

March 8, 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

As we continue our Lenten pilgrimage of prayer, fasting, and charitable works, I would like to update you on the status of the Chapter 11 reorganization proceedings for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse. The Diocese of Syracuse filed for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the US Bankruptcy Code on June 19, 2020, to be responsible for reparation in a fair and equitable manner to those individuals who had been harmed through sexual abuse by members of our diocesan family.

At the time of the filing, there were 106 claims against the Diocese of Syracuse. Now that all deadlines for filing claims in the Chapter 11 case have passed, we know that 411 proofs of claim asserting liability for sexual abuse have been filed. This is the number of claims not persons accused. The claims involve allegations of abuse by members of clergy, religious, lay employees, volunteers and unknown or unidentified individuals dating back decades.

Sadly, this is a staggering number and even one claim of abuse is far too many! I remain committed to providing reparation for those who have been harmed and to assist in their continued healing. This is the only way we can move forward from this very dark and tragic chapter in our Church's history.

To that end, the Diocese of Syracuse entered into a process of mediation with diocesan insurers, the Diocese and the official Committee of Unsecured Creditors appointed by the United States Trustee made up of representative survivors. Unfortunately, little progress was made initially as sessions were held virtually due to the pandemic. A new mediator was appointed in June 2022. Since the appointment of the new mediator, the diocese has participated in at least 17 days of court-ordered mediation with both the insurers and the Committee, including 10 virtual sessions and 7 in-person meetings. In addition, the parties through their counsel, have participated in many informal settlement discussions that have taken place between the scheduled meetings. Despite these efforts, a global settlement has not yet been reached.

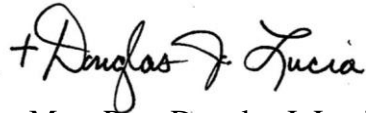
One major goal of mediation is to agree upon a pool of funds to establish a Victims' Trust from both the diocese and insurers. Parishes and other Catholic entities were invited and have agreed to contribute to the Victims' Trust. As such, claims against parishes and Catholic entities will be settled in the same way as those against the diocese. All claims against the parishes and diocese are expected to be conveyed to the Victims' Trust through a "channeling injunction." Thus, all claims would be settled from the same fund.

Naturally, the most asked question is when will a settlement be reached and how much will be contributed from the Catholic family ~ the diocese, parishes and other Catholic entities? Sadly, I do not yet have an answer to this inquiry, but I know the contribution will need to be significant. In person mediation is scheduled to resume on March 21-23 in Syracuse and I ask for your prayers that we might make substantial progress and move this process forward.

I am very aware that this process has taken far longer than any of us anticipated and it continues to weigh a heavy burden on the survivors and our entire Catholic family. As your Bishop, I need again to apologize to those who have been tragically harmed by this grave breach of trust and to all who have been so scandalized by such detrimental behavior.

I remain committed to helping all carrying this heavy cross to arrive at a new day of healing and assurance that as Church we are doing all we can for the protection of children now and for future generations. Please know of my continued prayers for all affected and for our diocesan family.

In the Name of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse