



BISHOP EDWARD B. SCHARFENBERGER

March 15, 2023

**“Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.
If one member suffers, all suffer together with it.” 1 Corinthians 12:14, 26**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I begin this letter by renewing my sincere apology to all those who have suffered sexual abuse by those clerics or Church personnel who violated their position of trust. I am so very sorry for the suffering they endured, and I pray for them every day. The Diocese remains committed to helping Victim/Survivors find hope and healing and to creating a safe environment for all, especially our children.

As a pastor, I want to help all survivors find healing of body, heart and soul which does include arranging for financial redress. You likely recall that last summer I proposed a global mediation plan with the goal of making it possible for each Victim/Survivor to be assisted with some financial means in a fair way to help in their healing. After many months of focused negotiation, the global mediation plan was not approved. Litigation cost and settlements or jury awards will exceed our resources, and the Diocese will be unable to continue to litigate or settle these claims.

For that reason, and after much prayer, study and consultation with diocesan consultative bodies which include many lay persons who have expertise in these matters, the Diocese of Albany has filed for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the United States Bankruptcy Code.

This is a very difficult decision. But after assessing all reasonable possibilities to satisfy the claims, reorganization is considered the best and fairest course of action for the Victim/Survivors and for the well-being of the Diocese, its parishes, agencies, and institutions. We believe this is the only way we can provide just compensation for all who suffered the egregious sin of sexual abuse, while ensuring the continued commitment of the Diocese to the mission of Christ.

A Chapter 11 filing stops the collection of debts and legal actions and enables the Diocese to form a Reorganization Plan that will detail how available assets will be used to settle claims and negotiate reasonable settlements. Had the Diocese not filed under Chapter 11, it would face the continuation of multiple civil actions and trials, a slow, unpredictable, and costly process that would require years of court involvement and those claimants who filed suits first would receive all available funds to pay Victim/Survivors. As a result, later claimants would receive nothing. Most importantly, such lengthy proceedings delay justice for the Victim/Survivors and only prolong their pain and suffering.

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY
40 NORTH MAIN AVENUE
ALBANY, NY 12203
SHEPHERD@RCDA.ORG
(518) 453-6611

I am sure you are concerned how this Chapter 11 filing affects your parish. The parishes are separately incorporated under New York State's Religious Corporations Law. The ministries and operations of parishes and schools should not be directly affected by the Diocese's Chapter 11 proceeding.

As the Chapter 11 process moves forward, we will continue the work of healing and reconciliation, both for the Victim/Survivors and our diocesan family. Through all of this, we will remain focused on Christ's mandate to preach, teach, and sanctify, to reach out to our brothers and sisters suffering from sexual abuse, to serve those in need, and to be present to the community, as we have been for the past 176 years of our diocesan history.


A special page about our reorganization is on the diocesan website, www.rcda.org/reorganization. It includes reorganization details, a "What You Need to Know" section that answers frequently asked questions, Protecting Children and Safe Environment resources, information on how to report sexual abuse, and contact information for the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator, Noelle Marie. This site will be updated as new information becomes available. If you have specific questions regarding the reorganization, you can call 518-453-6734 or email chancellor@rcda.org.

To reiterate our recent statement in the March 2023 solicitation for the Diocesan Appeal:

All funds raised for the Diocesan Appeal are used for programs, services, and ministries for parishes. No Diocesan Appeal contributions are used for the settlement of legal cases. This also applies to gifts and payments to the Re-Igniting Our Faith campaign and restricted funds in The Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany.

I remain immensely grateful for the commitment you have made to support and strengthen our Diocese over the years. I humbly ask for your prayers for the Victim/Survivors and for the Diocese as we move forward in this process. "Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth."

Faithfully yours,



Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger