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Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis addresses those gathered for an outdoor Mass on the vigil of Pentecost at St. Bonaventure in Bloomington, Minn., May 22, 2021. (CNS/The Catholic Spirit/Dave Hrbacek)

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The Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis announced June 17 it has fulfilled its remaining \$3 million obligation to clergy abuse survivors ahead of schedule in its \$210 million bankruptcy settlement.

Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda said in a statement, "With funds drawn from unexpected estate gifts, and at the advice of the Archdiocesan Finance Council and Corporate Board [lay leaders who advise him on archdiocesan operations], the archdiocese has decided to accelerate its payment schedule, underscoring a heartfelt desire to assist the survivors as promptly as possible by fulfilling our financial obligation ahead of schedule."

The archdiocese filed for bankruptcy protection in January 2015 in the wake of mounting claims of clergy sexual abuse dating back as far as the 1940s.

Ultimately, 453 claims were filed against the archdiocese during the claim-filing period, most of which were related to lawsuits brought against the archdiocese during a three-year-lifting of the statute of limitations on child sexual abuse claims in Minnesota.

In May 2018, the archdiocese announced it had reached a \$210 million settlement.

The \$3 million is the balance left on a \$5 million promissory note as part of the bankruptcy settlement, in which the archdiocese agreed to contribute \$1 million to the abuse survivors' trust each year for five years.

In a Dec. 17 report on the archdiocese's 2020 fiscal year, Hebda noted two significant estate gifts: one for \$1.1 million and the other for \$8.5 million. At that time, paying the \$3 million balance to the abuse survivors trust was among recommendations from the Archdiocesan Finance Council and Corporate Board for using the estate gifts, the archbishop said.

While the now-completed payment ends the archdiocese's financial obligations under the bankruptcy agreement, archdiocesan leadership remains committed to vigorous abuse prevention and to programs supporting those harmed by abuse, the archbishop said June 17.

Additional funds from the unexpected estate gifts also will be used to help the archdiocese build on progress already made in creating and sustaining safe environments and abuse prevention, he said.

"I offer my apology and express my deep regret to those who suffered abuse by clergy and others in the church," Hebda said, "as well as to their families, and to the broader faith community that has been impacted so profoundly. Courageous survivors and their loved ones continue to generously share with me not only their deep wounds, but also their hopes for a better and safer tomorrow."

"I am most grateful for the opportunity to listen to their stories, celebrating with them those instances in which the Lord has helped to bring true healing to those injuries," he continued. "I promise that under my watch this local church will always remember those who have been harmed, and strive to honor their frequent request that we together work to make certain that what happened to them never happens to another."

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Ruff is news editor of The Catholic Spirit, newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

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