me afterwards and he says, "I know you," which is kind of the obvious thing to say, you know, I said, "Yeah," he said, "I've seen you on television," and I said, "Okay." He said, "Will you come out for a drink with us?" I said, "Sure." So we came to the Black Cat. And Billy, the same age as the host, Richard, was 24, and we were talking and he said, "I'd like to go home with you," and I said, "Well, I'm flattered," I said, "You're a very attractive man," 22 years my junior, I was 46 at the time, but I said, "No, I can't." He said, "Why?" I said, "Because I know you are interested in me more than just a romp in the hay," and I said, "Believe me, I'm not beyond that, I love that, but no, I can't." He said, "Okay, will you see me again?" I said, "Yeah, I'll see you as a friend if you want," but I said, "If you want anything more than that, I'm the wrong person." And so I think I've said, you know, we saw each other and of course, if somebody, "Falls in love with you," they fall in love with you. But I was as incapable of falling in love as...I had nothing. And I was nothing. ON the outside I was, keep on going, do my work, seeing people, but just... "Leave me alone." And that went on, with Billy, I would say, for four years on and off, kind of seeing me, and he hadn't changed and I hadn't changed, and I asked him eventually one Sunday afternoon here, "Billy, this is wasting your time, can't you see? I really would prefer not to see you anymore." I said, "I've thought about it, I've tried," I said, "But no." So he was very hurt, I was very hurt, he left and I went out for my run, which I've always done when I'm in trouble. And I was coming back from my run and I saw Billy at the bottom of the parkway, and I noted in the distance that he was, of course, head down, shoulders bent, and I went to go the other way. Then I said, "No, I'll face him." And when I came up near him, he was in another world, and I said to him, "Billy, it's me," these big, brown, beautiful eyes looking at me, and I just broke, completely. And I said, "I'm sorry. I'll give it a try. A real try." And we're still together.

[01:48:59]

Interviewer: And you're still trying, you're' still trying.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah. And that...without any overstatement, that was my salvation.

Interviewer: The experience of knowing that...

Bernard Lynch: I'm loved. Of allowing somebody.

Interviewer: Because you were keeping him at arm's length.

Bernard Lynch: Yes, I was keeping the whole world. The whole world.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bernard Lynch: That was my salvation. And for that, I am...humbled and grateful and the words of H.A Williams, I have experienced true resurrection.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Someday I'll find you his autobiography.

Bernard Lynch: Yes.

Interviewer: But I was thinking of, you know, kind of theological image for all of this, and the open arms of Christ on the cross, that kind of complete brokenness, and you know, you were taking...I'm not going to push the comparison too far, don't worry, but you know, the complete and utter brokenness of and emptiness and so on. And actually, the only thing that can rebuild that brokenness, bring that back together again, is love, and it seems to me that that's what the cross is all about. So when that person earlier on in the story made that comparison, it just kind of stuck with me.

Bernard Lynch: Yes. Norman Pittenger is the other man.

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Bernard Lynch: Is the man I was thinking of, who wrote the first book that I know of that became my...my bible.

Interviewer: Yes, Dean of King's at some stage, wasn't he? Or something like that? Cambridge? I can't remember. But I certainly know the name.

Bernard Lynch: Was he part of the Murfan community as well?

Interviewer: I don't know, I don't know.

Bernard Lynch: Or Murfield?

Interviewer: Murfield?

Bernard Lynch: Murfield, I beg your pardon.

Interviewer: I don't think he was Murfield.

Bernard Lynch: Was he not?

Interviewer: I don't think so.

Bernard Lynch: Yeah probably Dean of King's.

[End of Transcript]