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The Archdiocese of Santa Fe will be auctioning nearly 140 parcels of property next month as it seeks to settle a raft of sex abuse claims.

Church officials announced Aug. 10 that an online auction will begin Sept. 21. Opening bids will start as low as $500 for vacant pieces of property that are spread throughout three counties in central New Mexico. Another auction is planned for November.

The archdiocese filed for bankruptcy reorganization in 2018 to deal with a surge of claims.

A U.S. bankruptcy judge ruled last October that lawyers for clergy sex abuse survivors can file lawsuits alleging the archdiocese fraudulently transferred millions of dollars in property and other assets to avoid bigger payouts to victims. That decision in the Chapter 11 reorganization case opened the door to what could be a multimillion-dollar boon to hundreds of victims who filed claims. It also could result in costly legal appeals that would tap funds that would otherwise be used to pay claims.

A top church official, Fr. Glennon Jones, said earlier this year that progress was being made in collecting donations for the bankruptcy settlement. He also warned that should the bankruptcy fail, nothing would be safe from liquidation to pay for legal costs and settlements.

He reiterated his warning in a more recent posting on the archdiocese website, saying the case needs to be settled to avoid lawsuits being filed against individual

parishes and those parishes possibly being forced to sell parish halls or even churches to pay legal bills.

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