

POSSIBILITY OF A FACILITY FOR TREATMENT OF PRIESTS IN NEED OF THERAPY

In September 1990, I visited the Villa Louis Martin at Jemez Springs, New Mexico, where a Priest of my Diocese has been undergoing treatment for some months. The Villa Louis Martin is conducted by the Servants of the Paraclete. I spoke to six or seven staff members individually and sat in on a staff meeting. I was impressed by the professionalism of the work conducted at the Villa and with the atmosphere of mutual support amongst the priests who were patients.

The Superior General of the Servants was not in Jemez Springs during my stay, but I arranged a meeting with him in Albuquerque on September 15th. Whilst assuring him that I was making these enquiries solely on my own behalf and was not speaking on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops, I did sound him out about the possibility of the Servants of the Paraclete being involved in a facility for priests and/or Religious in Australia should they be invited. The following is a summary of the notes which I took in the course of my conversation with the Servant General, Father Liam Hoare:

There are forty-nine members of the Congregation of the Servants of the Paraclete, of whom five are Brothers and the rest are Priests.

All that would be needed for the foundation of a new facility would be two good Servants. Should an invitation be issued for the Servants of the Paraclete to establish a facility in Australia, two would presumably be sent (Father Liam Hoare himself would be interested in such a project when he finishes his term as Servant General in two to three years time). The Servants would tap into local resources; they would design, plan for and create a staff.

The Servants are not into the acquisition of property. They do not have funds of their own; any funds which they do receive go to the provision of scholarships to enable priests who would otherwise be unable to afford treatment to have it.

The Servants also would assist with the formulation of a program for the evaluation of seminarians.

A facility established by the Servants would not be a punitive facility.

The Servants would wish to come at the invitation of or with the support of the Australian Hierarchy.

Although the majority of priests at Jemez Springs are there for treatment for psycho-sexual problems, others are treated for severe depression, whilst still others are undergoing a re-entry program as a help to a return to active ministry.

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The Servants would design a brochure in conjunction with the local clergy and would be promulgated to all clergy and Religious Superiors, defining the Renewal Centre or whatever name might be given to such a facility. This brochure would not contain pejorative information.

A facility established by the Servants would have a theological, pastoral and therapeutic emphasis. Priests could be sent for evaluation to the Centre. The program would be educational. There would also be emphasis on preventative care - ie. psychological and pastoral care for priests still on the mission. It would be a prudent and pastoral thing to do to provide preventative care.

Advertising of the Centre would emphasize the intellectual and formational aspects.

The Centre would offer holistic, therapeutic programs.

With regard to the location of such a facility, it would need to be proximate to a nice scenic location; proximate to a major metropolis for psychiatric hospital facilities, educational and cultural features; and proximate to an airport. Their requirements, in addition to residential accommodation, would be for group meeting rooms and a chapel and possibly a swimming pool. The Servants would not be looking for elaborate accommodation.

Up to date, the Servants have dealt with Priests and Brothers at the facility at Jemez Springs. They have not yet endeavoured to reach out to Religious Sisters. They consider that this would involve a different dynamic. However, their staff ratio is about half and half male/female. The Servants would endeavour to establish a safe, non-judgmental environment.

It is important that the Priest or Brother undergoing treatment is able to return to something conducive to his sanity and his salvation. After-care is important and this involves the assistance of a sponsor during the re-entry process.

Father Hoare enquired as to whether health insurance would cover psychiatric and medicinal costs which can be considerable in a professionally run program.

The attraction of inviting the Servants to establish a facility in Australia is that this would bring the benefit of their experience in America and in the United Kingdom, which experience would be adapted to Australian culture and would tap into Australian resources. A further attraction is that the expense of such a program would be considerably less than

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that at present involved in the sending of Priests or Brothers to programs overseas. (It is costing me well in excess of \$70,000 for the treatment of the particular Priest whom I visited). The Servants have a program which is concerned with the provision of professional help, of the building of self-esteem, the provision of the support of fraternal charity and the centrality of the Eucharist. As indicated above, they would be interested in providing assistance with pre-seminary evaluation and with the formulation of a spirituality for Diocesan Clergy.

The Servants would prefer to deal with the Australian hierarchy and, should they be invited to establish a facility would ask that a liaison Bishop be appointed between the facility and the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference.

The bottom line is that Father Hoare would be happy to come out at a mutually convenient time to speak to the Bishops at their Conference for a half hour to an hour and be available to speak to Bishops individually. My query is whether it would be helpful for the provision of care for our Priests and Religious to take up this offer on the part of the Servant General.

P.S.

Whilst the facility at Jemez Springs which I visited has an emphasis on psycho-sexual problems, the Servants also conduct facilities at St. Louis and in the United Kingdom which provide programs for the treatment of alcoholism and drug abuse.

+ *Ronald Abigail*

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