



Oct. 3, 2024

Media Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Sandra Peterson, (414) 769-3461

Bankruptcy Court Rules in Favor of Archdiocese Judge Notes – Attorney General is on “Massive Fishing Expedition”

MILWAUKEE – Judge Michael Halfenger, Chief United States Bankruptcy Judge of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin has ruled against Attorney General Josh Kaul’s petition to reopen the Archdiocese of Milwaukee’s chapter 11 bankruptcy case which was closed nearly 10 years ago, calling the state’s request a “massive fishing expedition.” (See p. 26 of the ruling.)

The attorney general had asked the court to reopen the case and grant his office access to sealed information about abuse survivors as part of its clergy abuse investigation attempting to target the Catholic Church. Survivors had received assurances of confidentiality from the court, and that their identities and claims would remain under permanent seal. If the motion had been granted, survivors would have been notified by the court that the case would be reopened, and potentially dozens of people would have access to their information.

“We are thankful for Judge Halfenger’s ruling because a breach of confidentiality like that would have been devastating to abuse survivors who see this case as closed, and want their claim kept under seal by the court,” said Frank LoCoco, attorney representing the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. “In his ruling, Judge Halfenger reasserts the bankruptcy court’s finding at the time that because the abuse happened so long ago in the 1950’s-70’s, there are no longer any public safety concerns.”

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee has consistently communicated with the attorney general its on-going and long-standing commitment to working with his office or any local district attorney on any investigation related to potential criminal conduct involving sexual abuse of a minor related to any living archdiocesan priest. The archdiocese has consistently cooperated with such investigations and will continue to do so. To-date, the attorney general’s initiative has failed to lead to a single legal inquiry regarding any living priest who remains in ministry within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

-more-

3501 South Lake Drive, St. Francis, WI 53235

Phone: (414) 769-3461 – Fax: (414) 769-3388 – communication@archmil.org – archmil.org

Bankruptcy Court Rules p. 2

In his ruling, Judge Halfenger criticizes the Department of Justice for previously having consistently opted to not be involved in the abuse case in any way, including during the bankruptcy case. The judge ruled that the attorney general's request is improper and has nothing to do with the bankruptcy case.

###

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee encompasses 10 counties in southeast Wisconsin. It includes 184 parishes that provide spiritual care to more than 500,000 Catholics, 101 schools serving 27,000 students, and six cemeteries. Its Mission is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ by calling, forming, and sending disciples to go and make new disciples.

The Mary Mother of the Church Pastoral Center, located in St. Francis, is the main office for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Milwaukee is its mother church. The archdiocese also provides pastoral support for its sister parish, La Sagrada Familia, in the Dominican Republic.