

MICHAEL C. BARBER, S.J.  
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October 7, 2024  
Our Lady of the Rosary

## CHAPTER 11 UPDATE

Dear faithful Catholics and friends of the Diocese of Oakland,

May the peace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ continue to be with each one of you!

Today, I want to update you on the progress we have made since May 8, 2023, when the Roman Catholic Bishop of Oakland (the Diocese) made the difficult but necessary decision to seek bankruptcy protection.

The effect of California state law AB 218, which temporarily revived the statute of limitations for sexual abuse claims, meant we did not have the resources to simultaneously defend the claims made against the Diocese for abuse which happened decades ago, and to provide adequate compensation to abuse survivors, as well as to continue to fulfill our mission to serve God and His people.

Thus, the Diocese filed bankruptcy because we believe this process is the best way to support a compassionate and equitable outcome for abuse survivors, while we continue to spread the Gospel and provide essential services and support so crucial to our parishioners and communities.

We believe we have made significant progress toward that goal. Regrettably, it has been necessary for the Diocese to sue our insurers, so they will satisfy their moral and contractual responsibility to pay covered claims and assist contributing to a settlement. This pursuit now involves more than a dozen different insurers and a court-ordered mediation process, and is a key component of a potential settlement in bankruptcy.

Second, over the last seven months, we have been engaged in mediation with the group of survivors appointed by the bankruptcy court, through mediation with their counsel and representatives. We are also separately mediating with representatives of our insurers. Each mediation is overseen by court-appointed mediators, with the goal of reaching a settlement which may then be approved by the bankruptcy court. We are working toward a bankruptcy court deadline of Nov. 8, 2024, through which the Diocese has the exclusive right to file a plan of reorganization with the bankruptcy court, pursuant to which the Diocese would seek to compensate the survivors. The details of these negotiations are confidential pursuant to an order of the bankruptcy court, and the process remains extremely difficult.

FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD

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The bankruptcy case has required a tremendous amount of effort including making necessary court filings and production of reams of documents and information about the Diocese. The financial burden of being a Debtor in bankruptcy is also tremendous. We believe progress is being made. Still, I must stress to you that a settlement in the bankruptcy case, if we are able to achieve it, will necessarily involve shared sacrifice – there is no way around this.

Nothing can undo or excuse the terrible suffering the survivors have endured following the deplorable conduct of their abusers. We are hopeful the survivors nonetheless recognize the Diocese is working in good faith to try to compensate them fairly and equitably. I believe this kind of settlement is the right thing to do.

A settlement in the bankruptcy case is not guaranteed, and much work remains. Therefore, I ask you, my brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, to join me in praying for a successful conclusion to this process. Please pray for the survivors; for those in our Diocese working so hard now to keep children safe; for our team working to resolve the bankruptcy case fairly and justly; and for me.

This is a time of purification for our Church and Diocese. We are committed to the mission Christ has entrusted to us: to bring His message of love, mercy, and salvation to the people of the East Bay. We trust in the promise Christ made to us at His Ascension: "I will be with you all days, until the end of the world." It is His Church; and the power of His love will prevail.

I thank you, the priests, religious, and laypeople of our Diocese for your generosity, fidelity, and good will.

On this feast day of the Holy Rosary, we ask Mary, Queen of Heaven, to intercede for us with her Divine Son.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Barber S.J." with a small cross symbol to the left of the name.

The Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, S.J.  
Bishop of Oakland