News



People attend a memorial service outside the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels in Los Angeles, Jan. 19, 2021. (AP/Damian Dovarganes, File)

by Associated Press

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Los Angeles — October 17, 2024

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The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has agreed to pay $880 million to victims of clergy sexual abuse dating back decades, in what an attorney said was the largest single child sex abuse settlement with a Catholic archdiocese, it was announced Wednesday.

After the announcement of the agreement in principle, Archbishop José H. Gomez said in a statement, "I am sorry for every one of these incidents, from the bottom of my heart."

"My hope is that this settlement will provide some measure of healing for what these men and women have suffered," the archbishop added. "I believe that we have come to a resolution of these claims that will provide just compensation to the survivor-victims of these past abuses."

Attorneys for 1,353 people who allege that they suffered horrific abuse at the hands of local Catholic priests reached the settlement after months of negotiations with the archdiocese, the Los Angeles Times reported.

The agreement caps a quarter-century of litigation against the most populous archdiocese in the United States.

Attorneys in the Plaintiffs' Liaison Committee said in a joint statement, "While there is no amount of money that can replace what was taken from these 1,353 brave individuals who have suffered in silence for decades, there is justice in accountability."

Under the settlement, the plaintiffs will engage in a process— that will not involve the archdiocese — to allocate the settlement amount among the participants.

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The archdiocese has previously paid $740 million to victims in various settlements and had pledged to better protect its church members, so this settlement would put the total payout at more than $1.5 billion, the Times said.

Attorney Morgan Stewart, who led the negotiations, said in a statement that the settlement is the largest single child sex abuse settlement with a Catholic archdiocese.

“These survivors have suffered for decades in the aftermath of the abuse. Dozens of the survivors have died. They are aging, and many of those with knowledge of the abuse within the church are too. It was time to get this resolved,” Stewart told the Times.

The settlement will be funded by archdiocese investments, accumulated reserves, bank financing, and other assets. According to the archdiocese, certain religious orders and others named in the litigation will also cover some of the cost of the settlement, the Times said.