

Update from the Archbishop

Dear People of the Archdiocese of St. John's:

Over the past year since the legal decision became final that the Archdiocese was vicariously liable for the claims of abuse at the Mount Cashel Orphanage in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, we have been working hard to determine how best to resolve these claims while also ensuring the ongoing practise and celebration of our Catholic faith. This work has included financial analysis, consultation with parishes, consultation with victim counsel, parishioner feedback, research and planning, real estate appraisals and a review of current operations.

As a next step in the process of resolving these claims, the Archdiocese may be forced to file for Creditor Protection under the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. This action, if pursued, is intended to provide the Archdiocese with additional time to complete the evaluation of our assets, formally call for claims against the Archdiocese, and develop a proposal for our creditors to settle victims' claims and creditor liabilities.

The cash reserves of the parishes and the Archdiocese will be dedicated to meeting our financial obligations to our creditors. There will be a re-allocation of available funds between parish accounts to assist and support all of the parishes within the Diocese. Each parish will be provided with a set amount of operating capital. The opening cash combined with continuing contributions of parishioners, will be available to pay parish operating expenses such as heat, light, phone, salaries, repairs and maintenance. The ability of parishes to be financially self-sufficient will be a major factor in determining their ongoing viability and the overall success of the Archdiocese to develop an acceptable proposal to its creditors.

It is important to note that while the intention is to maintain all parish operations in the immediate term, there will be a need to market many diocesan and parish properties including church buildings. As marketing plans are developed and parish restructuring arrangements are finalized we will continue to provide you, the parishioners, with timely updates. We intend to work with parish clergy, lay staff, and parish pastoral and financial council members to provide pastoral ministry and have the sacraments continue to be available for all members of the Archdiocese.

I am truly sorry to be having to announce this type of news to you at this time of the year. However, if we can accept this present situation together, as a diocesan community, with trust in one another and in God's goodness, I firmly believe that we can help bring healing to the victims and their loved ones and to the entire faith community and bring closure to a dark chapter in the history of our Archdiocese.

It is my intention to meet with as many parishes and groups as I can in the coming weeks to further explain our situation and to respond to your questions and concerns. It is my hope that together we will find creative ways to meet our financial commitments and to promote our pastoral ministry into the future.

With prayers for God's blessings upon you, your loved ones and all the members of our Archdiocesan family during this upcoming Christmas season and always, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Peter Hundt
Archbishop of St. John's