



Letter of Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ
Our response to the harm caused by clergy sexual abuse

March 16, 2023

Dear Parishioners and Friends of the Diocese of Oakland,

Today, I write about an important moment in our journey toward rebuilding Christ's Church, a moment in which I ask for your support.

You may have read or heard about a California state law which opened a three-year window for individuals to bring otherwise barred or expired claims for sexual abuse suffered as a child. Since the closing of the filing window on December 31, 2022, we have been informed there may be approximately 330 lawsuits filed against our diocese.

As the court continues to process the lawsuits, the total magnitude will become clearer. However, it is increasingly evident we face a monumental challenge. I have therefore been working with our College of Consultors, our Diocesan Finance Council, and our staff and advisors to discern the best way to support compassionate and equitable compensation for survivors and ensure the continuation of vibrant, Christ-centered parishes to serve our faithful. This reality has a direct impact on our Mission Alignment Process, which is critical to our future.

I want to let you know the Diocese is giving strong consideration to filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. After much prayer and thoughtful advice, I believe bankruptcy can provide a way to support all survivors in their journey toward healing in an equitable and comprehensive way. It will also allow the diocese to reorganize our financial affairs so we may continue to fulfill the sacred mission entrusted to us by Christ and the Church.

In this Lenten season, let us pray for one another, that we may embrace God's redemptive love. Mindful that He has promised to remain with His Church forever, we seek His Divine Mercy and take comfort in the sure promise of Christ's Resurrection.

Most Rev. Michael C. Barber, SJ
Bishop of Oakland