



DIOCESE OF WINONA-ROCHESTER

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

55 West Sanborn Street, P.O. Box 588

Winona, Minnesota 55987

507-454-4643

507-454-8106 (Fax)

February 11, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On February 9, 2021, the Diocese of Winona-Rochester reached a settlement with the Creditors' Committee that represents the 145 survivors primarily of clergy sexual abuse. This is an important step that will lead to the completion of the bankruptcy process and exiting Chapter 11. Since the time that I first received notice of the sexual abuse claims against the Diocese, efforts were made to reach a settlement that is just and equitable to the survivors of sexual abuse.

It is my desire and hope that the compensation paid in this settlement will help the survivors heal from the pain they have experienced over these many years. We must never forget the tragedy and anguish caused by those who abused their power and positions of authority. We must stay vigilant in our unwavering commitment to protect the youth and the vulnerable in our Diocese who rely on priests, deacons, religious, and lay people to keep them safe and provide for their spiritual care.

This settlement, mutually agreed to by the Diocese and the Creditors' Committee, also includes resolution of other claims against the parishes, schools and Catholic entities within the Diocese. The \$21.5 million settlement allowed the Diocese to submit a Plan of Reorganization to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for approval as part of its Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings.

About two decades ago, national publicity made us alert and aware of the reality of clergy sexual abuse. These past several years have made it clear that our own parishes and families were not spared of this tragedy. Since the implementation of its safe environment program over 18 years ago, the Diocese has conducted over 44,000 background checks and 16,000 clergy, teachers, staff and volunteers have completed the VIRTUS safe environment training. As your Bishop, I continue to rely on and I am guided by the strong advice given by the Ministerial Standards Board to ensure accountability and proper monitoring of interactions between youth and all persons who minister in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester.

I want to express my sincere apology to all those who have been affected by sexual abuse in our Diocese. My prayers go out to all survivors of abuse and I pledge my continuing commitment to ensure that this terrible chapter in the history of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester never happens again.

Finally, I want to affirm the deep and abiding faith of the people of the Diocese. Your faith inspires me and I am grateful for how you continue to live out that faith, and the many ways you support your parish and diocese. I'm deeply grateful for the love and trust you have for our priests who are serving the Church faithfully and who work daily with you to protect our youth. Blessed are you.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ *John M. Quinn*

Most Rev. John M. Quinn
Bishop of Winona-Rochester