



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

300 WYOMING AVENUE
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503-1279

Dear Friends,

The Grand Jury report confronted us with the horrific transgressions of past clergy and Church leaders that endangered the welfare of children – children who had the right to be kept safe from harm. Nothing can erase the resulting pain and suffering. We can, though, attempt to make amends and to bring some sense of peace, healing and recovery to survivors. These survivors deserve a voice. They deserve to tell their stories, to identify their abusers, and to receive compensation as they continue down the path of healing and recovery.

This week, the Diocese of Scranton launched its Independent Survivors Compensation Program. I want to briefly describe to you the key elements of the Program.

First, this Program is completely independent from the Diocese of Scranton. We have absolutely no influence over any compensation decisions. The Program is administered by two nationally-renowned experts – Kenneth Feinberg and Camille Biros. They have, among other similar assignments, been appointed Special Master of the government's September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, served as the Special Master for TARP Executive Compensation Fund, administered the BP Deepwater Horizon Disaster Victim Compensation Fund and handled the victim assistance fund established in the wake of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings. They have already successfully administered, or are in the process of administering, similar programs for several other Catholic dioceses. An Independent Oversight Committee comprised of three individuals with relevant experience across healthcare, law enforcement and social work will oversee the Program.

Second, this program is entirely voluntary. No survivor is forced to participate or to accept the compensation determined by the Administrators.

Third, the Program will be run with care and compassion. As I alluded to, the Administrators have already handled similar programs for five Catholic Dioceses in New York and are currently administering a similar program for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and several other Dioceses within Pennsylvania. They know what they are doing and they have been widely praised for being fair, timely and compassionate. They will review claims compassionately and fairly determine compensation.

Fourth, this Program is comprehensive. It is open to those who reported their abuse before the Program was announced, as well as those who reported abuse later. It is open to survivors of abuse committed by priests from the Diocese of Scranton, members of religious communities, or lay employees of the Diocese. The Diocese designed the Independent Survivors Compensation Program to be as comprehensive and far-reaching as possible.

Lastly, I want to assure you that the Diocese will fund the Program from its reserves and the sale of assets, as needed. We will NOT access parish and school assets. We will NOT tap into contributions or bequests from parishioners. And, we will NOT apply donations from the Diocesan Annual Appeal.

Since I was appointed Bishop in 2010, child protection and victim advocacy have been of the greatest importance to me. The Diocese has striven to protect our children and to treat survivors of abuse with care and dignity. Establishing this Independent Survivors Compensation Program is the next step in those efforts. While I know that no amount of money can take away survivors' pain or change the past, I sincerely hope this Program contributes to the healing and recovery of survivors.

Thank you and God bless you.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

† *Joseph C. Bambera*

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Scranton