

D I O C E S E
of NEW ULM

Office of the Bishop

March 3, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This year, we will mark 15 years since the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* in response to the reports of sexual abuse of minors by clergy.

Since I became bishop of New Ulm in 2008, I have listened to many victims and survivors share their stories. I have heard from them how the abuse they experienced violated a sacred trust, often damaging their relationship with God and with their loved ones. They have told me of their struggles on the long and difficult path toward healing.

On behalf of the Church, I once again extend my deepest apologies to these victims and survivors. It takes great courage to tell their stories. They deserve not only our compassion, but also fair compensation to help them in their healing. They should also have our daily prayers for healing.

While victims and survivors have endured years and even decades of pain, the impact of sexual abuse is now more publicly evident than ever in the Diocese of New Ulm. There are a total of 101 lawsuits against the Diocese and some parishes within the area the Diocese serves. These claims were made under the Minnesota Child Victims Act, which temporarily lifted the civil statute of limitations on historic cases of childhood sexual abuse.

Faced with the large number of lawsuits, I directed that the diocesan corporation file for financial reorganization under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. The decision to file for financial reorganization has not been an easy one. But after months of prayer, examination of all options, consultation with representative clergy and lay leadership, and the counsel of financial and legal advisors, I am confident it is the right decision.

Reorganizing our finances under the guidance of the court is the fairest way to compensate victims and survivors of childhood sexual abuse by clergy, while continuing the work of the Church in our parish communities.

By no means does reorganization suggest that the Diocese is avoiding its responsibilities. Rather, reorganization is the fairest way for the Diocese to meet its obligations to victims and survivors. We must act to ensure that available assets are fairly utilized to resolve all the pending sexual abuse claims. If we instead resolved the cases on a piecemeal basis, available diocesan assets could be exhausted in the first few cases, leaving nothing for other claimants.

I understand there may be concerns about what reorganization means for local Catholics, not just because of the diocesan reorganization filing, but also because of pending claims against some parishes. Let me assure you that we will remain steadfast in carrying out the mission of the Church. The pastoral needs of people in our local parish communities will continue to be met.

Please visit the diocesan website, www.dnu.org, and see the upcoming *Prairie Catholic* for information related to diocesan financial reorganization.



The Diocese remains resolute in efforts to create safe environments for our children and youth as well as continuing our commitment to helping victims and survivors heal. To learn more about these efforts, I encourage you to visit the diocesan website at www.dnu.org and click “PROTECT & HEAL” at the top of the page.

Guided by our faith in the Lord, I am confident that filing for financial reorganization is the right decision to fairly address lawsuits by victims and survivors and to help keep us moving forward as a Church family.

I encourage all of us, as one Body in Christ, to continue to pray for those sexually abused by clergy.

May the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ bring us Hope, Healing, and Peace.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ John M. LeVoir". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend John M. LeVoir
Bishop of New Ulm