

## FATHER TAYLOR AUTOBIOGRAPHY 2003

Father Charles Taylor responded to these autobiographical questions at the time of the celebration of his fiftieth anniversary of ordination. (The questions were designed by Father Joseph Daley.)

### A. Personal items

#### 1. Place and year of birth.

Kemmerer, Wyoming, 83101, (9/7/1926) was his place of birth

#### 2. Growing up

I lived in Kemmerer until 9/1944 and then entered the U.S. Navy's Boot Camp in Farragut, Idaho and was discharged from the U.S. Navy on 8/26/1946.

#### 3. Educational background

I graduated Kemmerer High School in May of 1944 and entered Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska. In September of 1946, I spent two years at Creighton, 1946-1948. I later entered St. Thomas Seminary in September 1946-St. Thomas Seminary 1946-1948. Later I entered St. John Lateran University in Rome Italy (J.C.D.) Then in September 1956-May 1959, I was at the University of Laval, Quebec, Canada, Summer 1964. The summers of 1965-1968 were spent at Catholic University, Washington, D.C.

### B. Priesthood

#### 1. Year and place of ordination

#### 2. By whom

I was ordained to the Priesthood on May 30, 1953 at St. Patrick's Church in Kemmerer, Wyoming by the Most Reverend Hubert M. Newell, D.D.

#### 3. Various assignments

Later I was stationed at the Immaculate Conception in Green River, Wyoming, from July 1953-October 1953 and then to St. Anthony's in Casper, Wyoming, from October 1953-October 1954. I then went to SS. Cyril & Methodius in Rock Springs, WY from October 1954-July 1956 and then to St. John Lateran from September 1956-May 1959 and then to St. Paul's Newman Center, Laramie, Wyoming, from September 1959-September 1972. My next parishes were Our Lady of the Mountains, Jackson, Wyoming, September 1972-June 1975, followed with St. Barbara's, Powell, Wyoming, June 1975-June 1982, and then to Holy Rosary Church, Lander, Wyoming, June 1982-January 1986, then on to Our Lady of Sorrows in Rock Springs, Wyoming, January 1, 1986-September 1993. I then moved to St. Patrick's Church in Kemmerer, Wyoming, September 1993-May 1998. I finally went to St. John the Baptist in Buffalo, Wyoming, May 1998 until????.



#### 4. Your greatest contribution

I initiated and sustained the "Newman School of Catholic Thought" at St. Paul's Newman Center at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming for twelve years from 1961-1972. I brought Catholic scholars, priests and laymen for a week of classes, 5 classes per day, exploring the areas of Scripture, theology, church history, Thomistic Philosophy, and writings from Cardinal John Henry Newman. These classes were open to college students from all over the United States.

#### C. Bishop McGovern's Era.

##### 1. Flavor of the age, how would you characterize the regime?

I was confirmed by Bishop McGovern when I was 10 years old. He asked me the question, "What one word does the Church use to describe the truth that in time the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity took upon Himself our human Nature?" Since the longest word in the Baltimore Catechism was "trans-substantiation," that was the answer I was going to give him no matter what question he asked me. I hesitated. He tried to help me by saying, "Well, young man, look up at the altar." Since it was Confirmation, the altar was blanketed with red and white carnations. Well, thought I, CARNATION! That rhymes with "TRANS-SUBSTANTIATION." Of course, that is it. I would have answered "trans-substantiation, if he had asked me who the parents of Jesus were, or any other question. I blurted out, "TRANS-SUBSTANTIATION!" He responded, "Sit down." I had failed my Confirmation question! How humiliating! He overlooked my incorrect answer and confirmed me anyway. The answer he was looking for was THE INCARNATION. Well, that rhymes with "CARNATION" too.

Our Pastor at the time stressed that, since we were being confirmed to be soldiers of Christ, we were not to flinch when the Bishop struck us on the cheek. He was a rather tall and slim person and not a jolly Santa Claus type, at least to my eyes, more reserved and serious, having been a Bishop 40 years before he died.

A few years later, when I was 12 years old, he was again in the parish, and I suppose it was for Confirmation again. He came up to me. I had no idea whether or not he remembered my faux-pas two years earlier. He said to me, "I understand that you are going to be the next seminarian from this parish." At the time, the Pastor was encouraging my parents to send me to the Benedictines in Canyon City for high school. My father at the time was not a Catholic. I remember saying distinctly, "No, Bishop, that's not right! I will help the Church in any way that I can, but I'm not going to be a priest!" Then, tearfully I ran home and told my parents that I did not want to leave Kemmerer and go to Canyon City for high school. There was no long, drawn-out

conversation. They said, "Alright, if you do not want to go, you do not have to!" That was the end of that.

Years later, eight years approximately, after having talked to the new Co-Adjutor Bishop Newell, who had encouraged me to go to St. Thomas Seminary in Denver to see if I did have a vocation to the priesthood, I agreed. I had occasion to visit Bishop McGovern in his hotel. He was still the Bishop of Cheyenne. I asked if he remembered me, and our conversation years earlier. At this time in my life, I do not recollect his answer. Bishop McGovern died November 8, 1951. I had no other conversations with him.

There is a story concerning him. I do not remember my source, but I believe it to be true. Bishop McGovern received a letter from Rome, inquiring why he did not have a Diocesan seminary. Coming from Rome this troubled him greatly. For whatever reason he was in Chicago and mentioned this matter to Cardinal Strich, who told him not to worry, but to go have a good night's sleep and we would talk tomorrow. The next day the Cardinal told him to write back to Rome and tell them that having a Diocesan seminary was one of his fondest hopes and that just as soon as he could raise the necessary funds and assemble the faculty with the required theological and philosophical degrees necessary for such an endeavor, he would comply with their request. The letter was duly sent and apparently that was the last that was heard. The Diocese being as small in population as it was in those days, funds for such an endeavor were not possible. St. Thomas Seminary, 100 miles to the south, was operating and receiving candidates from Cheyenne.

I do recall in my early years in the priesthood, older priests remembering the manner in which they received their new parish assignments, a penny post card in the mail. Others recalled seeing their new assignments being announced in the Billings Gazette. Another priest who was stationed at St. Mary's Cathedral in Cheyenne, who was quite a trickster, tells this story. Bishop McGovern was famous for using the evening meal at the Rectory, he resided in the rectory with the other priests assigned there, to fire questions at the table to the young assistants in the varying fields of theology and Sacred Scripture, to find out how much they knew in these various fields. As you might judge, this questioning during mealtime did not make for a relaxed atmosphere. The assistants were always on edge. So one of the assistants knew that the table questions usually came from whatever the good Bishop happened to be reading at the time. Soooooo, this one bright and inventive assistant went into the Bishop's room, when he was out, located the current reading matter of the Bishop and read a Chapter before and the chapter following wherever the Bishop had marked his place in the particular book, thus preparing himself for the inevitable question game. The Bishop was impressed.

## 2. Church before Vatican II

All priests wore clerical black, except when taking showers or working outside on the parish grounds. There was tremendous camaraderie among priests, young and old. There was no debating between the Pastor and assistant[s]. There was a schedule of services and Pastors and assistants took their turn. The Pastor assigned the division. When petitioners or Catholics from other parishes would come with a story about a priest saying this or that, which seemed off the wall, the standard answer would be, "I think you misunderstood what Father said, but I will check it out and get back to you." More times than not, upon checking with the priest, there had been a misunderstanding. AFTER VATICAN II, THE OPPOSITE HAS BEEN TRUE!!! Aberrations of every stripe have been rampant: heresies, flaunting Canon Law, liturgical practices, you name it.

## 3. What was life like with him

I had little contact with him, as I was in the seminary at the time. I had no summer assignments.

## 4. How were parishes administered

Each Pastor was in charge of his parish, and since most priests, whether ordained in the U.S.A. or Ireland had basically the same seminary training. There was a common basic background. There was not much shifting of assignments. Many priests spent the greater part of their priestly life in one parish known as "The Big Horn Basin Boys." Monsignor John J. O'Connor, 1940-1972, St. Patrick's, Kemmerer. Father Sylvester Welsh, 1918- , spent his entire ministry at Our Lady of Sorrows, Rock Springs, Wyoming.

## 5. How were priests were treated

Priests were men of the cloth, properly trained in the Seminary, ordained to the priesthood, and expected to perform accordingly. No fuss, no lolly-gagging, just, live and act priestly men of God which would include "prayer sessions" with the boys , i.e., cards and get-togethers, discretely in various parishes, sometimes regularly, where they would swap stories and compare their ministries. This has been supplanted in part by "prayer groups," etc. I cannot speak personally about Bishop McGovern's treatment of priests, since I was a seminarian at the time. Whatever I would say is only hearsay. Monsignor Delaney, Monsignor Jim Godley, now in Ireland and not doing well mentally, and Father Tom Fahey and Father James Doudican are the only living priests who served under Bishop McGovern. You had better get to Monsignor Godley "post haste" as he is not well.

## 6. Personal experiences

Mentioned above



## 7. Funniest experiences

As mentioned before, my one meeting with Bishop McGovern in the hotel in Denver, in the middle of the conversation, he excused himself saying, "Pardon me for a moment, I have to expectorate, and he left for a moment or two. Another true story, which, to the best of my knowledge is not written down anywhere, took place during one of his Confirmations. Somehow or other during his questioning of the children, the subject of dreams came up and one little boy told the Bishop about one of his dreams that had influenced him to some degree, and what should he do about it. The good Bishop quickly responded to the youngster with, "The Catholic Church does not believe in dreams! The young boy fired back, "St. Joseph did!!!" Ball game over! Score: Bishop zero small boy ONE!

## 8. Saddest experiences

The disappearance of Father John Zieman, former assistant at St. Patrick's Church, Kemmerer, became a chaplain in the U.S. Army. No further information.

## 9. Outstanding event of the regime

I am not sure, but perhaps the establishment of St. Joseph's Orphanage in Torrington, Wyoming, was outstanding. Additionally, Bishop McGovern's writing the history of the Diocese of Cheyenne and convoking the first Diocesan Synod in 1948 (?), was the most significant event with lasting effect for the Church of Wyoming.

## Bishop Newell's Era

### 1. Flavor of the age, how would you characterize the regime?

Tremendous change took place due to Vatican II. Bishop Newell was a participant. Bishop Newell was always a participant. Bishop Newell was always available to his priests. He was always kind and polite, but not wimpy or Mr. Milktoast. It is my understanding that he was well respected by other bishops of his day.

### 2. Church before Vatican II

As a Co-adjutor Bishop, he took over the reins of the Diocese in November of 1951 at the death of Bishop McGovern. (Cf. Official Catholic Directory for other dates of ordination, consecration, death, etc.) The Fraternity of priests in the Diocese was singular and unique. This was evidenced by continual reference to this fact by nearly all Retreat Directors, Bishops, priests, and even laypersons. They all remarked that this group of priests was outstanding in their fraternal love and working together, not like other groups with which they had contact. They arrived at this conclusion by observation of the priests at their annual retreat either at St. Stephen's Indian Mission, Sedalia, or at other Retreat sites.



3. What was life with Newell like?

Always pleasant! He commanded respect by his gentlemanly conduct. There was never any friction. In giving assignments, he would always, at least with me say, "I would like you to go to such and such a parish....."

4. How were parishes administered

Parishes were administered in much the same manner as during Bishop McGovern's era. Although I cannot really prove that, since I was not a priest during Bishop McGovern's era. The two Bishops were individuals and grew up in different times. I would reasonably expect that there would be some different management practices, but cannot substantiate that thought. Bishop McGovern grew up prior to and following WWI. Bishop Newell grew up prior to and following WWII. There were bound to be some differences. All of this would be known to priests who served under both. Unfortunately, there are the above-named few priests still alive who can still attest to this. You had better get to them fast or their recollections will be lost forever!

5. How were priests treated

They were treated very kindly and with respect. I only have my own personal experience of this. I cannot speak for relationships between him and other priests.

6. Personal experiences

On one occasion something came up which I thought the Bishop should know. It was not "whistle-blowing" information, just something I thought he should know. I had an appointment with him. He greeted me cordially and I asked him if he knew this and this? He smiled at me and said, "Yes, Father, I did know that." Then, he said to me, "And did you know, this, this, & this?" ticking off with his fingers four or five other items with reference to what I had said to him. He knew what I knew and five other bits of information. That was the first and last time I ever repeated that action. How he knew, I know not, but he did. Ever after that I just presumed, as Bishop, he had channels of information far greater than my small world.

My father was not a Catholic. Bishop Newell gave him a rosary which he highly treasured and used it at the "block rosary" which was begun in St. Patrick's parish during and after WWII and continued until 1974. My father died a Catholic in October 1971.

My personal experience with reference to Bishop Newell had to do with his Deanery visits and his influence on the ladies in attendance. He always closed the sessions after the planned program with a few brief remarks. Time after time I would hear the ladies in attendance say, "I always come to these Deanery meetings, because even though the programs are not very good or stimulating, I always know that the Bishop will have

something great to say at the end that is uplifting, and always well-worth my time and trouble to attend these meetings."

At our annual Retreats, Bishop Newell was always present in cassock and pectoral cross, every inch a Bishop. Although there was not complete silence during the Retreats, his presence certainly dictated an atmosphere of moderated conversation. In the early days there was reading, spiritual, etc., during the meals at the Retreat. I do not really remember when this was phased out.

I believe Father Joe Fraher was his first ordained, and if that is true, I was his second three years later.

#### 7. Funniest experiences

Bishop Newell was known for his dislike for wild game meat. He was once a guest for dinner at St. Anthony's in Casper. Monsignor Thomas O'Reilly was Pastor and Fathers William McCormick and Charles Taylor were assistants. Father McCormick was an avid hunter and fisherman. He had been fortunate enough to bring down a young moose, cow or bull. Cecelia Lauer, the housekeeper, was truly an excellent cook and prided herself in providing the very best for the priests. She would literally spend hours in the kitchen. For this occasion with the Bishop being the honored guest, and since Father McCormick had provided the main item, Cecelia had prepared a prime rib of moose roast. They all sat down for dinner and the roast was brought in. Monsignor O'Reilly did the carving and portions of the savory and beautiful to behold delight were served to the participants. Not a word was said about the origin or pedigree of the main offering, provided by Father McCormick and his trusty 30-06 rifle and Cecelia's skill. There was, of course, the usual potatoes and gravy, tossed salad, vegetable, etc. All went well as the meal progressed and the conversation was light and cheery. As the plates emptied, Monsignor O'Reilly, gracious host that he was, asked the Bishop, "Would the Bishop care for a bit more of the roast?" Remember, Cecelia truly was an excellent cook and had come up with a real winner! Bishop Newell, his plate completely emptied and with his usual gentlemanly manner, replied to Monsignor O'Reilly, "Why, yes, Monsignor, I believe I would have another slice of that "roast BEEF." I really did enjoy that first helping!" And with that he polished off a second serving of Father Mac's tender moose. None of the other participants breathed a word. And it is not known whether or not the good Bishop Newell went to his grave, thanking God, Father Mac, and cook Cecelia for that wonderful "PRIME RIB ROAST OF BEEF!" Or perhaps, the Bishop with the extraordinary powers of the Episcopacy had, indeed, changed the moosy? creature of the wild, into a lowly, domesticated range yearling.

#### 8. Saddest experiences

I have no personal knowledge of this event, but I could easily imagine the unfortunate and untimely death of his twin brother. Father Raymond Newell would rank high in the saddest category. Father Newell was ordained to the priesthood prior to Bishop Newell. His priestly twin brother was killed in a car accident. I believe this is factual. You can verify it.

#### 9. Outstanding event of the regime

It is difficult to say. His establishment of the Wyoming Catholic Register, the establishment and personal care and guidance of the Wyoming Council of Catholic Women, the establishment of St. Paul's Newman Center at the University of Wyoming. He was a school man who supported and promoted the parochial schools in Laramie, Rock Springs, Riverton, Sheridan? Cheyenne? and Rawlins?

#### 10. Most significant event with lasting effect for the Church in Wyoming

Probably his efforts in the field of education are the most significant.

#### Bishop Hart Era

##### 1. Flavor of the age

A division hardened between, for want of better terms, Liberals, religious sense, and Conservatives. Division among priests as a result of *Humanae Vitae* generally occurred in the USA. It is hard to say how. This affected Cheyenne priests. Most were older and of the pre-Vatican mode.

##### 2. Church before Vatican II

Bishop Hart was ordained Bishop in 1976. He took over in 1978, after Vatican II.

##### 3. What life was like with him Bishop Hart was less serious than Bishop Newell.

Bishop Hart was less serious than Bishop Newell. Bishop Newell was a great punster and an avid crossword puzzle devotee. Bishop Hart was a great baseball fan, coming from Kansas City, and laced his talks and homilies with humor. He was known to be extremely concerned and helpful to individual priests who had various kinds of difficulties, such as alcoholism, etc.

##### 4. How were parishes administered

There was no basic change from previous eras. There was one counsel that he often put forth. He was always ready to assist the pastors. He always called at Christmas and Easter to wish all the priests the blessings of the seasons. He is on record as having said, "I want you priests to talk to each other on the phone often. I would like to see big telephone bills." He, himself, was on the phone often. On trips away from Cheyenne, traveling around the Diocese, he was in daily contact with the Chancery Office. One of his special habits was the daily perusing of the newspaper, USA TODAY. That was a must! In the beginning he enjoyed driving around the Diocese and when the two-way radio, like the truckers had, he had one too. I do not remember his special call name or moniker. It was something like "Big Red." As the years went on, driving those long Wyoming miles became harder, and the priests would drive him from Confirmation to Confirmation. One of his greatest acts, it seemed to me, was to take the officers of the

Wyoming Council of Catholic Women to the Annual Convention of the National Council of Catholic Women wherever it happened to be located. He was the tour guide and the life of the convention, so reported the ladies. He always was the great host at the convention and always knew the interesting places to visit and where to have meals.

5. How were priests treated

Bishop Hart was often on the phone, and was concerned whether he was doing enough. He made telephone calls when I was in the hospital for heart and hip surgery.

6. Personal experiences

On a Confirmation tour, I drove him from St. Patrick's in Kemmerer to Jackson at night in one of Wyoming's snow storms. He was antsy, but said nothing. I was considering turning back, but we drove out of the storm and continued on our way with clear roads. This was a 165 mile trip and 30 miles of it was in a storm.

7. Funniest experience

At one of the annual state meetings of the Wyoming Council of Catholic Women, Bishop Hart, in a skit put on by the ladies in their attempt to show the structure of their organization, used a football team as their model of "team-work" or unified effort. All of the ladies were outfitted with shoulder pads and football jerseys, green in color. Some of the participants were rather buxom, so you can imagine the hilarity! Bishop Hart was the coach. It was one of the liveliest presentations by the Wyoming Council that I had ever witnessed. It should have been video-taped!

Perhaps not the funniest, but watching Bishop Hart take part in the annual volley-ball game between the oldest and the youngest at the Annual Retreat at Sedalia was most enjoyable. It was a "no-holds barred" at the net. Rank made no difference!

8. Saddest experience

Probably the accusation against him that was dismissed in the final days of his tenure was saddest. The deaths of his parent and the illness of his brother Father Jim Hart resulted in his having to semi-retire. Some of his friends in the Episcopacy were forced into retirement.

9. Outstanding event

Purchase of the bank building and property adjacent to St. Mary's Cathedral, which was renovated to become the The Chancery Office, was a great event. The addition to St. Joseph's Children's Home with the Bishop Hart Addition was memorable. Another important event was the organization of the Diocesan Financial Council. I am not absolutely certain about this? Perhaps it was in place under Bishop Newell. Another

event to remember was the YEAR OF EUCHARISTIC SPLendor. I am not sure of the date. It might have been under Bishop Newell.

#### 10. Most significant event

To open the new Chancery Offices was significant. I am not certain of the date that the Tribunal was organized in its present form. This date can be verified. It certainly was a great step forward. I remember Monsignor McCormick holding forth in the old Chancery Building next to St. Mary's Catholic School. Monsignor McCormick was the Chancellor. I remember Father James Ruddy handled the marriage cases. Father James Godley also had a degree in Canon Law from Catholic University. Fathers Gerald Chleborad and Vernon Clark also have Canon Law degrees.

#### Bishop Ricken's era

##### 1. Flavor of the age, how would you characterize the regime?

He has been a Bishop for a short time, January 6th, 2000 to the present, just three years.

##### 2. Church before Vatican II

Bishop Ricken takes over governance of the diocese in the aftermath of the sex scandals in the Church in the U.S.A. He has implemented the Charter that came out of Dallas. He has had everyone, priests, staff, CCD teachers, anyone dealing with children undergo background checks. He has made it mandatory that this same group attend a conference on "Boundaries, which are interpersonal relationships of every kind. He has been actively engaged with a Committee in planning a five-year Pastoral Plan for the Diocese. He has appointed a committee to explore and recommend CCD textbooks for the entire Diocese. He has lowered the age for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation to the seventh grade beginning in the year 2005. In his first three years at the helm, he has visited all of the parishes and several of the missions, talking to the staff and parish councils of these parishes.

He is affable and pleasant, but not wimpy or indecisive. He is always well prepared whenever he is to be the main speaker or when he is the homilist at liturgical functions. He is active outside the Diocese proper. He is the Chairman representing the Bishops of the USA on the Rural Life Conference.

##### 3. Too short a time for the "funniest."

##### 4. Saddest experience

The death of his mother was certainly a sad time.

##### 5. Most significant event

His ordination to the Episcopacy by Pope John Paul II was most significant.

## 6. Outstanding event

It is too early to say. Perhaps his strong points are his management style and future-oriented vision. He has placed priestly vocations and CCD education, as well as adult education, at the top of his list in the Pastoral Plan. He has inaugurated the Wyoming School of Catholic Thought. He has Father Tom Kadera pursuing a degree in Cannon Law. He encouraged Father Cliff Jacobson to complete his degree work in the Sacred Liturgy. He is actively seeking priests outside the diocese and in other countries.

Father Charles Taylor, (Anonymous, 1976?)

Father Taylor came to Our Lady of Sorrows Church in January of 1986. Prior to coming to Rock Springs, he served at Holy Rosary Church at Lander. He also served at Jackson, Powell, and was the assistant pastor at SS. Cyril and Methodius Church in Rock Springs from 1954 to 1956. He was pastor at the Newman Center from 1959 to 1972.

A native of Wyoming, Father Taylor was born in Kemmerer on September 7, 1926. He attended Kemmerer High School and graduated Valedictorian. He was in the United States Navy from 1946 to 1948, and then attended Creighton University for two years. After completing his studies at St. Thomas Seminary, he was ordained May 30, 1953. He studied in Rome at St. John Laterals University for three years, at which time he received a degree in Canon Law.

Father Taylor's father, Frank H. Taylor, who was a publisher of the "Kemmerer Gazette", died in October of 1971. His mother Pauline still lives in Kemmerer. A sister and brother-in-law Mr. and Mrs. Gordan L. Huntington, live in Davis, California; their children are Charles W. Huntington and Margaret Ann.

"It is an honor and a privilege to represent all the priests that have gone before, especially during this centennial year."