

This weekend, I pass along to you an update concerning the bankruptcy proceedings. In April, it was announced that the Diocese of Buffalo, its parishes and Catholic affiliates agreed to a \$150 million payment to survivors of sexual abuse in a settlement with the Creditors Committee. This represents our best hope and opportunity for emerging from the filing of Chapter 11 bankruptcy begun 5 years ago, providing the most equitable model for compensating victims while continuing our vital ministries throughout Western New York. Parishes will contribute \$80 million through cash assets and an additional \$30 million through real estate proceeds. It is noteworthy that 50% of parishes and Catholic organizations, ours included, have lawsuits filed against them or have inherited liabilities from closed parishes, and that over 130 of these cases are not perpetrated by clergy. By meaningfully contributing to the settlement fund, each parish participates in the effort to bring some measure of justice and healing to those affected by abuse while securing release from these suits and obtaining legal protection from additional claims if and when the statute of limitations is re-opened as has been the case in other states. We continue to be vigilant against abuse and independent audits demonstrate that we are in compliance with Protecting God's Children and NYS Attorney General Mandates to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

Even with the best efforts and intentions, no doubt, this stirs up in all of us various emotions, and there is much still to be resolved in our hearts. Sin hurts. Sin hurts, and as a Church called to be the compassionate presence of Christ, this hurt is shared by all of us (I am with you in this – the priesthood I have given my entire life over to has been overshadowed by this since the summer I was ordained). Indeed, the cost is steep. Let alone the spiritual (!!!), reputational, emotional ramifications, etc., in financial terms approximately \$100,000 from Immaculate Conception, as well as \$1.7 million from St. Peter (St. Bernard's is included here, St. Raphael is accounted for separately here) is being contributed from our cash reserves as well as the proceeds from the pending sales of St. Raphael Church and Rectory, the house on Plank Rd. owned by Immaculate Conception and St. Bernard's Rectory. St. Raphael School and St. Bernard's grass lot remain listed for sale.

By July 15th, these various assets will have been formally set aside and designated for the settlement, meaning that our current offertory and contributions from this point going forward will be ours: for ministries, programming, St. Peter School, faith formation, retreats, parish staffing, operations and utilities, service and charity, etc. ... all those things that make up our mission as Church. We have enough resources to continue our good work and have been positioning ourselves for this day for some time, responsibly undertaking the needed capital projects, getting in front of the lengthy sale process of selling properties, addressing the school budget, weaning ourselves off of investment income, keeping our operations efficient (you know, all those things they 'teach' you in seminary...) so that this would not result in our defeat but in our resurrection, so that we can move forward.

I plan to share with you more next week some of the partnerships that we have formed with Hallow and Catholic Parenting Initiative and within our local community. There are plans in the works to expand our faith formation programming beyond the classroom and offer meaningful support to families amid their struggles in this day and age. We have exciting things going on in the school and are proud of our students – come and see! Our spiritual programming has been synchronized across our family of parishes and our ministries and organizations continue to serve the needs of our parishes and communities. In the Church universal, there is a new Pope and young people in the United States are beginning to return to the faith. Our local Renewal is allowing us to tap into some of this momentum and reclaim our hope. Come join us in that.

Peace, Fr. Luke