News



Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral is pictured in this file photo. The Chicago Archdiocese says it has paid out more than $400 million to abuse survivors. (OSV News/Reuters/Andrew Nelles)

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A St. Paul, Minnesota-based firm announced a new abuse settlement with the Chicago Archdiocese, which has already paid out more than $400 million to abuse survivors. The firm has also unveiled a national database of clergy it says are credibly abused of sexual abuse.

Attorney Jeff Anderson of Jeff Anderson and Associates said the latest $5.475 million in settlements, involving nine cases, were finalized in the two weeks ahead of his firm's Sept. 10 announcement.

In a statement sent on the same day to OSV News, the Archdiocese of Chicago said the settlements "arose from incidents alleged to have occurred 50 to 30 years ago."

"This timeframe is consistent with the large majority of claims coming forward today," it said.

“We have paid more than $400 million to survivors and continue to ask for survivors to come forward. They will be received with dignity and compassion,” said the archdiocese, referencing the amount of compensation it had paid to abuse survivors over the past four decades. Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich first revealed the $400 million figure June 12 in a statement posted to the archdiocese’s website.

During the news conference in Chicago, attorneys from Jeff Anderson and Associates and Pearlman and Anderson highlighted close to 300 settlements in the history of their work in the Chicago Archdiocese. Marc Pearlman whose law firm works with Anderson's to represent sexual abuse survivors, said the settlement figures represent validation for his clients.

"Nobody's paying that kind of money for something that didn't happen," he said. "This is validation that it happened."

Mike Shereck, a survivor client of Jeff Anderson and Associates, who was not part of the most recent settlement, told reporters that for him, no longer being angry was "the greatest gift of all … far beyond any financial settlement," after filing a

complaint.

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He explained, "You're dealing with it emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and legally, right? And so what happens is you go through the process. That's the part of healing. Healing hurts sometimes. But as you go through it, you start realizing what it is. I realized I survived."

Jeff Anderson and Associates also unveiled what it called a national database of priests and clergy who have been credibly accused, located on its website, that survivors from around the country can look up.

"This allows survivors to come to our site who may have forgotten information, who they were abused by, when they were abused, where they were abused," said Ian McIntyre, the firm's senior communications coordinator who created the site.

While the archdiocese has encouraged survivors to step forward with claims, it also reiterated that in the past two years it has received "an avalanche of new claims due to venture capital funding of law firms."

"Unfortunately, as we have seen from our experience, these include more false claims, as we reference in our RICO [Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act] lawsuit," it added.

In June, Cupich announced the archdiocese's countersuit against false claimants could go forward. The archdiocese discovered a prison- and jail-based scheme involving a network of at least 30 people who allegedly made or attempted to make false claims of abuse.

"The filing of false claims is, in the long run, a disservice to true survivors," said the archdiocese.

The archdiocese's statement said it welcomed the news that Mike Shereck found healing. It said the policies the archdiocese put in place around abuse since 1992 "have served as the model for the U.S. and global policies of the Catholic Church."

This piece has been updated to correct when the Chicago Archdiocese disclosed the $400 million figure.