

30/11

CONFIDENTIAL

REDACTED

Newhaven 3925.

Ph. REDACTED

25/11/93

Dear Gerry,

I rang your office yesterday and you were at lunch. That gave me more time to reflect on your request for further information on the Bill Baker affair. Because I am more comfortable with the written word rather than conversation I have decided to write my account of the story. If you want to take the matter further, that is your prerogative. My philosophy has always been that there are enough stresses and pressures in the present without complicating matters by dwelling on the past. This exercise has proved to be stressful, depressing and highly embarrassing. If it wasn't for our relationship I would certainly be tempted to join the throng who intend to sue the Archdiocese for their negligence in allowing such a person to become and practise as a priest. Despite the Church's preoccupation with sexual morality which continues even today and has tended to generate significant guilt amongst many of my generation, at the same time it was apparently lax in applying the same strict codes to its ministers. Ironically I am not as angry at Bill Baker whom I pity rather than despise. If I met him I doubt that I would want to punch his lights out; in fact I hope I never see or hear from him for the rest of my life.

The story begins with a physically and emotionally immature boy of Junior Secondary age. Unlike his modern counterparts he is sexually ignorant and naive. He has no idea about paedophilia or homosexuality and his parents, like many in their generation, had provided him with very little sex education. The same boy believes that he has a vocation to the priesthood and is modelling his life on the example of St. Dominic Savio. For him sanctity is a very emotional dynamic and the priest is not simply a man but a special incarnation of God on earth. He rushed at the opportunity to become an altar boy and rode his bike 5 or 6 kms to serve the early morning Mass, sometimes more than once a week. Serving Mass was spiritually and emotionally uplifting and it is clear to him in hindsight how vulnerable he was to the advances of an errant young Priest.

It began with spiritual guidance and an affection which the boy appreciated. His own father was a hard working battler who found it hard to express affection and his mother was highly strung and volatile as well as preoccupied with three children under five years. To be paid attention by a man of God and singled out for special 'talks' was flattering. The priest would sometimes hold his hand and then hug and cuddle him. He did not resist and did not feel anything was wrong. He knew that other boys at his school would often snigger about the priest's behaviour but he never really understood why. Maybe it was because they were jealous of the attention he was being paid by the priest. And yet he remembers feeling uneasy when the hugging seemed to last forever and he still remembers the priest's warm breath and aftershave.

He was then invited by the priest to the priest's family home in Maryborough for the Maryborough Gift weekend. From a distance of thirty years he cannot recall the names of the other altar boys who were invited although he remembers that the senior altar boy, **REDACTED**, was there. He has a vivid memory of particular events on that weekend: surprising the priest's father who was sitting on the family toilet; the priest's father who was a doctor snipping skin lesions from the priest's face and wandering around the park on Maryborough Gift day. But the incident that stays with him and mortifies him to this day occurred later that night. The priest was explaining the sleeping arrangements and indicated to the boy that he would be sleeping in the same room. When they retired the priest invited the boy to get into the priest's bed where a long hugging session followed. The boy later returned to his own bed. The next day in his car the priest told the boy that he was worried about what had happened the previous night and that the boy should not feel guilty about anything. The priest told the boy that he had noticed that the boy had an erection, or words to that effect, and what was the boy's feelings about the episode. The boy was embarrassed and somehow for the first time felt dirty. From that moment a sixth sense told the boy to avoid as far as possible future contact with the priest. In fact it was a telling factor in the boy not becoming a diocesan priest and he gravitated inexorably towards the Salesian camp.

It was later when the boy understood more about life that he grew to hate the fact that he had been used as the priest's toy. He had made a fool of himself and his reputation amongst his peers was contaminated by his association with the 'poofter' priest.

In the greater order of things Bill Baker's actions are not that criminal or serious. But he betrayed the trust that I gave him as my confessor and confidante. He created a tear in my life's tapestry which I have had to mend and subsequently suppress. I am so grateful that it has not affected my relationship with my family and the students I have taught over the years.

I have never told the story to anyone else and it has been very painful to recall it. I can only start to imagine the damage caused to other victims in society who might have been raped or seriously assaulted. My regret is that I never had the words or the structures available to me at the time to report Baker's activities but it stuns me that he was able to continue his activities with impunity. I mentioned to you in Sydney an interesting recent discussion with REDACTED who provided a more complete picture of the Baker malaise than I ever knew. Although I did not tell him of my experience I did ask him in a subsequent letter to repeat to you what he had told me. I hope he has done that. If not I would be grateful if you would ring him REDACTED. I hope that my experience has not been shared by others who have found themselves under Bill Baker's care. The moral of the story is that both Baker and the Church have a lot of soul searching to do!

Yours sincerely,

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