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**STATEMENT**  
**from Archbishop John C. Wester**

ALBUQUERQUE – Thursday, November 29, 2018– IMMEDIATE RELEASE –Archbishop John C. Wester has issued the following statement:

For the past 25 years, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe has worked diligently to promote a safe environment for children and young people. In particular, during this time we have done our best to provide support and healing for those who have been harmed by clergy sexual abuse. We realize that nothing can ever adequately compensate those who have been victims of this terrible crime. Nonetheless, we seek to do all we can by way of publicly acknowledging their pain, offering apologies and providing financial compensation. We are committed to doing all we can to assist victim survivors now, and into the future.

With the full realization that this commitment is not simply to those who have already come forward seeking justice, but to all those who will come forward in the future. Cognizant of our diminished resources, I have sought the advice of representatives of the College of Consultors, the Presbyteral Council, the Archdiocesan Finance Council, and many others who have experience and expertise in these matters. Over a period of many months, these trusted colleagues have strongly recommended the archdiocese seek to reorganize under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code. Therefore, relying on the providence of our loving God and having informed the appropriate archdiocesan bodies, I now announce, having accepted this clear recommendation, we have instructed our attorneys to file for Chapter 11 reorganization within the first full week of December 2018.

I wish to make clear that our first and foremost concern is the victims of sexual abuse and our desire to do all we can to provide for their just compensation. Reorganization helps us to provide in an equitable manner, especially for those who could come forward in the future as well as those who have already taken the courageous step of making a claim. I

wish to emphasize that we have not taken this step to avoid responsibility. On the contrary, we believe that Chapter 11 is the most equitable way for the archdiocese to address its responsibility to the victim-survivors. Specifically, the operations of the parishes, schools and other critical missions of the archdiocese will go forward and will continue with their normal operations.

Chapter 11 reorganization will also provide full financial transparency with regard to the operations and properties of the archdiocese. In addition, the archdiocese will continue to cooperate with the New Mexico Attorney General with regard to the current ongoing inquiry. The Chapter 11 reorganization process also specifically provides that the victims and their counsel will be full and active participants in the reorganization. Concluding the Chapter 11 reorganization will require the affirmative consent of the survivors who file claims.

I would note that a significant part of our daily operations is our ongoing effort to heal and protect. Over the last 25 years, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe has had a “Zero Tolerance Policy” whereby every priest, deacon, staff member or volunteer who is credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor is removed from ministry permanently, and the abuse is reported to law enforcement. Since 1993, the archdiocese has had a full-time Victims’ Assistance Coordinator, an Independent Review Board, and every priest, deacon, staff member or volunteer are required to go through a background check and attend the Archdiocesan Abuse Awareness Training for Adults. In addition, the policy of the archdiocese is to pay for counseling for any sexual abuse victim who requests it, and the archbishop has offered to meet with every victim of sexual abuse by a priest, deacon, staff member or volunteer. In September 2017, the archdiocese published a list of credibly accused priests, deacons, religious, and seminarians, and recently updated the list to add additional names and provide the assignment history of each priest.

Our Church of Santa Fe, the Holy Faith, has walked, in the words of St. Paul, “...by faith and not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7) We will continue to do so, trusting in the mercy and guidance of the Holy Spirit as we journey together on the path of healing and reorganization. We in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe never cease to keep those who have been harmed by sexual abuse our first priority. It is my hope that as we seek their healing, we ourselves will be healed and renewed in the process. The road ahead will not be easy, but the Lord Jesus Christ, crucified in weakness and risen in glory, will support us on the way.

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