



ARCHDIOCESE
OF
SAINT PAUL &
MINNEAPOLIS

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wanted to reach out directly to you regarding the Settlement Agreement the Archdiocese and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office announced Friday morning.

From the time I first arrived here in June – two weeks after the charges were filed -- I have worked to learn as much as I can about the events surrounding Curtis Wehmeyer and his abuse of children under his care at Blessed Sacrament Church in St. Paul.

From that same time, the Archdiocese was engaged in dialogue with Ramsey County Attorney, John Choi, and his staff. We immediately realized we all had the same goal; to make sure children are safe in our churches, schools and communities. So, from the first time our team and the County Attorney's team met, we worked together to find the best ways to make that a reality.

We also involved and consulted with the Board of Directors, Archdiocesan Finance Council, the Ministerial Review Board, the College of Consultors (an advisory group of priests), and priests who have been or are currently in leadership positions. They all agreed that this Agreement is the right thing to do to provide safe environments.

All of that dialogue, collaboration and hard work came together on Friday morning when a judge accepted the Settlement Agreement with the Ramsey County Attorney's Office. Let me assure you, much of what is in the new document are things we are already doing, while others are practices and procedures that are already working in some dioceses around the country. We are agreeing to implement the plan under a set deadline and to be held accountable for that commitment.

As for what this means to you, our priests and our parishes: It will require all of us to renew our commitment to continue building a culture that makes the protection of children a priority.

This Settlement Agreement is an opportunity for us to do all we can to make sure children are as safe as possible now and into the future.

I am grateful for your prayers and support during my time in this Archdiocese and I am counting on your support moving forward. Please continue to pray for me and I assure you of my prayers for you and your families.

In Christ,

Archbishop Bernard Hebda

RAMSEY COUNTY CIVIL AGREEMENT Q & A FOR PRIESTS AND PARISHES

Q: What does this Settlement Agreement really mean?

A: It means that the Archdiocese has voluntarily agreed to implement the enhanced safe environment Settlement Agreement and submit to external auditing in 2017 and 2018. At the end of the 36 month review period, Ramsey County District Court has agreed they will drop the civil charges.

Q: Was the Archdiocese forced into this Agreement?

A: No. We made the decision not to fight the charges in court because we share the common goal of protecting children with the Ramsey County Attorney and his staff.

Q: How will the Ramsey County Attorney's Office be able to verify that the Archdiocese is following the new Settlement Agreement?

A: There will be both internal and external audits of the Agreement and reporting mechanisms that must be followed.

Q: Aren't there Constitutional concerns with the state (Ramsey County) involved in overseeing a religious institution?

A: The Archdiocese is still free to run its ministries, operations and other programs as it sees fit. We chose to enter into this agreement because the Settlement Agreement serves to enhance our mission of faith. It is at the heart of the church to protect children and vulnerable adults. Jesus said, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me (Matthew 9:37)."

Q: How much will this Agreement cost?

A: We should have a good idea on expenses sometime in the near term. We are already working on ways to maximize efficiency and effectively manage the costs to parishes and the Archdiocese. Because this is the right thing to do, it is considered a top priority in our budget.

Q: Were any non-Archdiocesan officials consulted during this process?

A: Yes. While leaders of our legal and Ministerial Standards and Safe Environment offices – as well as Archbishop Hebda and Bishop Cozzens -- negotiated with the Ramsey County Attorney and his staff, priests who have served or who are serving in leadership positions, the Ministerial Review Board, the Corporate Board of Directors, the College of Consultors, and the Archdiocesan Finance Council were all consulted in the process. Each of these groups were able to study the agreement, share their concerns, have their concerns addressed, and ultimately supported it.

Q: Does U.S. Bankruptcy Court have to approve the agreement?

A: Yes. Judge Robert Kressel is aware of the Ramsey County situation and we will seek the Court's approval at a hearing after the first of the year.

Q: What happens if the Archdiocese doesn't follow the agreement?

A: If the Ramsey County Attorney's office does not believe we are following the agreement, they are required to notify us. From there, we have an opportunity to reply to the notice, fix any discrepancy, or discuss with them what happened and what we are doing. If both sides cannot come to an agreement, then we would go before a judge to explain the issue.

Q: Are fingerprint background checks really going to be required in the future for all priests, teachers and volunteers who serve the Church? That seems intrusive.

A: The requirement in the agreement is for the Archdiocese to study fingerprint background checks and their feasibility and associated costs. With the proliferation of identity theft in the U.S. and around the world, law enforcement experts say fingerprint identification is only a few years away. The technology is not quite where it needs to be, but eventually it will be a part of everyday life. Several dioceses around the country already require fingerprinting for priests, employees and volunteers.

Q: Have the criminal charges been dismissed with this Agreement?

A: No, the criminal charges are a separate matter. We look forward to continuing to pursue a resolution with the Ramsey County Attorney's Office of those charges.