



February 19, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For several months the three dioceses of Colorado have been in discussion with the Colorado Attorney General about examining the response of the three Colorado dioceses to the sexual abuse of minors by priests. This morning the Attorney General, Phil Weiser, in collaboration with the three Colorado dioceses, announced in press conference a joint agreement to conduct an independent review of priests' personnel files regarding past sexual abuse of minors by priests. This review will be entrusted to an independent "special master," former US Attorney Robert Troyer, who will comb through the files to determine any substantiated allegations of sexual abuse against a minor by a priest. The names of those priests who fit this description will then be made public.

At this morning's press conference, there was also an announcement of an independent program to assist survivors of sexual abuse of minors perpetrated by priests. This fund will begin in the second half of this year. Please know that these two initiatives have received the support of the College of Consultors, the Deans, and the Diocesan Financial Advisory Council of the Diocese of Pueblo, as well as the Bishops of the three Colorado Dioceses. It is important for you to understand that the funding for these two programs will not be taken from parish offertory, school funding, charities, apostolates, or the Diocesan Ministry Fund. All funding will come from independent sources or diocesan reserves and resources.

Regarding the survivor compensation program, it will be administered by a national expert, Kenneth Feinberg and his colleague, Camille Biros. They will receive allegations from those who were abused as minors by priests or bishops, and will impartially determine what assistance is needed to help these survivors. Their work will be entirely independent of the three Colorado dioceses and will be monitored by a committee of respected Coloradans, chaired by former US Senator Hank Brown.

While these announcements and resulting reports will no doubt bring some painful moments, we are committed to conducting this process in a fair, responsible, and compassionate way. This is to help us to heal the sins of the past, while also highlighting the strong commitments we have instituted in order to ensure a transparently safe environment for our faithful into the present. We have been confident that the steps we have taken have been fruitful. I truly hope that these initiatives will help raise the awareness of the dedicated and sacrificial ministry of our active priests. At the same time, we hope this announcement will move anyone who has been harmed to come forward. While this process cannot ever fully restore what was lost, I pray that it will bring forth a healing process for all who have been so harmed. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and St. Therese of the Child Jesus, we place ourselves into the healing hands of Jesus.

Please visit our website for details of the press conference, the agreement, and an index of frequently asked questions at dioceseofpueblo.org.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Stephen J. Berg
Bishop of Pueblo