



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 8, 2023

Dear Friends in Christ:

After careful consideration and consultation, I have made the decision to file a Chapter 11 petition on behalf of the Diocese of Sacramento with the United States Bankruptcy Court in 2024. I expect to do so in March.

It is now clear to me that the only respectful, transparent, and fair way to address the substantial number of claims by those who have been abused by clergy and other members of the Church is to seek a court-supervised reorganization. This process will also allow me to sustain the sanctifying, teaching, and charitable work of the Catholic community in Northern California.

Without such a reorganization process, it is likely that not all the abuse victim-survivors would receive a fair consideration of their claim. The funds available to settle claims could be depleted by the first few cases addressed, leaving those that follow with little or no compensation.

Last Spring, I presented the very serious financial situation for the Diocese of Sacramento as I responded to more than 250 lawsuits alleging sexual abuse by clergy or other church staff. I had promised to update you when I had reached a decision regarding the path forward.

I remain steadfast in my belief that I must continue to atone for the horrible sin of clergy sexual abuse. The sickening evil that was perpetrated upon innocent children – and the failure of Church leadership to address it appropriately – has caused unfathomable pain that endures. It is these sins that brought us to this place. Pray for the healing of victim-survivors. The pain inflicted on them lasts a lifetime, and so our atonement must be a lifetime commitment.

The reorganization process would allow the work of the diocese to continue. My coworkers and I will continue to support parishes, schools and charitable organizations serving families and communities in need.

Importantly, parishes and schools would continue their operations uninterrupted. It is only the administrative office of the bishop that will be seeking bankruptcy protection.

Bankruptcy is a costly and lengthy process, but it also provides supervision and transparency for all the parties involved so that a fair resolution is offered to the victim-survivors of abuse.

Please join me in prayer for this journey of atonement and renewal that must begin. With God's mercy we will emerge from this necessary, penitential exercise with greater resolve to be a humble sanctuary of holiness and healing for all the sons and daughters of God in Northern California.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jaime Soto", written over a horizontal line.

†Jaime Soto
Bishop of Sacramento