Interviews

60-Minute Conversations with Jesuit History Series *"I might be a living example of Oscar Wilde's famous story, The Portrait of Dorian Grey": A Conversation with John W. Padberg, S.J.*

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Abstract

In October 2016, the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies at Boston College awarded John W. Padberg, S.J., the George E. Ganss, S.J., Award, which recognizes a person's significant scholarly contributions to the field of Jesuit Studies. At the occasion, Robert A. Maryks, the associate director of IAJSS and the successor of Padberg as the editor of the *Institute of Jesuit Sources* interviewed John about his scholarly career as a prominent Jesuit historian and editor. This is the first of a series of 60-Minute Conversations with Jesuit History. What follows is an edited transcription of the interview that was videotaped at Boston College in October 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llld6--DBis>).

Keywords

John W. Padberg, S.J. – Jesuit Studies – George E. Ganss, S.J., Award – Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies at Boston College – Institute of Jesuit Sources – 60-Minute Conversations with Jesuit History Series

MARYKS: Welcome to 60-Minute Conversations with Jesuit History. I'm Robert Maryks of the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies and of the History

Department here at Boston College. Our guest today is John Padberg. John Padberg has lectured extensively on the history of the Society of Jesus and on Jesuit education, including presentations at almost every Jesuit college and university in the United States. His many publications—more than seventy-five—include a monograph entitled *Colleges in Controversy: The Jesuit Schools in France from Revival to Suppression, 1814–1880*, and an edited collection of documents, *For Matters of Greater Moment: The First Thirty General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, which is still available from Jesuit Sources.

Born in St. Louis, Father Padberg entered the Society of Jesus in 1944 and was ordained priest in 1957. He received a master's degree in modern European history from Saint Louis University and a doctorate in intellectual history from Harvard. He served as an academic vice president at Saint Louis University and the president of the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for ten years. He later returned to St. Louis, where he directed between 1986 and 2014 the Institute of Jesuit Sources, now housed at Boston College. He's here at Boston College these days to receive the George E. Ganss, S.J., Award and deliver the Fiore Family Annual Lecture on Jesuit Studies. Welcome to Boston College, John.

PADBERG: Thank you very much. I've been here before, and every time it's been a pleasure.

MARYKS: Wonderful. John, last May, you turned ninety.

PADBERG: That's right.

MARYKS: And you look amazing.

PADBERG: Well, thank you. [laughter]

MARYKS: What's the secret?

PADBERG: There are three possibilities. One is that I've led a decent Christian life, and sometimes some of my brethren express skepticism about that. Secondly, I may have sold my soul to the devil. That's a possibility. And the third, I might be a living example of Oscar Wilde's famous story, *The Portrait of Dorian Grey*. I have carefully put that portrait at the back of the closet in my room, if that's the case.

MARYKS: [laughter] Wonderful. Now, my first question or second question is why and how did you fall in love with Jesuit history?

PADBERG: Oh, that's a long story, I think.

MARYKS: We have enough time.

PADBERG: Maybe it goes back to falling in love with history to begin with. As a kid, I think probably from the age of ten or so, I got interested not so much in the why a certain thing happened, but how did it happen? What were the circumstances around which stuff that I was reading—and by that time, I was reading a lot of Walter Scott's novels, things like that—

MARYKS: Like *Ivanhoe*.

PADBERG: Yes, like *Ivanhoe*. Exactly. How did that happen? What circumstances? Who were the people? What was more to be found about them and their circumstances? That was just an unstructured interest, and I have no idea exactly how I got into that.

The other thing I was interested in at the time—very amateurly, obviously, at the age of ten or twelve—was architecture. I used to draw amateurish little floor plans for things and sketch buildings very badly, but I always looked at the section of the local newspaper on Sunday for new buildings that had been built, etc. And when I got older, I'd wander around if I could, seeing places like that that were new or admiring—especially around St. Louis, there are a lot of places that were built in the nineteenth century and fortunately not destroyed for steel, glass, and aluminum towers. I guess I have no idea where that innate interest began, but that's where it started.

MARYKS: What produced the transition from that general interest in history into a specific history—interest in Jesuit history?

PADBERG: Jesuit history? Well, I suppose the remote sources of that were going to a Jesuit school for high school, Saint Louis University High. I tell people that apart from my Jesuit training itself and simply my earlier life with my parents in the faith, the two places that were most influential in my own academic development were Saint Louis University High School and Harvard University.

The high school was an excellent place. I had very good teachers among some of the scholastics and priests. One or two of them got me interested not from teaching a course in Jesuit history—they didn't have anything like that—but again, how did the Jesuits become who they were here? What influenced them to enter the Society? What was the Society itself like? Those were inchoate questions, obviously, but that I think was the turn toward the Jesuit part of it.

Then when I entered the Society, there was a vast array of material available to read about, to experience, and I kept that interest, although originally for graduate studies, I was not at all destined to, and I didn't destine myself, for Jesuit history as such. It was more a history of ideas or academic history. That came partly from a very fine lay teacher at Saint Louis University, Thomas Neill, a fellow who wrote a book, very well selling many, many, many years ago, *Makers of the Modern Mind*. I had him for several courses. He intrigued me. The how became not just the external circumstances of the time, but the ideas that were influencing people to do what they did or not do what they didn't do.

MARYKS: I imagine you must have been one of the first Jesuits to enroll at Harvard. Is that correct?

PADBERG: Oh, no. No, there were people way back when. Among the most famous, of course, was Walter Ong, the real international scholar. On the day I met for the first time the advisor for first-year doctoral students at Harvard, Dr. Stuart Hughes, who was very much a twentieth-century intellectual historian—

MARYKS: What years are we talking here about?

PADBERG: What?

MARYKS: What years are we talking about here?

PADBERG: Oh, 1959 I started studies there. The first time I met him, as all of the first-year doctoral students did, he said, oh, I see that you are a Jesuit. I said yes, I am. He said, do you know Father Walter Ong? I said, indeed, I do. He lives in the same house with me. He's a good friend. Oh, he said. We expect no less of you. [laughter] That was a high barrier to come up against.

MARYKS: How did you find yourself—Harvard University doesn't have a fame of being very embracing of Catholic culture. So as a Jesuit, how did you feel studying at Harvard?

PADBERG: Welcome. I felt very welcome. I never had a single teacher there who was dismissive of religion or of the church. It may just have been the luck. I'm not sure. They could speak very quickly about the virtues, the deficiencies, the craziness in some ways within the faith and the great things they've done.

But among others, I had Crane Brinton, who was one of the great intellectual historians at the time for eighteenth-century France; Stuart Hughes, whom I mentioned; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., for American intellectual history, and Paul Tillich for a course which certainly wasn't American history or intellectual history as such.

But there was nothing at all dismissive. Several of the people that I got to know among the faculty were very encouraging—very encouraging. And perhaps among the most interesting things I did—you remember the name David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, about American culture and American attitude sort of things? I got a call one day at the Jesuit house I was living in Boston—"Is this Father Padberg?" "Yes." He said, "This is Mr. Riesman." They never addressed each other or themselves as Professor or Doctor. That was presumed. "This is Mr. Riesman. Do you know me?" I said, "Oh, yes, I do know who you are." He said, "I have a proposal. Would you be interested in being one of the teaching assistants in the course that I teach regularly on American intellectual history, American culture? I would be interested if you would be." I said, "Well, may I ask—how did you find out about me?" He said, "Well, your advisor, Dr. Stuart Hughes, recommended you as a possibility. Would you care to come to dinner some evening with the other people who are being asked to do this?" I said, "By all means."

So off one evening I went to his home in Cambridge, had a typically Cambridge sherry beforehand—very nice dinner served. Salad at the end of the meal, as is proper in Europe. And after the dinner, he would talk about what he was going to talk about in his lectures the next week and asked each week one of us to prepare our own reflections on the reading that the students were to do.

That was one of the most interesting things I think I have ever done. I took the job for two years. They paid me—not very much. But I learned more every week from these people than I think I could possibly have imagined elsewhere. One time, I was supposed to deal with material that Riesman was going to deal with the next week, de Tocqueville. "Well, OK. I do that."

The second year I was involved, I was to deal with material from, I guess, a subgroup within American culture that maintained its identity while still entering in some ways into the culture. It was one of the Native American groups in the Far West.

So I read the material, called Riesman, and said I can do this, and I'm very happy to do it, but it struck me that I would know a lot more about another subgroup that has tried to enter into the current culture here and otherwise and attempts to maintain its identity. What's that group? I said the Jesuits, the Society of Jesus. I'd like to take the material or the insights from *The Lonely*

Crowd, where he talks about the three ways in which people reacted to the surroundings about them in American society over the years.

The first of them could be signified or symbolized by a compass—true north, you kept going this way. That's where things are supposed to go—the early founders of the American society, for example. Pardon me—the first one was a map, tradition direction. This is the way explorers had seen things. This is the way things are. You follow this, you'll get to your destination. The second was the compass. That was American society through the nineteenth century, for example. The third was the radar, constantly scanning the horizon as to what was going on and that qualifying your personal and societal reactions to what was going on. I said, I can do that for the Society of Jesus and the training we got.

So that particular evening—normally we had dinner and discussion and finished by 9:30, 10:00 maybe. Finally I stopped, because I said, “Look, I can go on with this at 11:00 that evening. I'm going to talk about this,” I said, “not from the point of view of my religious vocation, nor from the point of view of what we would say God's grace affecting.”

MARYKS: Providence.

PADBERG: “I'm going to try to talk about it from the point of view of simply the experience I had and how those three symbols or the way which American society were steps—it's not the only way you can talk about it, but steps in the formation of the Jesuits.” It was fascinating.

MARYKS: It sounds like. Now, did you apply this kind of methodology to your work on nineteenth-century French Jesuits, which eventually would become the topic of your dissertation?

PADBERG: Implicitly, I guess, yeah. I never sat down and said this is going to be the structure of the thing. But that structure helped me see what had happened before—or to take into account the early years or the earlier centuries of the Society before their suppression as in some senses the map that the restored Society was supposed to go back to, even though everything that had happened since the suppression in 1773, especially the French Revolution along with the political, social, cultural, intellectual, religious, every kind of other revolution—no, no, we can find out where we're going if we can go back to what we were as the original, genuine Society 1814 on.

But through the nineteenth century, that compass was there. The rules—we know where we're going. True north. twentieth century, as the Society began to change, and that's a subject somebody—I'm going to say something tomorrow about that—that's a subject somebody ought to get into. How did the Society

change from the reputation, deserved or not—I think it somewhat was—for being a very conservative group of people who looked at the world interior to the Society and the world around them through a conservative lens to a Society who certainly after the First World War gradually began to change and began to look at the world around with a much more sympathetic viewpoint and react individually as Jesuits and societally—depending on the country, slowly or rapidly—to the situation in which, rightly or not, the Jesuits today are regarded as a much more liberal organization. How did that happen? That's one of the programs—I want to say tomorrow, very briefly, that's a program for the future. I don't think I'm going to do that at my age. [laughter]

See, you ask good questions, I give long answers.

MARYKS: Very good. That's how this interview should go. How come nineteenth-century French Jesuits?

PADBERG: Ah, OK. Fairly early in my thinking about what I might work on, and I'm consulting the man who did become my advisor—again, Dr. Stuart Hughes, who was late-nineteenth, but mainly twentieth-century intellectual history—I happened to remark at one point, you know, people have written on Jesuit education in the old Society extensively, but there's not very much on the new Society. And I said I've been interested in France simply as a hobby, maybe, even before. Nothing's been written really at that point on what happened with the restoration. And I said that has to be done sometime or other. Why don't you do it? I said, well, when and how? For dissertation.

I said, well, wait a minute. I'd be reluctant to do that. I am a Jesuit, and I have my qualms about how objective I could be in doing that. "Oh," he said, "you have all kinds of resources—or rather you have all kinds of advantages. You know the history of the Society reasonably well. You know where the sources are. You would probably be given access to them much more freely than somebody else. And as far as the objectivity part of it, I've had papers that you've done, and I think you've been as objective as any person can be, whatever the circumstances. And if you were to write on the nineteenth-century Jesuits and Jesuit education then and were wildly nonobjective, I'd nail you. [laughter] And since dissertation director is, if not God, very close to it while you're working on it, I thought, yes, that's an interesting subject."

But I must say there was another external thing that pushed me toward it—going to Europe. Some of my brethren say I have a naturally European soul, and the very prospect of having to go there to do the work more than enticed me.

MARYKS: I can imagine. So what did you enjoy mostly about France while doing your research in the archives?

PADBERG: What did I most enjoy? Hmm. The architecture. I loved going to any of the cities that I did get to—and I didn't get to nearly as many as I wanted. But just walking the streets of the city. For example, I've been to Paris a fair number of times since I did the dissertation. The thing I most like to do is simply walk the streets.

Last year, I had the opportunity to be in London for about a month, Paris for about a month, and Rome for about a month. People asked, what did you do? I said, I didn't go to most museums. I've been to many of them. They're well worth going to. But the thing that most interested me was just walking the streets, looking at the architecture.

MARYKS: Now, thinking of France as being a very special place in the history of the Society—the first companions studying in Paris, thinking of building a possible society, and then once the Society was founded, the first Jesuits who worked in France had a lot of troubles—

PADBERG: They did indeed.

MARYKS:—with the parliament. And then you're studying the nineteenth century, which was the century of continuous expulsions and suppressions. So how did you feel as a Jesuit in that Parisian and, more largely, French environment?

PADBERG: Well, I finally got to learn enough of the language that I could work—never mastered, but I felt at home. And as far as the expulsion thing goes, let me give you an example. Something that suddenly—yes, of course this is the reason. The house I lived in Paris, the Jesuit house, and some of the others I visited around France, especially others in Paris, they were clean and they were neat, but they hadn't been in the American way maintained. They hadn't been painted. They hadn't been brightened up, etc. OK, I can live with that. They kept clean and neat. But all of a sudden, it occurred to me—why would you do anything on this place if you're going to be thrown out?

The house, for example, on the Rue de Sévres—great philosophical theological faculty now—there were three times in which the Society bought it and were pitched out and friends bought it back and gave it to the Society and were pitched out again and came back. All of a sudden, it gave me somewhat of an insight into what I found in some—I shouldn't say many—some of the French Jesuits, the willingness to face up to the problem of not being popular, not being liked, or being thrown out, for example, and a willingness to take on new and unpopular positions and see what might happen. That was a little different from—much more rule-oriented Society in the United States, in which I had all of my training.

Just an interesting example—the first week that I was there living at the Rue de Grenelle—very big Jesuit place. There were about eighty Jesuits there, forty French and forty from all over the rest of the world. And the poor French had to put up with all of us who barely knew French. Oh, from what province are you, Father? That was the level at which things started.

But the story I wanted to tell—about the second or third day, again I realized what had been happening the previous two days is that I could get up and go down to breakfast at any time between 6:30 AM and 9:00 AM. In the United States, the whole time I had been in training, breakfast was from 7:15 in the morning, and we all had been at Mass immediately before, and in lockstep we walked down the corridor and had breakfast. Thank God, breakfast in silence. That was one of the advantages. Then we could get up and leave any time we wanted. But this was very different. That was a very small symbolic thing. It wasn't that we didn't have Mass or we didn't have prayers and so on, but it was much more flexible. All of a sudden.

MARYKS: All of a sudden. Now, as I listen to you, John, it seems to me that studying history to you was fundamental to develop your own Jesuit identity.

PADBERG: Yes.

MARYKS: What's the correlation between the two?

PADBERG: As I think about and have studied, read about Jesuit history, first of all, there are possibly three or four things that entered into how I saw the Society and myself in it—admiration for the first founders. They were from very different places, very different personalities. How they all got along was another thing. Admiration because they were attempting to do something that maybe they didn't realize, but had never been done before, really, in the way in which they did it, and that is to take a chance on two possibilities—one, that they could go to the Holy Land and evangelize the Muslims there, a madcap thing if you ever thought about it, or if they couldn't do that, to place themselves at the service of the pope. "What do you want us to do?"

The possible venture to the Holy Land didn't work out, because there were no ships going. They were fighting at the time. But these ten people go to Rome, all university-educated, with degrees from possibly the best university in the world, approach Pope Paul III and say, here we are. We're at your service. He may have thought he'd died and gone to heaven at that point. [laughter] But the admiration for the novelty of that.

Secondly, concern for whether, as the Society grew in numbers, the inevitable regulation or bureaucratization or the necessity for rules—ten people

are different from one hundred people or from one thousand people. When the Society was officially recognized in 1540, there were ten Jesuits and a bunch of other people who would sort of like to enter the Society. By the time Ignatius died in 1556, there were one thousand of them, most of them in training. Some way or other, somebody had to put structure on that, and I admired the way in which he attempted to do that with the constitutions, and I was somewhat distressed at the way in which the constitutions had been interpreted, especially after the suppression and the restoration of the Society, and concerned that the constitutions themselves had been very seldom read or used.

We had a little book called *The Rules of the Society of Jesus*. There were things from—a summary of the constitutions, snippets taken out of context, and then further rules in there. That's what we basically lived by. Don't get me wrong—I was not unhappy in the Society as we grew up in it. You have heard the definition of the Society, I presume.

MARYKS: Which one?

PADBERG: Yes, which one? An absolute autocracy tempered only by the disobedience of its subjects and the incompetence of its superiors. Now, you may wonder where that came from. "The first part of it," Father Kolvenbach once said. "The first part." Oh yes, "the Society is an autocracy tempered by the regular disobedience of many of its subjects." The third part was added by I don't know whom, but with a laugh. And you can't say that kind of a thing without being confident of yourself and of the organization that you pertain to which you're criticizing right there. I remember telling that to some women religious—[gasp] "you said that?" "We might be thrown out of the order." I said, "well, all I can say is the first time I heard it was from a provincial quoting the general on that first part."

So concern for how the Society interpreted its past and was living it in the nineteenth and twentieth century, and then great—I guess joy was the word, for first of all, Vatican II and the opening that that gave to the Society to look at its history again, and you didn't look at the history if you didn't read the documents, and people didn't read the documents, because they were all in Latin or foreign languages, and Americans refuse to learn anything but English. But the opportunity out of Vatican II for the Society at its thirty-first and thirty-second congregation to look seriously at itself and ask, are we being the best we can be, with all of the questions about that, in the present world?

I'll tell you as a background to that my own internal experience of Vatican II. It's best summed up in one line by William Wordsworth, who wrote this

particular line at a time he was young and enthusiastic. He later became very conservative. But he wrote an ode on the French Revolution, and one line in that sums up the way I saw Vatican II and the possibilities for the Society—"bliss was it in that world to be alive."

That really—the council touched me in ways that I saw things happening that I thought maybe in the course of the development and the change in the church, maybe some of these things would happen by the time I reached the age I am now, ninety. But here they were happening right in front of me—the various decrees of the council. I devoured them. And they reinforced my desire to know more about what had been going on in the church and in the Society of Jesus over the last 150 or so years.

Those things influenced me greatly, and then the determination for the particular subject for the dissertation—well, that was Dr. Hughes and myself and my interest in France and in French history. I've always been involved. Once I got into some of the archives over there—oh, this is more interesting than I thought it was going to be. Doing a dissertation is not the happiest thing in the world, and living in a foreign country and trying to do it there put an added strain on it in many ways. But I enjoyed getting into the archives. I didn't nearly enjoy writing it as much as I did finding things.

That's an even longer answer and probably wandering to the question you asked.

MARYKS: No, no. I think those kind of skills that you acquired while writing your dissertation and doing archival work in France helped you envision the mission of the Institute of Jesuit Sources, of which you were a long-term director. Can you expound a little bit on that?

PADBERG: Sure. I never thought that I would have that position. At the point—well, I'd been at Saint Louis University. I taught there and had been in administration. Then after two years at the headquarters in Washington for the US, I was ten years at Weston as president. I thoroughly enjoyed those years. Now, it's true that at times the faculty might have wished to hang me, and I to hang them, and we would have done the same to the students and vice versa—those were not the easiest years—I thoroughly enjoyed them.

And I was very surprised when the then-provincial of Missouri Province, where the institute was located, at one of his meetings with me said, "John, you know George Ganss is approaching eighty, and he and I both know that he can't continue with this forever. I would like to see you seriously consider—in fact, I'd like to have you not only consider, but take the job of director of the Institute of Jesuit Sources." I said, "What?" [laughter] He said "Yes." My

response to it—"Sure, I'll consider it, but I would like at least to keep in the background—we're getting some projects going here at the school. I'd like one more year at least to see them go forward. I did think about the whole thing. I prayed about it. I consulted several people." "Oh, Padberg, you're a natural for that. You know and you're interested in the history."

One of the first questions I asked the provincial, though, was what does George think about this? What does George Ganss think? "Oh," he said, "you've been on several committees with him, especially the Studies and Spirituality of Jesuits." I had written for that. I'd been at those meetings. "Oh," he said, "he's very enthusiastic about you coming. He said he knows you, he likes you, and he thinks you could do it." I said, "I wouldn't want to come there and supersede the man who founded what I regard as one of the really important things the American Society had done in the past fifty years. I wouldn't want to supersede him in that. But if he's willing, let me think about it." So I did, decided yes, I would come and take the job.

Now, one of the great compliments you could pay George Ganss—this was his baby. He had founded the thing. He'd been at it for about twenty-five years or so. He never second-guessed me after I took over. He was always absolutely there. He continued to work. But he was always supportive. That's not easy for someone to do that kind of thing.

Somebody asked, how did George Ganss accomplish everything he did? One of the other members on the staff at the institute—not with him, but who came on the staff when I was there, said, oh, three words—an adverb, an adjective, and a noun. Utterly relentless assiduity. [laughter] That was true. George was a persistent—not frantic, but just persistent worker.

When I came, we sat down and talked at a great length about the kind of things that ought to be done and might be done, basically with limited resources. Among the things I had asked—what would you think about my trying to get some other people to come as part of the staff? That happened. We had several really good—Marty Palmer, for example, was a man who knew the history better than almost any Jesuit I had known.

MARYKS: And had the linguistic skills.

PADBERG: Oh, I think he knew eleven languages, the last of which were Swedish and Maltese. [laughter] And he could work with them. Another man, Marty O'Keefe, who was responsible for the first draft translation of all of those decrees—almost four hundred years of Jesuit congregations. And there were several other people, including somebody you now have, Claude Pavur, on your staff. That was a big help through the years that came.

Then the second thing I talked with him about is what should we, in some ways, concentrate on? It appeared clear to me that those thirty congregations—congregations, we say, are the ultimate or supreme governing body in the Society of Jesus. Nobody had done anything toward translating those, and nobody had done a real history of the congregations.

That occurred to me—even earlier, I was elected a delegate to the thirty-second congregation. One night after that, I woke up about 2:00 in the morning and spontaneously thought, gee, I ought to read a history of those congregations before I go to it. OK. I did not get up at 2:00 in the morning and look for one. But the next day, I began looking around, and to my surprise could find absolutely no such history. I began inquiring, and they said, well, yes, the Historical Institute in Rome has that as a project that they expect to do. They would probably have it done within three years or so. Still, they didn't and couldn't do it.

So with O'Keefe, who was an excellent Latinist, as well as Palmer and myself, we enterprised the translation. O'Keefe was certain it could be done. Palmer was certain it could not be done. I was sure that it ought to be done. [laughter] That took, I think, seven years before we finally finished it.

MARYKS: It's a huge volume.

PADBERG: And the day we handed over the final manuscript all finished, the proofs, to be—I said, "Marty Palmer, come here." The person who was going to do the printing—I asked him to stand on one side of the door to the institute. I stood on the other side of the door. I said, "Marty, now look. I am handing this over to him. It's done and will be finished." But that's an example of the kind of thing that we did.

Then things like the letters of Francis Xavier—never in English. Patron always referred to. Or the man who Ignatius said was the best giver of the Spiritual Exercises, Pierre Favre or Peter Faber—none of that had been put into English, etc. The task of the place was basically to do those things, and then some things that were much more popular. The congregation book, at almost eight hundred pages, was not a best-seller. The little booklet that we put out called *Hearts on Fire*, prayers by Jesuits from everybody, Ignatius to Dan Berrigan and beyond—we sold I think a little better than a quarter-million copies of that.

MARYKS: And it continues to be a best-seller still today.

PADBERG: I hope it is.

MARYKS: Yes, it is.

PADBERG: That kind of thing and others, too, helped sell the thing. Then to get back to the matters of the thirty congregations, I decided, OK, there isn't a history. Previously for *Studies and Spirituality of Jesuits*, I had attempted to write a brief précis, popular history of the congregations. Nobody had done that. What I did is not the final scholarly thing. If you gave me ten more years, maybe with doing nothing else, I could do that. But nobody had done anything like what was this body doing, how were they doing it, and how did it affect the Society? I'll have something to say about that tomorrow.

MARYKS: OK, wonderful. Speaking of congregations, I think it's quite a coincidence that this morning, the thirty-sixth congregation had its very first plenary session.

PADBERG: Yes, right.

MARYKS: Yesterday, there was an inaugural Mass at Il Gesù.

PADBERG: Absolutely unprecedented Mass. You know why?

MARYKS: Because of the Dominican?

PADBERG: Yes. The Dominican master general celebrated the Mass. That had never been done. If you know the fights that the Jesuits and Dominicans had on grace and free will through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—

MARYKS: And going back to the imprisonment of Ignatius in Salamanca as well.

PADBERG: Oh, yes. On a trip to Salamanca at one point for a meeting, they had tours of various places in Salamanca, and the convent or the house of the Dominicans was among the places—

MARYKS: San Esteban.

PADBERG: San Esteban, yeah—the places we visited. They had language groups that went there. I was in the last of the groups. They had had one or two English-language before that and then other languages. And honestly nobody will believe me, but after the tour guide, one of the Dominicans, had shown us a lot of things at the place—that was one of the most important Dominican

convents in Spain, and a whole bunch of their people were theologians at the Council of Trent.

MARYKS: Who criticized the *Spiritual Exercises* later on, right?

PADBERG: Mm-hmm. He'd shown me the room in which St. Teresa of Ávila met her confessor. Nobody will believe this, but in all innocence, I asked, "Can you show us the cell in which you confined Ignatius?" Well, with a certain amount of asperity in his voice, "No, we can't. We don't know which room it is or was." Why did he put it that way? Because every single group before my group had asked the same question, and none of us had concerted to do this at all together. As a matter of fact, the Dominican said, "Well, we can't have treated him that badly. We had him for dinner in the dining room once in awhile."

MARYKS: While interviewing and interviewing. So we have this image, right, and subsequent quarrels with the Dominicans, and now the Dominican master celebrates the Mass—maybe because also the fact that the current superior general, Nicolás, is resigning or has resigned, actually, officially this morning. So is it symbolic?

PADBERG: You mean the Dominican presence? Oh, I think so.

MARYKS: How do you read this choice?

PADBERG: The quarrels over particular interpretations of doctrine should not have occurred. We should have been working, the Jesuits and the Dominicans and others, but especially we should have been working in some senses in common to find common ground for the things that were necessary to be dealt with in the church in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. That, I think, more than anything else, was what the symbolism was about.

You do know the story of back in the late seventeenth century, the Dominican master general and the Jesuit superior general agreed that at the death of the master general of the Dominicans, the Jesuit general would preside at the Mass, and vice versa. Well, that's OK, except the Jesuit general served for life. So the Dominican general was always to be had. The Dominican general only served for six or twelve years and very seldom died in office.

MARYKS: Right. Which is a distinctive characteristic of the Society of Jesus. Now, you mentioned before Kolvenbach. Now Nicolás has resigned as the

second consecutive superior general. Is something changing in the very understanding of the structure of the Society of Jesus?

PADBERG: Possibly so, but there's something much more fundamental that's changed—the invention of antibiotics and the very fact that people live longer now than they did in the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and even nineteenth century, and it was not at all usual for generals necessarily to live as long as or to be elected at the age at which Father Nicolás was elected. He was the second oldest general ever elected at the age of seventy-one. So the lifespan makes a very big difference in how vigorously a general can pursue what's going on.

The second thing that made a big difference, beside the invention of antibiotics, to keep people healthy and alive, was the invention of the jet airplane. The general of the Society could not travel much out of Rome, because if he went to one place, he certainly should have gone to another place, and certainly he couldn't have done that with the travel sources before the invention of the jet. Maybe with the prop planes before. That would have taken a long time to get to America or Asia or Africa. Now, part of the job of the general is incessant traveling to bind together the threads of a Society that wishes to be the same, and at the same time, wishes to be extraordinarily diverse according to the cultures in which it's inserted—Africa or Asia or America or Europe.

So those two things, apart from anything else, that made a big difference. I don't think the resignation signifies any large internal difference to the Society, except that the idolization of the constitutions as absolutely unchanging—and they have changed—is no longer there. We can with ease take the provision originally that it was a lifetime general's office and adapting it to the present day and saying that won't work. Ignatius wanted a lifetime general so you didn't have—especially you didn't have the kind of campaigning for the job that came with frequent elections, which happened in other religious orders. But it's a changed world and a changed situation.

MARYKS: And we had the pope who resigned. Do you think there is any coincidence between Benedict XVI resigning and then Kolvenbach resigning around the same time?

PADBERG: Coincidence of time only. No, I don't think any other ways. Though, remember, Father Kolvenbach resigned before anybody such as—John Paul II was not about to resign. No, I don't think there's any coincidence there, other than the coincidence of time.

MARYKS: Speaking of other coincidences, today is St. Francis Borgia liturgical memory.

PADBERG: You are very up to date on those.

MARYKS: Thank you. Which superior general—not speaking of very recent ones, but from the very beginning of the Society, the period in which you were interested, right, and documents of which you studied—which superior general is your favorite, and what do you think about Francis Borgia?

PADBERG: (laughter) You didn't ask who is my least favorite.

MARYKS: OK, we can start from there.

PADBERG: No, we're not going to start from there. Who is my favorite? Out of sympathy and admiration, Lorenzo Ricci, the last general before the suppression. I think that with sympathy and admiration.

MARYKS: Who ended up in Sant'Angelo Castle.

PADBERG: Yes. And the way he was treated there—indeed, maybe Clement XIV had to suppress the Society under the kind of threats of schism that the Bourbon monarchs were presenting to him, and the last thing the church wanted was a schism, with the example of England leaving the fold, as they put it at the time, and never returning. Would that happen if the French and Spanish and Neapolitan monarchs did take—I don't think they would have, but take the church in those countries out of communion with the pope? Maybe he had to suppress the Society. But the way in which the subordinate officials treated Ricci as he was in prison in Sant'Angelo is absolutely unconscionable, and the way in which he bore that until he died two or so years after the suppression, I think he's my favorite from that point of view.

From the point of view of efficiency, maybe—and that's not a bad word—Acquaviva maybe was the most important general the Society ever had.

MARYKS: Why?

PADBERG: I'm tempted to say maybe even including Ignatius, but that's sacrilegious, and it's not quite true. Why? Because the rules—and here we go back to rules—and the spirit with which they were supposed to be interpreted that

he finally codified and introduced into the Society were pretty much the way in which we lived at the point at which I entered the Society in 1944, and we lived up until about Vatican II. At least, yes, basically the internal community life was very much influenced by those rules, and that influences the attitudes, the psychology, the emotions, everything with which you lived day by day.

But he had to do that. The previous general, Mercurian, and he, but especially Acquaviva, who had the longest term of any general and was elected at the age of, I believe, thirty-five or so—the way he structured the Society was necessary when you had a Society that had increased, as I said, from ten to one thousand to three thousand to five thousand members, by that time all over the world. Some way or other, the insights originally that carries them in some senses had to be structured increasingly for that diversified and widespread Society. Acquaviva did that. Whether exactly the way he did it should have been sort of a guidepost for the interpretation of the constitutions, the life of the Society, for the next two hundred-some years, three hundred years almost, is to my mind questionable.

MARYKS: How do you see the future of the Society of Jesus?

PADBERG: You are at the moment tempting me to the worst thing that a historian should do, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself. [laughter]

MARYKS: [laughter] I am.

PADBERG: No, you're not. You're tempting me to be a prophet, and historians regularly fall into that.

MARYKS: Just give us some predictions.

PADBERG: Ask the question again. What do I see as the—

MARYKS: How do you see the future of the Society of Jesus? We don't know what kind of decrees this current congregation will produce, what will be the focus of the discussions, but in your opinion...

PADBERG: Well, I certainly see it for quite some time as smaller in numbers. That's happening. I see from my own experience of seeing the younger members, and I lived with them for ten years in Boston, and they live right down the street from me in St. Louis at First Studies, and I have some of them not in classes, but in small informal seminars—I see the Society more adventurous

in the things it takes on than it had been in the past, or at least continuing that adventurous apostolate search.

I see its internal life certainly not as structured as it was when I entered, but perhaps more structured, or certainly in some ways more devotional than happened after Vatican II and much more willing and interested in the external—if you want to use that word, the external prayer life within the Society than it had been before.

I see, I hope, the members of the Society increasingly personally spiritually directed as individual persons within an organization to which they've given their lives. That's a hard thing to do. We had very little of personal spiritual direction when I grew up in the Society. To take just one example, the annual retreat—by the way, instituted as an obligation by Acquaviva—the annual retreat was a preached retreat. How could it be otherwise for 120 or 130 or more scholastics every year? Eight days of four, possibly five sometimes, presentations points that they called them—material for meditation preached for us. You couldn't have done it otherwise. With the small numbers now, most Jesuits have the opportunity to make a personally directed retreat every year. I hope that continues for the future. I think that's going to be very important.

I see the Society and its apostolates possibly—this is a prediction. You've gotten me into it. Possibly being more aware of the ecological dimensions of the world and the way in which the work of the Society can influence for the better, as the present pope says, our care for the planet than we've ever done before. What that will involve, actually, I do not know.

I think the concern for the famous combination of the thirty-second congregation, which wasn't an equal combination, faith and justice—faith of which justice is a constitutive part, which is very different from saying faith and justice—I see that continuing to be a concern of the Society, but probably implemented more not individually, as individual people, but implemented differently in the circumstances in which the Society finds itself—Africa different from Europe, from Asia, different from North America, and within the countries that we work in there, that combination being implemented differently.

Now, that's some of the things I see as possibilities and hopefulness for the Society. I would hope not having happened as it grew older—well, it is going to grow older for a while—as it grew smaller, I would hope it would not withdraw into itself and be more defensive of itself.

The precipitous drop over a good number of years in the number of people in the Society was partly due to the very drastically reduced number of vocations. But much more importantly in many ways than ever looked at by people is the huge number of people that entered in the '30s, '40s, and early '50s finally getting older and dying. There are many more of that big cohort there dying off,

and it's probably within not too many years from now that that finally will have tapered off. Not that many people are going to live as long as I have, I presume, unless different antibiotics. [laughter] But as that cohort dies off, it will not strike people that, oh my heavens, we're losing people. We're becoming lesser so rapidly. I don't know whether that makes any sense or not.

MARYKS: It does. And on that note, I would like to thank you very much, John, for taking time and having this interview with us and being, actually, the very first guest of our new series of 60-Minute Conversations with Jesuit History.

PADBERG: What a thing to begin with. [laughter] Thank you. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be with you.

MARYKS: Thank you very much.

PADBERG: I enjoyed it.

MARYKS: Me too.