

Growth Through Fragility

Contracts with Individual Brothers

Preamble

The document New Beginnings with Edmund states in the section on *Growth Through Fragility* that *Any serious diminishment in living the gospel vision whether in our personal lives, as communities or in our ministries leads to death rather than life.* Such diminishment may occur when a Brother's lifestyle is out of control and a blatant contradiction to the Gospel, hence needing external supports. Pastoral Care of such Brothers necessitates that structures are created which enable them to live a more integrated, healthy, and congruent lifestyle. Such structures and supports ought to be an outcome of collaborative dialogue between brothers concerned and those vested with leadership responsibilities.

Systems which nurture the potential of the individual and advance corporate potential of the Congregation are clearly Congregational responsibilities. *Relying on God's help through prayer, personal asceticism, and the support of a compassionate and trustful community, we accept the cross inherent in living our consecration.* (Const #7)

Some Brothers need to create structures which stop them causing damage to themselves and others as well as impeding their social functioning. These structures need to be recognised in a formal manner, enabling them to continue being Christian Brothers. This formal manner implies the formation of a contract, known to Province Leadership Team members as well as to an agreed number of other people, for example a Brother's community.

At the same time, it should be noted that even with the contract, a Brother's lifestyle may still be unable to meet the minimum standards of behaviour as expressed in the Brother's proclamation to live in accordance with our Constitutions and his public vows. Then, it may be necessary for a Brother to begin a process to discern whether he should stay in the Brotherhood or alternatively, a process may have to be begun to dismiss him from the Congregation according to the Canonical Counsels (#697).

A Contract

A contract will be necessary for any Brother who has:

- been accused of some malpractice (e.g. alcohol or sexual abuse) and while an investigation takes place.
- been in a therapy program to treat inappropriate behaviours .
- been convicted of a criminal offense.
- persisted in behaviours which have significant harmful consequences to self and others (e.g. alcohol abuse, substance abuse, chronic spending). These behaviours are an unacceptable

- risk to the Congregation and the Brother himself.
- any Brother who has expressed the need for such a contract to enable a healthier lifestyle.

In the following cases, a contract may be considered where a Brother:

- had criminal charges brought against him, but was found not guilty.
- had criminal charges brought against him but the result was a *nolle pro sequi*.

The contract will take into account such issues as:

- continuing therapy/direction/mentoring/professional supervision.
- the individual's personal limitations.
- a protocol in case of a relapse, including who is to be contacted.
- a protocol when the contract is unable to be responded to in an appropriate manner.
- what is not in the contract, as suggested by any relapses.
- a time for review and renewal of the contract.
- regular attendance at support groups outside the community.
- who needs to be told of the Brother's limitations.
- the role of the community in which the Brother is a member.
- a structure for a weekly/fortnightly/monthly review of the Brother as is deemed appropriate.
- the recognition of any of the Brother's negative coping methods such as denial and what the Brother is communicating by entering into such behaviours.
- forms of behaviour which are unsuitable (e.g. viewing pornography, interstate travel or overnight stays without consulting the community or support group).
- any time restraints which need to be applied.
- travel arrangements.
- use of medication.
- the use of money.

The contract will be signed within the context of a religious ritual within the community of the Brother and guests will include all those who are members of the supporting structures.

The contracted Brother in therapy shall arrange for his therapist, support group or others whom he sees as professional support to be able to give a report to the PLT on a six weekly basis and at the very least on a quarterly basis. The essence of this report should be the Brother's faithfulness to attendance at his support structures, areas that the Brother is working on (e.g. sexual inappropriateness, substance abuse), whether progress is being made or not. In all these reports, strict adherence to the principles of confidentiality is essential.

A time may come in the future where the need of a contract no longer exists. This time will occur when the structures required to stop relapses have become very much part of the contracted Brother's daily life patterns.

Process

Inappropriate behaviour by a member of the Congregation has consequences for that person. These consequences include the developing of structures to prevent further relapses into inappropriate behaviour.

While support people can be both positive and encouraging of the Brother, there is a need to be direct in communicating expectations and direct in assessing if those expectations have been fulfilled.

Some Brothers may see the approach as outlined here as authoritarian, inhuman and inappropriate in this era of personal responsibility. However, an approach involving limitations is a direct consequence resulting from earlier inappropriate behaviour.

Some contracts will only be developed after a full assessment is carried out by Encompass Sydney. In this process, the physical, psychological and spiritual health of the Brother can be assessed by a third neutral party whose recommendations need to be acknowledged by the Congregation and the individual Brother as professional and competent.

Some criteria for deciding on the need for an assessment are:

- the medical state of the candidate.
- the need for a neutral third party.
- the ability of the person to function.
- the details available to the PLT of the Brother's lifestyle.
- the supervision and accountability structures already present in current ministry and community.

To assist in this process, the following guidelines are suggested:

- structures are presented as choices for the Brother to decide.
- choices have consequences.
- the power is with the Brother who chooses.
- this paper will be distributed to all Brothers such that they are aware of Province Leadership Team policies.

- all interactions are collaborative but the Brother, for whom the contract is being developed, needs to be aware of the consequences of his choices in making the contract.
- reviews can be both short term and long term.
- given the confidential nature of the contract, the content will be developed with two members of the Province Leadership Team.
- education in relapse prevention of the community in which the contracted brother resides is important so that the community can be supportive and aware of relapse signs.
- all other support people are requested to go through an education process to be aware of signs of likely relapse.

Action Steps

1. Distribution of this contract document:
 - to the Community Leaders for comment on **March 15, 1999**.
 - to communities by Community Leaders through a process as outlined at the Leaders' Day, 15 March 1999.
 - to the PLT at their meeting on **17 March 1999** with Dr. Gerardine Taylor from Encompass Sydney.
 - at the Fairhaven meeting of the PLT on **28 - 30 March 1999**.
2. That at least two members, of the PLT be appointed to be responsible for this area. **By March 22, 1999**
3. That the PLT decide on the Brothers who need contracts. **By 30 March 1999**
4. That the PLT members appointed in (2) above initiate the following:
 - A meeting with each Brother needing a contract, in which a basis for the initial contract will be presented and discussed. **By ???? , 1999**
 - Contracts be signed within a ritual with key people supporting that person being present. **By May 31, 1999**.
 - Further interview with the Brother on a weekly/fortnightly basis to review progress on how the contract is being fulfilled.
 - An arrangement for other key people involved in the support (such as a therapist, spiritual director, support group) to give a report (at least on a three monthly basis) assessing how the Brother is fulfilling the contract from the perspective of that support person or group.
 - the devotion of their time to this issue until contracts are set up and their are structures to maintain the contracts.