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## *Saint Luke Institute*

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October 22, 1993

Right Reverent Timothy T. Kelly, OSB  
Abbot and Chancellor  
St. John's Abbey  
PO Box 2015  
Collegeville, Minnesota 56321

RE: Reverend Richard Eckroth, OSB  
SLI NO: 12814

Dear Abbot Kelly:

Thank you for your referral of Father Richard Eckroth who is, as you know, a 67 year-old Benedictine priest from St. John's Abbey in Collegeville. Father Eckroth was referred to Saint Luke Institute for evaluation following allegations that were made against him that stemmed from incidents that occurred approximately 19 or 20 years ago. According to Father Eckroth, the complainants allege that he had sexual contact with two different boys, both of whom were approximately seven years old at the time. Father Eckroth states that these allegations came to him approximately two weeks before the evaluation. Father Eckroth denies having sexual contact with either of these two boys and, in fact, denies having sexual contact with anyone in his life. It is important to note that there is another complaint that had been lodged against Father Eckroth approximately six or seven years ago. Father Eckroth is somewhat vague about the nature of this complaint, except that it was "something sexual." In light of these allegations, it was thought that a complete psychological and physical evaluation at Saint Luke Institute was justified.

Father Eckroth came to Saint Luke Institute on October 3, 1993 and completed his evaluation on October 8, 1993. Although Father Eckroth was somewhat defensive on the psychological testing component of the evaluation, we nevertheless believe that we were able to make an accurate assessment of his current psychological functioning.

When we evaluate an individual who has been having emotional and/or behavioral problems, we include an assessment of a wide variety of motivations, developmental experiences and physical factors. Our assessment protocol includes the following elements:

# CONFIDENTIAL

Rt. Reverend Timothy T. Kelly, OSB  
RE: Reverend Richard Eckroth, OSB - SLI NO: 12814

October 22, 1993  
Page 2

1. Psychosocial interview.
2. Clinical interview.
3. Physical and neurological examination.
4. Electrocardiogram.
5. Chest x-ray.
6. Psychological testing including personality and projective tests.
7. Neuropsychological testing including intelligence tests, memory tests, the Halstead-Reitan neuropsychological tests.
8. Spiritual assessment.

The final step in the evaluation process is a discussion among the evaluation team members about the client. We then meet with the client to report our findings and recommendations. This report will outline the results of our interviews and testing and will detail our recommendations.

**PSYCHOSOCIAL HISTORY:** We take a detailed background history from our clients in order to understand the impact of past events on current attitudes and behavior..... Although we gathered many details about Father Eckroth's background, we will include only the clinically relevant information in this report.

Father Eckroth was born on June 21, 1926 in North Dakota. He is the ninth oldest of fourteen children; the two children born just ahead of Father Eckroth both died when they were very young. Father Eckroth reports that their deaths, in addition to his being a somewhat sickly child, made his mother quite concerned about his health.

Father Eckroth describes his mother as a beautiful, shy and gentle person who was orphaned at age six when her own mother drowned. He describes his father as a gentleman who was honest and never seemed angry.

Father Eckroth does not recall any separation problems when he began school. He recalls that he enjoyed elementary school and liked his teachers. He was, reportedly, a good student and reports that he had several friends.

Because the allegations against Father Eckroth are sexual in nature, we took a detailed sexual history from him. Father Eckroth states that there was very little talk about sexuality in his family. He reports that there was very little open affection between family members but, nevertheless, there was a strong feeling that he was in a loving family. Father Eckroth denies any early peer sexual contact. He says there was no discussion with peers and no experimentation with his peers around sexual matters. He recalls that, in eighth grade, he got a pamphlet about sex from his mother. He says that he started to enter puberty at approximately age 13 or 14. He reports that he was embarrassed about nocturnal emissions at that time. Father Eckroth reports that he would occasionally touch himself in order to become sexually

MONK\_2470

# CONFIDENTIAL

Rt. Reverend Timothy T. Kelly, OSB  
RE: Reverend Richard Eckroth, OSB - SLI NO: 12814

October 22, 1993  
Page 3

aroused, but avoided stimulating himself to the point of ejaculation. He recalls that in prep school an older boy tried to get in bed with him, but Father Eckroth, reportedly, rebuffed him.

Father Eckroth states that when he did start engaging in masturbatory activity, it occurred approximately twice a month. Father Eckroth denies ever having sexual contact with an adult while he was young.

Father Eckroth states that he went to St. John's Prep in Collegeville, graduating in 1944. After that he attended St. John's University before going to Rome to study philosophy. He then returned to St. John's and was ordained in 1952. Father Eckroth reportedly taught philosophy at St. John's until the mid 1970s. After this he went to the Bahamas and did parochial ministry and missionary work. He describes his ministry assignments in very positive terms and states that he is happy with his present work load.

Regarding the allegations against him, Father Eckroth states that he used to enjoy taking children on outings. He reports that the Abbey owned a log cabin and that he would usually bring between five and seven boys at a time for overnight trips. He states that most of these boys were approximately ages 10 through 12, but he would sometimes bring younger children if they were accompanied by an older sibling. Father Eckroth also mentions that, at times, he would bring both boys and girls on the trip.

One of the people bringing the complaint against Father Eckroth states that Father Eckroth sexually abused him at the cabin. He reports that he was approximately six years old when Father Eckroth had anal intercourse with him. This person also reports that Father Eckroth kept a pillow over his head while the abuse occurred. He also notes that Father Eckroth warned him not to report this information to anyone else.

Another person who brings allegations states that Father Eckroth sexually abused him while at the cabin when he was six or seven years old. This person notes that Father Eckroth put his hand over his mouth while he was being sexually abused. This person reportedly feels that he was intimidated by Father Eckroth and that he was afraid that Father Eckroth might harm him if he told anyone.

Father Eckroth acknowledges that there is a similarity in the stories reported by these two men. He denies that he had sexual contact with either of these boys. He states it is not "in my nature" to be threatening to others. Father Eckroth has no explanation about why these people would bring allegations like this if they were untrue.

MONK\_2471

# CONFIDENTIAL

Rt. Reverend Timothy T. Kelly, OSB  
RE: Reverend Richard Eckroth, OSB - SLI NO: 12814

October 22, 1993  
Page 4

Father Eckroth does admit that he would bring boys into the sauna at the cabin and that both the boys and Father Eckroth would often be naked. Father Eckroth also notes that it would not be uncommon for one of these boys to request a massage. Father Eckroth states that he and the boys in the sauna would give this person a massage on their back. He says they would touch the person's back, legs, thighs and calves. Father Eckroth notes that sometimes he would request this kind of a massage and the boys would similarly touch him. Father Eckroth says that he may have touched the buttocks of some of these boys; he points out that it was very dark in the sauna because it was lit only by a lantern light. When questioned more closely about this behavior, Father Eckroth claims that he noticed nothing sexual nor felt anything sexual involved in this kind of behavior.

Father Eckroth admits that there was another allegation that surfaced approximately six or seven years ago about some inappropriate sexual incident with a boy. Father Eckroth states that the Abbot at that time spoke with the father and with the young man about the incident. The incident reportedly occurred a little after the alleged events described above. Father Eckroth was not able to remember the details of the allegation.

Regarding his sexual orientation, Father Eckroth states that he is attracted to adult women. He denies any sexual activity with any adult women or anyone else. He denies any sexual attraction to male minors. Father Eckroth states that he does not regularly engage in masturbation. He says that if he has an erotic thought, he will sometimes touch himself, but will attempt to avoid ejaculation.

**PSYCHIATRIC HISTORY:** Father Eckroth denies any family history of mental illness. He denies any emotional problems in himself. He denies any history of depression or anxiety. He denies any psychotic symptoms.

Father Eckroth states that he drinks rarely. He says he will have a rum and Coke before bed at times. He denies any drinking occurred while he was at the cabin with the boys. Father Eckroth says there have been no complaints about his drinking from others. There are reportedly no legal, physical or social consequences secondary to his drinking behavior.

In the interviews, Father Eckroth was completely oriented. There was no indication of disturbance in thought content or process. His affect was somewhat restrained; he seemed to take a cognitive approach to the allegations.

**SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT:** As part of the assessment process, Father Eckroth underwent a spiritual assessment interview with Father Bill Stumpf. Father Stumpf reports that Father Eckroth appears to have a very disciplined prayer life. He is

MONK\_2472

# CONFIDENTIAL

Rt. Reverend Timothy T. Kelly, OSB  
RE: Reverend Richard Eckroth, OSB - SLI NO: 12814

October 22, 1993  
Page 5

reportedly faithful to the Liturgy of the Hours on a daily basis. He reportedly takes a yearly retreat with either the monks at a nearby abbey or the local diocesan clergy.

Father Stumpf notes that Father Eckroth's spiritual life and work seems to have found energy around building projects associated with parish. He believes this is part of the reason he has always admired St. Joseph.

Father Eckroth reportedly notes that one of his continual spiritual challenges is patience. He sometimes reportedly finds that his parishioners exhaust his patience. Father Eckroth notes that he lives alone and has tried to adopt a very efficient use of his time. He reportedly feels more comfortable with a good deal of structure and order in his life.

Overall, Father Stumpf feels Father Eckroth is to be affirmed for his very disciplined prayer life. Father Stumpf believes that there is a certain detachment in Father Eckroth's approach to life and wonders whether this is similarly true of his spiritual life.

**LEGAL STATUS:** Father Eckroth states that there are no civil or criminal charges against him at this time.

**PHYSICAL EXAMINATION AND LABORATORY EXAMINATION:** As part of his evaluation, Father Eckroth underwent a thorough physical examination by our consultant in internal medicine. Our internist notes that Father Eckroth is in excellent health except for prostatism. He, currently, takes Hytrin, 5 mg. a day, for his symptoms. Father Eckroth underwent a prostate biopsy in May, 1993 and the results were negative. Our internist reports that Father Eckroth has been hospitalized in the past for a left hip replacement and hernia repair.

On examination, Father Eckroth is six feet tall and weighs 185 pounds. His pulse is 72 and his blood pressure is 124/70. Examination of the head and neck is normal with no evidence of thyroid pathology. Chest and cardiovascular examinations are within normal limits. An abdominal exam reveals no liver or spleen enlargement or other abnormality. His extremities are normal. Neurological exam reveals good reflexes and coordination. His EKG and chest x-ray are normal.

As part of his evaluation, Father Eckroth underwent a thorough laboratory examination. Most of the laboratory values are within normal limits. Father Eckroth's PSA is elevated, a finding taken into account by our internist who notes the prostate problems as mentioned above.

Other laboratory values are within normal limits. There is no elevation in Father Eckroth's glucose level. Liver enzymes and thyroid values are also normal. There is no evidence of any drugs in Father Eckroth's system. There is no evidence of past or

# CONFIDENTIAL

Rt. Reverend Timothy T. Kelly, OSB  
RE: Reverend Richard Eckroth, OSB - SLI NO: 12814

October 22, 1993  
Page 6

current sexually transmitted diseases. A special test of a hormone known to be related to sexual urgency is within normal limits.

Father Eckroth's cholesterol level is slightly elevated at 227/mg/dl. It seems important that Father Eckroth follow a low cholesterol diet.

Overall, our internist states that Father Eckroth is in good health. He notes his prostatism, which is currently being medicated. He also notes the elevated PSA, which seems adequately handled with a prostate biopsy four months ago.

**NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION:** As part of our evaluation, we examine the functioning of the brain since the brain mediates all perception and experience. This was particularly important in Father Eckroth's case because it is now well documented that neuropsychological impairment is correlated with sexual behavior disorders.

On the testing Father Eckroth receives a Verbal IQ score in the very superior range, a Performance IQ score in the very superior range and a Full Scale IQ score in the very superior range. Analysis of test scores reveals that Father Eckroth has no difficulties in attention and concentration tasks.

Tests of memory function show mixed results. Father Eckroth demonstrates mild impairment on delayed recall of verbal material. His facility with complex verbal material is within normal limits but, compared to his superior IQ, his memory for complex verbal material is relatively impaired.

Father Eckroth's nonverbal memory seems adequate for immediate recall but he shows mild problems in delayed recall. This is particularly true of his abilities for remembering complex nonverbal material.

Father Eckroth shows no difficulties on tests that measure abstraction and complex nonverbal problem solving. There is no evidence of sensory perceptual deficits except left ear hearing problems. Motor skills are within normal limits. Tests that measure mental flexibility and a higher level executive judgement are also within normal limits.

Overall, our neuropsychologist states that Father Eckroth shows mild impairment in verbal and nonverbal memory tasks but otherwise is neuropsychologically intact. It will be important for Father Eckroth and his therapist to take note of his memory difficulties and devise strategies that will help him get the most out of his treatment.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING:** Psychological testing is an important part of our evaluation procedure. It allows us to compare responses that our clients make to objective norms and to validate our interview impressions through test data.

MONK\_2474

# CONFIDENTIAL

Rt. Reverend Timothy T. Kelly, OSB  
RE: Reverend Richard Eckroth, OSB - SLI NO: 12814

October 22, 1993  
Page 7

Psychological testing is composed of two different parts. Personality testing assesses a client's personality traits and the strengths and weaknesses that accompany those traits. We can also assess the level of psychological distress a client is currently experiencing. Projective tests assess a client's habitual ways of handling thinking and emotional processes. It can also point to specific psychological conflict areas.

On one personality test, the MMPI-2, Father Eckroth produces a valid, although somewhat defensive, profile. The profile is similar to people who are described as somewhat shy and with social inhibitions. People like this are usually excessively sensitive about what others think and inhibited in their personal relationships. The tests also suggest that Father Eckroth has a limited range of interests especially as compared to most priests. He is likely to be less interested in the expression or discussion of feelings than his peers. There is no evidence of clinically significant levels of depression or anxiety. There is also no evidence of any psychotic disorders.

On another personality inventory, the MCMI-2, Father Eckroth again produces a valid personality profile. Several major personality trends emerge from this testing. The testing suggests that Father Eckroth greatly values meeting the expectations of others, especially those in authority. Conforming to the rules and values of others will likely be emphasized in most areas of his life. The test results suggest that this personality trait is present to such an extent that Father Eckroth will be at risk for sacrificing his more independent and negative feelings in order to minimize any conflict he feels with those in authority. Father Eckroth's wish to gain the affirmation of others, the tests suggest, will help him ease interpersonal tensions but will also cause him to sacrifice expressions of resentment or of difficult feelings. The testing also suggests that Father Eckroth's tendency towards social withdrawal will thwart his ability to get his dependency needs met by peers. It is probable that this has contributed to Father Eckroth's using his relationships with minors as a way to satisfy these needs.

The projective testing suggests that Father Eckroth has a marked tendency to simplify complex information so that he may not recognize the nuances or social demands involved in these situations. An example of this may be Father Eckroth's understanding of what it meant to be so physically intimate with minors in the sauna. Although Father Eckroth's assessment of the situation may be correct, it is limited because it does not include the sexual nature of these physical contacts.

The test results also suggest that Father Eckroth is at risk for distorting or misinterpreting information more than most adults. This will probably be more exaggerated when Father Eckroth is confronted with complicated emotional situations.

Test results further suggest that Father Eckroth has a tendency to avoid emotional stimuli when possible. People such as this are usually quite uncomfortable around emotion and are at risk for becoming socially isolated. The test results also suggest

# CONFIDENTIAL

Rt, Reverend Timothy T. Kelly, OSB  
RE: Reverend Richard Eckroth, OSB - SLI NO: 12814

October 22, 1993  
Page 8

that Father Eckroth has unusual high capacities to withstand stress. Although this is a positive characteristic in people who do not have prominent psychological problems, it also suggests that people with psychological problems will be more difficult to change. It will be important for Father Eckroth and his therapist to find ways for Father Eckroth to experience sufficient stress for him to motivate the behavioral changes necessary to overcome his difficulties.

## **DIAGNOSES:**

- |          |    |  |
|----------|----|--|
| AXIS I   | 1. | Sexual disorder not otherwise specified - unintegrated sexuality.                            |
|          | 2. | Rule-out pedophilia - homosexual type.   |
| AXIS II  | 1. | Personality disorder not otherwise specified with compulsive, dependent and schizoid traits. |
| AXIS III | 1. | Prostatism.  |
|          | 2. | Circumscribed neuropsychological deficits in memory functioning.                             |
|          | 3. | Status post hip replacement.   |

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:** We recognize that there are several specific allegations against Father Eckroth concerning sexual activity with latency age males. The similarity of these allegations and the specificity of them suggests that they are quite credible. In addition, there is another allegation regarding a sexual complaint that occurred at another time in Father Eckroth's life. We therefore believe there is a strong possibility that Father Eckroth has engaged in sexually inappropriate contact with these people. However, we take note of Father Eckroth's denial that this activity took place. We therefore cannot with certainty diagnose sexual attraction to minors. Our diagnosis above reflects our understanding that more information is needed to determine if Father Eckroth indeed has this sexual orientation.

We nevertheless believe that there is substantial evidence that Father Eckroth has been sexually inappropriate with minors. His admitted behavior with the male minors he brought to the sauna suggests that he was touching them inappropriately and allowing them to touch him in the same way. The sexual nature of these physical intimacies cannot be overlooked. Father Eckroth's lack of awareness of this component of his interaction with these minors suggests to us that, at a minimum, his sexual feelings are quite unintegrated with the rest of his personality.

The evaluation has elicited several psychosocial and psychological factors that have put Father Eckroth at risk for development of a sexual problem. His early experience of sexual repression and the interruption of the sexual developmental history are risk factors for these problems. We also believe that Father Eckroth's personality structure



CONFIDENTIAL

Rt. Reverend Timothy T. Kelly, OSB  
RE: Reverend Richard Eckroth, OSB - SLI NO: 12814

October 22, 1993  
Page 9

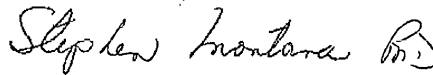
that inhibits his social interactions and gratifications from peers has probably contributed to these difficulties as well. In addition, the psychological testing reveals several risk factors including Father Eckroth's tendency to misinterpret important information.

Our recommendation is that Father Eckroth come to Saint Luke Institute for residential treatment of his issues particularly his sexual problems. We recommend that Father Eckroth undergo additional testing as soon as he begins his treatment in order to help him and the treatment staff understand his sexual orientation more completely. This testing can be accomplished in the initial stages of his residential stay. We understand that Father Eckroth has some physical problems that might delay his entry into residential treatment. It may be that resolution of these physical problems will be appropriate before he begins his psychotherapeutic treatment. Until Father Eckroth begins treatment and makes substantial progress we recommend that he have no unsupervised contact with minors. We hope to stay in touch with you to form a treatment plan that will meet Father Eckroth's physical and psychological needs.

Father Eckroth has several important strengths that will help him in his treatment. Father Eckroth's intellectual strengths and spiritual strengths will certainly be important factors in his psychological growth.

We hope this report is of help to you and to Father Eckroth. If you have any questions or if we can be of other assistance please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Stephen Montana, PhD  
Director  
Outpatient Clinical Services

SM/ng  
cc: Reverend Richard Eckroth

MONK\_2477