Barbara DeLaTorre: Educational Commission-Embracing Tradition and Faithfulness of the Magisterium

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Chanel Carter

Interview with Barbara DeLaTorre

CC: Alright, it is March 18, 9:32am at Saint Joseph’s Academy with Barbara De La Torre.

BD: 16TH

CC: 16TH, sorry! March 16TH.

BD: [Laughter] I was going to say; did I miss St. Patrick’s Day?

CC: I just wanted to get your verbal consent that you know this is for the UD oral repository?

BD: Yes.

CC: Wonderful. So, one of my first questions that I wanted to ask you is: so, you cofounded St. Joseph’s correct?

BD: Yes.

CC: And what year did that finally become established?

BD: We actually got our 501c3 and we started school in 1995, but we had a year before that to get it ready.

CC: Okay, gotcha. And so, what was your educational background just growing up?

BD: Oh, okay. So, I just went to public school k-12, and then went to the community college in Ventura for 3 years. I switched majors from biology to nursing, and then I took my prerequisites and then I transferred to Cal State Long Beach into their nursing program. I had to wait a semester because it was impacted. And then I went into the nursing program and graduated three
years later with a bachelor’s degree in nursing. And then I worked as a nurse and got married and worked as nurse until Johnny was born.

CC: Okay, great. That kind of leads to my next question…so your career background before St. Josephs was nursing? So, you didn’t do any teaching or anything before that?

BD: No, no education background, except going to school. [Laughter]

CC: So, then that leads to my next question, what were your motives for cofounding, or how did you come across this idea?

BD: Well, yeah I did come across the idea. So, before when um.. I mean I could go way back but…

CC: Yeah, please!

BD: Well, yeah, I got interested in things going on in the community probably when I was at the community college. I had to take a speech class and I am not one to get up and talk at all in front of everybody. But it forced me to and so I did… actually way back then it would have been 1979 or 80. I picked abortion. And I really grew up in public school and CCD was nothing and I just really think God lead me to do that not really knowing much about it all…I did a lot of research and presented as a persuasive. And so, from there on out I had a desire to do more community things. I was good at researching, but of course that was before internet and everything.

[laughter]

But anyway, so it was a lot of phone calls and writing and mail and things like that. So, I got involved in a few of the community things out there and then I got married and then having a child set my mind on a different path…more focused on things that would affect my child. Vince
was the first. So, we thought we would go ahead and put him into public school because Dave and I were both public school. I had never been to Catholic school in all my life. And so, we didn’t really know our faith either of us at all. And so, I thought I would research the public school and it’s a long story but in researching I found out they were just…the sex ed. in there was just explicit… starting in kindergarten. I got on a committee and tried to change it, and that’s a whole story into itself. It’s all rigged… there is no change. People [say] “Oh come on our committee as a parent.” No, it’s all rigged. The whole thing is rigged. And you will make no difference whatsoever. They already have their plan. That’s what I learned from that. After spending numerous hours of talking and effort. And so there is no changing that system. Plus their education… there was no phonics back then it was just outcome based education, it was not traditional. It was just not what we wanted. So, during this time to we were growing in our faith… kind of self-teaching, you know, both of us were. So I was learning more and more and becoming a more and more stronger Catholic in that regard as well. I morally knew the issues but just knowing more about the faith itself and what it all was. And so then we said okay well public school is out. We’ll try the Catholic school. So, I took Vince to go take the little kindergarten test at a local parochial school. So, they put me in the nurse’s room, while he was taking the test, to listen to the Gazelle for parents…I think it’s called the Gazelle test… and this is for parents saying “this is the Gazelle test your kid is taking bla bla bla.” So at this point I was getting a lot of newsletters in the mail. And I belonged to human life international—[like] your mom—and Paul Marx. So, I got his newsletters back in the day. And so, I would read those and there were all kinds of exposés that he wrote on this horrible catholic sex ed. program called New Creation…so I was already aware of it through his newsletters…and he just wrote exposés
[saying] this is terrible and so I’m sitting there listening to the Gazelle test and I’m looking up at the nurse’s wall and there up on the shelf was New Creation. And I went…Oh my…

CC: Red flag!

BD: This is what Fr. Paul Marx said! And I’m looking and I’m like oh my gosh. So afterwards we leave and my friend Diane Durrant had been there, she’s probably 10 years older than me… and she had all of her kids over there and she was a friend and she was on the school board and she knew everything about that school, completely involved. I said, “Did you know they were teaching New Creation, this terrible sex ed. program in the school your kids are going to?” And she said “I had no idea.” She goes, “I’m on the board… I’m on everything.” We come to find out the principal snuck it in and didn’t tell anyone. It had been there for years. And so she was furious you know. And a little side story: her daughter was in kindergarten when Vince was in kindergarten and so she told the principal, “I do not want my daughter to be exposed to this.” Because what happened was she found out her 8th grade daughter was in class and the teacher said, “well the church says abortion is wrong but I think it’s right for these reasons.” So then she told the principal, “I don’t want my kindergartener exposed. I don’t want her getting the classes.” And so her kindergartener comes home and she says [to her daughter], “so what did you do today?” And she says, “Well they put me in the second-grade class.” “They did? Why?” “They took my out of my class because they were doing that program but then I got it.” She got the second-grade program. So I’m just like dying! Like what are these people doing? And if you read the exposé by Fr. Marx you would feel the same way. It is horrific. So I start my research
again… I had the whole program mailed to me and I contacted all these women that were writing articles about it, fighting it in other areas. I pulled all the information together and wrote… I still have it… because everything was hand written back then you know… about this thick [holds up thumb and index finger about three inches apart], a three-page letter but this much backup information on how this was heinous, it was Anti-Catholic, it was destroying the innocence of children… I had psychologist back up… everything. From the Vatican saying it was no good. I sent it to the diocese. Eventually they did remove it… they took it off. But then they just replaced it with another horrible one. So we did get rid of New Creation which was good, but still again at the end of it all… after a whole year of that only three parents were on board with me to, Dianne, me, and what’s her name… I forget it was so long ago… Rene. And we were the only ones. Nobody else cared. [they would say] “Oh this is good.” You see? “Oh no…”

CC: Do you think they were just ignorant of it? They didn’t know?

BD: They didn’t want to know. They didn’t want to. And so we went to the priests and everything and he was just… no. Super liberal. So anyway, at the end of that, I said “okay hon, what are we gonna do with Vince?” He did go through a year there. He went through Kindergarten. And there was a lot of battles going on with other things there. Other moral issues. And so then I said I’m going to homeschool [laughs]. At the same time as we made that decision, I was still doing research and at that 20 years ago it was Values Clarification… it was a big deal… we called it that. Which nowadays, good grief, it’s gotten 100 times worse. But so I got a hold of Eagle Forum which is Phyllis Schlafly’s group, who is a wonderful… I thinks she just passed away… but she is a wonderful… she formed [unclear] for America… wonderful Christian woman… wonderful. So I called them and they said, “well you need to call… you need to talk to so and so. And she’s in orange county.” So [I thought] well I can call her. So I call and I get the
number… and she goes… I can’t even remember her name now… but this is so and so and
we’ve moved to Arizona. And here’s my number. And I go I’ll call her in Arizona…I don’t care,
you know. So I get to talking to her, by now she’s Catholic, find out they’ve moved to Arizona
and they found this little parent run school. Unheard of…unheard of. There were only five in the
country at that time, you know…Ville de Marie Academy…she goes, “it’s wonderful you walk
in and there’s rosaries and there’s no…the sex ed. is for the parents and we use the Faith and Life
series and the Baltimore Catechism…” and all these things you know… and the uniforms are to
the knees and all of this. And so we were gonna be in Arizona that weekend for my cousin’s
wedding and she says “come see it.” So I go, “Dave, let’s go out a day early and look at it.” So
we drove out there and left the kids with the family and it was just at the back of a building they
rented… it was a multiuse building… they were in the back… kind of a strip mall-ish place…”

CC: Sounds familiar…

[laughter]

BD: So I walked in and we walked on that campus and saw those kids… we just… that’s all we
had to see was that. And when we went in the classroom and started talking to the principal… I
mean it sealed it. But when we walked in we could feel God’s presence there. It was completely
different from anything we’ve ever experienced before. So by the time we left we said we gotta
have one of these. We can do this.

CC: That’s amazing!

BD: So we came home and during this time I was doing all of this research somebody had
connected me with Pat Hansen and said she had been fighting sex ed. at another school over
there [laughter]… and so she’s about fifteen years older than me and so I was… how old was I…
35 at the time and so she was 50. So I had only known her by the phone and we would talk…
and I was just going to start homeschool…I had never done it before. She had been doing it
for… I don’t know seven years or something. We had a lot of similarities. And so I came home
(and) I said who can help me do this so I called her up…I don’t think I had met her…it was just
on the phone…and I said would you want to start a school. And I told her about Ville De Marie.
I took her to fly out to see it. And then we came back and said we’re gonna do it.

CC: Wow.

BD: Then we held garage sales to make…we had to earn $1,000 to get our 501c3 so we’re tax
exempt so we could get donations. So we did that…if you go on our website and our history
you’ll see pictures of the garage sales…it’s hilarious.

CC: [laughs] I will have to check that out.

BD: Yeah, it’s pretty funny. But then Father Healey over here at St. Mark’s was Pat’s pastor. I
was over in Ocean Side. And so he really knew her and was very conservative and traditional
and the good thing was that in San Marcos there was no parochial school that we were
competing with. They didn’t have one. It was perfect.

CC: Yeah, no competition.

BD: Perfect. And he supported us. So we didn’t do it through his parish but we had his support.
So we held our first meeting over there…information meeting…

CC: Oh my gosh.

BD: And we had Denis Uniform company…we tried to look for professional so we did have
uniforms. We wanted it set up as a school, not a homeschool. A real school. You know, with
desks, books, recess, lunch, rules, everything. So that first year we found that strip mall over there. We had to go through the city and the conditional use permit to put it there…which was… you know, and we had to do that yearly so. But, it all came together and we opened in September of ’95.

CC: Oh my gosh, wow! So how long did it take to get it started? Did you say?

BD: About a year.

CC: About a year? Okay, wow.

BD: And there were no… there was only like…like I said maybe four other schools. There was Kolbe Academy up in Napa, there’s Ville De Marie over in Arizona where we visited, and then maybe one or two more? And then we started. Now there’s hundreds. There’s lots of them now. And there’s all kinds of organizations that will help you. NAPCIS is the biggest one but they all formed after we had started. So, and we got to put in there Faith and Life, you know, that has been stamp approved by the Vatican. It’s beautiful… they won’t use it in the diocese. And we said why won’t you use… why won’t you use the Faith and Life series…religion series 1st-8th grade not on your accepted book list? [They said] because it’s too hard for the kids to understand. We’ve been using it for twenty-two years with no problem.

CC: They don’t want to raise the rigor.

BD: No, they don’t want to raise their… it’s all stupid… the religion books out there…they’re so pathetic. They’re completely devoid of anything with “s”, saint, sin, sacraments… you know all the “s” words that they don’t want to say…

CC: Are you serious? Oh my gosh…
BD: Yeah they’re so bad. They’re just empty. Full of fluff and no meat. But the Faith and Life is very very good. And then we back it up with Baltimore Catechism. So we got to put in our curriculum… you know no Values Clarification… none of those stupid outcome based education where you take away grades and give them checkmarks and all this… and all of our teachers sign an oath of allegiance to the magisterium of the church… they will teach only what the church teaches and that’s it. And so they all sign an oath, which is unheard of… nobody does that. And so we made it very traditional. We have pictures of Jesus and Mary, we have them pray the rosary at lunch and…

CC: That’s right, I’ve always loved that.

BD: All the traditional… novenas… we’re doing our St. Joseph Novena right now. So the kids are exposed. They get the explicit Latin Mass; we do that once a quarter where they can see the Latin Mass. And so throughout the years we have maintained all of that.

CC: Okay, great. You kind of, a little bit, answered my question of what would you say is the basis of the curriculum you chose for the school? So it would be…

BD: Traditional. The traditional curriculum. Even now we see the attack even more. Like I said they… back then they had outcome based education… now its common core… they just change the name…they just… every… I heard this article… I think every twelve years?… he gave a certain number of years… they just change the name. It’s the same thing they just change the name… but it’s the same liberal, progressive, education ideas that completely eliminate traditional education that served us for thousands of years… the traditional education that has brought up Einstein and all the great thinkers of the world… and they refuse to use that. We use
classical. We use the three stages… the grammar stage k-5, the logic in middle school and the
rhetoric… the rhetorical stage in high school.

CC: Okay, and is there like a particular educational theorist/philosopher or anything that you
would say you kind of look to as the foundation of your curriculum or? Does a particular name
come to mind?

BD: Not a certain person, but we look at… we’re members of NAPCIS and members of the
Independent… classical….Catholic education something like that…so they have a lot of
recourses and this year in particular we’ve made some real big changes in that regard. Not
change... It’s not that we weren’t using… like we were using Rod and Staff for years which is
completely grammar… diagraming… the whole thing but now we’re using Shirley Grammar
which is... well you diagram do all that but it’s more of a classical approach. So, it uses sing-
song in a grammatical stage… they like that. Then you change when you get into the middle
school because they’re more logic… they want to hear more logic. They want to hear
arguments… teach them how to argue with logic. And then in the rhetorical stage we teach them
how to speak clearly, concisely, and intelligently… you know? and be able to back up their
arguments.

CC: Right, that’s great. I just did my theorist report on St. Elizabeth Ann Seton so I was just
wondering if you… well I’m sure you know plenty about her… but she’s great. And then… let’s
see… so what kinds of educational issues or concerns came up when founding the school? If
any?

BD: Educational issues or concerns…
CC: Like, did anyone try to combat you with what you were trying to do in the schools or anything like that? I know you had the support of… what’s his name? Father… Father Marks?

BD: Oh Father Paul Marks. He came and visited the school too. That’s in the history… if you look under history [on the school website] there’s a picture of him in there.

CC: Oh awesome, so you definitely had his support.

BD: Yeah… let’s see um… did anybody… well we’ve always been seen as different… because we are not a diocesan school. So, and they know we use the Baltimore Catechism… but that’s our rote… that’s for rote memory. But we use Faith and Life as our catechism but still nobody else does… you know. So they kind of… I think they see us as either as rebellious or maybe pre-Vatican II… that might be the thought but we’re not. We’re totally you know… we are right there with the Holy Father and the Vatican and you know Vatican II says they want more laity participation spreading the Gospel and that’s what we’re doing.

CC: And that’s in your mission statement… yeah.

BD: Yeah, so we’re not… we’re totally up to date with everything that’s going on in the church you know, although we… what the magisterium teaches… not everything going on in the church right now but what the magisterium teaches… that’s what we’re yeah… let me clarify that… because there is some crazy stuff going on right now. So yeah, it’s what the magisterium teaches… we hold to that.

CC: Yes, I love that. Let’s see what else… What about parent involvement? Would you say that has increased or decreased over the ages?

BD: Well, it was very high over there… the old school…
CC: I remember they had parent… the room moms.

BD: We still do. We have room moms and a lot of ways… they’re all in all the fund-raising activities which we have tons of…and they’re involved in bake sales and all in that regard. We don’t quite need them in other regards as much here because we’re fenced in. Over there we were half and half fenced in with two separate campuses… so it’s a different setting here which does not require them in those positions anymore… but yes in other positions. And so yeah its still high and we encourage it.

CC: Oh, good. That’s great. What about student academic performance or behavior? How has that changed since the founding or has it changed?

BD: Well you know you always get the…we’ve always had the really really higher level academic achievers and the lower ones… and then you’ve got the mid-range. And it’s been that way from the beginning… you know we try to help those that can’t or are having difficulty through tutoring or things like that. The mediums are okay and the high ones are just off the charts. We just had Therese Aguilarre just got national merit. She got a full ride to UD. Four years full ride.

CC: Really! Oh my gosh.

BD: Yes! Therese Aguilaree, our senior. Can you imagine?

CC: That is amazing.

[laughter]
BD: It’s just like wow! So she’s off the charts you know. But we have several kids you know that are super… but it’s been that way from the beginning. So I haven’t seen a change in that regard. Our SAT scores have been going higher and higher every year I’ve noticed.

CC: Yes I did notice that on your website, it mentioned that.

BD: Mhm, those are going up but the IWOA’S from the k-8s they’ve always remain up in the 90… 80-90 percentile… they always have from the beginning because we use that solid curriculum.

CC: Yeah, I agree with that…let’s see… and so would you say the same about behavior? Do you think?

BD: Kids behavior, you mean?

CC: Yeah, so with the influences of society now and then…?

BD: Oh yeah… I guess the issues are sometimes maybe different because now you’ve got issues of… I don’t know if I would say the um… the ADD has gone up or not… cus we did have our ADD kids all throughout…I’m just trying to relate it to technology… computers… we’re such an electronic age over here verses there. We started off… there were no computers…we didn’t have a computer until like year two or something. So, now you deal with you know… no you can’t… there’s no… what’s that poky-man? Find the poky-man?

CC: Oh, yeah, Pokémon Go?

BD: Oh yeah, all that here. These are the issues we’re dealing with you know. These are the kinds of things…keep your cell phone away… we don’t… they live on them. It’s like parents what are you doing? So it is what you’re dealing with. But in the school here they’re here a lot
and we don’t…we have one rolling computer lab cart of computers and the whole school shares
it. So, there’s no iPads… because we have handwriting…and you do cursive.

CC: Right, and I was wondering about that because a lot of schools don’t practice cursive so…

BD: Nope. We got handwriting every day. Cursive starts in second grade and you have to do
cursive throughout. Now in high school you’re taking notes and stuff yeah you’re writing…but
when you’re doing a paper you turn it in and even in middle school if you’re writing a paper…

CC: Yeah, that’s on the computer.

BD: Then that’s computer, yeah. It’s not like we’re against computers… like we want to get a
keyboarding class going as well. I have Sarah doing Mavis Beacon at home. So, I want her to
learn to type correctly… and we do too. So these are things we’re working on… we’re not… you
know I mean they’ve done studies… if you read a book off of an iPad versus off real paper and
pencil or article then you put them both away and the kids test, they’re going to score higher on
the paper and pencil because the iPad… something with the eyes and pixels and it’s not staying.

CC: And the interaction is different because when you have a paper and pencil you can make
notes, circle words… vocabulary… whatever it may be… you know?

BD: You don’t have to plug it in to… “my battery ran out”… or “I can’t see because of the glare
of the sun”… “I can’t take it to the beach to read my book because the sand”… you… just
carrying around a novel…

CC: There’s something about it.

BD: Yeah, there’s something about it. And there is. And the same thing with the writing and all
of it… people don’t know grammar anymore… What we’re seeing now with this common core
and its just… what we hear and what we see… we do no common core… and the kids that test in here… oh my gosh it would make you want to cry… you know they got a simple maybe thirty times eight problem… we give them admissions test… so you know eight times zero is zero, eight times three is twenty-four… 240 is your answer. They’re writing thirty, eight times and adding them all up and drawing boxes and drawing a number line and going like this with the number… it’s like don’t you know eighty times three like this? No… They can only do it through boxes, and drawings… they have no concept… I had a woman bring her fourth grader… well she’s in fourth grade now… so third grader at the time in the summer to test for the fourth grade… so she tested. And she did horrible. And the mom is an RN and the dad is an entrepreneur… very very smart… the parents are extremely smart. So she’s not coming from… she’s coming from smart parents you know. And I said, she doesn’t know any math! And the mom says, “she brings her math home and I can’t help her do her third-grade math. It makes no sense.”

CC: Yeah it’s so different from the way we’ve learned it so.... that’s understandable.

BD: It’s pathetic. You know you read the interview to astronauts and people that use it in the real world math and they’re like… uh-uh… no… when I’m up in space and I need to know what 3,000 times you know… I can’t…

CC: You don’t draw a picture of it.

BD: Because I want the answer now and I want the right answer. And it’s just proven to be horrible but the education system out there just won’t let it go… you know hopefully Trump will do something but California won’t… so stupid… liberal…but we have people coming to us to get out of common core… because they can see its destroying their kids… It’s just a big
educational experiment that's going to show these kids to be damaged the rest of their life
because they won’t know math… they won’t know English… you know… any other subjects…
they know no history… when they come test for us out of the public school or even out of the
parochial they don’t know history. They don’t know who the first president of the United States
is…
CC: Oh my gosh…
BD: They don’t… they get social studies… “Oh, so Madonna what is she doing now?” You
know their social studies books will have…
CC: Pop culture…
BD: Pop culture and nothing about… there’s no history being taught… and you’re doomed to
repeat history if you don’t learn from it… and they don’t know it… they’re also being taught that
socialism is wonderful and that democracy… the republic… is not. And they’re being
brainwashed out there…
CC: Yeah, no when I student taught in a public school and I was just talking to some of my
friends because we noticed that none of them knew… like you would say, “what city do you live
in?” “Texas…” “Okay, no… that’s the state you live in… what country do you live in?” and they
would say Dallas.
BD: They know no geography. None. We do mapping the world by heart so they memorize the
entire world by heart in ninth grade. But we also give the geography throughout the grades.
CC: Yeah I remember those map… books…
BD: Yeah, Map Skills!
CC: Yeah, I remember doing that in like second grade or something…

BD: Yeah we did Map Skills.

CC: And what grades do you do map skills in?

BD: Well we’re inserting it through the history now. So it’s done a little differently. We’re not using the Map Skills but yeah we do geography.

CC: Okay, that’s wonderful. They sure need it.

BD: They don’t know anything. Well what it is that world today… the culture today is this… it’s a mirror and its right here [holds hands right in front of face]. So the kids, this is about how far they see… and all they see is themselves. So it doesn’t matter where Japan is… it doesn’t matter… truth doesn’t matter. Truth… well obviously,, everything is fake news out there right…but I was talking to this one lady who’s teaching in a public preschool right now. And she said she heard the two little three-year old’s talking, “yeah men can marry men now… I know…yeah… and I know two mommies that are married…” and she’s just like… but she can’t say anything. She can’t say anything… and of course all the bathroom issues going on right now.

CC: Oh, yeah, the kids talk about it just as much as their parents do.

BD: Oh yeah they do. So on and on and on it’s just getting to the point you know… I… we pray that God will keep the school going but I don’t know… who knows what will happen… they might shut it all down and throw us all in jail, who knows. But we’ll keep going as long as we can.

CC: Yeah, of course. And cuz how you do deal with… do those issues come up in school? I wouldn’t really assume so since it is so…
BD: Not yet but you know the devil is attacking this place because we’re forming the souls of these Catholic children and he hates it. So we’re protected… we have the new tabernacle now, did you see that?

CC: Yes! I would love to go visit once we are finished. When did you guys build the chapel?

BD: I think it was about three years ago…

CC: Okay, what a great addition. That’s awesome.

BD: Yeah. We’re very very blessed.

CC: Yes. Let’s see… has disciplinary action changed? I remember when I went to school here we would get our number on the board… check marks…

BD: It’s still that way, yeah.

CC: Okay, so and then how does it go? Once you get four check marks it’s principal’s office or?

BD: Yeah, it’s different. K-5 has one, middle school has one, and high school has one. So they’re different. Its consequence. Follow the rules and this will happen… and the lower grades is more rewards… they get a class pet or pizza party or movie… but if you don’t follow the rules then you’re going to stay after. There’s detention, there’s writing what you did…

CC: Oh okay, copying out of the dictionary? Do you guys do that still?

BD: Well more what did you do wrong and what are you going to do to change it.

CC: Right, more reflective.

BD: Mhm, and if its misspelled or its sloppily written you’re going to stay and do it again

[laughter]
CC: Right, exactly.

BD: Yeah so that’s pretty much stayed the same. The school hasn’t changed much in 22 years.

CC: Yeah, no I mean I loved it. It’s been so crazy comparing… because I was just shocked when I went to the public schools for student teaching. I was like what? This is so new to me… But yeah I very appreciate the tradition that this school carries. Let’s see… so, I know you just said not much has changed but would you say there is something that has changed the most…?

BD: Well, our new campus of course. But what we’re really going for right now… our concentration is…we’ve always been traditional and we’ve been classical to some degree… but we’re going more the classical route. We had Mary Pat Donoghue from that ISEL, catholic liberal education group come… and what’s his name… can’t remember his name. He’s from Thomas Aquinas College… and he came down as well, he’s part of the group. And they gave our teachers a two-day in-service on classical education. And we put more of that in, you know, like I said we switched from Rod and Staff which is a great, traditional, wonderful program, but the Shirley Grammar is a more classical approach. And we switched from Write Source to this other writing program… and we’re going to bring in Institute of Excellence for writing in middle school. And then just things like our history you know we used to do just mostly American history, and we still are, but we’re doing the Greeks, the Romans, like that. So we’re doing more classical. And also concentrating more on the grammatical stage k-4 is memory, which is what the kids naturally… that’s where they get their foundation.

CC: Yeah, that’s the basis.
BD: They’re memorizing math facts, times tables. Memorizing nouns, pronouns, where these things are so that when they get to middle school and high school, they already have the base and the things just fall in.

CC: Yeah, and kind of go into a deeper meaning as well.

BD: Yes. Then the logic stage… is again, that’s where they want to argue. Typical adolescent, right? So you teach them how to argue. You teach them to use logic. And so we teach logic, and teach them you can’t just say stuff without backing it up. And then in high school it’s the rhetorical stage where we’re doing more of getting up and making speeches that are clear and like I said concise… meaningful… and substantiated. So, that’s more the classical approach.

CC: So it’s a traditional but with a classical approach.

BD: Yes, traditional school, classical approach.

CC: So what would you say are some of the remaining traditional things that you guys do?

BD: Yeah I mean we still have the rosary, the novenas, you know we pray four times a day. We do the classical prayers. We do the Amina Christi, the Our Father in Latin, Pater Noster. They learn all the traditional prayers… we do… it’s a traditional classroom setting. The desks are facing forward. We’ll circle up as they get older, or when they’re really young.

CC: So there’s none of the grouped desks all the time? It’s more of just…

BD: Right, kindergarten is more of that but once they get older 1st-5th its more traditional setting. But that doesn’t mean there isn’t classroom discussion. An example of that would be like, “what do you think the main character is doing right here?” And Johnny raises his hand, “okay Johnny”
“well I think he’s da da da.” And then you say, “well Mary what do you think of what Johnny had to say? Do you think he’s correct or not?” So it’s not just you know…

CC: Yes, it’s not just the teacher telling the answer.

BD: See that’s the… how say… people stereotype traditional education. It’s just the teacher up there bla bla bla.

CC: Yes, we just had a discussion about this in one of our classes.

BD: Yeah, that’s the stereotype… an unfair stereotype… and maybe that does exist in some places or at sometimes but in the classical approach… it is that traditional… it’s the teacher led. We’re not into the “here’s the information students, you figure it out and I’ll go facilitate you.” No, its teacher led here, and teacher driven but the students are pulled in and they do discuss things and they discuss things as a group and give each other information… it’s not just the teacher talking. So I know people will stereotype and write you off but that’s not what it is.

CC: Yeah, okay, gotcha. And have you ever had new teachers coming in wanting to change that because it may not be what they’re familiar with?

BD: Yes.

CC: And what are some of the things they would like to change that didn’t happen or things they wanted to change and it did work out to be something that was beneficial? Can you think of anything?

BD: I can think of two cases right now that… it was bad.

CC: Really? Would you mind sharing what that was?

BD: Bringing in progressive education… and it did not work.
CC: And in what ways did they want to bring that in?

BD: They wanted to run their classrooms with progressive techniques. And with all the stuff out there… and there was no changing their mind… you can talk to them and talk to them, in-service, talk… no. So, we parted ways. And it was best for them and best for us. It just did not… it was not what we wanted.

CC: Yeah, well…. You gotta stand true to your values and you do…

BD: Yeah we do… and we did. We’re not going to budge. You know? And that’s fine. This school isn’t for everybody… it’s not for every teacher and its not for every kid, not for every parent… it’s not. So, that’s fine.

CC: Yeah so what would you say is the target community? I’m sure devout…

BD: Well I think that’s who we attract honestly. People who are desiring an education like ours.

CC: Yeah, that’s great. Um… let’s see…. So, I think you might have touched on this but, what do you deem as one of the most successful component to your school? What do you value the most in St. Joseph’s?

BD: At the school? That we are faithful to the magisterium…

CC: Don’t budge on that…very…

BD: that’s it. That we’ve remained faithful from day one. We started the school and we didn’t just dedicate it to God, of course we dedicated it to God but we gave it to Him. This is His school. It’s not the board of directors, it’s God’s school.

CC: That’s beautiful.
BD: So, that’s how I see the school and I know Pat does to. “Oh Barb” or “Oh Pat… your school… what do you think about your school now after all these…” It’s not my school. It’s not. It is not. I do not see it that way at all. It’s God’s school. It’s in His hands one hundred percent. We just do the labor here and try not to screw up too bad. Hoping we can fix everything we’ve ruined… mess up… but it is His school.

CC: Yes, of course.

BD: And the timing and everything you know “oh we’ve had the old campus for so long…” Well, God decided we’re going to be here now. “Well when are we going to get a gym?” When God wants us to get one we’ll get one. I’m not in any hurry. Whenever He wants one we’ll get one. Yeah, its…

CC: Absolutely. And how did you come across naming the school St. Joseph’s? Opposed to Sierra Madre?

BD: Well, we always wanted a Catholic name but when we first started the school we were advised do not pick a saint name because the diocese might not like that because you’re starting off independent. We did write a letter to the head of the schools that time, Sister Clare Patrice, she’s since passed away… saying we’re opening this school… here’s our religious ed. program… we’d like you to bless it. And she did. So, that was all we needed. And we didn’t really need it but it was good. And so, then… I forgot your question.

CC: Oh, how you came across St. Joseph’s?

BD: Oh, yeah. And so, we just picked Sierra Madre… just… it was a pretty name. And a lot of schools… like Opus Dei schools and stuff name their schools after mountain tops or whatever… you know… so we thought we’d do that. But we always wanted a religious name. But we never
wanted to shake up the diocese… we always remained very quiet and small and try not to disturb anybody. Just leave us alone and we’ll leave you alone. Although we have great relations with other schools and this and that. And they do have us on their website… although we aren’t included in everything… we don’t go to the meetings… we don’t have to do the curriculum or teachers or anything so….

CC: Well that’s good you still get the mention.

BD: Oh, yeah… And so but when we moved… when we had our building campaign at the old school, St. Joseph was our… that’s who we were praying our novena to to get the school. So when we moved, we said now’s the time we name it. So, that’s why.

CC: So he’s always watching out for the school.

BD: Mhm.

CC: Oh good… and then so what do you hope to see improve in the future? Whether it’s anything?

BD: Well, for me personally?

CC: Just for the school, yeah…. Wherever you would like to see from the school…

BD: Well if you just talk about the physical location and all that… then I would love for us to get that property up there [points up the hill].

CC: That’s where the…the church is up there isn’t it?

BD: Mhm, and a field and stuff. And we have put some medals up there… so… in God’s time.

I’m not in any hurry but I would like that. If I could have a wish list… you know… and then for the school itself… I would like us to continue going doing the path of really solidifying ourselves
as classical… you know… and get the word out… nobody knows we exist. So, to get more…
people to know about us. So that would be…
CC: So, you want to expand more? Overall?
BD: Yeah, well… not necessarily… I don’t want to be some gigantic school or anything like that…
CC: Right, you still want to keep the tight community…
BD: Mhm. It would be nice to have that property, that church. And get the word out… not so much… I mean yeah we could use a few more students of course…
CC: What is the student-teacher ratio? For most classes?
BD: Well high school it’s like 1:15… and grade school its anything from 1:19 to 27 or something.
CC: Okay and sorry, I didn’t mean to interrupt you there with that question.
BD: Oh, that’s okay. I like the word to get out… more… well yes of course so people can know us and you know… we need to financially sustain… it’s on outside contributions. You know we get no help… we self-sustain our selves. But also, that people know that such a place exists… because I feel like people are out there and they feel they don’t have any options…
CC: You want to give them hope…
BD: We want to give them hope… that there is… you know you can can put your child in an environment… you know we are helped financially a ton… we’ve always been about that large families… large family discounts… so for that reason, just as much as the other reason.
CC: Yeah, I really like what you say about giving families hope because it does seem sometimes hopeless to find a school that truly sticks to what the magisterium teaches, while also really tending to the intelligence and making them grow intellectually.

BD: I see it as child abuse. You know God gave all these babies out there brains and intelligence and they’re being brought up out in the public school system… just destroying their intelligence… you know they should be learning all this information and they’re being reduced down to stupidity… and by the time they get out of school they aren’t going to be able to think for themselves. They aren’t going to be able to reason… what’s the University of Dallas’s saying… independent…

CC: Yeah, independent thinkers?

BD: Yeah, they have the same philosophy we do… you know we teach the children to think… and base their… on reason and truth… you don’t base your thoughts on stuff that’s not true… and that’s what they’re getting… you know or stuff that’s not reasonable… or natural law… you learn your faith but you realize God put natural law in everybody… and oh yeah the church says that it should just be a one man and one woman marriage… well that comes from natural law… because that’s how God made man and woman… you know and it’s not natural for the opposite… you know the same sexes to be togethers it’s not natural physically, it’s not natural emotionally, spiritually… anyway. There’s something wrong… something went wrong… usually it’s a missing father… but you need help… not continue to go down this path that’s not true love… that’s…”oh yeah here… transgender bathroom… we’ll call you he/she whatever…” that’s encouraging them and enabling them to go down that path… that is destructive in every way… in every part of their body… rather than telling them the truth… in love… God made you not to be that way… God made you all in love… but the truth…
CC: And the reasons for that truth because it’s not enough just to say... just oh I believe... even if it is the truth... I believe this... you would need to be able to back it up so you can defend yourself...

BD: Exactly.

CC: And you can draw others to your view... you know... it’s not just about being able to spew out whatever you want to say...

BD: Facts...

CC: It’s really being logical and putting your heart into it as well... you’re not condemning anyone... you’re there to give them reasons...

BD: You’re doing it because you love them and you want them to go to Heaven.

CC: Exactly.

BD: And that’s why you do it...

CC: Mhm, well that’s great. Well I really think that wraps up all I wanted to say. Did you have any other comments on anything?

BD: No, it’s just great to see you.

CC: Okay, thank you so much for being with me and helping me... it’s so wonderful...

BD: Well give my love to your whole family.

CC: I will... absolutely.

BD: I miss you guys.
CC: I know!

BD: We gotta go… I got to go out to dinner with Sheri.

CC: Oh, she always brings up… she’s like “I really want to call Barb DeLaTorre…”

BD: We haven’t done that in so long… well let her know Dave’s got….

End interview.