



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

Office of Communications • *The Long Island Catholic* • *Fe Fuerza Vida*

50 North Park Avenue, Rockville Centre, NY 11570

Tel: 516-678-5800, ext. 221 • Fax: 516-594-0984 • www.drvc.org

Diocese of Rockville Centre FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is the Child Victims Act?

A: A law passed by the New York state legislature and signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo on February 14, 2019, that lifts for one year the statute of limitations for filing lawsuits by child victims of sexual abuse. The one-year window begins August 14, 2019 and ends August 14, 2020. This law will allow currently time-barred lawsuits to be brought against individuals as well as public and private institutions, regardless of how many years or even decades ago the abuse may have taken place.

Q: What effect will the Child Victims Act have on the Diocese of Rockville Centre?

A: Bishop John Barres and his leadership team have been preparing for months with diocesan legal and financial professionals as well as with the pastors of our 133 parishes. While the ultimate effects of the Child Victims Act on the Diocese of Rockville Centre and its parishes are not yet known, and may not be known for some time, we expect the daily work of the diocese's many ministries to continue uninterrupted.

Q: What has the diocese done about the sexual abuse of children by members of the clergy?

A: Since 2003, the diocese has taken many decisive steps to protect children. Through its robust reporting mechanisms, the diocese has released the names of all clergy and employees accused of the sexual abuse of a minor, whether credible or not, to the proper law enforcement authorities. The majority of clergy accused of abuse, most of which happened decades ago, have died; others have left the priesthood – and the name of every single person accused, whether credible or not, has been turned over to law enforcement.

The diocese continuously works to strengthen its efforts towards child protection, abuse prevention and pastoral outreach to survivors. Through our Child Victims Assistance Program, the diocese reports all allegations of sexual abuse of a minor to the appropriate district attorney. Allegations of abuse are thoroughly investigated. We offer a hotline (516-594-9063) and respond within 24 hours with pastoral care and support we work closely with law enforcement and make certain that all allegations of child sexual abuse against clergy or lay employees and volunteers are reported to the appropriate District Attorney. We provide pastoral outreach to survivors and educational programs for abuse prevention and we have imposed and strictly enforce robust controls, such as screening of new hires and requiring employee training.



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In 2017, the Diocese of Rockville Centre initiated the Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program (IRCP) to offer the opportunity for some measure of healing and justice to those who were abused by diocesan clergy.

The IRCP program allows survivors of clergy sexual abuse to file confidential claims and receive financial compensation. It continues to offer survivors a confidential option for reconciliation. To date, 370 people have filed claims with our IRCP. The vast majority of claimants - 277 to be exact—have accepted compensation totaling just over \$50 million, with 75 – 80 claims still being processed.

Developed in 2017, the IRCP builds on the reforms and best practices for protecting our children in the Catholic Church. The outreach of Bishops and survivors' assistance coordinators to survivors and their families, a firm zero tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse, immediate reporting and cooperation with civil authorities, diocesan and parish audits, the ongoing training of clergy, employees and volunteers to prevent child abuse, extensive background checks on clergy, employees and volunteers, thorough screening of our seminarians preparing to become priests – these are just some of the examples of the proactive procedures which have been integrated into every dimension of the Catholic Church's life for many years.

Q: Did my weekly donations to the Church fund the IRCP settlements?

A: No parishioner donations were used to fund compensation paid to sexual abuse survivors. The money came from strong investment returns the diocese was fortunate to have. Diocesan insurance programs also helped fund the compensation payouts.

Q: Are the children of the diocese safe today?

A: Absolutely. In most cases, the horrific claims of sexual abuse by priests made by survivors happened decades ago. Most of those accused are deceased or have left the priesthood. Members of the clergy against whom a credible and substantiated claim of child abuse has been made are permanently removed from ministry.

Q: What does the diocese say to those survivors who will file lawsuits because of the Child Victims Act?

A: The Diocese of Rockville Centre takes seriously and investigates all allegations of sexual abuse. We commend the courage of those who come forward to share their experiences and wish to see justice, healing and reconciliation prevail.



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Q: I have read that dioceses in other states that passed a similar Child Victims Act were forced to file Chapter 11 (bankruptcy). Will the Diocese of Rockville Centre be forced to follow a similar path?

A: Bishop Barres and his leadership team have worked diligently with the diocese's financial and legal advisors to assess its financial position and maximize the availability of insurance coverage to meet the demands that will likely be imposed by anticipated CVA litigation. The diocese will continue to consult with legal and financial experts to determine the best approach to sustaining the good work of the Church.

Q: Will my school or parish be forced to close because of any potential financial necessity?

A: While the diocese does not know the full impact of the Child Victims Act, we intend to work diligently to see that no schools or parishes will be forced to close as a result of the CVA. We do not believe, at this time, that the closure of parishes or schools because of the CVA would be a likely outcome.

Q: Will employee pensions or retirement funds be impacted?

A: The Diocese of Rockville Centre will do everything within its legal power to preserve and protect employee pensions and retirement funds. That said, it is too early to say definitively, but in diocesan settlements in other parts of the country, no employee pension money or retirement funds were impacted.

Q: How many survivors of clergy sexual abuse are expected to sue the Diocese of Rockville Centre?

A: It is impossible to predict, but the diocese is working with the best financial and legal talent to find the least disruptive means through this challenging time.

Q: How long will it take to fully litigate all the lawsuits filed under the Child Victims Act?

A: Again, it is impossible to predict, but for some dioceses it took a number of years to reach a final settlement with all of the survivors who filed lawsuits.

The coming months will require perseverance and prayer if we are to emerge even more dedicated to Christ's saving mission. As the opening of this legislation takes place near the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, we are reminded to turn to Mary our Mother and draw courage from the one who did not look away from her suffering Son. She waited patiently, suffered with him, and shared in his victory over sin and death.



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This is the same Mary who, as Mother of the Church, gathered with the Apostles in the locked room, waiting for the power of the Holy Spirit to descend at Pentecost. As we enter a time of Paschal Mystery suffering, may Mary guide us, so that together we may continue to carry out the mission of her Son: the building up of the Kingdom of God throughout Long Island and the world.

8/8/19