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***Put Out Into the Deep***

**Walking With the Sexually Abused  
by Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio**

***My dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,***

As Bishop of Brooklyn, I am announcing a significant new step in the ongoing effort of the Diocese of Brooklyn to address the wounds of those sexually abused by members of the clergy. It is called the “Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program” and it is one more way our diocese serving Brooklyn and Queens can acknowledge the harm that was done by those who were priests or deacons, and show our solidarity with survivors.

Our Program is modeled after the program recently launched by the Archdiocese of New York. Compensation decisions will be made by Kenneth R. Feinberg who administered numerous high-profile compensation programs, including the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, the compensation fund for the victims of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, served as a mediator for sexual abuse cases for Penn State University and administered many other corporate and charitable independent compensation programs. Mr. Feinberg will have total independence in his decisions.

Throughout my time as a diocesan bishop, first in Camden, N.J., and then in Brooklyn and Queens, I have met with more than 50 survivors. It is difficult to hear about the pain caused by the criminal behavior of members of the clergy. I am well aware that no amount of money will ever heal the scars of abuse, but this program is a concrete expression of our contrition and our desire to make amends. We hope it will help with the healing process and bring survivors some element of healing.

The Diocese of Brooklyn will continue all of our past efforts to support survivors. Those efforts include paying the cost of therapy provided by independent professionals who are unaffiliated with the Church, offering various support groups, providing monthly prayer groups, and holding our annual Mass of Hope and Healing.

Four years ago, survivors of clergy abuse in the Diocese of Brooklyn formed a “Survivors Advisory Committee.” This program, along with all of our outreach efforts, has been discussed with this group of survivors. I will continue to listen to and be guided by these survivors in developing new ways to respond to the needs of victims.

I wish to assure every parishioner and every donor to our diocese in Brooklyn and Queens that not a penny of their contributions or bequests will go toward compensating victims of abuse. The Diocese will take out a loan to cover for the cost, and pay it back with rental income. The Diocese will not use money given by the faithful to support parishes, schools, charitable works, ministries, apostolates, or the Generations of Faith Campaign Fundraising Campaign. The financial burden will rightly be felt by the central diocesan administration.

**In accordance with our diocesan policy, any and all claims of sexual misconduct against a minor have been reported to the District Attorney. Any new allegations that come to light through this program will be also be reported to the DA and any other appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

**We understand the importance of protecting the identity of victims of sexual abuse. To that end, the Diocese of Brooklyn will respect the privacy of participants in the Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program. However, we want to make it very clear that under the protocols of the Dallas Charter, passed by the Bishops of the United States in 2002, participants themselves will NOT be bound by any type of confidentiality agreement. Participants are free to discuss any and all aspects of their case and the compensation they may receive with anyone they wish.**

**We will never stop working toward reform, reparation, and reconciliation. Here in the Diocese of Brooklyn, we re-affirm our commitment to the protection of children, as we walk in solidarity with survivors of abuse in their journey toward wholeness.**

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