News



Bishop Robert J. Brennan of Brooklyn, New York, celebrates a Mass marking the opening of the papal conclave at Immaculate Conception Center in the Douglaston section of Queens, New York, May 7, 2025. Brennan issued a letter Feb. 12, 2026, announcing that the Brooklyn Diocese intends to pursue a settlement of approximately 1,100 lawsuits. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)



by Camillo Barone

NCR staff reporter

View Author Profile
cbarone@ncronline.org

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Bishop Robert J. Brennan of Brooklyn issued a letter to clergy and parishioners Feb. 12 announcing that the Diocese of Brooklyn intends to pursue a settlement of approximately 1,100 lawsuits filed under the New York Child Victims Act (CVA).

The cases allege sexual abuse of minors by clergy and others associated with the diocese over several decades.

The Child Victims Act, enacted in 2019, created a lookback window permitting survivors of childhood sexual abuse to file civil claims previously barred by statutes of limitation. The measure led to a surge of litigation against institutions across New York state, including Catholic dioceses. In Brooklyn and Queens, which together compose the Diocese of Brooklyn, roughly 1,100 cases remain pending.

In his letter, Brennan stated that the diocese has been working "for many years" to address "its part in the Church's shameful history of sexual abuse." He offered apologies to "victim-survivors" and said the diocese hopes that "fair and comprehensive action" to resolve these lawsuits will advance healing. He described the proposed global resolution as a means to resolve "all meritorious claims" expeditiously and to avoid the time and expense of individual trials.

The bishop referenced the 2002 "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," adopted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in response to nationwide revelations of clergy abuse. The charter established standards for reporting allegations, removing accused clergy from ministry and implementing prevention programs.

Brennan stated that, following reforms under the charter and subsequent reviews, including cooperation with the New York state attorney general, the diocese is committed to child protection and maintains strengthened procedures.



Bishop Robert J. Brennan of Brooklyn bows his head in prayer as he celebrates a Mass marking the opening of the papal conclave at Immaculate Conception Center in the Douglaston section of Queens, New York, May 7, 2025. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)

That cooperation followed an investigation by the attorney general into the handling of clergy abuse allegations in several dioceses. In 2024, the Diocese of Brooklyn entered into an agreement providing for independent oversight of its response to abuse claims. The agreement included the appointment of an independent compliance auditor to monitor how allegations are reported, investigated and documented, and to assess adherence to internal policies.

The diocese previously established an Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program in 2017. According to Brennan's letter, more than 500 survivors have received over $100 million through that program. He reiterated that funds used for past and future settlements are not derived from parish donations or parish offerings.

To facilitate a resolution of the remaining cases, he wrote, the diocese is undertaking cost-cutting measures and setting aside significant funds. He characterized the process as involving "difficult financial choices" but stated that the diocese is committed to compensating all meritorious claims.

The diocese has retained legal and financial advisers, including Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, Anderson Kill P.C., and Alvarez & Marsal. Brennan also stated that the diocese has engaged in discussions with representatives of its liability insurance carriers in an effort to secure additional funds for compensation.

As part of the proposed global settlement effort, the diocese and counsel representing plaintiffs have agreed to engage Judge Daniel J. Buckley and mediator Paul A. Finn as neutral mediators. Both have experience overseeing large-scale settlements of clergy sexual abuse claims in other jurisdictions. Buckley previously mediated a settlement of abuse claims in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and has been engaged in similar efforts in the Archdiocese of New York. Finn has mediated claims involving the Archdioceses of Boston and Milwaukee and several New York dioceses.

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Following the bishop's announcement, attorney Jeff Anderson, who represents more than 200 plaintiffs in Child Victims Act cases against the Diocese of Brooklyn, issued a statement describing the announcement as "positive news" and said it presents "a real opportunity for resolution."

Anderson said that for more than six years the diocese had denied responsibility and contested most cases, resulting in delays. He indicated that survivors and their counsel intend to work with the mediators while continuing litigation as necessary.

The Diocese of Brooklyn did not respond to a request for comment.

The approximately 1,100 pending cases include allegations spanning multiple decades. Plaintiffs allege that diocesan officials failed to adequately respond to reports of abuse, reassigned accused clergy, or did not report allegations to law enforcement in a timely manner. The diocese has stated that it intends to resolve "meritorious claims" and to avoid the burdens associated with individual trials.

A global settlement, if achieved, would likely establish a structured process for evaluating claims and determining compensation. Comparable settlements in other dioceses have involved significant aggregate payouts and, in some instances, restructuring of diocesan assets. Brennan's letter did not reference bankruptcy proceedings.

The mediation process will proceed under the supervision of the designated neutrals. The diocese has indicated that it will provide further updates as discussions advance. The outcome of the proposed resolution may determine whether the pending Child Victims Act litigation in Brooklyn concludes through negotiated settlement or proceeds, in whole or in part, to trial.