

Common Questions & Answers

We are grateful to God that on December 4th, the court confirmed the Plan that resolves and ends the Chapter 11 / Bankruptcy Case for the Diocese of Rockville Centre and all our parishes.

As you know, to compensate abuse survivors and resolve all parish lawsuits, the Diocese and every parish made a contribution to the settlement. To further protect the parishes from any past liability, it was necessary for every parish to enter into an abbreviated Chapter 11. That process is also completed, and now our Parish can get on with the work of proclaiming Jesus Christ, free from the cloud of bankruptcy and historical lawsuits.

We pray for all survivors of child abuse, that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the compassion of others, they may find healing and comfort. We pray for our parishes and all ministries that serve God and the common good of all people on Long Island, that Mary, Mother of the Church will intercede for us. Out of this dark chapter in the Church's history, we look to a time of restoration, to a Church purified and eager to bring the saving message of Jesus Christ to all people.

1. What has happened to the Church on Long Island?

The New York State Legislature passed the Child Victim's Act in 2019 which allowed historical lawsuits to be filed for child sexual abuse, regardless of how many years ago the alleged abuse occurred. The number of lawsuits filed against our Diocese, our parishes, and schools was too many to resolve one at a time in court. Trials could have devastated our parishes and resulted in many abuse survivors receiving little or no compensation because of a "first come, first served" system. The legal costs alone involved in taking these cases to trial over years would have been a significant burden on each parish. Chapter 11 (Bankruptcy) allowed the Diocese and parishes to settle all the lawsuits equitably while continuing the work of the Church.

2. Why does my parish have to declare Chapter 11 Bankruptcy?

For any individual or organization to resolve past liabilities (historical matters for which it could be sued), it is necessary to obtain a "release / discharge" in bankruptcy. Therefore, the only way that parishes could protect themselves in the future from lawsuits involving matters from the past, was to obtain the discharge afforded through bankruptcy. All parishes are completing the same process. Thankfully, our parishes were able to complete a significantly abbreviated Chapter 11 process.

3. Does Chapter 11 Bankruptcy mean that my parish is in jeopardy or closing?

No. There are no parishes closing in the Diocese of Rockville Centre as a result of this Chapter 11 process. Parish bankruptcies were agreed upon between the parties to the case and were completed within 48 hours. This process is not expected to affect parish work or ministries.

4. **Did Catholic Ministries Appeal donations get used to settle lawsuits?**

No. Catholic Ministries Appeal (CMA) donations support the ministries of the whole Church on Long Island, and their use is considered restricted, meaning, they could **not** be used to settle lawsuits. CMA donations support our parishes, our schools, our outreach programs for the poor, the training of future priests, and care for our retired clergy. That is why the work of the CMA is more important than ever. The Ministries Appeal is here to help support our parishes and schools, especially now that we are emerging from this difficult time in our Church's history.

5. **Did donations to my parish get used to settle lawsuits?**

The fact is all the resources that the Church has are the result of the support of the faithful over generations. Even returns on investments and parish rental incomes would not have been possible if people had not donated the resources to build parishes and make investments. So, in one sense: Yes.

The settlement came from many different sources: insurance, savings and reserves, investments, the sale of Diocesan Chancery (Office) building, etc. Parishes made their contributions so that any present or future *historical* lawsuits against the parishes could be resolved once and for all. The settlement contribution from the Diocese and parishes was fixed and agreed upon. So, donations made to parishes now, serve the mission of the parish.

Feelings of anger over the abuse scandal and its ongoing effects are justified and understandable. We may not have caused this scandal, but we have all suffered its effects. That is what sin does to the human family, causing suffering for all. But as Saint Paul wrote, "Where sin abounds, grace abounds more." (Romans 5:20)

The settlement brings an end to this painful time for our Diocese. It will bring some measure of compensation to abuse survivors whom we pray will find healing and reconciliation. It has brought an end to lawsuits that could have devastated our parishes. It secures protections for our parishes from future historical lawsuits.

In the end, the Church *is* Jesus Christ. He is our only true treasure. But the physical buildings in which we worship God, learn about our Faith, and serve the poor, require donations to build and maintain. With bankruptcy behind us, we will pray and work together for a time of resurrection for the Church on Long Island, continuing the saving mission of Jesus Christ.