



ARCHDIOCESE
OF
SAINT PAUL &
MINNEAPOLIS

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

March 26, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

One year ago this month, Pope Francis bestowed on me the honor and responsibility of leading this Archdiocese. You may recall that it was a time of considerable uncertainty and unrest. We were trying to make sense of unspeakable harms that occurred over many decades. The abuse crisis had led to resignations, other personnel changes and legal challenges. There was a call for justice and a need for healing, reform and action.

Since arriving in our Archdiocese, I have come to know this local Church – and many of you – and I consider that a blessing. I want to take a few moments to offer some updates, seek your advice, and express my gratitude.

First, I can assure you that through consultation and purposeful corrective actions, and with an unwavering commitment to improve, we are together building a healthier, more responsive and more accountable local Church. Your prayers have undoubtedly been a huge part of that.

As you may recall, just over a year ago, the Archdiocese entered into a Settlement Agreement with the Ramsey County Attorney's Office relating to the protection of children. Since then, the Archdiocese has been periodically reporting on our progress in Ramsey County Court. Not only have we been found to have complied with the spirit and letter of the Agreement, but the Archdiocese has been commended for our cooperative work with the county attorney's office – and others – to protect children.

Over the past few months, many of you have asked about our remaining legal challenge: bankruptcy. You want to know if the Archdiocese is doing everything it can to ensure that those who were harmed receive fair compensation. You have also asked how your parish and the entire local Church will survive this and continue with their missions.

I can assure you that our goal has been to provide fair compensation as soon as possible. We have liquidated possessions, sold buildings, collected other assets, and negotiated with insurance carriers. We have managed to gather more than \$155 million, all with the hope of compensating claimants and finally bringing an end to the bankruptcy.

We know that those who have been harmed deserve justice sooner rather than later, and we realize that prolonged litigation works counter to our desire to maximize the amount available for victims because legal fees and costs, which are already substantial and grow the longer this goes on, reduce the proceeds available to victims. We also know how that the uncertainties of the ongoing litigation have made it difficult for many of our parishes and parishioners to stay focused on our mission. Please join me in praying that the matter might soon be brought to a resolution.

At the same time, I ask for your continued prayers for those who have suffered abuse. I can attest that many have suffered in silence for a long, long time. It may be someone sitting next to you at Mass, on the bus or a train, or at your family dining table. We want to create welcoming environments for those who have been harmed while embedding into our culture the changes necessary to create the safest possible environments for all.

If you know of a way that our Church could do more to help, please let me know. Reach out in whatever way is best for you. We want your advice. My contact information is at the bottom of this letter.

I thank you. We are, together, setting a new course. To be sure, we have much work ahead. But, through your efforts, this local Church is positioned to accomplish so many positive things and to continue the vital acts of service it performs every day. In taking stock of where we have been, where we are now and where we are headed, I am most grateful for our present opportunities. God willing – and with your help – we will continue moving toward a better future.

May God bless you and your families.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard A. Hebda". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis