

Archdiocese of Chicago



Statement of Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., Archbishop of Chicago Delivered at the Archdiocesan Press Conference on August 12, 2008

In 1986, the Archdiocese began a comprehensive approach to healing young people who have been sexually abused by priests. Settlements were made to bring healing through spiritual counseling and therapy and monetary awards to enable a victim to be free to live beyond the consequences of this terrible crime. That tradition of settlements continues today: what is new today is our making them public, with the cooperation of the lawyers for the victims. The way both the Archdiocese and the victims have been involved in settlements changed in the early 1990's and again in 2002, although all the cases settled extended back twenty or more years. After Daniel McCormack abused children in 2005, the Archdiocese re-examined its method of protecting children and pursuing evidence. In 2006, I invited anyone who had been abused by a priest to come forward. I promised that we would continue to settle cases, no matter when the incidents occurred, and we would try to settle them as respectfully and quickly as possible. The settlements announced today are evidence of that policy and that practice. I thank sincerely all those involved in bringing these settlements about, and I hope that we might continue to find ways to expedite the settlement of claims that go back decades and involve even deceased or resigned priests.

Sixteen victims of sexual abuse by priests have entered into these settlements. Fourteen of these victims were abused by ten different priests, all of them either dead or resigned; one victim was abused 46 years ago. Two of the victims were abused by Daniel McCormack, who pled guilty in 2007 to having abused five children, The Archdiocese has now tried to help, through comprehensive settlements, four of the five people whom McCormack admitted he abused. Chancellor Jimmy Lago, who has been the general coordinator of these efforts since 2006, will give the details of the settlements.

As part of the mediation process, I agreed to be deposed, to testify under oath. I am releasing this deposition voluntarily for the sake of the record and, I hope, the help the healing of everyone concerned in this matter. The deposition will be available on the Archdiocesan website today.

Finally, I want to take this occasion to apologize again for the sexual abuse of minors by some priests. I have met and apologized to victims and their families many times over the past years, and I hope I will have the chance to do so with those involved in the settlements today. One cannot speak with a victim of sexual abuse and not feel profoundly sorry for what has been a great personal tragedy; nor can one not respect the way in which each victim fights to overcome the consequences of abuse. The Archdiocese is committed to helping overcome these consequences and to join victims in their efforts to see that no child will suffer what the victims have endured. The mediated settlements today are intended to be part of that help.

Mr. Lago will now provide an overview of the settlements.