

Diocese abuse claims double

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Published Thursday, January 8, 2009

FAIRBANKS — Since the Fairbanks Catholic Diocese filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy March 1, the number of people alleging sexual abuse by priests and church workers has more than doubled.

In the nine months following the diocese's reorganization filing and a court imposed Dec. 2 deadline to file further abuse claims, another 152 people came forward filing similar allegations with the court. The latest tally is 292 claimants.

Previous to filing for reorganization, the Fairbanks diocese had settled with 23 victims.

"We're still getting calls. There still are other claimants out there," said Anchorage attorney Ken Roosa, who with law firm partner Chris Cooke and California attorney John Manley represent approximately 80 percent of the people who have come forward alleging sexual abuse by Catholic clergy dating from the 1950s to 1980s.

New offenders also are listed among the most recent sexual abuse claims, Roosa said.

The Fairbanks diocese is now legally protected from further claims, Roosa said, but victims can still levy legal claims against the Society of Jesus which provides priests for the northern Alaska mission diocese.

Although the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) settled 110 Alaska Native claims of clerical sexual abuse with a \$50 million agreement in November 2007, there is no time bar, Roosa said.

According to Ronnie Rosenberg, the diocese's legal coordinator, the diocese is still working on liquidating assets, selling things and getting appraisals to meet Chapter 11 requirements.

"These are complex cases with a lot of people trying to garner assets and figure out a plan," Rosenberg said.

"We're trying to figure out how this can happen so the diocese can continue to operate and the plaintiffs can get compensated. It's in everyone's interest to have that happen."

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