

July 27, 1981
Interviewer - Irene Ruiz
Interviewee - Rev. Ramon Gaitan

- 006-007 Father Gaitan is prior of the St. Augustine monastery in Kansas City, Kansas.
- 008-015 Born in San Antonio, Texas, February 3, 1934. Father was Santiago Gaitan, mother Tomasa Jimenez. One of 12 children, 7 girls and 5 boys.
- 016-018 Attended public school through 6th grade, 2 years in a Catholic school, another year in public school, last years at a parochial high school.
- 019-058 Father was ironworker at Alamo Iron Works. Died when Rev. Gaitan was about 10, possibly due to poor working conditions. Family lived in a 3-room house outside the main San Antonio area. Some poor whites in the neighborhood, many blacks and Mexicans. Most were manual laborers.
- 059-075 Children attended church, does not remember father going.
- 076-100 Good neighborhood center. Nuns ran 1/2 day summer schools to teach religion, crafts.
- 101-131 Spoke Spanish at home, found the first years of school painful. Mother could read English but never spoke it. School was 80% Mexican, 20% poor white. Blacks had separate schools.
- 132-143 Older siblings all dropped out of high school by 10th or 11th grade, due to economic problems in the family and lack of desire to finish. He was first to graduate.
- 144-146 Three older brothers and a sister joined service in World War II because they could not find jobs as unskilled workers. Father died at this time, oldest brother was released from service. Others all returned.
- 167-173 One brother died as a prisoner of war in Korea.
- 174-186 Was unhappy at Little Flower where he attended 9th grade. Transferred to San Antonio Tech, a vocational school, but found it too big. Last 2 years at Central Catholic, an all-boys school.
- 187-205 Began thinking about the priesthood as a means of helping people while still in junior high school.
- 206-223 Family was first shocked at his interest in the religious life, but supported him. Parish priest gave him the impression that seminary was only for the wealthy. He saw priests as superior, removed from the people.

- 224-263 Active as a altar boy, in choir, Boy Scouts. Participated in Boy Scout Drum and Bugle Corps.
- 264-311 Worked after school in a grocery store, summers as the church janitor. Relates various adventures as a migrant worker one summer.
- 312-337 Wrote to numerous monasteries for information, received a positive reply from Kansas City. Few monasteries actively recruited.
- 338-413 Immediately after graduation, secured a government job assembling propeller units. Recalls women could not work the night shift. After 6 weeks, received acceptance to monastery. Entered in August, 1952. Wanted to be far from home so he would be less tempted to leave the order.
- 414-444 After a 1-year novitiate, studied 3 years of philosophy. Then studied 1 year in New York before going to Spain for 3 years to learn more about the roots of the order.
- 445-455 Ordained a priest in Spain before returning to New York for a year. Then back to Kansas City.

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- 002-047 Was sent to Guadalupe primarily, he believes, because of his Mexican background.
- 048-064 Spent 2-1/2 years at Guadalupe and another 2-1/2 at Sacred Heart. As an associate priest he was not allowed to initiate ideas. Church elders were against being involved in community affairs, so Gaitan would sneak out to attend neighborhood meetings.
- 065-093 A series of negative articles in the National Catholic Register caused parishioners to form a group to write letters of protest to NCR editor. Group later became active in other community affairs, with positive results.
- 094-129 Helped organize a group on the sly to protest the closing of Sacred Heart School. School was saved but later consolidated with Guadalupe to make Our Lady of the Americas.
- 130-147 Returned to New York's lower East Side in 1966 or 1967. Spent 4-1/2 years there considers it a "liberating" experience. Dealt with radical groups.
- 148-174 Desired to work with Mexicans again, but church officials ignored his requests because he was considered disobedient and a rebel. Elders tried to force him to leave the order, but he finally was offered a Mexican church in Topeka, Kansas or Sacred Heart in K.C. saw Sacred Heart as a poor choice because of declining membership, so he went to Guadalupe in Topeka.
- 175-199 Was associate in Topeka for 1-year in 1971, before making pastor. Continued ministry there 6 more years before being appointed prior of the monastery. Has been prior 3 years.

- 200-246 Grateful for support of friends, relatives and his home parish. Found seminary supportive also. Does not hold church elders' attitudes against them and feels he may have reacted the same way in their place.
- 247-328 Finds a great need for people to be more open-minded and understanding with those from different cultures and backgrounds. Is not sure how to accomplish that change. Sees need for leadership training. Sees it as a painful process but worth it in the long run.