

PRESS RELEASE

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Diocese of Orange Clergy Sexual Abuse Settlement

Today counsel for the 87 survivors of childhood sexual abuse in the Diocese of Orange are pleased to announce the successful negotiation of the settlement agreement which will conclude the cases against the Diocese of Orange. On behalf of all of the attorneys, let me say that it has been both a privilege and a honor to represent these clients.

On December 2, 2004, 87 survivors reached a financial settlement with the Diocese of Orange for an amount totaling \$100 million dollars. The final version of the settlement agreement and all non-economic terms have now also been agreed to by the parties. There remains one final step, which is for the Court to approve this agreement and the individual settlements of each survivor, since many will continue their cases against other non-settling defendants.

The prior order of confidentiality issued by Judge Owen Kwong has now been dissolved. Those attorneys and survivors who wish to speak about this difficult period are free to do so.

While the financial terms of the settlement are historic, the documents associated with the tenure, assignment and transfer of the perpetrators were paramount to the survivors. Those documents have been turned over by the Diocese of Orange to the Court for further disposition. The survivors and their counsel will motion the Court forthwith to release all documents formerly held by the Diocese to the public consistent with due process to those who may be affected by the release of their contents. This critical term of settlement between the Diocese and the survivors is an attempt to bring much needed light to the flawed, and often tragic decision-making process that permitted perpetrators unfettered access to children.

Fear of the truth being revealed should never be a justification for putting a child in harms way. Children are society's most precious asset. They are the world's future. Childhood sexual abuse is an insidious assault on the victim and their loved ones, becoming for many a daily reminder of loss and despair. No amount of money can replace the joy and wonderment of childhood or adolescence. This settlement brought the parties to the brink of personal and organizational crisis. The parties choose a path of reconciliation as opposed to continued conflict. While the memories of abuse will linger, the status of the survivors as victims of sexual predators will never be in doubt.

We wish to thank all those who worked tirelessly to bring this settlement to fruition. Some individuals, however, deserve special mention. Throughout two long years of mediation, the parties were assisted by Judges Peter D. Lichtman, Thomas F. Nuss, and most recently, Owen Kwong. They conducted their mediations with dramatically different styles, but with a singular purpose - fairness to all. A litigant cannot ask for any greater service by the Courts.

Finally, it is the clients who deserve the highest praise. Bishop Tod Brown and the 87 survivors of childhood sexual abuse entered into this process with courage and a will to shed light on a tragedy that altered the lives of everyone it touched. While the process was contentious, often reaching the praecipe of failure, the will to find a solution became a beacon of hope and over time led the parties to resolution. Bishop Brown offered to meet privately with each survivor. These conversations are difficult and heartbreaking and we commend the Bishop for spending this time with the survivor community. These discussions will leave no one who listens untouched by the depth of pain expressed. They are, however, necessary. No plan of prevention will be successful unless there is full recognition and acknowledgment of the harm that comes to every child that suffers at the hands of a sexual predator. This first step of reconciliation is perhaps the true value of this most historic settlement.

For further information, contact the following:

Katherine K. Freberg, Esquire
Law Offices of Freberg & Associates
8001 Irvine Center Drive, Suite 1070
Irvine, CA 92618
(949) 453-1111
[**kfreberg@freberglaw.com**](mailto:kfreberg@freberglaw.com)

Stephen C. Rubino, Esquire
Ross & Rubino, LLP
8510 Ventnor Avenue
Margate, NJ 08402
(609) 487-9864
[**scr@rossandrubino.com**](mailto:scr@rossandrubino.com)