



Love One Another **February 12, 2014**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

On February 12, 2014, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee filed its Plan of Reorganization in our Chapter 11 Bankruptcy proceeding. This is the next major step toward ending the bankruptcy and returning our focus to the primary mission of the Church; proclaiming the Gospel, worshipping more fully and serving our sisters and brothers in need.

It's been over three years since our Chapter 11 petition was filed, but we are turning a corner. A Plan of Reorganization is what allows the archdiocese to emerge from bankruptcy once it is confirmed by the court. This Plan demonstrates both our commitment to abuse survivors and our commitment to serving the people of God in southeastern Wisconsin. It's time for us to get back to what the Church is supposed to be doing. It's time for the archdiocese to return its focus to its ministry. Outreach to and the support of abuse survivors will always be part of that ministry.

Nothing I can say or do can change the past. The abuse suffered by survivors sickens me. When I arrived in Milwaukee four years ago, I found a faithful community of Catholics who were angry and ashamed that trusted priests abused innocent children, and embarrassed about how some Church leaders responded.

But I also found a Catholic community committed to making sure nothing like this could ever happen again. For years now, and continuing with my unyielding commitment, rigid protections have been put in place, which we strictly follow. Education, training and safe environment initiatives have been implemented. Stringent policies and procedures have been rigorously observed and audited annually for compliance. Documents and information about abusive priests have been publicly shared. I promise to remain vigilant to all of these commitments.

Abuse survivors have consistently told me this is not about the money and I believe them. No amount of money could ever be enough to restore what was taken from them. People were robbed of a part of their lives and I understand that nothing we do today can change that; nonetheless, I want to do the best I can to help abuse survivors.

I am sorry for what happened to abuse survivors and I understand our obligation to love and care for those who were harmed. So, a large part of the Plan outlines our permanent commitment to their ongoing support. I can't change the past, but what I can do is to make sure they receive the therapy assistance they need.

We've started to see some healing these past years, but it's going to take much more time. That's why the Plan includes a Lifetime Therapy Fund. I also want to take this opportunity to renew my invitation to personally meet with any abuse survivor who would find it helpful.

So what does the Plan do? This Plan of Reorganization renews our pledge and commitment to abuse survivors, and renews our spiritual commitment to the work of the Church in southeastern Wisconsin. First and foremost, the Plan provides abuse survivors the assurance of therapy for as long as they need it. Second, the Plan takes whatever unrestricted archdiocesan assets that remain and gives them to abuse survivors of diocesan priests. Third, it pays the cost of the bankruptcy, as required by bankruptcy law; mainly legal and accounting fees.

The length of the Chapter 11 process and the legal costs associated with it has depleted archdiocesan resources. What many people do not realize is that the archdiocese must pay the lawyers on both sides. So every decision the creditors' committee made to pursue assets like parish investments, school funds or other charitable trusts that didn't belong to the archdiocese, depleted our resources even further.

One asset we do have, however, is our insurance policies. In the interest of abuse survivors we have aggressively pursued action against our insurance companies. Our lawsuit against Lloyds of London has resulted in a settlement that will contribute millions of dollars to pay for the Plan. We will continue to pursue litigation against other insurers to benefit abuse survivors.

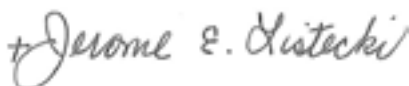
The costs of the bankruptcy are the responsibility of the archdiocese and the Plan must outline how we expect to pay those bills. To make the Plan work financially, we have taken the few remaining properties we own -- mostly vacant land -- and converted them to cash by using them as collateral to secure a loan from the Cemetery Perpetual Care Trust. Instead of depending upon an unstable real estate market, we have been able to secure more for these properties by using them as collateral for this loan. This puts an end to any speculation about the money that was always intended for cemetery perpetual care and avoids the expense of a lengthy court appeal, which could take another year or more. Since no bank would ever lend the archdiocese the amount of money needed to pay for the Plan, this loan makes sense.

So although we hope to emerge from Chapter 11 soon, because of all these expenses, we will emerge with at least \$7 million of debt. The archdiocese has historically operated on a balanced budget, so the burden of paying off this debt will certainly be part of our penance. I wish we wouldn't have had to spend the past three years and millions of dollars on attorneys' fees to get to this point, but now we have a Plan that moves us forward.

I feel confident about the future of the Church in southeastern Wisconsin. Confident because of the faith we share in Jesus Christ. Confident that the good work of the Church conquers the evil of clergy sexual abuse. I am confident, mainly because of you, the faithful Catholics in parishes across this archdiocese, who live your faith every day.

So now is the time for the archdiocese to emerge from Chapter 11. Now is the time for the archdiocese to turn a page on this ugly chapter of our history, not forgetting our past, but looking forward to a future guided by the Holy Spirit. Because of the lessons we've learned, we will be a stronger, better Church as we continue to proclaim the Gospel, and continue our works of education, service and charity. We do so as we fulfill the mandate of Jesus Christ to Love One Another.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Jerome E. Listecki
Archbishop of Milwaukee