News



Joseph Caramanno, left, and attorney Jeff Anderson listen as Bridie Farrell addresses a news conference in New York Aug. 14, 2019. Caramanno accused Msgr. John Paddack of child sex abuse and sued the Archdiocese of New York in August 2019. (AP/Richard Drew)



by Ryan Di Corpo

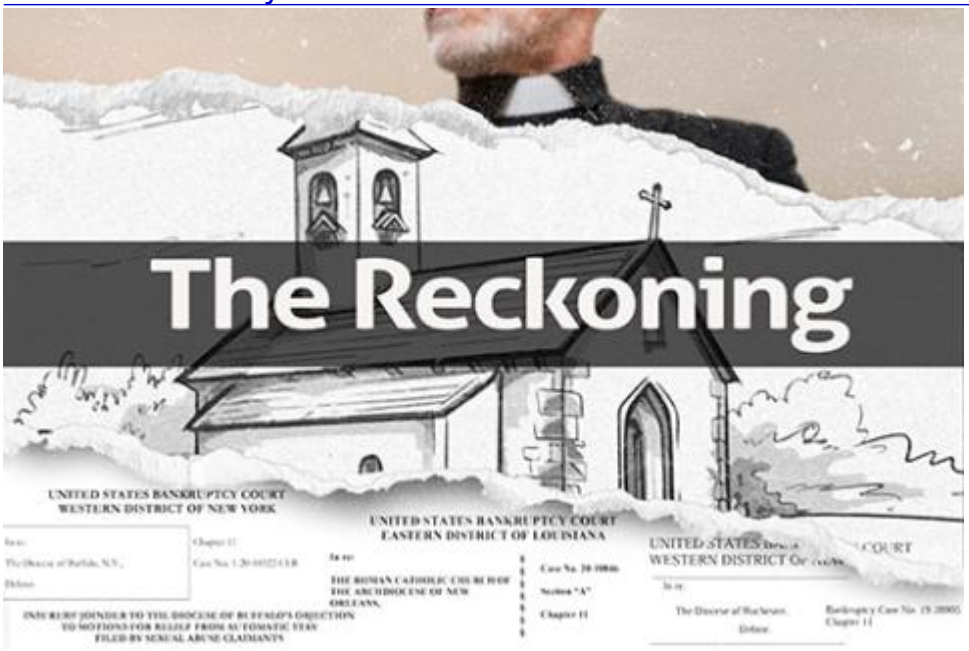
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An $800 million proposal from the Archdiocese of New York to settle more than 1,000 claims of clergy sex abuse is a step towards accountability but an imperfect resolution for the church's victims, said one accuser and several plaintiff advocates.

The archdiocesan settlement, which the recently appointed Archbishop Ronald Hicks described as the culmination of "several months" of negotiations between the church and plaintiff representatives, comes amid a bitter, yearslong legal dispute pitting the archdiocese against its longtime insurer Chubb, which has refused to pay compensation to accusers and accused church leaders of intentionally enabling and concealing sexual abuse for decades.

Mike Finnegan, an attorney whose firm represents 300 of the 1,300 accusers seeking redress from the archdiocese, said the $800 million settlement provides claimants with the choice to receive $250,000 outright as "quick pay option" or to enter into an allocation process to determine compensation. But the proposal requires unanimous consent from plaintiffs by June 27, followed by a 30-day signing period, in order to take effect.

Rejection of the deal would push the archdiocese to file bankruptcy, following in the footsteps of New York dioceses in Albany, Rockville Centre and Buffalo. "If a truly

global settlement can be achieved," Hicks wrote in a May 1 statement, "compensation will become available to victim survivors in the fastest, most comprehensive manner possible, without the need for lengthy painful litigation for victim-survivors or bankruptcy proceedings for the archdiocese."

Archbishop Ronald Hicks delivers the homily during evening prayer at St. Patrick's Cathedral i

New York Archbishop Ronald Hicks delivers the homily during evening prayer at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City Feb. 5, 2026. (OSV News/The Good Newsroom/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Joseph Caramanno, who accused Msgr. John Paddack of child sex abuse and sued the archdiocese in August 2019, said he plans to accept the settlement deal because he has no other option.

"I feel like there's not much of a choice," Caramanno told the National Catholic Reporter. He described the specter of archdiocesan bankruptcy as "a threat," a negotiating tactic used to force accusers into accepting a deal. Caramanno also said he questions the need for bankruptcy proceedings considering the church's financial resources. The New York Times has reported that the archdiocese is "one of the city's largest landowners, with billions of dollars in real estate holdings." But in recent months, the archdiocese has sold some of its buildings, including the land under a luxury hotel in Manhattan, to help raise money for victim compensation.

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Caramanno, who attends weekly Mass and sings in the choir at a Catholic church in Brooklyn, said he was "happy about the prospect of accountability" but that a single, blanket settlement "diminishes the individual experiences" of accusers. He said he knows little about Hicks. But he faulted Cardinal Timothy Dolan, who led the Archdiocese of New York from 2009 until his retirement late last year, for his response to abuse allegations.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, now retired archbishop of New York, delivers his homily during the ch

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, now retired archbishop of New York, delivers his homily during the chrism Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City April 15, 2025. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)

"I was very upset with Cardinal Dolan on a personal level," said Caramanno, who cited a 2019 Al Jazeera documentary that depicts a journalist publicly confronting the cardinal about accusations of clergy sex abuse.

"Are you willing to hang a priest because of a press conference?" Dolan asked the reporter. "It's all being investigated, so drop it." Caramanno urged the church to genuinely acknowledge its legacy of abuse without "being cornered" into it by legal proceedings.

Finnegan, a plaintiffs' lawyer at Jeff Anderson and Associates, said he expects that other accusers will accept the deal, but that no dollar amount could sufficiently compensate victims for the harm they endured. "The people we have spoken to so far are in agreement" with the proposal, Finnegan said.

In addition to the $800 million, which the church would place into a trust to pay claimants and cover legal fees, the archdiocese must publish a list of credibly accused clergy and release a collection of "secret documents" detailing historical reports of abuse and how allegations were handled by church leaders. The documents, Finnegan said, would be made publicly accessible and housed at Iona University, a Catholic college in New Rochelle.

Supporters of SNAP, Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, walk in memory of allegec

Supporters of SNAP, Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, walk in memory of alleged abuse victims outside the Nov 12, 20108, assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore. (CNS/Catholic Review/Kevin J. Parks)

Finnegan also criticized Chubb for declining to pay compensation; the insurer places full liability for child sex offenses on archdiocesan officials and alleges that the church "expected or intended" abuse to occur. Describing Chubb's actions as "unprecedented," Finnegan said the insurer should pay. "The very reason the archdiocese bought insurance was to have protection," he said. Finnegan anticipates that some abuse accusers will eventually join with the Archdiocese of New York in its suit against Chubb.

The insurer defended their nonpayment. "The coverage litigation with the Archdiocese concerns the fundamental legal question of which of the underlying claims, if any, are covered by insurance," a Chubb spokesperson said in a statement

to NCR. "The insurance policies issued to the Archdiocese covered accidents, not the knowing tolerance and concealment of criminal sexual abuse of children, which the Archdiocese has admitted to."

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Caramanno also questions Chubb's argument that the church was negligent in handling abuse and therefore the insurer should not be liable to pay. He views this as Chubb "making excuses" to avoid payment and "not fulfilling their obligations." He said he would consider joining the archdiocesan lawsuit against Chubb, if asked, saying: "The more pressure the better."

Angela Walker, the executive director of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, said full accountability for the church must include prosecuting officials who shielded perpetrators of abuse as well. "The church has hidden behind this wall of silence for too long," she said. She views the settlement proposal as "a very good first step," but she encourages accusers to act in their own best interests. As for the court battle between the archdiocese and its insurer, Walker shifts the focus back to the accusers caught in the middle. "It's the survivors that should be put front and center," she said.

This story appears in the **The Reckoning** feature series. View the full series.