



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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

June 19, 2020

Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

Grace and peace be with you! Today, I write to share with you the news that after considerable consultation with Diocesan Administration, the Diocesan Finance Council, the College of Consultors, the leadership of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and the Priests and Pastoral Leaders of the Diocese of Syracuse, I have authorized the filing of a Chapter 11 reorganization case for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, New York before the United States Bankruptcy Court, Northern District of New York.

I have taken this action in light of the financial impact of the Child Victims Act (CVA) on the Diocese, as well as the economic downturn precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. When I became your Bishop on August 8th last year, it was just before the start of the CVA window and I was asked whether the Diocese would have to follow the paths of other dioceses in the United States who had made such filings. At the time, my answer was a hopeful “No” due to the Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program (IRCP) conducted in recent years by the Diocese of Syracuse.

Unfortunately, this has proven not to be the case, and at present the Diocese has over 100 lawsuits pending against it. This number could grow, especially in view of the fact that the CVA window is expected to be extended until August 2021. Without a reorganization, the Diocese and claimants will face a slow, unpredictable and costly process that would require years of court involvement. Such a protracted process would delay justice for the victims and only prolong their pain and suffering. The challenge this situation presents our Diocese is simply that one jury award could so diminish our assets that we would have little or nothing with which to resolve the other claims or carry on the important ministries of the Diocese.

From the start of my ministry among you, it has been my intent to make reparation to all of the victims of sexual abuse for acts perpetrated against them by clergy, employees or volunteers of the Diocese of Syracuse. However, the growing number of CVA lawsuits against the Diocese presents a risk that those claimants who filed suits first or pursued their claims more aggressively would receive a much greater portion of the funds available to pay victims, leaving other claimants (potentially, even some who have suffered more) with little or nothing. In order to ensure that victim claims are treated justly and equitably, I feel it is necessary to enter into Chapter 11 where available funds will be allocated fairly among all victims in accordance with the harm each suffered.

I want to be very clear that this action is not to hinder claims by victims of sexual abuse. It is just the opposite! It seeks to establish a process by which claims will be treated in a just and equitable way. I know not everyone will see it in this manner and to those whose wounds are opened again or whose faith is shaken because of these proceedings, I am truly sorry. However, since my coming among you, I have not shied away from tackling the problems we face as a faith family. My approach has been to seek a balance;

Faith • Hope • Charity

whether in parish planning and re-configuration, dealing with the Coronavirus, and now in helping both victims of sexual abuse and our Diocese to move forward from this sad and painful chapter.

On the Diocesan web page at www.syrдио.org you will be able to find the latest information on the Chapter 11 proceedings and follow its progression in the days ahead. Included will be a quick FAQ sheet to help you understand what today's announcement involves. The web page will also link to a report of the Diocese's response to past child sexual abuse claims and the important work of our Diocesan safe environment program. All claims of abuse are decades old, dating back from 1950 to the early 1990s.

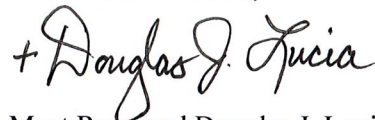
It is important to note that it is only the corporation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, New York that has filed for reorganization before the U.S. Bankruptcy Court. The parishes within the Diocese, the Foundation including the Hope Appeal, Catholic Charities, Catholic schools, and other entities associated with the Catholic Church of Syracuse are separate corporations and are not directly involved in these proceedings.

Today's action will require the Diocese to be under court supervision in its Chapter 11 case for many months. However, after exhaustive study by myself and those in Diocesan Administration, I feel it is the only way we can address victims' claims in the most fair and equitable manner, while maintaining the vital ministries and mission of the Diocese.

It is my hope that during this process of reorganization and following its completion, we will continue to pray for the healing of those who had been harmed during this very dark chapter of the Church. As your Bishop, I must again, apologize for these heinous acts and ask you all to join me in our diocesan commitment that these acts will never take place again.

In this matter, we place ourselves under the loving care of the Sacred Heart of Jesus praying that He will make our hearts more like His through this time of purification and reparation. Please know my prayers for you and your loved ones continue and I ask humbly for your prayers for me and the Church of Syracuse.

In the Name of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse