

RAMSEY COUNTY CIVIL AGREEMENT Q & A FOR PRIESTS AND PARISHES

Q: What does this Settlement Agreement really mean? **A:** It means that the Archdiocese has voluntarily agreed to implement the enhanced safe environment Settlement Agreement and submit to external auditing in 2017 and 2018. At the end of the 36 month review period, Ramsey County District Court has agreed they will drop the civil charges.

Q: Was the Archdiocese forced into this Agreement? **A:** No. We made the decision not to fight the charges in court because we share the common goal of protecting children with the Ramsey County Attorney and his staff.

Q: How will the Ramsey County Attorney's Office be able to verify that the Archdiocese is following the new Settlement Agreement? **A:** There will be both internal and external audits of the Agreement and reporting mechanisms that must be followed.

Q: Aren't there Constitutional concerns with the state (Ramsey County) involved in overseeing a religious institution? **A:** The Archdiocese is still free to run its ministries, operations and other programs as it sees fit. We chose to enter into this agreement because the Settlement Agreement serves to enhance our mission of faith. It is at the heart of the church to protect children and vulnerable adults. Jesus said, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me (Matthew 9:37)."

Q: How much will this Agreement cost? **A:** We should have a good idea on expenses sometime in the near term. We are already working on ways to maximize efficiency and effectively manage the costs to parishes and the Archdiocese. Because this is the right thing to do, it is considered a top priority in our budget.

Q: Were any non-Archdiocesan officials consulted during this process? **A:** Yes. While leaders of our legal and Ministerial Standards and Safe Environment offices – as well as Archbishop Hebda and Bishop Cozzens -- negotiated with the Ramsey County Attorney and his staff, priests who have served or who are serving in leadership positions, the Ministerial Review Board, the Corporate Board of Directors, the College of Consultors, and the Archdiocesan Finance Council were all consulted in the process. Each of these groups were able to study the agreement, share their concerns, have their concerns addressed, and ultimately supported it.

Q: Does Pope Francis have to approve this agreement? **A:** The Pope's representative to the United States, the Apostolic Nuncio, in Washington, DC, has been advised of the Settlement Agreement and expressed his support.

Q: Does U.S. Bankruptcy Court have to approve the agreement? **A:** Yes. Judge Robert Kressel is aware of the Ramsey County situation and we will seek the Court's approval at a hearing after the first of the year.

Q: What happens if the Archdiocese doesn't follow the agreement? **A:** If the Ramsey County Attorney's office does not believe we are following the agreement, they are required to notify us. From there, we have an opportunity to reply to the notice, fix any discrepancy, or discuss with them what happened and what we are doing. If both sides cannot come to an agreement, then we would go before a judge to explain the issue.

Q: Are fingerprint background checks really going to be required in the future for all priests, teachers and volunteers who serve the Church? That seems intrusive. **A:** The requirement in the agreement is for the Archdiocese to study fingerprint background checks and their feasibility and associated costs. With the proliferation of identity theft in the U.S. and around the world, law enforcement experts say fingerprint identification is only a few years away. The technology is not quite where it needs to be, but eventually it will be a part of everyday life. Several dioceses around the country already require fingerprinting for priests, employees and volunteers.

Q: Have the criminal charges been dismissed with this Agreement? **A:** No, the criminal charges are a separate matter. We look forward to continuing to pursue a resolution with the Ramsey County Attorney's Office of those charges.