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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The sexual abuse crisis in our beloved Church has been devastating. I have seen it unfold in the media since I was a young man and it has been painful to hear about. We cannot undo the actions of the past, as much as I wish we could, and the only way forward is to be truthful about the offenses and errors of the past, as horrific as they were, fully cooperate with our civil authorities to investigate any accusations and continue to act with vigilance today. I also renew my commitment to seeking forgiveness and healing along with the assurance of safe environments for children in this archdiocese. I continue to urge any who have been abused by clergy to come forward, as brave survivors before you have done.

I want to assure you that no clergyman with a credible claim of abuse remains in ministry in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Any allegation of abuse or any other crime we receive at the archdiocese is immediately reported to law enforcement, no matter when it occurred. Our civil authorities have the best opportunity and expertise to investigate these matters.

When I became Archbishop of New Orleans back in February, I instructed there be a review by the Internal Review Board of the archdiocese of every claim against an archdiocesan clergyman received during the bankruptcy proceedings. This board is a consultative group of mostly lay professionals with representation of abuse survivors that advises me, as Archbishop of New Orleans, in assessing allegations of sexual abuse of a minor and determining an accused cleric's suitability for ministry. While that work is ongoing, it is these reviews which lead us to today's announcement. We cannot be afraid of the truth and must work towards a process of both accountability and healing.

As was agreed to during the recent bankruptcy, today we are publishing the names of archdiocesan clergy that are accused of child sexual abuse. This update contains the names of clergy, all of whom are deceased, who were accused of sexual abuse, and after the allegations have been reviewed, it has been determined that there is sufficient information to make their accusation public. We are also adding a number of clergy who were never formally assigned here, who are included on a list of accused in their home diocese or religious order, and were accused in the bankruptcy of abusing a survivor in the archdiocese. It is our hope that by including them on our local list, it will be a tangible acknowledgement of the suffering endured by survivors.

Also, from the bankruptcy settlement, we are releasing a full list of all those whose records will be included in the Archive of Eligible Files which will be published through an

agreement with Louisiana State University. This archive is part of our commitment to transparency and will include anyone who is on our published list and those individuals identified as the perpetrator in three or more child sexual abuse Proofs of Claim in the bankruptcy. In accord with the court ordered agreements, the records of anyone accused in three or more Proofs of Claim are to be included without any review or determination of credibility. While we do not have an exact date for when the archive will be published, once it is live, there will be a direct link on our website.

My heart is heavy as I make these announcements today. My heart is heavy for the survivors who have endured the pain of their abuse for so many years. My heart is heavy for you - our dear parishioners, priests, deacons, religious - who knew and perhaps even ministered with or were shepherded by priests who have been implicated. Those feelings are likely hard to reconcile with the news of a claim of abuse of a minor.

The abuse crisis in the Church has been devastating. But despite this heaviness, I am hopeful. This is an important step for our archdiocese. We need to follow the path of truth, wherever it may lead, and together ensure that the crimes and sins of child sexual abuse nor any crimes would be kept secret or repeated.

We are a people of hope, and it is with faith, hope, and trust in the Lord and the mercy of His Sacred Heart that we will move forward together on our mission to bring souls to Him. For I know that it is only the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ that can relieve the heaviness of my heart, and the hearts of so many who continue to bear the pain caused by abuse.

To the priests, religious and all other members of this community, I join you in prayer that God carry us together in His love with commitment to our faith and each other and let us never forget to pray for the healing of our survivors.

I am grateful for all of those who continue to work daily to protect children and for the tens of thousands of clergy, religious, staff, and volunteers who spend their time learning and being trained in how to create and maintain safe environments for our children so that they can grow in their friendship with Jesus through the formation of their minds and hearts.

Know of my love, prayers, and gratitude for you. Please pray for me.

With renewed best wishes, I remain

Yours in Christ,

+ James F. Checchio

Most Reverend James F. Checchio, JCD, MBA
Archbishop of New Orleans