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Report to Encompass Australasia  
Attention: Dr Gerardine Taylor

Dear Gerardine

Re: CHUTE John  
DOB: 13/06/32  
Seen: 20/08/02

Thank you for asking me to see your client, Br John Chute, a Marist brother based at Mittagong who retired around May this year. He is occupying their new monastery and he is devoting a lot of time to homemaking, cooking, repairing the hothouse and the like. He really enjoys his life but has 'more time on my hands than I'm used to.' In September, he plans to start a twelve-week course overseas on 'coping with ageing' run by his order.

He has been involved in organising a Eucharistic celebration for the locals, as he is 'a bit of a liturgist.'

He comes to Encompass following 'a couple of complaints' which went back over thirty years and which emerged about two months ago as well as more recent complaints which had been dealt with. He has asked for the assessment seeking 'something for myself' to assist in dealing with 'the hurt I caused the victims' and his own guilt and shame.

He was close to tears as he said this.

The complaint involved fondling boys around the ages of twelve or thirteen years. In all he thinks he may have fondled some eight or nine boys - some were 'one offs' and 'some were repeats.' I gather that 'the one that complained forty three years ago - he claimed it happened fairly often - I think the other boy said it happened more than once too.'

He does not have a clear memory of the recent allegations but 'I'm not saying it didn't happen' as he could clearly remember doing similar things.

I remarked that it could not be easy for this to happen just as he retired. He replied that 'nobody in my family lives over eighty and I want to have closure for myself - I want to have peace with the Lord.'

His demeanour was certainly quite unhappy. I asked him how he felt in himself. He replied 'pretty agitated and pretty down and as I said, very much ashamed that I've hurt people.'

I asked him how long he had been feeling down and agitated. He replied 'for the last six months.' It predated the emergence of the last allegations but coincided with the intense press coverage of the last few months. He read the papers knowing that they were referring to people like himself.

He has often asked himself 'how can I undo the harm that I've done' whilst 'questioning myself why I could have been so silly - that kind of thing.' He added that 'I honestly don't know' why he did this other than to wonder whether perhaps at the time he may have had a need for affection. At the same time, this need perplexed him as he had 'great friendships' and tended to 'get on with people.'

He remarked that he had sought answers adding that 'under the old system it was say the three Hail Mary's.' A superior had said to him 'John you've got a bit of a problem here and you'd better solve it.' I remarked that it sounded as if he did not get help when he wanted it most. To cap things off, he did see someone some twenty years ago 'but the person I sought help from started to make advances to me' adding that another Australian brother had said much the same.

Spiritual directors had been supportive and sympathetic but ultimately the help the Church could offer was very limited.

He feels at times 'as if I'm living a life of hypocrisy - I've held positions of authority - these things didn't happen when I was in positions of authority - in think I'm fairly highly regarded among the brothers...'. He saw 'the whole thing [as] hurting us as a group and I feel very much as if I'm hurting them.'

He feels greatly for the victims.

He acknowledged there was a lot of sadness in his life at present though he tries to balance it with a lot of good things that have happened.

I asked him what the sadness was like. He replied 'it might sound awfully pious but I feel that some of the sadness I have has a positive to it... I'm definitely not a martyr - I'm pretty weak in that area - but the strength I get is definitely in my life of

prayer... often my prayer is about bringing some kind of healing or resurrection to the people I've hurt... it sounds like something that comes out of a Bible....'

I told him that while it certainly sounded as though it came from a Bible, I did not believe it was something he was merely spouting off.

He tells me he sleeps well and on closer questioning, this seemed to be the case. His energy levels are 'fairly high actually' and his 'an energetic sort of a guy' who tries to 'throw myself into what I'm doing.'

He says his appetite has been good though he has to watch what he eats because he has maturity onset diabetes. Since coming down, his blood pressure and sugars have gone up in parallel with his anxiety.

He was a bit vague about his sex drive - he found it difficult to name his feelings in this area.

He has never had any psychiatric treatment or any kind of 'breakdown' and is seen by his fellow brothers as a 'pretty buoyant sort of a guy' who is actively involved in sport and things like that.'

The youngest of ten children (with a twin sister), he knows of no family history of psychiatric illness. His dad died when he was nine years old and one of the brothers who taught him 'became a sort of a surrogate father... later on when I became a brother he left and married... I had him at my celebration of my fiftieth....' This was a factor in his decision to join the brothers.

His father died of cancer - he remembers his father as sick over a number of years. He has no memory of the day he died. He remembers being sent away by his mother 'because dad was sick' and the like. Some details of his life are not well known 'but my sisters and brothers speak of him as very good man.'

Apparently, his father had great affection for his sister and himself. The story went around that he slipped and fell in a shower after a boxing match sustaining a closed head injury. His father was prominent in the local community and gave much money to a number other causes.

He sounded like a later than life figure. He has dreamt that he would have loved to be like him.

His demeanour was pensive, anxious and sad and his story was punctuated with silences. All up, his affect was permeated with shame suggesting that, absence of biological features notwithstanding, he is in fact quite depressed.

I found no evidence of psychosis or of an organic brain syndrome though at his age particularly I would be keen to see the results of neuropsychological testing.

Br John would appear to have a psychosexual disorder (ephebophilia with same sex attraction in remission by self report) but I wonder if it may not be in part driven by an episodic mood disturbance. His number of victims if accurately reported is relatively small and he refers to unmet intimacy needs as a possible factor in his past behaviour. He looks depressed now and I would go as far as diagnosing a major depressive disorder possibly triggered by the attention this material has been receiving in the press of late.

The alternative diagnosis would be one of an adjustment disorder with mixed anxiety depression triggered by the stress of recent allegations and the current climate in the community in relation to clerical sexual abuse. I think he would benefit from the program - his request for closure and help are to be commended.

He may well benefit from antidepressants though I have not suggested this to him. The medication decision would be one best made once he has come into the program and we have had a chance to observe him for three or four weeks. Consequently, if he receives and accepts an invitation on board, I would welcome the opportunity of reviewing him around three or four weeks into his stay.

With best wishes



Chris Canaris  
20/08/02