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Winona, Minn. — November 26, 2018
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Bishop John Quinn of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, said the diocese planned to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection following the recommendation of several consultative groups.

The announcement from the diocese Nov. 20 said a legal path is the "most just and equitable way to hold the diocese accountable for past child sexual abuse by clergy."

The bishop first told parishioners about the plan in a letter distributed in parish bulletins the weekend of Nov. 17-18.

The planned filing by the end of November was made with the cooperation of attorneys representing abuse survivors, Quinn said.

"I believe this action will create an environment of healing for both survivors and our entire diocesan community," he said in a statement released by the diocese. "Health and justice for the survivors is our number one priority and I recognize this is a much needed step as we create a path forward to reconciliation."

The bishop said he had talked with the diocese's College of Consultors, Diocesan Finance Council, Presbyteral Council and trustees of the Diocesan Civil Corporation Board, all of which recommended the bankruptcy step.

The diocese said it faced 121 claims of abuse by clergy filed under the Minnesota's Child Victims Act, a 2013 law that temporarily lifted the statute of limitations past claims of abuse for three years.

The claims involved incidents that occurred from 1960 through 1986, the diocese said. All clergy against whom abuse allegations have been made are either deceased or have been removed from ministry, laicized or are no longer working in any priestly capacity, the diocese said.

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The filing will not affect diocesan staffing, nor will it force the closing of parishes or schools, the diocesan announcement said.

Quinn reassured parishioners in his announcement that the diocese had taken steps to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse for 15 years through several steps including a safe environment training program. He said annual audits of its Office of Safe Environment Program has found the diocese to be compliant with appropriate abuse prevention efforts.

The diocese would be the fourth in Minnesota to seek bankruptcy protection.

The Duluth and New Ulm dioceses also filed for bankruptcy to resolve abuse claims. The Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis is emerging from bankruptcy after a judge in May approved a $210 million settlement between the archdiocese and more than 400 survivors in the largest such agreement in the nation. The St. Cloud Diocese said it intended to file its case in February but has not done so.