

# San Diego Catholics settle sex abuse cases for \$198 million: Abuse settlements now total over \$2 billion

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The Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego has agreed to pay \$198 million to 144 alleged victims of sexual abuse by clergy or other church employees—the second-largest such settlement since the abuse crisis exploded five years ago.

The settlement follows four years of negotiations and a threat from a U.S. bankruptcy judge to dismiss the diocese's Chapter 11 claim if a settlement was not reached by September 11. In announcing the settlement four days before, San Diego bishop Robert Brom said the diocese would ask to be released from bankruptcy court.

In the wake of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles's record-setting \$660 million settlement in July, the San Diego agreement brings to more than \$2 billion the total amount the U.S. Catholic Church has paid in sexual abuse-related matters since 1950.

San Diego will pay about \$107 million of the settlement, including \$30 million for religious orders, some of which the diocese hopes to recover, Brom said. The insurance carrier Catholic Mutual will pay \$76 million; the Diocese of San Bernardino, which had been carved from the San Diego diocese in 1978, will pay about \$15 million.

"Some have accused the diocese of engaging in delay tactics in order to avoid our responsibility to victims," Brom said. "We have done our best . . . to bring this matter to conclusion with justice for all involved, but many forces beyond our control have complicated the process."

Said Joelle Casteix of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests: "No settlement will ever magically restore hundreds of stolen childhoods, betrayed psyches, shattered self-esteem and damaged relationships. But a settlement can be

an important first step in healing, exposure, accountability and prevention.” –  
*Religion News Service*