

**Appendix C: Letter of complaint written to Broken Rites in 1997. I received and apology from Chris Mclsaacs,** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Over two and half years ago I contacted Broken Rites; a group I had learned was formed to offer advice and support for people who had suffered sexual assault by members of the clergy. I had been sexually assaulted by a priest on a number of occasions as a child, so when I heard of Brooke Rites I was pleased to learn that at last a group was focusing on the insidious and somewhat taboo subject of the many and varied abuses by the church/s. I felt comfortable contacting Broken Rites and felt it would be very empowering for me to tell my story – a courageous step considering my lack of options regarding this matter as a small child of eight.

Unfortunately my experience with Broken Rites was disappointing due to the lack of support and validation received. I understand detailed information regarding sexual assault is required, however having to divulge such information to an unsympathetic ear, incredibly distressing. I was told “Broken Rites only goes after solid stories!”

I was asked numerous questions regarding the details of the assault. Which I expected, however I did not expect to be asked repeatedly (and on several occasions) what sexual acts took place and in such an explicit manner! Revealing this sort of information, even after extensive counselling can be traumatic. Having to reveal it to a virtual stranger over the phone, daunting to say the least.

Due to my responses to some of the questions I was told in a stern and increasingly impatient voice “you need to a clear cut story, it’s no use saying “I don’t know, I don’t remember!” I didn’t need my recollection of the abuse challenged. I needed to be believed. This resulted in me feeling like my story was not “meaty’ enough for Broken Rites to take on and investigate. I was told someone else (who was also assaulted by the priest) was needed to come forward “to verify” that the priest was a child molester. I began to feel victimized

and pressured into producing another witness (victim) for the case. I had a story! I was a victim! “

Some days later I received a call from Broken Rites. The caller informed me ■■■ had spoken to a person who used to attend the same parish as myself. This person was asked about the priest concerned. His reply? “He was an alright sort of person”. The Broken Rites member then told me that ■■■ would respect this person’s opinion of the priest, unless I could “find someone to say that he wasn’t a nice guy!” Being nice to parishioners does not exclude a priest from being a paedophile! Paedophiles masquerade behind many masks . . . that is their forte!

I was again put under pressure to produce another witness. What about your brothers and sisters? Had they been abused? I replied that they had not said anything to me when I had talked to them about the priest. I was told rather curtly by the caller “Either they know, or they don’t know!” The nature of sexual abuse is such that a sexual abuse victim can have no recall and is in denial that anything happened (of abuse) then memories cannot be procured upon request. Denial is an extremely powerful coping mechanism used by many to survive the harrowing experience of child sexual abuse.

There appeared to be a lack of understanding of the dynamics of sexual abuse and its effects. At this point I felt contacting Broken Rites proved to be of little benefit to me. In reporting my case of sexual abuse by a paedophile priest to Broken Rites I had hoped to be taken seriously and treated with the compassion and empathy required for the traumatising experience that child sexual abuse is.

I was disappointed that instead, I was treated in such a manner that it only served to perpetuate my already existing psychological distress. It became apparent to me that the person I dealt with from Broken Rites exhibited a lack of communication skills and knowledge in dealing with the psychologically and spiritually affected adult survivor of child sexual assault.

A man of the cloth assaulted me. He betrayed my trust. Through the eyes of an eight year old, here was a man of the cloth. Twenty eight years ago, there stands a man of the cloth "dedicated" to the teachings of Jesus and held in awe by many. A man of great power and influence. Respected and God-like, revered and feared. A mortal representative of God. Selfish and calculating in his pursuit of gratifying his desires in paedophilia. What hypocrisy. What an absolute betrayal of the unconditional respect and trust of an innocent eight year old girl.

Mary Rutledge