

Chicago Archdiocese to pay \$12.6 million to 16 abuse survivors

CHICAGO - The Archdiocese of Chicago has agreed to pay 16 victims of clergy sex abuse more than \$12.6 million in a settlement announced Aug. 12.

In addition to financial payments, the archdiocese agreed to make public additional information and files related to the cases, including the deposition of Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago.

The settlement followed two years of mediation between the archdiocese and attorneys for the victims.

"I'm releasing the deposition voluntarily for the sake of the record and I hope to help the healing of everyone concerned in this matter," Cardinal George said at an Aug. 12 press conference to announce the settlement.

"I want to take this occasion to apologize again for the sexual abuse of minors committed by some priests," he said. "I have met and apologized to victims and their families many times over the past years. I hope I will have the chance to do so with these victims."

Attorney Jeffrey Anderson, who partnered with lawyer Marc Pearlman of the Chicago law firm of Kerns, Frost & Pearlman in representing the victims, called the settlement "a giant step" toward accountability and transparency on the part of the church.

"I call it a great beginning toward not just accountability but toward the kind of transparency that has been lacking in the clerical culture, not just in the Archdiocese of Chicago but elsewhere," he told Catholic News Service. "It isn't the end. It isn't a solution, but a beginning to a more cooperative solution to what remains a crisis."

The mediation process that led to the settlement involved extensive talks among Mr. Anderson, Mr. Pearlman and the archdiocese. The process included the sharing of

documents and other information and the use of an arbitrator to resolve disputes.

Thomas Gibbons, an attorney and dean of the School of Continuing Studies at Northwestern University, served as mediator. Stuart Nudelman, a retired judge, was the arbitrator.

Mr. Gibbons told CNS the mediation process was designed to allow victims to be heard as well as for victims to hear apologies from church officials. "There's a lot of benefit in that," he said.

While Mr. Gibbons has been mediating cases involving the archdiocese and victims for several years, he said the most recent process was the first that started after civil lawsuits were filed.

The settlement covers 14 cases of abuse involving 10 priests between 1962 and 1994.