



ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

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CONTACT:

Jeanette DeMelo, Director of Communications, Archdiocese of Denver
(303) 715-3230, or if after regular business hours, (720) 233-7933

Archdiocese of Denver announces settlement of 18 claims

Following three years of litigation, Denver Archbishop Charles J. Chaput today announced the settlement of 16 more lawsuits and two additional claims against the Archdiocese of Denver.

All but one of these 18 claims were related to sexual abuse by two priests of the archdiocese, Robert White and Leonard Abercrombie. One claim related to another priest, Lawrence St. Peter. The incidents in all of these claims occurred between 27 and 54 years ago. All three men have since died. The settlement amount for this group of 18 cases was \$5,505,000. With these additional settlements, only two cases remain against the archdiocese.

The archdiocese used archdiocesan assets to pay for the settlements. Contributions made to the Archbishop's Catholic Appeal have not been used for settlements or for litigation-related payments.

“It is my hope that these settlements help the victims and their families to heal,” said Archbishop Chaput. “I’ve offered to meet personally with every victim. Some of them have responded to this request. I’ve also met with some of their family members. I’ve expressed an apology on behalf of myself, our clergy, and the whole Catholic community and I apologize to them again today.”

As a part of the settlement agreement, the archdiocese made a portion of White's file available to the plaintiffs. In releasing these documents, Archbishop Chaput said, “The file shows that prior to 1981, White engaged in wrongful behavior.” The archbishop also reported, “After 1981, White’s file contains no evidence of abuse by him. Judge Richard Dana has confirmed this fact to the satisfaction of plaintiffs' attorneys.” The archdiocese

is not releasing any other files or Church documents. The archdiocese continues to respect the confidentiality and privacy of all involved.

White's file contains information about decisions some archdiocesan officials made between 1961 and 1981 that do not satisfy current archdiocesan policies for handling allegations of sexual abuse. Those decades-old decisions reflect the societal understanding of sexual abuse and ways of handling it at that time, which are not today's norms. Archbishop Chaput said, "In light of what we know today about sexual abuse, many of the decisions made by archdiocesan leadership during the years 1961 to 1981 regarding Robert White would now be very different."

"For the last 20 years, the archdiocese has worked hard to understand the nature of sexual abuse, to prevent it and to protect our children from it," said Archbishop Chaput. "Our strict policy is that no priest, deacon or lay employee with a credible allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor is allowed to minister in our archdiocese."

The archdiocese's current policy for preventing sexual abuse includes background checks and sexual abuse prevention training for all clergy, seminarians, employees, teachers, parents and volunteers who work with children throughout the archdiocese, including all parish schools. In the last five years, approximately 77,000 people have been trained through the program. The archdiocesan Office for Child and Youth Protection facilitates the prevention program and receives and initiates the investigation of any reported claims of sexual abuse of minors. All allegations of sexual abuse of a minor are immediately reported to civil authorities.

When the first lawsuits related to Abercrombie and White were filed in 2005, the archdiocese invited all plaintiffs to mediation, instead of litigation. Over the past three years the archdiocese has worked to find ways to resolve these claims outside the court system.

Archbishop Chaput said, "These past experiences of sexual abuse have been tragic for those who've endured them and for the wider Church community. Victims need our help and support for their continued healing. I'm grateful that they've accepted mediation and I continue to pray they find peace in this resolution."

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