

# Number of sex abuse claimants reaches 288 in Fairbanks Diocese

FAIRBANKS, Alaska – The number of people claiming to have been sexually abused by Catholic priests and other church workers in the Fairbanks Diocese over the past six decades more than doubled after the diocese filed for bankruptcy protection in March.

The diocese said 288 people have made abuse claims against more than 40 individuals, with most of the cases relating to childhood sexual abuse. Because of the bankruptcy, victims had faced a Dec. 2 deadline to be included in the group that will be compensated by the diocese for the abuse.

When the diocese announced in February that it would seek bankruptcy protection, it said it was unable to reach a financial settlement with 140 people who had filed about 150 claims against the diocese. The most recent abuse asserted in a claim took place in the 1980s, although some cases go back to the 1950s.

Filing for bankruptcy is “the best way to bring all parties together and to provide for fair and equitable treatment of all who have been harmed,” said Fairbanks Bishop Donald J. Kettler in announcing the decision. “I am legally and morally bound to both fulfill our mission and to pursue healing for those injured.”

The bankruptcy court had set the Dec. 2 deadline for claimants of alleged abuse to file claims against the Fairbanks Diocese. Ads were placed by the diocese on Alaska public radio and in newspapers throughout Alaska, Washington state, Oregon and in USA Today to notify people about the deadline.

Ronnie Rosenberg, human resources director for the Fairbanks Diocese, said more than half of the claims were against one man, Joseph Lundowski, who has been described in lawsuits as a deacon and a Trappist or Jesuit “monk” but was actually a lay volunteer, according to Rosenberg.

Lundowski, who was believed to be from Chicago, worked in several parishes in the Fairbanks Diocese from about 1959 to 1975. It is not known whether he is living or

dead.

The Society of Jesus reportedly paid \$50 million in 2007 to settle lawsuits filed by 110 Alaskans against 12 Jesuit priests and three other church workers, including Lundowski.

The nation's largest diocese geographically, Fairbanks covers more than 400,000 square miles.

Other dioceses that have filed for bankruptcy to resolve clergy sex abuse claims are San Diego, Spokane, Wash., Davenport, Iowa, and the Archdiocese of Portland, Ore. Portland, Davenport and Spokane have emerged from bankruptcy.