



For Release Thursday, December 13, 2018

**STATEMENT OF THE MOST REVEREND DAVID A. ZUBIK ANNOUNCING
THE CREATION OF THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH
INDEPENDENT RECONCILIATION AND COMPENSATION PROGRAM**

Five weeks ago, I announced that the Diocese of Pittsburgh was committed to establish an independently administered compensation program to assist survivors of clergy sexual abuse. I pledged to announce the specifics of that program before the end of the year. Today I am honoring that pledge.

As I have said many times from my heart, the protection of children and healing of victims truly is the priority of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. We have continually sought to strengthen and improve our policies over the course of the last thirty years. This effort will never be finished until the scourge of child sexual abuse is eradicated from our society. As part of this pledge, we have undertaken a number of steps to assess our policies, learn from the many voices in our communities, and seek guidance for the future.

Several months ago, I announced that the diocese engaged Professor Shay Bilchik, Director of the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University and a renowned expert on the prevention and prosecution of child sexual abuse to conduct a comprehensive review of all diocesan practices related to the protection of children and young people.

I have now completed listening sessions in all vicariates of the diocese. Together with everyone in attendance at those diocesan wide sessions, I have heard again first hand of how sexual abuse suffered at the hands of clergy has damaged innocent young people and the families who love them. I have promised to take what I have heard in these sessions, as well as the recommendations of Professor Bilchik, and present them in substantive Plans of Action that will be released in the form of a pastoral letter before March 6, the beginning of our Lenten season.

As for the survivors' compensation program, the payment of money cannot heal the scars of sexual abuse inflicted upon a young person. However, what compensation can do is to help acknowledge the scourge of past clergy sexual abuse. Secondly, it can assist those brave survivors as they journey to find peace and happiness in their lives.

Therefore, today I am announcing the creation of the Diocese of Pittsburgh Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program for claims of clergy sexual abuse of minors. This independently administered compensation program will be funded by the diocese.

There is no way to know at this time the number of claims that will be brought forward. And while the financial commitment of the diocese will be substantial, I am not able today to indicate what that amount will be. But I can tell you that the diocese will fund the program through investments held from the previous sale of historical diocesan assets such as the Saint Joseph Protectory and other closed institutions. Additional program funding may very well need to come from the future sale of diocesan owned, downtown properties.

Let me be clear. No funds for this program will come from *Our Campaign for the Church Alive!*, from Catholic Charities, parishes, schools, or any other funds designated for a specific use by donors. Nor have such funds been used in the past to compensate victims.

This new compensation program will be independent of and separate from all other ongoing diocesan efforts to assist survivors of clergy abuse.

In turning to the features of this new reconciliation and compensation program, I will first note that any such program designed to compensate survivors of abuse must be more about the survivors than about the payment of money. It is about recognizing the harm done by past abuse and of our continuing the pledge of taking every appropriate action to prevent the occurrence of future abuse. We believe that it is important for us to help survivors resolve their claims quickly. In our search for a capable, effective and independent party to administer this fund, the Diocese of Pittsburgh, like many other dioceses, recognized the unique skills of Mr. Kenneth R. Feinberg and Ms. Camille S. Biros. Mr. Feinberg and Ms. Biros are nationally recognized claims administration experts renowned for their abilities to manage and resolve complex claims programs.

Except for the funding, the program is wholly independent from the diocese. The program is designed to help survivors come forward in an atmosphere where their interests are secure and respected, without the uncertainty and stress of litigation. The Administrators of the program will have complete autonomy to determine eligibility of individual claims. They will also determine the amount of compensation for victims who come forward with a claim.

Finally and most importantly, I again want to express my deep sorrow and regret for the pain inflicted upon survivors of clergy sexual abuse and their families. I can't offer that apology enough.

At this point, I would like to introduce Mr. Feinberg and Ms. Biros as they will take the lead in providing further details of the program and how the substance of this program provides for survivors. Out of respect for the independence of this program, I ask that you direct your questions to Mr. Feinberg and Ms. Biros following their presentation. Their expertise and authority in this effort are why they are here today.