Oral History Interview with Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

May 8, 2013
Office of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Detroit, Michigan
Detroit Newspaper Strike Oral History Project

Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, Interviewee
Thomas John Gumbleton was born on January 26, 1930, in Detroit, Michigan. Bishop Gumbleton is a retired auxiliary bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit; as a Roman Catholic priest he is unmarried and has no children. Bishop Gumbleton was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest on June 02, 1956. He was appointed auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Detroit in 1968. During the Detroit newspaper strike Bishop Gumbleton served as a regional bishop and pastor of St. Leo Parish in Detroit. Bishop Gumbleton participated in non-violent protests during the strike and was arrested on March 6, 1996, during a rally at the Detroit News building.

Steve Wejroch, Interviewer
Steve Wejroch is a student at Wayne State University in the Masters of Library and Information Science program with a concentration on Archival Administration. Wejroch received a Bachelor's Degree in History from Wayne State University and has worked at the Archdiocese of Detroit Archives since 2007. The research for this project was conducted at the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit Archives.

Interview Location and Other Notes
The interview was conducted at Bishop Gumbleton's office, located at 4800 Grand River Avenue in Detroit, Michigan. The office is located next to St. Leo Church, where Bishop Gumbleton served as parish pastor from 1983 until his retirement in 2007. The interview was conducted in the conference room. The interview was recorded in one continuous recording using the Marantz PMD660 flash recorder. At about the 6:23 mark, the first of a series of chimes from what I belief is a smoke detector went off; the chime came from another room down the hallway, away from the closed conference room in which the interview was conducted. The chime is audible; but, does not disrupt the interview or overwhelm the recording. Also, just before the 13:00 mark, the doorbell can be heard faintly in the background. I did not notice this until listening to the recording; it certainly did not disturb the interview or take away from the content. There is also some outside traffic noise that can occasionally be heard in the background. I incorrectly reported Bishop Gumbleton's motto as "Be Doers of the World"; I should have reported it as "Be Doers of the Word;" Bishop Gumbleton corrected this during the interview.

Wejroch: This is Steve Wejroch at the office of retired Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton in Detroit, Michigan. Today is Wednesday May 8th, 2013, and we are discussing the Detroit newspaper workers' strike and Bishop Gumbleton's role as a Catholic priest, parish pastor, auxiliary bishop and community activist. Your Excellency, I'd like to begin by asking you about your personal background; where were you born?

Gumbleton: 9961 Manor (laughs), Detroit, Michigan. I was born at home, in Detroit.

Wejroch: And where did you grow up?

Gumbleton: In Detroit.

Wejroch: The same area?

Gumbleton: My whole life has been in Detroit, except when I was away at school.

Wejroch: And where did you go to school?

Gumbleton: Elementary school was the Epiphany Parish School, and then ninth grade I entered Sacred Heart Seminary for high school, continued through college and then went to St. John Provincial Seminary for the last four years of preparation. And subsequently I obtained a Doctorate in Canon Law at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome.

Wejroch: St. John Provincial was in Plymouth, Plymouth, Michigan?

Gumbleton: That's in Plymouth, Michigan, yes.

Wejroch: Other than Detroit, you've lived in Rome, obviously, anywhere else?

Gumbleton: For three years in Rome, you know, that's all. Otherwise, I have lived in Detroit, basically in this neighborhood. Where we are right now is just about two parishes over from Epiphany, so it's three or four miles away. And where I live is in Corktown, so, that's the same, in west side Detroit.

Wejroch: Right, still in this area, absolutely.

Gumbleton: Yeah.

Wejroch: Okay; do you have any siblings?

Gumbleton: Yes, there were nine of us.

Wejroch: Okay; and what do they do for a living or what did they do for a living?

Gumbleton: Well, a variety of things; (pause to reflect) let's see, my oldest brother worked for Shedd-Bartush-Holstess or Shedd-Holstess-Bartush, whatever it was, in Detroit. It was a, they

produced mayonnaise and food products. And then my—well my oldest sister actually was damaged at birth in her brain and so she was institutionalized from the time she was about twelve. And she just died this past summer.

Wejroch: I'm sorry.

Gumbleton: Yeah, so she lived to be ninety.

Wejroch: A good long life, though.

Gumbleton: Yeah. But then my next brother was a certified public accountant, he worked for, (pause to reflect) the big one, Plante Moran.

Wejroch: Plante Moran?

Gumbleton: Yeah; and my next brother was a general sales manager for General Mills. And my next brother (laughs) was a school teacher in Redford, South Redford School District. He taught middle school. And my next brother was a research engineer for General Motors. And my youngest brother was— social work, basically. He got his MSW from Wayne State University.

Wejroch: That's a good school (laughs).

Gumbleton: Yeah.

Wejroch: Growing up in Detroit, what was your knowledge of incidents like the Flint Sit-down Strike and the—

Gumbleton: About the what?

Wejroch: The Flint Sit-down Strike in the 30s and "The Battle Over the Bridge"?

Gumbleton: Well, I was a bit too young to know about that. When that happened I was six, seven years old and, so, I wasn't aware of that, at the time.

Wejroch: Did you grow up— was it ever spoken about? I know you were a pastor in Dearborn as well, at St. Alphonsus?

Gumbleton: Yes.

Wejroch: Was it, (pause) was it ever spoken about; the bridge incident in Dearborn, at the Rouge Plant?

Gumbleton: Yeah, well, not (pause to reflect) not so much then. As I got to know many union leaders, I—

Wejroch: Certainly learned about it.

Gumbleton: Learned more about it. And, you know, I read about it later on and was aware of all that happened. I got to know Walter Reuther quite well. And he, of course, was very much a part of that.

Wejroch: Absolutely, yes.

Gumbleton: Yeah, and, (pause to reflect) so. (Pause) Well, I want to tell you too, since we're going to be talking about the Detroit News Agency, I peddled *Detroit News* newspapers (laughs) when I was a child. In fact, we had a *Detroit News* route that was on Manor, our home, the street

Gumbleton: where I lived, and it was three blocks, from West Chicago to Plymouth. And we had about a hundred customers, so; and I say we because it started, my two older brothers had it first, then I had it (laughs)—

Wejroch: Yeah, it's a family affair.

Gumbleton: Yeah. So we just, because it was a perfect newspaper route. You could ride up and down those three blocks on your bicycle and peddle all the papers in less than twenty minutes. So, (laughs) it was a good deal.

Wejroch: And how old were you when you did that?

Gumbleton: Well I probably started at my turn at peddling when I was in the sixth grade. So, I'd be twelve.

Wejroch: And who were your influences prior to your entrance into the seminary?

Gumbleton: Oh, that came from the parish school and the church. I was an altar boy, and I remember, actually, for some reason I was thinking about this this morning, I don't know why. But, it was on a Holy Thursday, you know, the Thursday of the Last Supper, and I served Mass in the morning, and I was probably in the fifth or sixth grade. And I remember after church on Holy Thursday talking with my mother about the fact that I probably would go to the seminary.

Wejroch: And people went younger then, I think, than they do now.

Gumbleton: Yes, I entered the seminary in the ninth grade. But I had been thinking about it for two or three years before that. And made the final decision in the eighth grade because you had to sign up for what high school you're going to go, if you were going to go to a Catholic high school. From Epiphany we didn't have a high school, so, most of the boys went either to Catholic Central [High School] or to U of D [University of Detroit High School]. My older brothers all, well my younger brothers, too, went to Catholic Central. But, I was the exception. I went to Sacred Heart Seminary.

Wejroch: Right; the exception (laughs).

Gumbleton: (Laughs) Yeah.

Wejroch: At what parishes did you serve in during your career as a Catholic priest?

Gumbleton: First, St. Alphonsus in Dearborn, that was 1956 to 1960. Then, after that, for a few years I was doing weekend work because I was assigned to the Chancery Office. And so lived in a parish, but did parish ministry on the weekends, basically. I worked in the administrative offices of the diocese during the week. I was assigned to the Chancery Office in 1960, and then about fourteen months later, that was in June, and then in September of '61 is when I went to Rome for school, and came back in '64. And then began living, at that point I lived at Madonna Parish on Oakman and 12th Street.

Wejroch: Father [William] Cunningham's Parish, right?

Gumbleton: Not at that time. Subsequently it was his. Father Charlie O'Neill was the pastor then. And it was somebody I knew and it was a real friendly person. And it was—I picked a parish to live in that would be convenient for going back and forth to the Chancery. And, of course, that's just off of the Lodge Freeway at 12th Street, or, I mean, at Davison. And, so, it was a ten minute ride back and forth.

Wejroch: And close to Sacred Heart as well, the seminary?

Gumbleton: Yeah. And so, I lived there until ’67, the late summer of 1967. There was a parish on the east side, northeast side, called Holy Ghost. And it was staffed by the Holy Ghost Fathers, and they pulled out that summer of ’67. And I was still full time at the Chancery, but I wanted to get back into parish work. So, I became the pastor of that parish. But (laughs) it only lasted maybe eight or nine months because in May of ’68 I was ordained an auxiliary bishop, so then I had to give up the parish because I was going to be expected to circulate among all of the parishes. And so I was no longer the pastor at Holy Ghost after that. But, then in about 1973, I felt the need to get back into a parish (laughs) and so I was able to become pastor of St. Aloysius Parish in downtown Detroit.

Wejroch: Which is next to the Chancery.

Gumbleton: Yeah, so it was easy to take care of that parish and keep working in the Chancery Office. And so that lasted for about, (pause) let’s see, until about 1977, I think it was, or ’78, when we established regions for the diocese. And so as regional bishop I was given more responsibility for a certain area of the diocese. And the expectation was to get to know those parishes well, the priests in those parishes and the people. And so, again, I gave up the parish and got myself established in what we call the West Region of the diocese. And, (pauses to reflect, laughs) but, then again in 1983, St. Leo Parish became open, again because it was staffed by a religious order. Well, actually, the religious, first the Immaculate Heart of Mary priests left here probably about ’81 and another religious order took it over for a while, the White Fathers they were called, but, that didn’t work. And so by ’83 we had no pastor here, and it was in my region and I was responsible for finding a pastor, so I decided I would do it.

Wejroch: You had a good one, right (laughs)?

Gumbleton: (Laughs) If the people would accept me. And so, I met with them ahead of time and talked it over and one of the people said, "Well you'll never— we'll never see you." and I said well yeah, if I take it on I'll be here every weekend, you know, certainly, and then during the week. But, I might be out doing other things also, because I was still working at the Chancery. And so, I became pastor here and was here until I think 2007, it was '06 or '07.

Wejroch: Which is when you retired, right?

Gumbleton: Well, when I got kicked out.

Wejroch: Right (laughs).

Gumbleton: (Laughs) Yeah, 2007, I think. And so, that's where, all of the parishes that I served in.

Wejroch: Did you have associates? As a pastor, did you have associate priests with you?

Gumbleton: (Pauses to reflect) No.

Wejroch: Just you here at St. Leo's?

Gumbleton: Yeah, by that time not many parishes had associates. You know the big exodus started in the middle '60s and through the '70s, so, we lost a lot of priests, plus the regular retirements and people dying. But also priests were leaving and so, more and more parishes were staffed by one person. So every place I was, I was the only one.

Wejroch: That's a lot of work, for one person, certainly.

Gumbleton: Well, sort of. (Pause) I mean you had lay staff and pastoral associates, who are not ordained. Yeah, so that was a good development on its own.

Wejroch: Your motto, on your episcopal coat of arms, translates to, "Be Doers of the World."[1]

Gumbleton: Correct.

Wejroch: How has that influenced or directed your ministry?

Gumbleton: Well, (laughs) by the time I was (pause) appointed as a bishop, I was an activist in the priesthood already. You know I had been involved in the anti-war movement. I guess that was probably the most important thing, the anti-Vietnam War. But also I got involved in the organization Bread for the World, I was the president of that for a while, and that was kind of an activist organization. And I was— social justice issues I got involved in quite a bit. And, you

[1]His motto is actually "Doers of the Word."

know, when I got named a bishop I had (pause) no idea what we had to do (laughs) to become a bishop. But, one of the things, you had to get a coat of arms. So, there was a priest in the diocese, [Father] Bohdan Kosicki, who knew all about how you make coats of arms, because there's something, you know, a certain number of things you have to put in (tapping on the table top) — are supposed to. I think, relate to your family, to your city, or something like that. So he designed it, but then you had to get a motto. And frankly I didn't know what do get. And (laughs) it was amazing. I took the big national catholic directory, and I opened it up to see, you know, what other bishops had as mottos. I was going to take one, find one I like and take it. Well the first one I came to was Anchorage, Alaska; and that bishop had (laughs), "Estote FactoresVerbum (inaudible) [Estote Factores Verbi]", "Be Doers of the Word". I said, hey that fits. I took it.

Wejroch: It's divine intervention you found that one, huh (laughs)?

Gumbleton: (Laughs) Yeah. So I didn't have to look any further. So, I thought, I like that, be active, be doers.

Wejroch: It certainly fits.

Gumbleton: Not just hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word. And so, I took it.

Wejroch: Other than pastor and auxiliary bishop, in what other capacities have you served in the Archdiocese?

Gumbleton: (Pause to reflect) I started off at the Chancery as an assistant chancellor. The chancellor was in the— it's in the U.S. system, not so much Canon Law itself. But, the chancellor, in the U.S. dioceses was—well, I should say first, technically in Canon Law the chancellor is like the record keeper.

Wejroch: The archivist.

Gumbleton: Yeah, part, the archivist, and you know, the person who had to make sure documents are signed properly and all that sort of thing. But, in the U.S., the chancellor became like the assistant for, major assistant to the bishop of the diocese. And it was through the chancery office that appointments were made, parishes were established, and, you know, all of the oversight of the diocese that the bishop is responsible for, the main assistant he had would be the chancellor. And so I was an assistant chancellor. There were three of us, actually, at that point, when I was assigned. But I was only there for fourteen months or so before I went off to school. And when I came back I was the assistant chancellor again, but, by 19, early '65, I became the vice chancellor, which is, you know, like, vice president; vice chancellor. And I was vice chancellor when then I was named bishop. And so, I continued to be the vice chancellor at that time, after I was named auxiliary bishop. But within a very short time we redid the administrative structure of the diocese. And we (pause to reflect), as I mentioned before, organized it according to regions. And then each, there were four auxiliary bishops, and each of us became a regional bishop. And so, you worked outside of the Chancery building, much more than within the Chancery building (tapping on the table top). And other people took over the

kinds of things that I had been doing before. And basically it was lay people that took over the kind of work that I had been doing before and the role became much more of a pastoral role. As a bishop under the auspices of the archbishop, who was Cardinal Dearden, each of us was the bishop for a region, and so had the pastoral responsibility for that region.

Wejroch: For a collection of parishes in the region? And schools—

Gumbleton: Yes. There were at that point we had (pause to reflect) I think about three hundred and forty parishes. So, when it got split up you would have seventy-five to ninety parishes in your region.

Wejroch: And you had four regional bishops, is that right?

Gumbleton: Yeah, four of us. I had what was called the West Region, Bishop [Walter J.] Schoenherr the South Region, Bishop [Arthur] Krawczak the East Region, I think, and a Northeast Region, something like that. I didn't pay as much attention to the east side (laughs); so, I'm not sure about that.

Wejroch: You were plenty busy yourself.

Gumbleton: What they called that. But the west side I know we just called it the West Region. And the South Region, which was like, well at that point the South included Monroe County, Washtenaw County and (pause), what's the other county?

Wejroch: Lenawee?

Gumbleton: Lenawee, yeah.

Wejroch: Because [the Diocese of] Lansing didn't break off, well Lansing—

Gumbleton: Until '71.

Wejroch: Yeah, more regions—

Gumbleton: Well no, Lansing was there, but—

Wejroch: Was '37. But, they got more territory from [the Archdiocese of] Detroit.

Gumbleton: Yeah; the two dioceses [the Diocese of Gaylord and the Diocese of Kalamazoo] were added in '71, and so Detroit lost those two counties. They went to Lansing.

Wejroch: And as the West Region, your parishes were mostly in the city [of Detroit]?

Gumbleton: Mostly, because at that point we still had a lot of parishes left in the city (laughs). And so between—from downtown out to Telegraph [Road], you know, following Michigan Avenue, well south of Michigan would become the South Region, you know you get in like to Inkster, all those suburbs going west, including Dearborn, was in the South Region. And then the

West Region was, like north of, well likely Ford Road or Warren [Avenue] and kind of following Woodward [Avenue] northward, and then all of those northwest suburbs. So it was a major part of—well, Grand River [Avenue] would be the main artery. And on both sides of Grand River going all the way to the end of the diocese.

Wejroch: All the way north through Oakland County?

Gumbleton: Yeah, yeah, it would be the west Region. (Pause to reflect) And I forget what the boundary, it might have been Woodward. Although, no, Royal Oak was in my region. So, I don't know exactly what.

Wejroch: Could it be Gratiot [Avenue], maybe?

Gumbleton: Yeah, more like, yeah, Gratiot, the counterpart to Grand River. And then Macomb County and Lapeer County and St. Clair County, that would be the Northeast Region.

Wejroch: And they still use the regional bishops system today. They've still got it.

Gumbleton: Yeah, the regions have changed somewhat. And when Cardinal Dearden did it, he really allowed responsibility to be handed over. And so regional bishops, you had serious responsibility for trying to develop the parish life and trying to, (pause to reflect) well, oversee the work of the priests and the religious education programs and the schools, all of that.

Wejroch: And you got to know the parishioners, too.

Gumbleton: Yeah.

Wejroch: Which, they can't always get to the archbishop; so, you're their channel to the archbishop, as a regional bishop.

Gumbleton: Yes, that's right. If it had to go to the archbishop, then you would take it there. But, otherwise, you were responsible for the development of parish life.

Wejroch: Turning to the strike, throughout the strike you were an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese and pastor at St. Leo's.

Gumbleton: Yeah.

Wejroch: What was the make-up of the parish community as far as strikers or replacement workers?

Gumbleton: At St. Leo?

Wejroch: At St. Leo's, yes.

Gumbleton: (Pauses to reflect) Well, it would not have been so many strikers at St. Leo's. By that time this neighborhood had become almost one hundred percent black. And there would have been maybe some truck drivers and, I don't think like on the editorial staff of the papers.

Wejroch: No writers, or?

Gumbleton: No, or the writing staff. But, there would have been some Teamster union members perhaps; but, not really very many. You know by that time the white exodus has taken place (laughs). And, you know, a lot of the workers lived in Macomb County, Warren and Sterling Heights.

Wejroch: Right, the plant was in Sterling Heights.

Gumbleton: Yeah, yeah, that big plant in Sterling Heights, right.

Wejroch: Were there any police officers as parishioners at the parish?

Gumbleton: No, not in this parish, no. Because again, up until after Coleman Young came in the police force was almost totally white. And he was first elected in '72. But all of the police cars going around this neighborhood were white police officers. That's what really built up the tension, or one of the main things that built up the tensions that led to the riot in '67. Because they were, it was almost like an occupying army. I mean, they were resented by the people very often, they weren't looked upon as, you know, really as an asset that much. And there really

turned out to be quite a bit of harsh treatment of young people, especially. I mean the black kids were (pause) badly treated. The neighboring parish from St.—, well, St. Cecilia's is in between, but, next one going off Grand River would be St. Theresa [of Avila Parish] at Pingree [Street]. And, in the Tenth Precinct, and the pastor there was a very good friend of mine; in fact, I lived at that parish for a few years when I wasn't pastor someplace else. And there was lots of (pause) bad things that happened to kids in that area.

Wejroch: Well, and most of the officers, they called them copper canyons where they lived. They had to live in the city but they created their own community of police officers; so, they didn't live in this community.

Gumbleton: Well yeah, and a big—like St. Raymond's Parish on the northeast side, was filled with police officers. And on the northwest side, when you get up around, (pause) well, St. Gerard, that's at Evergreen [Road] and Seven-and-a-half Mile Road [Pembroke Avenue], and going, (pause) like, South Rosedale, that would have been heavily occupied. There was a parish that was called St. Eugene, which was right at the corner of, northeast, or northwest Detroit. Telegraph [Road] was one of the boundaries and Eight Mile [Road]. So, right in that, (pause) you know, Telegraph and Eight Mile, you know, the triangle that would be formed.

Wejroch: They were still in the city, but just barely in the city, the officers—.

Gumbleton: Yeah, they were in the city. And so that was heavily, police officer.

Wejroch: There was a segregation between the people in the community and the officers, so that's another reason they could be seen as an occupier.

Gumbleton: Yeah, they didn't share, you know, the common life in almost any sense.

Wejroch: Right, they didn't live together, eat together, pray together.

Gumbleton: No. It was very different. You know, as a kid I remember growing up, the police officer is your friend. You know, but black kids couldn't always count on that.

Wejroch: How did the strike impact St. Leo? Did it impact the number of parishioners, or fundraising, or collections?

Gumbleton: No.

Wejroch: No?

Gumbleton: No, there was—See my, (laughs) my activities as an auxiliary bishop, or in this case regional bishop, didn't— and St. Leo's was in my region, but my activities, you know, that were separate from being a regional bishop— my, I guess what you would call social justice activities didn't have much overflow effect into the parish. You know, people were supportive of what I did, but, (pause) it didn't bring people in or drive people away.

Wejroch: Okay. Turning to more of the major events of the strike, the ones that more people know. On August 19, 1995, Frank Brabanec was kicked out at the Sterling Heights plant—

Gumbleton: ’85?

Wejroch:’95, I’m sorry.

Gumbleton: ’95, yeah.

Wejroch: By an off-duty officer. Do you remember that event or your reaction to that event?

Gumbleton: No. You know what I do remember, (laughs) now—that I did have a couple—white, who were union people, not newspaper workers. And, but as union people— he was an electrician, in the electricians union, and he was (pause to reflect) well, got in a fracas out there at the Sterling Heights plant and got arrested, you know, for striking somebody. It was, you know, a fight developed somehow between. And so he was arrested. I remember his wife calling me up and she was just panicked because he had gone out there, you know, to support the strikers, and then he got involved in it. And ended up being arrested and, you know, I think it was on a Saturday night and she called me Sunday morning all upset. And they were (pause to reflect) white people that— and they ended up being parishioners at St. Leo’s because before they were married, both of them were, she for sure and I think he also, were students at Wayne State [University]. And they happened to come by here and found out there was a church very close to Wayne State. And we got to know each other and then they started to come here while

they were still students, and then ended up being married here, and all of their kids were baptized here at St. Leo's.

Wejroch: And how did everything turn out for him after his arrest?

Gumbleton: Well, after he— you know, he got out of jail, he was in twenty-four hours or so. He had not been injured too badly, but he was injured somewhat. And they (laughs) within the family they settled it. He wasn't going to get into that kind of stuff anymore (laughs).

Wejroch: Did he describe how he was treated? By, by— because the Vance Security officers out there were accused and the Sterling Heights Police were accused of violence.

Gumbleton: No, I don't. You know, there would be two versions of it (laughs).

Wejroch: The truth lies somewhere in the middle.

Gumbleton: Yeah, you now, like anything like that, you know, going back to the time we were kids, "He hit me first," you know. But he did refrain from getting in the physical (laughs).

Wejroch: He was more afraid of his wife probably (laughs).

Gumbleton: Yeah, (laughs) yeah. And so, he did, he only got arrested that one time. But I had forgotten that they were actually parishioners here. So there were parishioners involved in supporting the strike.

Wejroch: Because the other unions were involved, Teamsters, things like that.

Gumbleton: Yeah, oh yeah.

Wejroch: They were certainly involved.

Gumbleton: Yeah, and as an electrician union person he (pause); well the unions, you know, united.

Wejroch: Yeah; solidarity.

Gumbleton: Yeah.

Wejroch: Jeanie Wylie.

Gumbleton: Hm?

Wejroch: Jeanie Wylie, she was quoted, she was an organizer for Readers United with her husband, Pastor Bill [Wylie-Kellerman], she was quoted as saying, “We [the protesters] are

committed to nonviolence, but we are not going to be passive." Did you witness any less-passive action or any violence on behalf of the strikers?

Gumbleton: No, I never did, no. I mean I knew of that one incident, but I wasn't there. It happened on a Saturday night, it was late at night. And, see, and Rick didn't come home, that's why his wife was so panicked.

Wejroch: She knew what was going on there and she worried.

Gumbleton: Yeah, and you know you don't, if you get arrested you usually don't get a chance to make your one phone call for a few hours. And so, there was no way for her to find out what had happened.

Wejroch: Right, until the morning, right. (Pause) On December 21, 1995, you participated in a prayer vigil at the Detroit News building. About 4:30PM, which [was] about closing time, or shift change maybe. Can you describe the purpose of the prayer vigil and your participation?

Gumbleton: Well, at that time we were struggling to get the two sides to come together and really negotiate a settlement. And so we had a prayer vigil, you know, praying for a spirit of reconciliation and harmony and to try to eliminate bitterness and hard feelings between the two sides. And so, it was intended to be a sincere effort to bring the two sides together; you know, to do it publically. And (pause to reflect) the— (laughs) this may seem to be my bias, but, it just seemed to me, and I think the documents show it, that the company really didn't make any offer

that was, could even be thought of as acceptable. And I don't know if this was before or after, it was probably after, all of the outsiders were brought in, you know the strike-breakers.

Wejroch: The replacements, yes.

Gumbleton: Yeah, pardon?

Wejroch: The replacements.

Gumbleton: Yeah, the replacement workers. Yeah, I was thinking of the other word (laughs).

Wejroch: Yeah (laughs).

Gumbleton: And that was a clear violation of the law. And so, (pause to reflect) the company just wouldn't budge on any of that and, you know, and I watched over that five-year period. I remember one of the really good writers for the *News* was, or *Free Press*, Kate De Smet, and, struggled so hard and was trying to do the right thing and get this settled and so on. But after two or three years she couldn't make it anymore. And so she had to move and get a job. I think out on the west coast, she ended up in California. And, you know, I was watching that happen to other workers, and I remember going to a couple funerals of workers who died while on strike. And, you know, that was just devastating to the families, obviously. But it just seemed so cruel that the company could wait, and wait, and wait. And even though the courts issued

determinations of conviction against the company for violating the law, they could appeal to the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board], and that could take two, three, four years or more.

Wejroch: And people are still on strike.

Gumbleton: Yeah, and so, it really became clear that the company was just waiting it out. And pretty soon the strikers would be gone. They'd die or they'd—

Wejroch: They'd move for other jobs, right.

Gumbleton: Move away, get other jobs. Yeah, and so, that's what was happening. And so the prayer vigil, I don't know at what point it was, but it was probably while—well certainly this was going on. I don't know at that point how many had had to leave, you know just couldn't sustain the strike. But, that's what was happening, so we were trying to bring a spirit of prayerfulness into the whole thing.

Wejroch: And get people to talk, peacefully.

Gumbleton: Yeah, right, exactly.

Wejroch: Okay. There were reports, now these were *Detroit News* reports, at the time, with the prayer vigil, that said there were shouts of "Lowlife" and "Rats" and other vulgar phrases, they said. And they said that, "One protestor held a small sprayer candle in one hand and, with the

other, displayed a familiar one-finger gesture of disdain." Did you see any of that at the prayer vigil?

Gumbleton: No. I did not, honestly. Now, you know, I suppose, you know, as one of the religious, clerical people I was up in the front, and so maybe there was things going on behind me. But I didn't remember that it had that kind of a spirit. To me it was a genuine effort to bring a spiritual context into the whole thing, and to— a prayerful context.

Wejroch: The prayer vigil was coordinated by the Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues. Can you describe the committee, its purpose and your involvement?

Gumbleton: Well, (laughs) there were other people who were much more active on that committee, you know. They would be the one who would plan events and, you know, and then tell us what to do. You know, some of the, like Coleman McGehee, or myself, or some of the other religious leaders. And so, the Interfaith Committee was an attempt to bring the religious communities, Catholics, Jews, I mean Christians and Jews, at that point we didn't have Muslims of any number, but it was— and to bring the Christian community together but to make it interfaith by bringing Jewish leaders into it. And so, it was an attempt to show that a strike like this is an economic issue, but there's also moral questions involved: the rights of people to a job, to a fair wage and the right to organize. Those are all rights that have been recognized in Catholic social teaching. Well, the beginning of Catholic social teaching is usually historically marked as 1891, when [Pope] Leo XIII published an encyclical letter, which is a major teaching document for the Pope, that's how the Pope would teach, basically, through such encyclical

letters. An encyclical is something worldwide, it would be to the whole world. And that was called *Rerum Novarum*, so, *Of New Things*; but it was basically on the rights of laboring people. And included in those rights are, the right to organize, the right to a fair, well we even use the term family wage. In other words a worker had a right to a wage that would enable that worker to support a family. Not just a minimum wage, but a family wage. And so, those are rights that were part of Catholic social teaching, for sure, but also other religious groups supported the same rights and the same kind of teaching. And certainly in the Jewish tradition that's a very strong tradition, about the right of the worker to receive a fair wage. And so, the attempt was to bring the religious community together and to try to highlight the fact that the, these— that this was a moral question as well as economic or political, whatever other term you might want to use. But it definitely had religious overtones or connections, and we were trying to bring that into it and appeal to the people who were Christian or Jewish or whatever, to try to act out of the basis of their religious faith.

Wejroch: To show that we're all (pause), we're all committed to the same thing, through our faith.

Gumbleton: Yeah, that's what we had hoped, yeah.

Wejroch: Another coalition is the Action Coalition [of] Strikers and Supporters, which was established two weeks after the strike [began], July 27, 1995. Its stated function was to build support amongst trade unionists, the community and religious groups. What was your role in this coalition?

Gumbleton: What's the name of that one?

Wejroch: It's the Action Coalition for [of] Strikers and Supporters, ACOSS.

Gumbleton: I don't remember—

Wejroch: Not too much connection?

Gumbleton:---Being part of that in any significant way.

Wejroch: Okay.

Gumbleton: Most of my contacts and my efforts were with United Religious Leaders, whatever we—

Wejroch: The Interfaith Committee [on Worker Issues]?

Gumbleton: Hm?

Wejroch: Interfaith Committee?

Gumbleton: Yeah, that one.

Wejroch: And they listed, the Interfaith Committee listed St. Leo's phone number, I saw, as the contact information, the phone number for St. Leo's Parish.

Gumbleton: Oh, did they?

Wejroch: Did they hold any meetings, or any rallies at the parish that you know of?

Gumbleton: Some, but it wasn't a major meeting place, that I recall. And I was here at the time. So, no, I don't think so.

Wejroch: Okay. Well, I wanted to turn now to the events of March 6, 1996. There was a protest at the Detroit News building that you attended. You were arrested at that protest. Can you describe the situation? It started about 7:30 in the morning.

Gumbleton: Yeah, well I think we started with a prayer service of some sort. And then we blocked the entrance to the building. And (pause to reflect) were disturbing the peace (laughs). Violating private property, I guess. And so, that's when we got arrested, a number of us. I don't—

Wejroch: Twenty-four was what I read.

Gumbleton: Was it? Yeah it was twenty-something, I knew that.

Wejroch: Including Maryann Mahaffey.

Gumbleton: Yes.

Wejroch: Who was Detroit City Council President at the time.

Gumbleton: Yes.

Wejroch: Do you remember any of the other arrestees?

Gumbleton: Well, wasn't Coleman McGehee out there?

Wejroch: I believe he was.

Gumbleton: Yeah, he was one of them and Rabbi Richard Hertz, maybe.

Wejroch: Okay.

Gumbleton: See, because those were the same people I worked with on the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights that I think started a little bit later. But we had determined that we had to call more attention to what was going on and to, again, bring emphasis to the point that these are moral issues that we're dealing with and so we wanted to emphasize that they're so important

that we'd be willing to get arrested (laughs) as a sign of our protest. You know, make it something very concrete, visible, physical involvement.

Wejroch: And I read reports that protesters wore armbands and there were different colored armbands for the folks who got arrested. Was it predetermined who might be arrested?

Gumbleton: I presume it was because usually in those kind of events, there's planning ahead of time and, you know, what to do when you are arrested. You know, not to fight back or, you know, resist arrest in any way. And so, people are prepared for what's going to happen. And so usually those who are going to be arrested have decided ahead of time. And so, you kind of empty your pockets to make sure (laughs) you don't have, you're not carrying too much. You had to have your ID, but that's about all you needed. And so— and we— I've been in some arrest situations like that where people deliberately did not even have their ID just to make it more difficult for the civil authorities to do anything about you. And, so, yeah— and I don't remember wearing different armbands but, I'm sure those that were to be arrested had predetermined that. Now I've also been at events where somebody at the last minute decides "I'm going to get in this, too," and become one of the people arrested. That happened. But in this case, as far as I know, it was just those who had prepared for arrest.

Wejroch: And there was a little difficulty with the— they brought a bus, from what I read, and the bus needed a jump start. They had to call a tow truck in and get the police bus a jump start and there's an image I saw of Maryann Mahaffey, who's giving an interview out of the bus

window; so, that brought a little more attention and gave you an opportunity to speak at the scene, too.

Gumbleton: Yeah, I remember seeing that picture (laughs).

Wejroch: And there were a couple of fists coming out of the bus window, too.

Gumbleton: (Laughs) Yeah.

Wejroch: (Laughs) It's a good picture.

Gumbleton: Yeah.

Wejroch: And this was organized by Readers United.

Gumbleton: Um-hm.

Wejroch: The rally. What was the purpose of Readers United?

Gumbleton: By the name, the indication is that (pause) these are ordinary people who buy the newspaper, and read it, and we don't like what's going on with the newspaper that is being provided to us by— what's going on by the people who run that newspaper. And so, as readers, and if we can get enough readers united (laughs), you know, it would really have an economic

impact on the paper because we would refuse to buy the paper and instead would buy the alternative paper that was produced by the union members. And so, that was the idea, to have enough readers to have an impact. Now, it never really got where, to a large enough number of acknowledged readers refusing to take the paper to have the impact we wanted. It didn't dramatically change things. But, I'm sure it had a significant enough impact on the business people that they might think about what they're doing.

Wejroch: The advertisers and things?

Gumbleton: Yeah, but ultimately it did not, you know, the economic impact for them wasn't large enough to cause them to really negotiate.

Wejroch: They were pretty, pretty steadfast, the Detroit Newspaper Agency.

Gumbleton: Yes, very definitely so.

Wejroch: On March 7, 1996, the next day, in the *Detroit Journal*, John Lippert wrote, the *Detroit Free Press* and *News*, "sought to portray striking workers [as] misguided and violent." He continued, that "The strikers' supporters fought against that image Wednesday [the day—morning you were arrested] with dignified and peaceful protests at the Detroit News building." How would you describe the strike? We said before that usually the truth lies somewhere in the middle. It's described by the *News* and the *Free Press* as "misguided and violent" and "dignified and peaceful" in the *Detroit Journal*.

Gumbleton: Well, my recollection of what happened that day was certainly dignified and peaceful. Now, I might have missed some people. Besides the ones actively involved in protests being arrested, there was a large number of people there, and they would not necessarily all be supporting the action or the strikers and—I've had this happen in anti-war protests where the government puts people in the crowd even, you know, to provoke.

Wejroch: Right.

Gumbleton: You know, and that happened. I don't know if it happened in that incident or not. But I don't remember that there was any kind of, or any great deal of violence.

Wejroch: And it was over fairly quickly, about an hour.

Gumbleton: Yeah, right.

Wejroch: By, certainly by 9:00 it was over.

Gumbleton: Right, because we wanted to get processed and back to work. (Laughs)

Wejroch: And what was the experience? Once they got the bus and took you to the police station, how long was that process?

Gumbleton: Not very long, as I recall. I mean, I've been in other situations where you're in a holding cell for hours. But they got us over to the courthouse, I guess it was, and wrote out the—basically it's a ticket, they write out a ticket, you know, disturbing the peace. You pay a fine and it's all over. And so, there wasn't any big hold-up. They handled it quite well, the police department or the courthouse, wherever it was.

Wejroch: Your participation in the strike drew a lot of attention. There's a quote I read from a spokesman for the Archdiocese of Detroit, it wasn't, they weren't named. But he said, "Bishop Gumbleton frequently does things for Bishop Gumbleton. He does not represent the Archdiocese." How do you think the Archdiocese felt about your participation?

Gumbleton: (Laughs) Well, the communications director was very opposed to it (laughs). (Pause) I don't know if you're avoiding names or not.

Wejroch: You're welcome to name names.

Gumbleton: Oh, well that was Ned McGrath [the communications director] and he was a former newscaster for NBC.

Wejroch: WDIV, I believe. WDIV, the local [NBC] station?

Gumbleton: Yeah, I think so, yeah. And, he was much more sympathetic to the company than he was to the strikers. And he certainly was not very sympathetic to what I was doing. And

Cardinal Maida was in between. He certainly never tried to stop me or told me I was doing the wrong thing. But, just the tone of the things that Ned McGrath put out, he was implying that I was on my own and sort of a freelance (laughs)—

Wejroch: A renegade bishop.

Gumbleton: Yeah, an activist. But I never, you know, from people who were superiors, like the Archbishop, I never was once reprimanded or told it's better not to do it. So, you know, he said I did it on my own. Well, I did it on my own, but also as a Catholic bishop. And I feel like I was well informed in Catholic teaching about moral issues and so, we had a right and a responsibility to try to teach those principals of Catholic social justice, morality.

Wejroch: Which had been expressed for more than one hundred years, at that point.

Gumbleton: Yeah, oh yeah, right. Yeah and, you know, that wasn't the last word on it. In the 1930s there was a second encyclical that was a follow-up to *Rerum Novarum*, well it was 1931, it was forty years later, *Quadragesimo Anno*, that [Pope] Pius XI published that reiterated that teaching. And then there wasn't a whole lot during [Pope] Pius XII; but, under [Pope] Paul VI and [Pope] John Paul II there was a very, well (tapping the table top) because the Vatican Council intervened in '61-'63 (tapping the table top for emphasis). Well, I should mention [Pope] John XXIII, you know, he wrote a very important (tapping the table top) encyclical letter called *Mater et Magistra*, (tapping the table top) *Mother and Teacher*, and it was about the social justice issues. And, you know, then the [Second Vatican] Council came along and that document,

On the Church in the Modern World, insisted that the Church had to be involved in the issues of the world in which we live and try to bring the light of God's teaching into the situations that were going on in the world. And then [Pope] Paul VI and [Pope] John Paul II wrote very strong, clear letters that taught, it was a constant reiteration of Catholic social teaching on all of these issues, and that continues to this day. So, I felt (laughs) I was doing what a bishop is supposed to do and, you know, every minister is a teacher; but, a special role of the bishop is to teach. And so, I just felt I was doing what I was called to do as a bishop, the leadership in this area of Catholic teaching.

Wejroch: And you had support, it sounds like, from Cardinal Maida.

Gumbleton: Well, I wouldn't call it active support (laughs).

Wejroch: He didn't?

Gumbleton: No, he didn't do anything to stop me. But he never, on the other hand, patted me on the back and said, "Good work."

Wejroch: He had to be careful, publically, about saying anything.

Gumbleton: Yeah, right.

Wejroch: He's the leader of millions of Catholics here in the diocese.

Gumbleton: Yeah.

Wejroch: You spoke earlier about the encyclicals, and in March of '91 the United States Catholic Conference spoke about Senate Bill 55. Bishop Frank Rodimer, who was the Bishop of Patterson, [New Jersey], said it's, "especially appropriate for the Conference of Catholic Bishops to speak out on the issue at this time." It was the hundred year anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*; and he said, "Pope Leo XIII pointed out that workers' associations should be protected by the state, since they can be beneficial not just for the workers they represent but for the stability of society." And the late-Cardinal John O'Connor, who was Archbishop of New York, also said that collective bargaining, if workers—if management knew that they could replace workers that, "collective bargaining could be a charade and the right to strike a mockery," if they knew that they could permanently replace workers. Given this precedent, were you surprised at any negative reaction you received for your actions?

Gumbleton: (Laughs) There was another one that I, I said [Pope] John Paul II, but, one of the really important ones he wrote, encyclical, was *Centesimus Annus*, which is the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. That came out in 1991. And that's a very, very, powerful teaching document. And I use it a lot, but not so much for social justice issues, but anti-war. That's where he says clearly, "I myself on, the occasion of the recent tragic war in the Persian Gulf, repeated the cry, 'Never again war!'" And he tried to prevent that (tapping on the table top) first Persian Gulf War. See, and it had just ended when he published his encyclical. The ground war had gone on for about six weeks after the air war had gone on the previous six weeks. And

he said, “I repeated that cry,” and he gave reasons why we had to say no to war. So I use that a lot (laughs). But also in that same encyclical letter he reiterated again these teachings, the hundred years of Catholic social teachings saying (tapping on the table top for empasis) the same thing. But now the big problem was that those, you know, I remember a letter I got from some person challenging me on what I was saying, “How could you say this? I was raised Catholic and this was not what I ever learned.” You know, and that was a tragedy (laughs) because the teachings are there, they’re very clear. But we haven’t been successful in, well, getting the teachings disseminated among the Catholic population very effectively.

Wejroch: From the pope to the parishioners.

Gumbleton: Yes, or through the school system. You know, we had a marvelous system of schools, but we did not teach— you know (laughs). I find it very discouraging that someone who had gone to Catholic elementary school, Catholic high school, Catholic university, maybe graduate studies, and they know nothing about the social justice teachings of the Church. And they talk and act against it. Because they, you know— and maybe some of them would leave the Church if they knew the actual teachings. Because they say, “I don’t agree with that, I’m not gonna.”

Wejroch: People would say that you were politically motivated, but it wasn’t a political motivation was it? It was a moral motivation.

Gumbleton: Exactly, right, totally. I mean, you know sometimes (tapping on the table top for emphasis) moral questions are also political questions because we, in our society, we implement laws that bear on social justice issues. And so, there's a mix, and that's why we, sometimes if you're trying to (pause) get across some moral teaching, you also do lobbying in the Congress, like Bishop Rodimer was testifying before some committee or other when he did that. And he did it on behalf of the U.S. Bishops. But, at the same time, Pope John Paul II had issued what I think of as an even stronger statement. And not too long before that, we had also, the U.S. Catholic Bishops, had published a pastoral letter on the economy. I forget the name of it right now; but we called it the *Economics Pastoral*, in 1986. And in that pastoral letter we set forth some of the same teachings, well, all of the same teachings, but in not as much detail even as the papal teachings. But that *Economics Pastoral Letter* was based on this hundred years of catholic social teachings. And so it was designed to be a way of bringing papal teaching into the U.S. Church. And a pastoral letter by the U.S. bishops ideally would be disseminated throughout the country, with every parish teaching in their religious ed. [education] programs and their schools and from the pulpit. But that kind of follow through has not happened.

Wejroch: It got lost somewhere along the way, huh?

Gumbleton: Yeah, it stopped.

Wejroch: Well, there was a cartoon published in 1996. I don't know if you remember it. I brought it with me.

Gumbleton: You mean the confessional?

Wejroch: Yes.

Gumbleton: Oh, yes. (Pause) I have that in a frame hanging in my room at home (laughs).

Wejroch: Well, what was your reaction at the time, to the cartoon?

Gumbleton: Well, I thought it was kind of pathetic in a way. You know, using—Well I didn't think it was effective. I'm sure the cartoonist thought it was very clever. But, I didn't. In one sense I smiled at it and just thought, this is ridiculous, that people would think that somehow I would be doing that in the confessional. But it was, you know, not something laughable, actually, because it was an attack against something very sacred.

Wejroch: Absolutely.

Gumbleton: It was suggesting that a sacrament, which is a very important moment in peoples' lives, would be diminished to the point that you would be trying to get across a personal effort or, you know, something you— a personal commitment that you wanted to carry out through the sacrament. Well, between that [unclear]—Nowadays the other way we misuse the sacraments sometimes as a penalty for people; you can't go to communion if you don't do this or that (tapping on the table top for emphasis). And, you know, the sacraments aren't prizes that belong to the Church that we can give out or take away, and should not be mocked in that way, either.

Wejroch: Which is what it was, it had the newsboys walking away saying what? You told them to burn in hell for delivering the newspaper? And you were a newsboy as a young kid.

Gumbleton: Yeah, right (laughs).

Wejroch: Was there any impact in your support from the Church or from parishioners as a result of that comic? Did anything change, for levels of support?

Gumbleton: For me? Because of that cartoon?

Wejroch: Because of the— yeah.

Gumbleton: No, I think even Catholics that didn't agree with me felt that was insulting to a sacrament. You know, it was not quite blasphemy, but it was verging on that. That you're doing something with a sacrament that is for people something very sacred, very personal, very intimate even, and you're using it to mock.

Wejroch: So it maybe had a negative, the opposite impact that—

Gumbleton: Yeah, I think it did. You know, it didn't turn anything around (laughs), but it offended people who did not agree with me, but were Catholic.

Wejroch: Larry Wright was the cartoonist. Did he ever apologize to you for it?

Gumbleton: No, I never knew him. I got to know Bill Day very well. But, he was *Free Press*, I think.

Wejroch: This was *News*, yes.

Gumbleton: *News*, yeah. But I— no, I never knew him. I never was in contact with him.

Wejroch: Did the *News* ever apologize for it?

Gumbleton: No.

Wejroch: Did you think you were owed an apology?

Gumbleton: Hm?

Wejroch: Did you feel you were owed an apology?

Gumbleton: Well, I wrote a letter to Mr. [Bob] Giles, at the time, indicating—but, I never got an answer.

Wejroch: No response, okay. Readers also wrote to the papers, in the editorial section. One woman said, "It's a shame that in this day and age, with the shortage of priests, that Bishop Gumbleton is marching his sheep around *The Detroit News* instead of spreading the word of the Lord. He cannot be both a priest and a politician." And another person wrote, Bishop Gumbleton, "seems possessed of a distorted interpretation of Christ's message of tranquility and rectitude. He evidently sees no consistency between intimidation, violence and threats, and Christ's dictum of harmony, forbearance and benevolence. Frightening and intimidating workers, blocking gates and damaging vehicles are not concordant with the guiding principles of the church. The fact that this has escaped a religious leader of such eminence is disappointing and disheartening." Did you read those editorials at the time?

Gumbleton: No.

Wejroch: How do you feel about things like that?

Gumbleton: Well, (laughs, pauses to reflect) you know, people who would write that way have a limited understanding of how you teach, for one thing. Look how Pope Francis has been teaching, not through words, he hasn't published many, any encyclical letter yet, but, just by the way he's acting. And it's affecting not just Catholics (taps the table top), everybody talks about you know, how he's simplified— you know, such a[n] almost ridiculous thing like not wearing red Prada shoes. Why (laughs) that's something that grabs peoples' attention, because it does seem to be just out of the context of Jesus, you know, [who] went around in sandals and bare feet half the time (laughs). You know, that a pope would be identified by his red shoes. But, as soon

as [Pope] Francis discards that everybody's almost like, "Yay, that's the way it should be." And so, he's teaching by what he's doing, going and kneeling down in front of people in jail, young people in jail, and washing their feet, kissing their feet. He's teaching by his actions. And that's much more powerful than words. And so, to complain because I'm involved in a protest, I see that as being a doer of the word, rather than a hearer only. You can hear it, take it in and it goes nowhere. But if you hear it, take it in and let it change your life you might change your actions. So, I feel that's a way of teaching. And, I never did engage in any violence or support any kind of violent action. But, I also am aware (laughs) that in the gospels Jesus did actions, too. You know, turning over the tables of the money changers and knocking those down, you know. And it was because he was acting against an injustice. These people were being cheated right (tapping on the table top) within the temple precincts. "You've made the House of God a den of thieves," that's how Jesus criticized the people doing it; and they were people, you know, part of the temple staff that he was acting against. And so to say that actions are, you know, that nobody should do actions or that you'd never do an action that's going to confront somebody. You know the idea that everything is always going to be tranquil and peaceful, not when you are proclaiming the truth or times when people don't want to hear that and they react against that. And yet Jesus came, "I came to bring fire on earth, not peace." Those are his words. And, "I came to bring conflict." And what he meant by that is you can have a false peace, where you just kind of gloss over everything, pretend it's not happening or that there's no disagreement here. But if you confront and get down to the issues and then you resolve those, then you will have genuine peace. And so, that's what Jesus was doing and that's what we have to do, too, as a teacher in the Church. Or, I should say, I have to do as a teacher.

Wejroch: And certainly as a bishop, just because you become a bishop, doesn't mean you slow down at all. You get more active, you should, I think.

Gumbleton: Well, yeah, because, in a sense, you're teaching on a little broader level. In the parish, when I was in the parish I was teaching within those parish boundaries. Basically, preaching on Sunday, teaching in the religious ed. programs, teaching in the school, the high school, the grade school. But I was doing that within that framework of the parish where I'd been assigned. But then, as you become a bishop and your responsibility is broader, then you have to teach on a broader level.

Wejroch: You've got more people to speak to.

Gumbleton: (Laughs) Yes, exactly.

Wejroch: I'd like to finish by asking your impressions of the strike. Some people see it as having a positive influence or some people see it as a failure. How do you feel [about] the outcome of the strike?

Gumbleton: I think it was a failure. Certainly the strikers lost. So many of them, their jobs were gone, they took jobs at lesser pay. The circumstances, many had to move, you know, which is a big thing, you move your family out of a[n] area where you'd been living. Some died during the time of the strike. So, the workers truly lost. But the newspapers did too. I mean, they're not anywhere like they were as a newspaper. When I was peddling the *Detroit News* (laughs) it was a

thick newspaper and had lots of— not just all ads, it was really a— you know, now it's almost like the paper's like the *Shopping News*, which used to be peddled, you know, was thrown on everybody's porch, but it was just all ads (laughs). You look in the newspaper now, and they have very few reporters on the scene. They use wire service and have a few columnists, but not— I don't think the caliber, you know— now I was a kid, maybe I'm not in a position to judge, but I used to love H.G. Salsinger (laughs); he wrote the sports column for the *Detroit News*. And I would always read that the first thing. I started to read the sports pages when I was five or six years old, and I grew up with H. G. Salsinger. But, you know, and of course looking back maybe he's no better than anybody now, I have no idea really. But I, I just, I don't think they have the number and the caliber of columnists and writers that were there before. And this is true of newspapers across the country, they're just— it's almost like they're going out of existence because of all the other ways people communicate today.

Wejroch: Social media and everything online.

Gumbleton: Yeah, twenty-four hour news. Newspapers are behind by the time they end up on your porch, they're already out of date (laughs).

Wejroch: Yeah (laughs).

Gumbleton: Even if you're getting a daily paper.

Wejroch: Well, Pastor Bill Wylie-Kellerman said about the strike—another student for this project interviewed him—that he felt it was a good example of non-violence. This is a positive outcome, by the unions a positive example of nonviolence by the unions to solve the strike. Do you agree with him?

Gumbleton: (Pause to reflect) Yes, I do. Except that, and I guess, you know, he's probably thinking in terms of non-violence as a religious action. And so, you're not— you don't use non-violence to achieve— it's not a tactic, it's simply supposed to be a way of saying the truth. You don't have it as a tactic, trying to get what you want. And so in that sense it did show what Jesus did by His non-violent actions, that you transform the world through love, rather than through force. And that if you're going to transform anybody's life it's going to be through love, non-violence, active love; that's what non-violence is, active love. And that's the most powerful force there is for transformation. And so, as an example of basically non-violent or active love, it was effective in the sense that it showed how Jesus would act, not how you manipulate to get your way. See and that's—but if you're really talking about success for the workers, (tapping on the table top for emphasis) for the company, both lost. And I think lost on a large scale. You know, we really don't have a *Detroit News* anymore, or a *Detroit Free Press*. It's, well (laughs), scattered all over. But, I mean the sources aren't from within Detroit and it doesn't cover Detroit news well at all, I mean, what's going on in the city.

Wejroch: And did you have— you had a subscription, I'm sure before the strike. How about during, or after?

Gumbleton: No, I never had a subscription. I always bought—partly because I travel a lot—and so (laughs), they'd pile up on my porch and they'd know if I was away. So (laughs), that's not always a good thing when you live at 15th and Grand River. So, no, I never had a subscription, but I would buy it. I became a *Free Press* reader much more than a *News*, after I grew up. As a kid we got the *News* delivered at home and I delivered the *News* (laughs), and so, that was my paper when I was— before I went to high school. But later on— see the *Free Press* was only a morning paper back then. You had to get up at four o'clock in the morning to peddle your papers (laughs). And so, I had this much better deal of three blocks, a hundred customers, make about ten or twelve dollars a week.

Wejroch: And you could sleep in a little (laughs).

Gumbleton: Yeah, right. Yeah you did it after school.

Wejroch: Well do you read the *News* or the *Free Press* now?

Gumbleton: (Leans forward to have the question repeated)

Wejroch: Do you read either paper now?

Gumbleton: Um, (pause), not on a regular basis. I do read the *Free Press* probably more often, but not on a regular basis. I read a national paper.

Wejroch: Well, and knowing what you know now, about the outcome of the strike, and the impact that it had on the workers and the community, would you have done anything differently?

Gumbleton: Well (pause to think), I couldn't have done much differently. But I think (laughs) that the major flaw in the whole system was the lack of enforcement of National Labor Relations Board decisions. And that law should be changed, and a long time ago the unions should have made that a major project, to change it so that employers couldn't, without any damage being done to them, that they could do with total impunity, just ignore (pause) court decisions, you know, that would come down. If your unions are going to be successful when they strike, you either have to have a totally popular cause, or you have to make sure that decisions are able to be enforced. You see, that's what the unions were up against. Those decisions were ignored, taken into court, and then just put on a docket that would take years reach that case. So, it didn't work. But, it seems that people don't pay much attention to the rights of laboring people until a tragedy happens. You know, like in Bangladesh now, over seven hundred people in that building that collapsed. And so now the corporations are jumping around a bit to say, "Oh, we're changing this, we're gonna," you know— But if you use something like that to really go after the corporations and, you know, get public opinion mobilized. Because, obviously, that's criminal, what happened. But, it's happened in this country, too, in not exactly the same— well, we did have that terrible (pause) fire way back in the beginning of the twentieth century.

Wejroch: With the textile workers.

Gumbleton: Yeah, yeah, the people locked in sewing. But those kinds of sweatshops are around the world. I mean I've been protesting those in other countries, too (laughs). But, it's hard to get people behind that. Again, as I say, when a tragedy happens people say, "Oh, that is wrong." You know, why would anybody force people to work in a building that has cracks in the walls that you can see? (Pause) But those things die out so quick. You know, the reaction dissipates in the matter of a few weeks.

Wejroch: Not if we keep talking about it.

Gumbleton: (Leans forward to have the statement repeated)

Wejroch: Not if we keep talking about it.

Gumbleton: No, no, that's right. If you could really mobilize something out of that. But, it's very hard, because all of the money's on the other side (laughs).

Wejroch: (Laughs) Well, Bishop Gumbleton I want to thank you for your participation in the project.

Gumbleton: Oh, you're welcome.

Wejroch: It was very insightful.

Gumbleton: Oh, well good. I feel good about doing it. It made me look through all of my files, to see what I had (laughs). There's a couple— I found a couple letters that were in there and were all typed out and ready to be signed, and it looked like I never signed them and sent them. One was to Mr. Giles, and I don't know why I didn't send it. But, it wouldn't have done any good anyway, I don't think (laughs).

[End recording (Recording time 1:19:42)]