News



Parishioners attend a service at St. Mary's Cathedral, the mother church of the archdiocese in San Francisco, on April 2, 2010. (AP File/Eric Risberg)

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The San Francisco Catholic Archdiocese has agreed to pay $395 million to settle more than 500 lawsuits alleging child sexual abuse by church officials, plaintiffs' attorneys said Monday.

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone will have to write an apology letter to each survivor as part of the settlement.

The settlement also requires the archdiocese to implement a series of child protection and transparency reforms, including creating a list of clergy accused of abuse, said Jeff Anderson, an attorney representing dozens of child sexual abuse victims.

The settlement comes three years after the archdiocese filed for bankruptcy and will cover approximately 530 survivors of child sexual abuse, Anderson said. It is the latest agreement over clergy sexual abuse claims. In 2024, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles agreed to a record $880 million settlement.

Several archdioceses in California filed for bankruptcy after facing hundreds of lawsuits brought under a California law approved in 2019 that allowed decades-old claims to be filed by Dec. 31, 2022.

Cordileone, the archbishop, said in a statement that he believes the settlement provides "a path toward fair compensation for survivors who have borne the weight of this abuse for a lifetime."

"The hope is that this proposal will allow us collectively to move forward," he said.

"We accept full responsibility for what happened, and I sincerely apologize to all those who have been harmed," Cordileone added.

Margie O'Driscoll sued the archdiocese alleging she was sexually abused almost 50 years ago by a priest while she was a student at Marin Catholic High School in Kentfield, a community north of the Golden Gate Bridge. She said the settlement was hard-fought and puts the responsibility on church officials, not survivors.

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"I, like every survivor, have carried this pain and shame along like a ball and chain for a very, very long time," O'Driscoll said during a news conference. "Ashamed and confused about what happened, scorned by the archdiocese, and sometimes not even believed by family and friends, and I think today shame is gonna change sides."

The San Francisco Archdiocese serves about 440,000 Catholics in the counties of San Francisco, Marin and San Mateo.

Anderson said a committee of survivors who spent thousands of hours over the last three years negotiating with Cordileone is empowered with establishing protocols on how to distribute the funds. He said every survivor will be given an opportunity to submit their story of abuse to an allocator hired by the committee to receive what Anderson said would be "an equitable distribution based on the unique circumstances of that survival."

Besides the funds, the archdiocese will be required to follow 14 child protection and transparency demands that include maintaining and making public a comprehensive, up-to-date list of all accused clergy that details allegations and the outcomes of investigations. The archdiocese will also be banned from imposing confidentiality agreements that silence survivors.

"I've been working with survivors for decades and I've never heard of anything quite as significant, as rigorous, as robust as what is being required of the Archdiocese of San Francisco," Anderson said.