

L.A. Archdiocese to sell chancery

LOS ANGELES - Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles said May 15 that the Archdiocese of Los Angeles would sell its chancery building, the Archdiocesan Catholic Center, to help fund future settlements in sex abuse cases.

In December the archdiocese settled 46 civil cases of sexual abuse for \$60 million. Its share of the settlement was about \$40 million, with the remainder covered by insurance companies or religious orders. At the time the settlement was announced, the archdiocese said its share had been anticipated and set aside in 2005.

Cardinal Mahony said the archdiocese now must be prepared to fund its share of coming settlements in all remaining cases, estimated at more than 500.

"It is only right that the archdiocese begin this process by demonstrating our commitment to reach final settlement in these cases by selling our central administrative building," the cardinal said in his May 15 statement.

He said the archdiocese would either lease office space for chancery functions, or lease back some space in the existing building.

The cardinal said a working group in the archdiocese had identified about 50 properties that also could be sold to help pay for future settlements.

"Our preference would be to retain all of these properties. But we have no other way to raise our share of money for coming settlements except through such sales," Cardinal Mahony said, adding the real estate had been acquired over the years for new parishes, schools, convents, charitable institutions and other archdiocesan ministries.

"No parishes or parish schools will be closed to fund these settlements, nor will their essential ministries be affected by these sales," the cardinal said. "None of the properties being considered for sale are being used by the parishes of the archdiocese."

"Over the past several months, attorneys, judges and church leaders have been working diligently to fashion a settlement (for remaining cases) that is fair and just,"

Cardinal Mahony said. "It is my daily prayer that this process will continue to intensify, and that in the near future these cases can be fairly settled."

At the time the settlement was reached, Cardinal Mahony alluded to the likelihood that the archdiocese would have to sell nonessential real estate to raise funds for the settlement, and re-evaluate some of the services and ministries it provides to parishes in the future with an estimated 500-plus additional clergy sex abuse claims lodged against the archdiocese.

In his May 15 statement, Cardinal Mahony said appraisals were being sought on the real estate parcels identified to date. "Other possible properties that could be sold are being studied," he added.