



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

July 27, 2023

Dear Diocesan Family,

Peace be with you! Today, I write to announce that the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse and the Official Committee of Unsecured Creditors in our Chapter 11 case for reorganization have come to an agreement concerning the contribution to be made by the Diocese of Syracuse, including its parishes and entities to the Victims' Trust Fund. Both the Diocesan Finance Council and the College of Consultors have given their assent to this action. The amount of the contribution will be \$100,000,000.

I can tell you as shocking as the settlement amount may seem to leaders of our own parishes and other Catholic entities, more appalling and heart-rending to me is the pain and mistreatment experienced by the survivors of child and adult sexual abuse at the hands of those they thought they could trust. As the present leader of the Roman Catholic Church of Syracuse, I cannot apologize enough for the abuse which happened or for any neglect in dealing with it. This is why the final settlement will include commitments meant to strengthen our safe environment protocols to further ensure the past does not repeat itself.

I ask you not to lose sight that what we are doing is the right thing to do! The reason I initiated these proceedings a little over three years ago was so the Diocese of Syracuse could 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. Together the Catholic family – the diocese, parishes, schools, and other entities – share a role in bringing healing and reconciliation to survivors of abuse and all those affected by the abuse crisis. It is hoped that acknowledgement of the grave breach of trust and the suffering it has brought will help these men and women – our brothers and sisters in Christ – to find some comfort and solace in the midst of the painful cross they carry, and that they do not walk this way alone!

Parishes and other Catholic entities have been invited to contribute to the Victims' Trust – as they have been individually named in lawsuits, placing them at substantial risk of direct liability in State Court actions. The litigation cost, settlements or jury awards would far exceed the resources available. By contributing to the Victims' Trust, parishes and other entities will have their individual claims settled in the same way as the diocese through a "channeling injunction." Thus, all claims will be settled from the same fund.

The one thing I continue to struggle with myself is the "scandal" of it all. Besides the moral depravity of the abuse itself, I grapple also with what the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines as:

Faith • Hope • Charity

- 5 **a:** discredit brought upon religion by unseemly conduct in a religious person.
 b: conduct that causes or encourages a lapse of faith or of religious obedience in another.

I am most heartily sorry for the lay faithful and clergy – who on their own faith journeys have been so offended and harmed by the breach of trust and detrimental behavior of their co-religionists – and who, too, have had to endure suspicion and ridicule for being a Catholic believer. I can say honestly that my own faith has been shaken and tested by the abuse scandal.

It is for this reason that I have asked that the Orations (Prayers) of all Masses celebrated in observance of the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time (July 29 & 30) be those “For the Forgiveness of Sins” and that Violet/Purple vestments be worn. In our prayer, on this weekend, we ask pardon for sins of commission and omission, as we pray for all victims and survivors of sexual abuse and those who have been scarred mentally, emotionally, and spiritually by these heinous actions. In charity, we must not forget the perpetrators of such harmful behavior and pray for their own healing, conversion, and amendment.

In the Preface of Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation #1, the Church prays: “Even now you set before your people a time of grace and reconciliation, and, as they turn back to you in spirit, you grant them hope in Christ Jesus and a desire to be of service to all...” The hope these words contain will be found in the Church’s liturgy for the first Sunday of August (August 5 & 6) dedicated to the Transfiguration of the Lord.

This event takes place in the shadow of the scandal of the cross inviting us to listen to the Father’s beloved Son who seeks to lead us through the valley of the shadow of death to the garden of the Resurrection. For those disciples willing to follow Jesus, it will involve a journey full of ups and downs – yet accompanied by the Good News of Jesus Christ – and words filled with light, comfort, encouragement, hope, forgiveness, mercy, and power! It is in this moment that all of us together can encounter again the power of Jesus’ name for our lives.

I understand that you may have further questions. Accompanying this letter is a **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** document that hopefully will provide you with some answers and clarifications. In the coming days, your pastoral leaders and the Finance Council will meet to discuss your parish’s involvement in the Victims’ Trust Fund.

Let us continue to hold each other in prayer, remaining steadfast in our resolve to help all survivors of abuse with the burden they carry and to build a new Church.

In the Name of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse