

Father Mark Day and LeRoy Chatfield On The Fast  
Interview by Fred Ross 1969

FR: This is going to be a tape of Father Day and LeRoy on the fast. You're on.

LC: Yeah, okay. You picked up on it.

FR: No, I think it can do better; we'll test it.

LC: Yeah, okay.

FR: Go ahead and say what you said.

LC: Well, you were talking about the beginning of a book, with the idea of the fast or starting with the event of the fast, and I very much agree with that. Because, well it's been over a year now, since we had the fast, and yet, the effects of that fast are still with us. I mean good and bad. I was trying to think of an incident that even came up the other day.

FR: Well, I wanted you to say what you said about the cutting edge.

LC: Well, from my point of view, the fast, was what I call cutting edge, or maybe a sword is a better description, but it cuts, it cuts through events, it cuts through circumstances, it cuts through people. And you know, some of the people that, that I know. Well, it cut all of us, one way or the other you see. But, I mean, the people that I know or I feel that it really, it, it really cut, were Fred Hirsch, Father Duggan, Tony Orendain and Rachel. Larry Itliong.. Did I say Fred Hirsch?

FR: Yeah.

LC: Yeah. Well, those people come to mind right off hand you know. In fact, you know; it was just a week ago, it was the anniversary of Kennedy coming to..... March 10th coming to Delano to end the fast, you know. So Bonnie made arrangements to have a mass out at the house. And, I was ..... shocked ..... at who came. And a number of people that came. It was a mass that was called in four hours notice or less, you know. But people that came that I didn't expect to, like Rachel and Tony and the family, you know. Larry, Philip. I mean they, rarely would they go to a, a house mass. Now, of course I know that this was tied in with Kennedy one-years' anniversary, but Kennedy wouldn't have come if it hadn't been for the fast.

FR: You've got to say something else about an incident.

LC: No, I was trying to think of an incident. Just the other day, the mass was one of them, that prompted me, it was a year later, about the fast. But also, there was a bookkeeping..... a question about bookkeeping thing that came up for money spent, or something like that. That.....that had to do.....well, that is traceable back to the fast, you know. Where I unilaterally would have anyone's okay or approval or semi-approval, or whatever, spent whatever money I felt was necessary to.....to take care of certain things during the fast, be it candles, or food, or transportation, or tents, or, you know, or all of the attended things that go along with bringing masses of people to Delano. And of course that caused a great deal of resentment.

FR: Then or since or both?

LC: Both, both, both, both.

LC: In fact, this is personal now. And of course, this will weave in and out,.....obviously, I can only tell on how it affected me, but, I was in a position at that time, to make certain decisions, and not only about spending money, but other things that had to do with the fast. That because of the press of time, because of the internal, political situation, in other words, so many people opposed to the fast.???, or not understanding what's happening, whatever, that making those decisions, I knew at that time that it wouldn't be at that time I would pay for them, but I would pay for those decisions. I said to myself, next year, the year after, whatever. And it's true. People, none of the people carried a grudge you know, so much, it's just that . . .

LC: One of the things that I never did understand is, what prompted you to stand up that day after Cesar made his speech and he left and then I gave my impassioned plea for something or other? And then at some point you stood up, maybe you don't even remember this; and announced that there would be mass, every night, there would be mass tonight at the Forty Acres. Do you remember that?

MD: We had talked about it in that group.

LC: We had talked about it?

MD: Yeah. Somebody had mentioned it some time earlier that day or when Cesar was talking. During his speech someone said something about we ought to have mass out

there. And as I recall, my memory is rather faint too but, as I recall it, either I got up and I said we are going to have mass or I whispered it to somebody and you were sitting right near me. And I thought that I remember you saying: My God we should have mass everyday and then that made me realize; well, we should, you know. Cesar's gonna go out there and spend all that time, then we should have mass everyday. So then I got up and said it. So I think we sort'a reinforced each other.

LC: Yeah, maybe that's the way it happened. Seems to me you know; in retrospect, that if we had not had mass, out at the Forty Acres, much of the meaning of the fast would have been lost. Only because it would not have been a daily focal point where people could come around something related to the fast, but something that Cesar could also come to; in other words, the attention and the focus wasn't really on him, but it was on something religious and he could also participate in that. But yet it all worked together. Just as I was sitting here now, we were starting, and I never really, 'cause I was pretty impassioned, in fact it was practically on my mind, I was so furious.

FR: About what?

LC: Well. Cesar gave the speech I guess about twenty minutes, if I remember, maybe fifteen minutes.

FR: And he announced it? Before that you hadn't known anything about it?

LC: No....no, I didn't know anything about it. I was gonna say yes, I had no idea; I'll explain. I was spending at that time; especially about the week previous to the fast, a good deal of time with him. In fact, I think we took a trip to San Francisco and back. He had to go to a meeting. Yes we did. He had to go up with the Teamsters and UAW and to the Food Council or something or other. Well, I drove him up and back. Well he didn't eat. From the time we left at 4:00 o'clock in the morning and we didn't get back 'til 11:00 o'clock at night. He didn't eat. And I had been with him almost; it just seemed like I was driving him around or whatever, and I noticed that he wasn't eating. So I talked to Howard. He said he wasn't eating at home. And I did know that, about the fasting he did, prior to the contract. So I figured something was up. I don't know who I talked to, but I think I talked to Marshall and I talked to Howard and I think I talked to Jerry Cohen, and there were a couple of other people I talked to. In other words I was concerned and I

knew something was happening, I didn't know what. I think I talked to Richard also. And sure enough, all the reports that came back, he wasn't eating, so obviously we knew something was up. And then I think some people went to see him. And began talking to him about it, and that's what prompted them to have a meeting and kind of explain exactly what he was up to. But I thought. First of all I was so impressed with the explanation as I remember it.

FR: Was there the day before.

LC: That's right. Was there on Sunday.

FR: Was where?

LC: Was here in Delano on Sunday.

FR: Prior to the speech?

LC: Yeah. Sunday afternoon. Wasn't it Sunday afternoon?

LC: I thought the speech was received so piss-poor. I mean between the.....well I don't know who spoke first. I guess Larry. Cesar walked out and then Larry got up.

FR: Well nobody spoke while Larry was there.

LC: He didn't allow anyone to speak. He wasn't taking any votes.

FR: Didn't he allow any questions?

LC: No. There was an interruption, but he silenced the interruption. I think that Camacho jumped up and Cesar said there was all this talk about violence. Then Marshall stood up and said something about: "Show me, I don't want to hear anymore of this kind of talk." Is there violence, or isn't there? Sounded like it was sort of personal.

FR: But well, he was almost in tears.

MD: I was saying that I had heard a lot of rumors and things like that. And one of the things that I heard was that there were a couple of individuals, and the reason why I'll mention the names is because maybe you people have heard some things also. But I heard that Fred Hirsch and Manuel Chavez were thinking in terms of some real campaign. Of using some tactics, maybe like getting a truck off the road in order to really get this thing going. Dramatizing the struggle. This is what really got Cesar, plus a lot of other things. He even mentioned in his talk that we were losing the whole spirit of nonviolence. That it would be a question of time before the whole thing fell apart. So that is the one thing that

stuck in my mind. Whenever I ask myself a question: “Why did Cesar really just walk off dramatically like that?” There must have been something more than somebody beating a hose on somebody’s car or somebody throwing a shoe. It must have been some real.... he must have seen like the whole foundation was starting to decay. And maybe he got a couple of reports like this. Now this is just pure conjecture on my part too because I never talked to those guys. Although I did think that if Camacho was defensive that Hirsch was very much defensive about a lot of things like that too.

LC: Well, now that you’re on the subject of what he actually said. One of the things that I remember that he said in the speech was that he felt that we had lost our will to win. And I think that he quoted Gandhi at that point about the will to win. And there was a lot of talk about shortcuts, in fact he used the word shortcuts several times in speeches instead of saying violence, he said shortcuts. And he was convinced that most of it was talk. And the people who took credit for....took credit for....I think he said, he put it humorously like, that twenty-five or fifty people have taken credit for bringing down the Giumarra. And he knew damn well that none of them did. But that kind of bravado.....so I think that is one of the things he meant by losing the will to win. Jumping on that kind of nonsense, using that kind of nonsense as a substitute for work. He didn’t say that but that was the implication. Then at one point he quoted from St. Paul. I don’t remember what the gist of the quote was. In fact I think he had a scripture. I think he had, either he had the scripture with him. Didn’t he have the new testament? He did, didn’t he? He read from it. I think he read a couple of verses. I’m not sure. But it struck me at the time it was a very apropos when he read from St. Paul. But then I don’t remember. The other thing that and one of the things I know that is right because I’ll never forget it is that what I consider a famous quotation now is that “The life of a grower for his child or the life of a worker for his child is not sufficient reason for him to want to build a union.” And if that was the price. Then he said. Not that it happened accidentally, but deliberately that had to be the road to achieve this fantastic thing . . . the union. He didn’t want any part of that. He couldn’t. And then the last statement he said was “The reason I did this is because I love you.” And then he announced that he was going to go out to the Forty Acres and he got up and walked out and there was only one person that walked out with him that I know. He asked the rest of

us to stay there and continue. And it was Helen. Helen went with him. And then I think Richard went afterwards. But I didn't see Richard go; I did see Helen go. And then Larry got up, and in effect said, to me anyway, came across like: Well, if that's what Mr. Chavez wants to do let's not bother him. Larry said he didn't have permission from the board, there was no meeting or I didn't know anything about this or ... kind of getting him off the hook, getting Larry off the hook. That's how I interpreted it. And then just complete, it was almost as saying well, now what's next on the agenda? After this fantastic..... homily, a real religious experience here you know? Or at least an experience that you just; had, had confronted you. And then Larry said, "Any other order of business?"

MD: I think this brings to mind something that I heard like these people talking about last night. The difference between a business meeting and a social movement. I don't know if we can blame? Larry too much in a way for not being sensitive to what so many other people are sensitive to. What's happening or the significance of Cesar and Delano and the fast and everything. Because in a way he also wanted to say despite that we've still got to keep this thing going. He did bring that up. There was some idea of: okay, well we can't just sit down here and mourn and fall apart. We still have to keep moving. But there was probably also that other element too that not everybody was consulted. But you can't consult through a religious experience.

FR: Well that proves and evidence warranted or required why Cesar didn't consult with them, there it was right there.

LC: Exactly, exactly. But then there was a furious exchange. I don't know how it started. I remember I just kind of went into a state of fury because..... I couldn't believe that... I'm just not focusing on Larry..... but I just couldn't believe that the people there were really serious about the concept of business as usual, after what had happened. I think probably that's because my concept in the union was all tied up with Cesar, and so therefore, whatever he would decide to do that's the order of the day, that's the business to be done. It would no more occur to me to go about picketing or to go about whatever else the hell we were doing or what I was doing the day before, than the man in the moon. My immediate reaction was we drop everything and we're gonna do this. Now I didn't know in practice what that would mean. But I started with that absolute position, and then all of a

sudden I was confronted with well no; he wants to go out there to be by himself and they kept saying this.

MD: By they, I picture Larry and Tony and Fred and what I consider the opposition at that point. That he said he wanted to be by himself and he wanted to be alone and don't bother about it.

FR: He just stepped out of the union for a while.

LC: He's like saying he's gonna take a vacation. He's gonna go to Florida or something. Oh, I became furious; I can't remember all of the things I said but one of the things I remember saying was; one is that, I was shouting at them. I was saying, have you lost. Well, two things. Now I remember what I was trying to say, in my mind what I was trying to say is: "Have you lost reverence?" Can you even feel or in fact, the significance of what this man is trying to do? And then I said, "Remember the march to Sacramento?" Of course, in my own naïve way, see, I guess now looking at things, I began to think I was naive even at that point, was I thought that all of the people there were enthusiastically; thought that the march was a beautiful thing and a great thing....and that they had thrown themselves into it, and I this as another kind of march. And so I just hoped the same thing. Then it began to occur to me that maybe many of the same people there in that room, no more agreed to the march, but they didn't have any choice. When I came on to the march scene, 'cause I was outside at that time, working to get people to go to the march and all that stuff. So when I joined the march everyone was on the bandwagon at that time. But probably at the beginning of the march there was a terrific inertia, to say the least, and probably had a lot of opposition; to do a stupid thing like the march. Then the other thing, and I think this is the greatest thing I ever did; really, is when I....ordered Richard....I ordered Richard to let no car onto the Forty Acres. And I remember I yelled at him, and I told him: "That's an order." And then of course, the first one to drive a car onto the Forty Acres was Tony. And you know, because ? onto Forty Acres, it made ? No, I don't mean that act made a reverence. The thing itself is what created ? but.....something like holy ground. It's a difference. It's like going into a church or there's something different about it.

MD: Like over at Lady of Guadalupe's over in Arizona. Where the Yaki's have this land. Well, that land in front of their church from the edge of one road to the edge of the other

road down to the displays the other edge of another road on the west; on the east. That's holy land. No cars or anything are allowed on ?. Boy, when they start playing baseball on that land those Yakis really rose up in rebellion and threw them out of there. So it's the same thing.

LC: Well I don't know why I did it; I guess.....I think it was sheer preservation, sheer instinct, that goddamn it, if they weren't gonna reverence it, the only thing, I mean I had control, I thought I had control of the Forty Acres. And that if Cesar chose the Forty Acres and that's how he was gonna do it; then shit on everyone else. In other words, they couldn't go there. In fact, they wouldn't even drive their (expletive) car there; just as if nothing was going on, you know. I mean they could sit in a hall and say nothing was going on, but they weren't gonna go out there and say nothing was going on.

FR: Yeah, desecrate it. What do you remember next, after you walked out of the hall, and started walking out there?

LC: In the hall? Or about the fast?

FR: Well, do you remember some more things that happened in the hall?

LC: The other thing I really remember of course was Mark Day at some point standing up and saying; announcing that there would be mass tonight, at the Forty Acres.

FR: That was after Cesar left?

LC: Yeah, after Cesar left. No, there was a lot of give and take wasn't there? I mean I had the impression maybe because I felt the hostility I interpreted it that way.

MD: That's when a lot of ? was built came up on either side. Because it became like sort of a religious war too, all during the fast. I remember myself having misgivings about the way I said that because I said that everybody should be there; almost like slapping the Catholic Sunday congregation in front of everybody. It was bad enough for Catholics but for people who are Jewish and of no faith at all. And then plus who had a chip on their shoulder, you know, about the whole thing to begin with. Then it divided the camps more. But there were also incidents that happened during the fast. Like one day Helen and Esther were eating oranges and Fred came by, Fred Hirsch came by and said: "Oh, we're taking a half a day coffee break, huh?" That really blew things up to, so that really divided the camps.

MD: Where were they eating the oranges?

FR: Helen sorta' wanted to stay with Cesar, you know? Because out of the very same thing. Out of devotion to her husband she would go out there and.... So Fred was really pissed off about that. But I think that as it went to him and others there was sort of lessening of that feeling, you know? Other people like Dave ?, they sort of sympathized with Fred, but they weren't so bitter about the whole thing.

FR: What was their reaction when you said?

MD: Well, I couldn't tell any reaction; but I got feedback during that whole month.

LC: No, in fact, in fact, it seemed to be kind of; at that point, I think the reason why I remember what you said, because I think at that point, I thought we had won the day. That the tide had shifted. And even the priest said there's gonna be mass. And I thought, of course. .... Didn't Manuel say something?

MD: I don't remember.

LC: Maybe he wasn't even there.

MD: If he was there, he woulda' said something. You can count on that.

LC: You know one of the things that I was so struck with too is when Helen got up and walked out with him. What he ? at the time. Because, I don't know; but my guess is, that Cesar hadn't even told Helen, and then to pull that, you know, just like that; wouldn't even tell his own wife. And then to do it, and then walked out. Well, in effect it's like leaving home, instead of being home for X number of days I'm gonna go to Vegas. You know, I'm just saying, in a husband-wife relationship and the fact that she, in order to do the right thing, and to go out with him. It's very presumptuous on his part, but on the other hand it's probably presumptuous, but I mean, that he knows instinctively that she'll do the right thing.

FR: So what happened next?

LC: Well, then after the meeting, I beat the hell out to the Forty Acres to see what was happening, and when I got there Richard was there. Richard was there, Helen was there, and Cesar was there. I don't know who else was there.

FR: Gustav?

LC: I saw Gustav some place because he said that he had followed Cesar, which caught me a little short afterwards because I thought, that I wish I had thought of that. Why should he walk up there by himself, it was a pretty dumb thing for me to do. But that's why I did see Richard somewhere along the line.

FR: And you knew Richard had gone out.

MD: The next thing was all the moving that took place.

LC: Right. Where the chapel was we had to pull out a lot of junk. We just cleaned it all out.

FR: That night?

LC: Right then. Right then. You were there? You remember, you tell me who was there. That you remember. Helping us move. There wasn't too many.

MD: Not too many?

LC: No, sir!

MD: I think Esther was there, and Helen.

LC: Marion was there.

MD: Yeah.

LC: And Richard.

MD: Yeah.

LC: I think there was another, you were there. There weren't too many men carrying stuff.

MD: Mike was there.

LC: Mike. Right, right. But he was also working hard. There weren't a lot of people there; . . . . because there was .....no one seemed to know what the proper thing to do was. Because I remember the look on Richard's face when I told him we were gonna clear that stuff out. He didn't want to say no, but he didn't want to say yes. I mean; what for, you know?

FR: What was in that room? All kinds of oil, and tires? Clothes? Oh, I see; clothes.

LC: Clothing. Building supplies. Building materials. Stuff like that you know, because the gas station hadn't been ? too long.

MD: There was a lot of sod and heavy machinery too.

LC: Right, that's right. But once Richard got; once the room started to become clear, cleared out, and I think he did finally ask me something like, "Well, there's going to be mass tonight, or something?" And then I remember we had to get some stuff for Cesar's room because there was nothing there.

FR: You had to get a bed, a mattress.

LC: A bed, a mattress; and a heater, lighting became a problem because even the electricity wasn't hooked up, and we had to run the electricity from the utility pole. There was no heat, no nothing.

FR: What about the toilet? Was that going?

LC: The toilet was working yeah; the toilet was working. But I remember I was dispatching people all over the place.

MD: Another thing, as long as I recall it. Another big bone of religious contention, was, people started cleaning those windows.

FR: The same night?

MD: This probably took place in the next day or so.

LC: No, soon after, very soon though.

MD: I remember people had painted some religious symbols some peace symbol, you know, on the window. That really caused a ?

LC: Did you ever actually see?

MD: I think so.

LC: Do you remember who?

MD: Let's see, who was that? I think it was:

FR: I was told it was ?

LC: Three people; Lourdes, and Flora and Escalita, are the three. In fact, I was definitely under the impression that Lourdes is the one I.... First of all they started painting; in fact it might have been that night, after mass. Or soon the next morning, they started painting. First it started in the little room, and then it spread.

FR: And what did they have on those windows? In Cesar's room?

LC: Colors. I don't think there was any writing on those symbols; I think it was just colors. I don't think there were any symbols.

FR: Outside they had

LC: In the chapel part, in the chapel. Then they had 'La Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe'. One said Larry and Cesar, and the other one said Cesar Chavez. But they were mostly colors, psychedelic, pastels.

FR: Then they had that peace symbol. Flowers? Did they have any flowers?

LC: No, no. Mostly designs.

FR: Were they in pastels, or were they in vivid colors?

LC: I have some Technicolor pictures of them. Yeah, they were pastels. In fact I remember, thinking to myself at the time that they struck me as being Oriental-like. I don't know whether I just read that into it, because ?

FR: Did they cover the whole window?

LC: No. They took pane by pane. They took hours in doing it.

FR: Yeah, but I mean, did they, did they?

LC: The whole window eventually got covered, but most of the window was still painted. But they did pane by pane. And each one became, well in fact it got to the point, where they became so popular, I mean there were six or seven women working on them, but then they began designing panes.

FR: But they actually had designs in the panes?

LC: What do you mean designs in the pane?

FR: Well for instance, on one pane did they have several different colors to make colorful designs?

LC: Oh yeah, yeah. Each one became a little artwork, a little creation. Oh, and they put their soul into it. They worked on it. Bonnie went out and did one. It was kinda' contagious, like getting a chance to color a wall. You know, how they do in big cities.

FR: What do they call those in the church, Father?

MD: Stained-glass windows?

LC: Yeah, that's what they became, because at nighttime when the lights were on, it was stained glass. It was beautiful, it really was.

FR: So then he slept on a bed out there that night? This was in the afternoon when he walked out there wasn't it? So that night then you prepared for a mass? Inside?

MD: Yeah. Did we have one inside, that first night?

LC: Yeah. In fact we generally had it inside, it was pretty cold out there in the middle of March.

FR: Was the virgin taken out there that night before the mass, or did that come later?

MD: I forget where one came. But I know that one came from Bakersfield. I think it was a relative of Jessica or Jorge ? I think it was a relative, they brought a nice, big painting, in a frame, and we used that.

LC: That came later though, I think.

MD: I don't remember, but it came.

LC: At some point, and I think it might have been even that first night. During the offering people began.....

MD: When we first starting putting stuff on the wall. I remember I got that quotation from ? school. Remember that guy gave it to me at the seminary and I had it at home and I put it up on the wall, and that appeared in a couple of magazines there. It was a panel and on one side it was dark, kitty-corner, then dark, then light and it said from "injustice to . . .

LC: From "Injustice to Justice", something like that.

MD: From "Justice, never Injustice."

FR: Oh, I see.

MD: And then a lot of people started bringing things like that. Pictures of Kennedy, flags, and images. It was beautiful.

LC: Once the cross ? people started coming to evening mass by the hundreds.

MD: I remember them directing traffic out there. Had the cars all lined up out there and there were special people detailed.

LC: We had a parking detail of eight people. I think we must have spent four hundred dollars on the flares.

FR: Really? Is that right?

LC: Yeah, oh we had cars parked as far away from at least a half a mile.

FR: How did they use the flares?

LC: Out in the middle of the road; we had to slow down the traffic. We put them in the road, in fact...

FR: That could have been very dangerous.

LC: Oh, it was dangerous, in fact when you're driving out from Delano just about a half a mile from the road out from ? then you ran into these red flares, then you knew to slow down. And we had to do it in both directions.

FR: Every night?

LC: Every night.

FR: From the road that comes from the north? Is that how you did on that one, or the one that comes from the west?

LC; No, the one that comes from the west. There was always traffic on that road. More traffic than you'd think on that road anyway, and it's fast, and here we had people parking at nighttime on the edge of the road and getting out and walking. Very dangerous. I remember Nacho ?

FR: How long did those flares last?

LC: Well, they only last maybe an hour. Well, I remember it was three or four hundred dollars at least.

MD: I remember . . . honking their horns, as soon as they found out what was going on out there.

FR: So what happened at the mass that night, do you remember? Anything in particular? Any hard feelings?

LC: No, they didn't come until after they realized that the thing spread like wildfire, but people were coming.

MD: Here again we go back to Cesar's most soft-quoted saying, "Whatever the workers want." And the workers started coming in. And like Cesar mentioned to me many times; the workers do not have these hang-ups. The workers, for them it's just part of their tradition, part of their culture, and it's tied in with the whole spirit of the movement, and that's why I think Cesar turned on to it because I think basically, he never wanted this thing in any way, to become theatrical or become a big operation, but I think it was really dear to his heart when he saw the workers, drunks and fighters coming in and worshiping and seeing the whole meaning of the nonviolence thing. I think those people were caught up into that too.

LC: Well, see, we had a kiss-and-makeup meeting.

FR: That was a week later.

LC: Well, it was about a week later.

FR: Did the pattern start then that night of Cesar being back in his room at the end of the mass at a certain point before the mass began, why he would come out?

MD: Yeah, I think it began right away because we were sort of cold too, and he had a heater in that room.

LC: He waited 'til the last minute right before mass was ready to start.

FR: Did the singing begin that night before the mass started?

MD: We always sang before the mass starts.

FR: Because Richard, somebody was telling me that there were three songs that they sang nearly every time. I think two of them were Mexican, I think one of them was "De Colores" and I can't think of the other two.

LC: Oh, the ancient, "Oh Maria, Madre Mia", that's one, and then "Benditos."

MD: Benditos. "Benditos, benditos, benditos a dios," then "De Colores."

LC: The first night I don't think we sang the other, those ancient ones, I don't remember, I think we sang "De Colores" and "We shall overcome" and something like that. More of the songs we were familiar with, and we sang during the mass too. And then as the people came it seemed like we added these other songs. Well, because first

of all, we were having mass every night, we didn't want to sing the same songs every night.

FR: You changed the script every night; you might as well admit it.

LC: Yeah, we did. Well Mark was very good at that because he started giving a homily. That first night he gave one.

MD: Well, what I would do is.....instead of using the scriptures that we ordinarily are assigned for daily mass ?, I just took the scriptures, the new testament or the old testament too, and just looked for something that would somehow capture the spirit of what we were doing, like the whole idea of sacrifice and nonviolence, or a penance. In the scriptures if you look through an index and you can just see a lot of places where you can go where the testaments were. The very theme of penance, and so I would pick these and extend a little bit on them. I don't know if we had much; people did much dialoguing in those homilies, not too much.

LC: Towards the middle we did. In other words in the very beginning I remember it was kind of a rough . . . I never ? the people had never ? a liturgy before ? Because most of the people.... this diocese is so backwards, and had been for so many years, but it really caught on fast.

FR: It became more orthodox.

LC: Yeah, more organized. One side did the preaching and the talking and the praying.

FR: Had they had time to come out of the shock yet and begin to feel bad? Or did that come later? When they began to see Cesar get weaker, begin to get worse, or did that come later?

LC: When you say 'they', I don't know.

FR: Well, the ordinary workers.

MD; Later on it got pretty emotional. If it was too early?

LC: Too early. Because first of all, from their point of view, it was the first day, and anyone can ? after ten days. Actually it was longer than that, because he had been fasting before. ? . Once they began focusing on it, and then you see at one point in the mass, or maybe it was right in the beginning; I forget now, but we added a little cross

each day of the fast being complete. We didn't start this until about the sixth day. Because then we started the sixth cross. At that point, you know, when those crosses were added, there was a feeling ...

FR: Oh they were added at the end of the mass or right during it?

MD: Right during the mass. I think it was right after the sermon or something like that.

LC: It was at the last of the offratory. It was the last offering given. And it was always one of Cesar's relatives. Each kid did it.

FR: He presented the cross to you.

LC: And then father held it up; explaining what the cross was.

FR: What was he saying?

MD: Mainly, that it was the significance of what day it was. He had this cross, the sixth day of the penance, of the fast, or the seventh day or eighth day.

LC: And those numbers began to mount ? And I remember there were some people that started coming from the bridge; they walked to the bridge and went on to ? bridge..

FR: What bridge? Oh, out there at the side of the road.

LC: Yeah, at the side of the road.

FR: They came underneath?

LC: From the bridge to the chapel.

FR: Oh yeah?

LC: At that point I knew... things were.....

FR: That was before the mass started. They got out of their cars and in approaching the shrine.

LC: Just like the Lady of Guadalupe. When they got to the edge of the property. Once again I said to myself, 'what a smart thing that was.' Was the right thing to keep cars and shit off that property.

FR: Did quite a few of 'em do it?

LC: One night I saw three ladies at once. And I saw on more than one occasion, but I remember when the three ladies were doing it at once I was.....I couldn't watch it

myself, because you know how a crowd forms, and then going along with them and singing.

FR: Oh, I see. They were carrying what, candles?

MD: Oh, they lit the candles at the edge of the road and then walked.....

LC: Placed them on the altar.

MD: And went along on their knees, with a candle. One of the things that was so beautiful too, was the fact that there were so many men there. Like, I mean when I make mass on Sundays, very few men would come. It was . . .

LC: Yeah, and ? in how early they came. It's kind of like at night, when it got dark, people just gathered. The mass might have been an hour, an hour and a half. Sometimes we even held it up, but no one was in a hurry. It wasn't like a schedule. It was just; it became very social after awhile.

MD: And there was also the thing, you were talking to Richard about; the campfire outside. There was that campfire; and I think it just brought out the beauty and the culture of the people too. These are the people who instinctively aren't just go-go-go; they like to sort of savor both the religious elements and the idea of being together as a community. Sitting around telling about the past; not just talking about the fast or anything, but about their lives; you know, about the cotton strike back in Corcoran, and the ranchers there, it was a beautiful experience.

LC: Yeah, I remember Carmen Serda was the one who did the organizing for the cooking.

MD: Yeah, the chocolate?

LC: Yeah, I think we started with chocolate, something like that. And then you know how it just takes one woman to start it and then pretty soon there was a crew of women. And every night; and then you needed firewood. I remember some shanty workers big pickup loads of firewood.

MD: ? Roots and all.

LC: Roots and all.

MD: You mentioned something about the promise; crawling underneath.

LC: Oh, well, because, my understanding of that is that it's a vow or a promise that a person makes. Either as a thanksgiving for something that's been received or that they will do this in the hopes of receiving something.

FR: Oh, I see. And they were gonna do that every night? Do something until he stopped the fast?

LC: No. It wasn't directed as stopping the fast, it was directed as a .....

MD: Personal penance?

LC: Personal penance ...

MD: Yeah, voluntary penance, sort of thing..

LC: Yeah, and then also I think it's prompted by the fact that here was a man who was not eating, the most.....well, when you talk about a rich person going without food, ? You're talking about a poor person doing without food. ? because he's probably been without it. We're talking about Cesar, who is poor, and deliberately does it. And not just one day or two days, but this ? That kind of penance is very grabbing, and if a person feels guilty for having done something or not doing something, they also feel they should participate in doing some kind of penance. At least that's how I attributed some of that...

FR: Is there a term for that going underneath?

MD: There probably is. It doesn't come to me right now. But penitencia would be the general term. There's something called the manda, they were saying about a promise, but that's sort of a whole program. People will do this everyday but....

LC: But I bet you they use that word though, When I saw people in Mexico City who ?, and I think they call them mandas.

MD: Yeah, yeah.

LC: And I think it was a quite specific task that they were going to do, mainly on their knees from the entrance to the altar.

FR: Where was the fire? That they sat around?

MD: It was right...here's the highway, here's the gas station, and it was right over here. It was right between ..... and the gas station.....

LC: It was close you know.

FR: Not too far from the building?

LC: No; no; very close. And a big fire too. Well then you see, and then what happened people started pitching tents out there.

MD: Yeah, people started pitching ?

LC: Yeah, ? but it was Nick Jones. Nick and Virginia Jones were the first. And that seemed to start the ball rolling. And then ?, and then Peggy too. Of course Peggy was kind of a was a nurse; but I guess she was ? clothes all the time. And then, of course, then a lot of people wanted to pitch tents. But we didn't have any tents left.

MD: Oh, then you rented them?

LC: Yeah, then I rented them. Started with six tents, then it went to twenty-five, then it went to fifty, and then we had two hundred and fifty tents.

FR: You did? That many?

MD: Yeah. You weren't here all during that time?

FR: Well I came late, then most of the tents were gone. I came about ....

MD: It was a tent city out there.

LC: Oh yeah.

FR: But you yourself didn't rent them, what you rented plus what they brought themselves huh?

LC: No, no, no. I ended up....see what happened Fred was; people started coming sixty, seventy, eighty, a hundred miles, in the evening, and then they saw tents. They saw some people staying, so they wanted to stay.

FR: Where did they want to stay?

LC: Well, they wanted to stay overnight at least. Well, you know what, it just seemed like people didn't want to be off work season, it just seemed people didn't have any place to go. And it was like they could come for a week or they could come for a few days and ....

MD: Then those caravans came down at the end of the fast and that's when we had all the tents.

LC: That's right. They came out from Hollister. When Cesar had to go to court; then we had hundreds of families that came from Hollister and had no place to stay. No, I rented, I forget now, but Jesus; I rented,. I know we rented every tent that was available in Bakersfield. And I know that we had to bring a trailer-load of tents from L.A. And ones from Fresno.

FR: That whole Forty Acres was covered with tents at that point then?

MD: That part around the gas station was anyway; that whole section.

LC: Yeah. They were big tents; they slept eight. They were four wide, and they went to the well, from the bridge to the well. They were four or six wide because I remember they were on both sides because I remember when we had the candlelight procession ?? right down the middle of the tent area.

FR: But the candlelight procession took place later?

LC: Later, yeah. I think one night we had two thousand people. But you're talking candlelight processions, of course, that's a lot of candles. I remember we had to get candles out of L.A. We got all the candles in the valley.

FR: What about the news media? How did they start coming? What was that one day when they were all there? There was a lot of reporters there? Bakersfield reporters were there?

MD: No, this was at the Forty Acres.

FR: Maybe that was the day, yeah.

MD: Yeah, that was the day.

LC: ????. Oh yeah, well of course once the problem of the press; oh wow! You were there more than once, weren't you?

FR: Yeah.

LC; Oh god, I never saw... in that town. It was just fantastic.

FR: What about the. ....kiss and makeup session?

LC: Well I call it that. We had another...it was another noontime meeting that Larry called to clear up some of the confusion. Wasn't that the way it was put? A

misunderstanding, or whatever? I don't know how long that was after though. Was it a week after? About the middle of the next week I guess.

MD: Yeah, it was. I forget. I remember some of the things.....

LC: And I remember, who spoke? Fred Hirsch spoke? That's the time you took on Fred Hirsch, right?

MD: That's the thing that I remember about the meeting.

LC: You took on Fred Hirsch. And then Cohen took him on. No, you didn't take him on directly, but he took it that way, and then he responded to it, I think, and then Cohen took him on.

MD: Well that whole... Fred got up toward the beginning of the meeting, and he said, and he spoke his mind, and it was to my mind a very individualistic point of view. "That if Cesar wants to on a fast, fine. If I want to go jump in a lake, that's fine. If you wanna go out then that was fine. But to me, that whole philosophy behind that was, is everybody does his own thing, and looks upon Cesar as just another individual in the union. And that to me was a very destructive way of looking at Cesar's fast. Like, fine; Chavez has got a religious kick, that's fine. Let's get back to the thing you said at the beginning, you know. Whereas, Willie Nillie, the religious element is very, is a very important element in the whole thrust for social justice. And so, that turned me off, the way he was talking, and so when I got up I said, "that, that was wrong I thought." And then I also mentioned "well; if somebody wants to go out and derail a train, that's fine too." And then he took it as if I was directly accusing him of violence, which I wasn't, you know. But then he got up.

FR: What did Jerry say?

LC: Well, another thing Fred, ,that he said; I think it was at that point. Something about – he believed in work and so that was his thing, work; that was the way some of the things were going to be accomplished. But the slur seemed to be ???

FR: ? the parade. Let's get the show on the road.

LC: Yeah. And also, the way he treated Cesar; as if Cesar were just; well; were just one of the executive board; you know what I mean? Or an organizer; or someone paid by

AFL-CIO or something. Because I had made up my mind that I wasn't going to say anything about Cesar, but then they called on me. In fact, you know, why I think the meeting was called was for me to give an accounting of myself. I mean in the sense of, to explain why no cars could go onto the Forty Acres or ..

FR: To explain why you were taking over.

LC: That's right. To explain why....., that's right. Because that's what people really .... Well there was a lot

MD: Just for the records sake; why was Duggan so turned off? The only way I could explain it is that he got disciplined by Cesar for coming back late from Texas. Naturally speaking, I don't think he would be against the fast or the masses or anything like that, you know? With his own background.

LC: No, I'd think he would be.

MD: Why?

LC: Because, here's a man; here is a man who at the time was trying to throw off. And throw off the superstition, or what he considered the religious superstition, trying to throw off the sacraments, so to speak, you know. In other words, trying to see them in perspective, and trying to come to grips with them himself. For example; remember all the arguments that we used to have about what kind of a cross we should have at the Forty Acres, and how you and Ralph were opting for a resurrected Christ or more of a modern thing anyway. And I was pushing for a bloody, realistic kind of thing. In other words, intellectually, I would push for the same thing that you're pushing for. But practically speaking I would push for something that moved some people. Here was a guy who was trying to throw this off, and Cesar comes along, in effect, and reinforces exactly what he's trying to get out from under.

MD: Yeah, I think that element was definitely there. But I think it was also a personal thing too. 'Cause Cesar himself said later on, that he thought that Ralph had received too much responsibility at one time and that this was bad.

LC: Well, you see, somewhere along the line, Cesar and Ralph had had a .... well, Ralph was dissatisfied with what he was assigned to do when he first came. Or he felt that he was being slighted or was as a townsman; being used or whatever. Then Cesar said, fine then,

come into the office with me. Then I think Ralph got the impression, in effect, that he was Cesar's administrative assistant. Or maybe he was, I really don't know. But I think he felt he should be appraised of everything that happened; and should become a part of the decision-making process. Instead of seeing that the letters were written, and the telephone was answered and the office was run. Which is, it's even more menial than working out at the Forty Acres; I mean, really. So then here Cesar pulled this fast thing on him, and Ralph didn't know anything about it, and probably figured, god-almighty. Here I am in the office with the guy as his right-hand man and here he doesn't tell me anything about it. Then he felt pushed out of ?. I don't know, you know.

FR: In any case, he was very bitter about it.

LC: Yeah, he was very bitter. Of course you know, at that meeting, he spoke... see, he had refused to go to mass, up to that point. That was something else that came up at the meeting. And I think he had to soften down or try to calm people down. We're only talking about a handful of people that were upset. And that was that he didn't want to give the impression that mass was obligatory. Then there was the question of the sign-up book. Remember, I had set up a guest register out there? The most natural thing in the world to do, you know. Then the word got around that I was taking the ?.

MD: Yeah. Of course that sounds like Hirsch because when we had the Martin Luther King; we had a mass for him, he asked me if it would be fine if he didn't go; as a dig..

LC: Well, I remember that came up. I remember I didn't say anything during the whole thing. The meeting was; obviously, everyone was waiting for me to say something. And I didn't say anything. Then Larry called on me to please say something. So I just simply apologized for being high-handed and I got carried away and about the business of the cars on the Forty Acres, that the reason why I did that was because I knew that there would be so many people coming out there, that if they drove their cars onto the Forty Acres; they would ruin the ground, the granite. We had put about five hundred dollars worth of granite out there, recently. And it was still green, it was wet, and that they would dig it up. Which wasn't ?. I mean that was no more my fault than the previous man on the moon, but it did turn out also, to protect the ?; then Larry thanked me and we all went our ways. But then it

kind of ????. When I say some of the people, by this time of course people were counting on this.

FR: Everybody in town except ? was ?

LC: So then the officers began to come. Tony and Rachel, ??? ??? ??? and Andy ??? ?? came. They came after awhile, didn't they? ??? Larry ??? ????. Of course I asked Phillip to be the doorkeeper. And that was a mistake that really screwed me up. And Phillip brags about it to this day, how he was with Cesar all the time, you know. And it's true, you know; that he was. But I got screwed because of that.

FR: Why?

LC: Because he attacked me at a meeting. Publicly.

FR: Who Phillip?

LC: Yeah.

FR: For asking him to do that?

LC: Yeah. For not treating him.... In other words, he was under a lot of attack for doing it. So he answered in effect by saying, "LeRoy commanded me to do it."

FR: Oh, I see.

LC: See? And then it became an Anglo commanding a member of the executive board to do it, and, so he had the best of both worlds. But then, you know, very soon after that, of course, Fred, especially you, would accept the logistic involved in having the numbers of people coming out there and remember the people during the day; I mean this was all...I mean Cesar did the most organizing during the fast then he did before or even afterwards. What I mean by that is the ..... well, with the exception of being sick; same thing. The number of people he was able to see on a one-to-one basis, or family-to-family basis, and just for a few minutes, you know. But, you know how Cesar can turn on people in just a few minutes? I mean people from all over the valley; all over.

FR: They were coming there all day long, huh?

LC: All day long! Sometimes you had to wait two hours.

FR: Really?

LC: Just to get in to see him.

FR: Well, what would they do, sit on the benches inside there, and wait? Or just sat there in the chairs and wait?

LC: Yeah, just wait.

FR: He had to put those in there to accommodate the people that were waiting to see him?

LC: And a...

FR: This was almost from the beginning?

LC: Very soon, yes. In fact, Cesar told me that the second day he was there; that a man had heard about it; word of mouth, you know; sixty miles away in a ? ole town. He was sitting down to eat and it just came across on the radio, on the news, or something. Anyway; and the guy wouldn't even finish his meal. Went right to the car and came down to make sure that Cesar was all right. Then, the thing with that; but I mean, that kind of; you just drop everything because of ?. That kind of power. So; and you know how Mexicans can wait? One hour, two hours, three hours.

FR: The same thing happened after mass. Did very many of them stay after mass?

MD: Oh yeah,

LC; Oh ye-aaaah!

MD: Yeah, they stayed there and prayed in the chapel and they talked outside, to visit Cesar. He kept people coming in all day.

FR: They prayed in the chapel after the mass was over?

MD: A lot of the people did, yeah.

FR: Is that right?

MD: Oh, they had vigil lights they had set up. They had these vigil lights you know, these candles. I think I sort of went down to the basement of the church and I swiped about two or three boxes of those ? lights, and I just gave them out to the people.

FR: What are they?

MD: Well, we call them ? They're big vigil lights. You know, with the candle inside of them. They're glass and the candle's inside of them, and it burns right down. They call them vigiladoras in Spanish. They would bring these to the mass, and after the mass; and they'd light...someone would offer to bring them...

LC: A lot of them bought them. You see, they sell them at all the supermarkets.

MD: Yeah, they sell them at some of the markets and stuff. After the ? they'd be all over the floor.

LC: Oh yeah, there must have been a hundred or so; burning all at once.

MD: They'd burn all day and all night. Then at night it was beautiful, all the vigil lights.

LC: It became a chapel; it became a church.

FR: Where were those scattered? All over; in front of the virgin?

LC: Yeah.

MD: On that side of that room.

LC: On that side; yeah.

FR: As many as a hundred, two hundred?

MD: Yeah. And I don't know if you want to go into it; but there was a lot of interesting visitors too. Weren't there? During the ??? fast?

LC: Like who?

MD: Well, there was Bishop Manning. Because that's what brought up ? Bishop Manning walked up through the chapel and saw all those things. ? diocese. He came and visited.

LC: That's right. I rode with ? Mahony in the car, yeah.

MD: I was hiding from the bishop that day.

LC: Yeah, you were really in hot water. He didn't stay very long.

FR: No. Well, what they would do then; when they stayed after mass to pray, where would they pray?

MD: Right there; there were benches there.

FR: Oh, they would kneel there in front of the benches?

MD: There were some kneelers there too.

LC: Yeah, there were kneelers. Not just kneeling, a lot of them just sat.

MD: You know people do that a lot. You know Mexican people just come into the church and just sit there, sort of in the presence of the holy, you know. And they just sat there; and some of them would talk a little bit. Actually, it became a little meeting place too. After; later on, after the mass, they served some chocolate when it was cold outside.

LC: Yeah, true, but then soon too, all night vigils developed; in other words that became another way of doing penance, so to speak, or aligning yourself with what Cesar was doing. In other words, just spend all night in vigil.

FR: Inside of there?

LC: Inside, yes.

FR: Just sitting there in front of the altar?

LC: Yeah, well, but the thing is, there were benches along the wall. Not right in front, but, you know. A lot of times I would go out there. In fact, I ? stay out there for awhile. You could go there at two or three in the morning, and there would be someone there.

MD: Yeah.

LC: No, no. Just sitting. In church. And it just seemed like a lot of people, all the time out there. Day or night.

FR: When did the candlelight processions begin?

MD: I only remember one big one, myself. I don't think we had them.... did we have them every night?

LC: No, no. We had a little procession every night.

FR: When did the little ones start?

MD: It started, I guess about a week after the thing started. After the fast started. Where would we go? We'd go from where to where?

LC: Well, when we had it in the building, we would...

MD: Yeah, after the end of the mass they would go around ...

LC: We'd turn off the lights. That started soon; I guess within a week.

MD: A week or so, yeah. Cesar would go back ? .: Yeah. He would stand by his door and collect the candles, as they walked by.

LC: Yeah, in fact, he also left the door open. And so the people, when they in effect, left the chapel, they could also see the room, and see him, and there was no talking, but I mean....I don't know. It seemed like the natural thing to do. Natural for people to wanna see. You know how curious people are. What the room was like, and you know, during the day it was closed...

MD: Is this the anniversary of the time of the fast, right now?

LC: Well, March the 10th was the ...

MD: Was the day that it started? No, it was already over?

FR: It was the last day.

MD: It was the last day. We should have had something up there.

LC: Yeah, but see, they should have, you see. But, everything, well....the executive board, well, I don't know, you know, not ? that everything went through the executive board, ? but they had a meeting about it.