



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

Office of Communications • *The Long Island Catholic* • *Fe Fuerza Vida*

50 North Park Avenue, Rockville Centre, NY 11570

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14 August 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE PRAYS FOR HEALING AS CHILD VICTIMS ACT OPENS *Extends its Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program*

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, August 14, 2019 - The Diocese of Rockville Centre prays that all survivors of sexual abuse, who starting today can file claims in state court under the recently passed Child Victims Act (CVA), may begin to experience some measure of healing. The one-year window to file suit under the CVA opens today, August 14, 2019. Hundreds, if not thousands of lawsuits are expected to be filed across New York State against dioceses, parishes, municipalities, public schools, hospitals and a broad range of not-for-profit charitable organizations, both religious and non-religious.

“Our Church continues to suffer as a result of past sins of sexual abuse of minors,” said Most Reverend John O. Barres, Bishop of Rockville Centre. “Victim survivors of abuse and their families also continue to carry the terrible effects of that abuse.”

The Child Victims Act (CVA) was signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo on February 14, 2019. The CVA provides a one-year suspension of the statute of limitations for bringing legal claims resulting from sexual abuse, regardless of where or when the abuse occurred, whether committed by members of the clergy, teachers, coaches or family members. “The legislation now recognizes that child sexual abuse is an evil, not just limited to one institution, but a tragic societal ill that must be addressed in every place where it exists,” the New York State Catholic Conference said in a statement earlier this year.

The Diocese of Rockville Centre takes seriously and investigates all allegations of sexual abuse. We commend the courage of those who have and will come forward to share their experiences and wish to see justice, healing and reconciliation prevail. While the ultimate effects of the Child Victims Act on the Diocese of Rockville Centre and its parishes are not yet known, and may not be known for some time, we expect the daily work of the diocese’s many ministries to continue uninterrupted. Bishop Barres and his leadership team at the Diocese of Rockville Centre have been working for months with financial and legal experts to prepare for this day.

Through its robust reporting mechanisms, the diocese has released the names of all clergy and employees accused of the sexual abuse of a minor, whether credible or not, to the proper law enforcement authorities. The majority of clergy accused of abuse, most of which happened decades ago, have died; others have left the priesthood - and the name of every single person accused, whether credible or not,



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has been turned over to law enforcement. The diocese continuously works to strengthen its efforts towards child protection, abuse prevention and pastoral outreach to survivors. Through our Child Victims Assistance Program, the diocese reports all allegations of sexual abuse of a minor to the appropriate district attorney. Allegations of abuse are thoroughly investigated. Members of the clergy against whom a credible and substantiated claim of child abuse has been made are permanently removed from ministry.

In 2017, the Diocese of Rockville Centre initiated the Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program (IRCP) to provide a confidential mechanism for survivors to be heard, to receive compensation and some measure of healing and justice. The diocese intends to continue this program for the foreseeable future, even after the CVA takes effect, so survivors can, if they wish, continue to be heard in a fair, respectful, confidential and timely way. To date, 370 people have filed claims with the IRCP. The vast majority of claimants - 277 to be exact—have accepted compensation totaling just over \$50 million, with 75 to 80 claims still being processed.

The IRCP builds on the reforms and best practices for protecting children in the Catholic Church, developed in 2002. Among the proactive procedures that have been integrated into every dimension of the Catholic Church's life for many years are: outreach of Bishops and survivors' assistance coordinators to survivors and their families, a firm zero tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse, immediate reporting and cooperation with civil authorities, audits of our diocese and parishes, the ongoing training of clergy, employees and volunteers to identify and prevent child abuse, extensive background checks on all clergy, employees and volunteers, and thorough screening of our seminarians preparing to become priests. These are just some of the examples of the proactive procedures which have been integrated into every dimension of the Catholic Church's life for many years.

In a letter to the People of God on August 10, 2019, Bishop Barres reminded parishioners that no Catholic Ministries Appeal or parish donations have been or will be used to fund compensation paid to sexual abuse survivors. The funds for the IRCP came from strong investment returns the diocese was fortunate to have. Diocesan insurance programs also helped fund the compensation program. "Please know that parish collections and financial donations made through the Catholic Ministries Appeal will continue to be used, consistent with our commitment to our parishioners, to support the diocese, and its ministries and pursue the goals of the Catholic Ministries Appeal. The parish offertory and Catholic Ministry Appeal funds have not and will not be used to resolve claims for clergy sexual abuse," said Bishop Barres.



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As part of its preparation for the Child Victims Act, the diocese in May created an Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) to review its financial position and related party transactions. The three members of the IAC were chosen by the Board of Trustees of the DRVC to provide an independent analysis based on their years of expertise in financial restructuring. No member of the IAC has had any previous connections to or affiliations with the diocese.

The chairman of the IAC is Arthur J. Gonzalez, a Senior Fellow at the NYU School of Law and the former Chief Judge of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York. The other two members of the committee are Melanie L. Cyganowski, who heads the restructuring practice at Otterbourg P.C., and Harrison J. Goldin, senior managing director and CEO of Goldin Associates. Judge Cyganowski is a former Chief Judge of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of New York, while Mr. Goldin has helped to ensure the financial survival of numerous firms facing complex financial challenges over the last several decades and served for 16 years as Comptroller of the City of New York.

The diocese has diligently prepared over the last several months to meet the challenges presented by the Child Victims Act, while ensuring it continues to meet its responsibilities to parishioners and its ministries. The diocese also continues its efforts to extend to survivors of abuse: pastoral care, healing and support services.

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For more information visit www.drvcchildvictimsact.com and www.drvc.org.

About The Diocese of Rockville Centre

The Diocese of Rockville Centre (www.drvc.org) was formed in 1957 and covers 1,198 square miles in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The diocese serves approximately 1,428,296 baptized Catholics* (total population in both counties is approximately 3 million). There are 133 parishes plus 1 campus parish in 115 towns. The diocese is blessed with 392 priests in active ministry, 801 religious women, 34 Brothers and 285 permanent deacons. In 2018, 15,446 baptisms, 14,714 confirmations, 13,638 First Holy Communion and 2,569 Catholic marriages took place in the diocese. There are 13,722 students in Catholic elementary schools; 10,512 students in Catholic high schools and 4,980 students in higher institutions. There are 45 Catholic elementary schools (41 parish or regional and 4 private), 9 high schools (2 diocesan, 2 parish and 5 private) and one Catholic college (Molloy College, Rockville Centre) in the diocese. In 2018, there were 75,727 children in parish Faith Formation programs taught by 10,000 volunteer catechists. In 2018, Catholic clergy and community provided consolation to families and loved ones of 9,955 deceased Catholics at 3 diocesan and 20 parish cemeteries. Catholic Health Services (CHS) of Long Island is comprised of six hospitals, three health care centers, four homes for the aged, a regional home care and hospice network, and a community-based agency for persons with special needs. More than 17,500 employees and 4,600 credentialed physicians work within the CHS system. Catholic Charities provides *Care With Dignity...Life With Hope* to the poor, isolated, vulnerable, and disadvantaged on Long Island. In 2018, more than 600 staff members and 400 volunteers provided over 1.4 million face-to-face services to 45,460 people of all faiths and backgrounds from 60 service sites in Nassau and Suffolk counties. The single largest outreach to the People of God on Long Island is through the diocesan media outlets. The diocese maintains vibrant



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Facebook, Twitter and Instagram platforms. Catholic Faith Network, the diocesan television station broadcasts 24/7/365 to over millions of homes; *The Long Island Catholic* Magazine, the official diocesan print publication is mailed 10 times per year to over 12,000 subscribers; the weekly LICatholic E-newsletter is emailed to 8,000 recipients. The diocesan website drvc.org averages approximately 18,000 unique visitors each month; *Fe Fuerza Vida*, the official Diocesan Spanish-language newspaper has a circulation of 11,000 and is printed ten times each year. (5/19) *As of 2018

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