



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

October 1, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Today, I have some important but difficult news to share with you. Earlier this morning, the Diocese of Rockville Centre has filed a voluntary petition for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. This decision was not made lightly. However, in the year since the passage of the Child Victims Act, more than 200 lawsuits alleging sexual abuse have been filed against the Diocese of Rockville Centre. What became clear is that the Diocese could not continue to carry out its spiritual, charitable and educational missions while also having to shoulder the increasingly heavy burden of litigation expenses associated with these cases.

Filing for Chapter 11, we believe, is the only way for the Diocese to ensure a fair and equitable outcome for everyone involved. That is because the bankruptcy court will centralize all litigation and oversee a settlement that ensures that no survivor is left out or gets unfair compensation at the expense of another survivor.

During this period of restructuring, most Diocesan operations and ministries will continue without interruption. We anticipate that current and future financial liquidity will be sufficient to fund normal operations and services during this restructuring process. Our employees will be paid their normal wages. Benefit programs will continue, uninterrupted. Our vendors will be paid for all goods and services after filing, and ordinary operations will continue as before.

We know that most people experience the life of the Church through their parish, so it is important to note that the good work of our parishes and Catholic schools is expected to continue as normal. **Since the parishes and schools of the Diocese of Rockville Centre are separate legal entities, they are not included in this Chapter 11 filing.** But it is also the case that after Chapter 11, the Diocese will have fewer financial resources to help struggling schools and parishes.

I also would like to stress that the practice of our Catholic Faith and administration of the sacraments continues just as it has and will not be affected by this legal filing. It is my hope and prayer that operations will be unaffected during the restructuring process as we work to maintain the stability of our many ministries. We will certainly need to prioritize the charitable missions that are essential to Long Island, but the work of the Church must continue. Catholic evangelization must and will continue.

We know that this is hard for people across the Diocese to digest and especially difficult for the many people of Long Island, both Catholic and non-Catholic, who depend on the Church in so many ways. Parishioners will certainly have many questions, so it is important for everyone to understand what this decision means, to avoid any misconceptions.

A settlement will be determined based on the assets of the Diocese and will not include any parish offertory donations collected during Mass or any contributions to the Catholic Ministries Appeal. Our financial and legal advisors are maximizing the availability of insurance coverage and investment proceeds. It is important to note that in bankruptcy, all assets of the Diocese are part of the court record and therefore publicly available and that the process is completely transparent. All public information relating to the filing can be found on a dedicated Chapter 11 website, which can be found by clicking on the Chapter 11 icon found on the diocesan website at www.drvc.org.

For the Diocese, fair and equitable treatment for survivors of sexual abuse has always been a top priority. That is why we created the Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program in 2017. Since then, the program has assisted approximately 350 survivors of sexual abuse. But that program also has greatly depleted our financial resources, leaving us with fewer resources to be able to litigate the CVA cases.

Over the last year, our advisors have studied our financial and legal situation extensively and concluded that a Chapter 11 filing was the only way to ensure an equitable settlement for abuse survivors, help us manage litigation expenses and carry out our essential mission and ministries.

We will work diligently with all survivors, creditors and ministries to maintain open communication while we work toward our goal of completing a settlement and a restructuring plan that includes a comprehensive resolution for those suffering survivors. Our Diocese underwent extensive reforms in 2003 with the creation of our Office for the Protection of Children and Young People. We will continue to be vigilant in our commitment to child protection.

I ask each and every Catholic on Long Island during these painful times to embrace the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ and His Divine Mercy, and to help others carry their crosses, especially survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Together, we ask for the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary, Mother of the Church, that she continue to intercede for a spirit of holiness and mission in this Diocese and the raising up of a new generation of saints on Long Island to serve the Church and the world. All of us, as members of the faithful, are called to find strength in the Word of God and the Sacraments and to live Christ's spirit of humility, charity, compassion, sensitivity and courage. We ask for the intercession of our patroness, the courageous martyr Saint Agnes, for the fortitude to joyfully and charitably proclaim the Gospel and the Splendor of Truth in every public square.

Please know that I am praying for each and every one of you and your families and in a special way for the survivors of clergy sexual abuse. I also pray that through this restructuring process, the Diocese can emerge stronger, having resolved these issues with dignity and fairness and put everyone in a better position to move forward and heal.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *John O. Barres*

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre