

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/archbishop-apologizes-for-priest-abuse/article_d8721ff8-c678-11ed-bb93-33a8759a7917.html

Archbishop apologizes for priest abuse

The New Mexican
Mar 19, 2023



Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe participates in a news conference in 2016 during the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Spring General Assembly in St. Louis.

Sid Hastings/Associated Press file photo

Archbishop John Wester wrote he was “ashamed” by decades of sexual abuse committed by Roman Catholic priests in an open letter to those who’d filed complaints and lawsuits against the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

In a letter dated Thursday and read during Mass on Sunday, Wester professed his “profound regret and sorrow over the tragic and inexcusable harm done to you,” referring to the hundreds of claimants in a scandal that rocked the archdiocese for many years.

In the letter, Wester wrote: “The archdiocese takes responsibility for the abuse,” and apologized “to each of you and to all those who have been harmed by sexual abuse perpetrated by Roman Catholic clergy in this archdiocese.”

In a recent interview, Wester acknowledged recovering from the damage done by the abuse scandal would not be easy and reiterated the archdiocese’s determination to deal head-on with abuse claims in the future. He also expressed concerns about feelings of guilt some victims had dealt with for years.

He addressed the issue of guilt in the letter as well.

“I also wish to affirm that none of you are to blame for the abuse perpetrated upon you,” he wrote. “Sadly, it is not unusual for those victimized by clergy sexual abuse to carry guilt for the abuse they received. This guilt is often encouraged by the perpetrator and is entirely unfounded. You were completely innocent and did nothing to deserve, encourage or sustain the hideous crime of sexual abuse of a minor.”

The archdiocese is in the final stages of a Chapter 11 proceeding that resulted in a \$121.5 million settlement with nearly 400 people who claimed they had been abused by priests, often as children. To help raise money for the settlement, the archdiocese was forced to sell some of its properties and asked its parishes to help contribute to the fund.

The archdiocese for a time considered mortgaging the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Santa Fe, its best-known church and considered by some the emotional center of Catholicism in New Mexico. But Wester said in an interview with *The New Mexican* earlier this year its fundraising effort from parishes was successful enough to drop the plan.

“It is my fervent hope that the Chapter 11 process that is concluding now will bring you all some measure of justice,” he wrote. “I pray that this moment will be yet another step in the healing process and that you will find the peace and well-bring that is your God-given right.”





Archbishop Wester letter

Updated 20 hrs ago

Phill Casaus

Editor