

The logo for "VICAR GENERAL'S CORNER" is a decorative emblem. It features a central black square with the text "VICAR GENERAL'S CORNER" in white, serif, all-caps font. This square is set within a larger, ornate gold-colored frame with a diamond-like shape and intricate geometric patterns. The entire logo is positioned at the top left of the page.

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Vicar General's Corner

July 7, 2022

Well, I hope you all had a joy-filled July 4th with friends and family. Now we enter the dog days of summer, with no holiday in sight until Labor Day. Well, for non-Catholics, at least; WE have the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary coming up on August 15th, and though it's not an official holy day of obligation this year because it falls on a Monday, we might consider whether it's a moral obligation, nonetheless. After all, our beloved Mother prays for and watches over us constantly, so would we not be remiss in not celebrating the most joyous day of her life—the day she is assumed body and soul into the eternal joys of Heaven, to be with her beloved Son, Father, and Holy Spirit spouse forever? If we dare not miss our *birth* mothers' birthdays, dare we miss our Blessed Mother's birthday into Heaven? Blessed is she among women; indeed, among all humanity.

Dobbs / Roe v. Wade

There's been a lot of negative stories about Catholicism and the archdiocese in the press recently—“coincidentally” just after the Dobbs/Roe v. Wade decision by the Supreme Court. That decision, by the way, was not necessarily pro-life *per se*, but rather a ruling that the Court in Roe v. Wade erred because it did not have the authority to make sweeping rules on its own as it did; the Court's proper jurisdiction is simply to interpret the constitutionality of laws passed. Though critics complain that it was a “religious” ruling, it wasn't really; it just backed the court off from making judicial fiats, and reasserted that laws are made by representatives of the electorate.

So, the fight to protect life continues, and have to be much more de-centralized—no longer aiming at the repeal of Roe, but rather the battle for the hearts and minds of the people who will influence each state's electorate, and nationally if the Congress and President pass laws for abortion which apply to the entire country. Even those laws would be immediately challenged in the courts, but litigation would grind on for years and maybe decades. So...we've in no way seen the end of the struggle for life.

As far as headlines, remember that news outlets work on a profit motive like any other business, and profits for them come from advertising—profits which increase depending on subscriptions and, even more so in our day, website views. So, it benefits the news organizations' bottom line to make stories as “eye-catching” as possible, regardless of whether they understand or include all that may be involved in an issue. Please remember that when you read negative stories about the archdiocese.

Archdiocesan Bankruptcy

Well, your pastors should have briefed the parishes about what's going on with the bankruptcy settlement by now. After years of negotiation, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and the claimants finally agreed to a total settlement of \$121.5 million, with the archdiocese responsible for \$75 million and insurance companies the rest. For the archdiocese, \$65 million is due by the end of September, and the last \$10 million by March 31, 2023.

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The archdiocese has sold, or is in the process of selling, virtually all the property it has not required for operations, and it sure doesn't have the money to pay that whole settlement amount. People have a (very) mistaken idea the Church has limitless supplies of cash for some reason; but where would the archdiocese get that? So, as you have likely heard by now, the archdiocese has to depend partially on the parishes contributing to the settlement in order for it to be successful. Yes, it is a significant amount of funds from each parish but adjusted according to parish size.

What is the benefit for the parishes?! Well, If the settlement is completed successfully, the parishes themselves will be shielded from lawsuits from events occurring up to the bankruptcy filing date of December 3, 2018.

What is the consequence of parishes NOT contributing? If the settlement fails, then each parish is individually open to lawsuits, and legal fees and settlement costs will almost certainly be far more than the bankruptcy settlement cost—even to the possible liquidation of all parish assets: parish hall, school, and even *church* buildings. And each parish which holds back not only increases the burden on all others but increase the danger to parishes' very existence.

There are some pastors and finance councils balking at contributions, or at least from contributing as much as possible. But ask yourselves which is better: to contribute now as much as the parish can contribute and gain future protections, or to see the parish buildings sold in payment of abuse lawsuit settlements, with no future protections? Should the bankruptcy fail, those 400 claims would be released to be filed individually, with the vast majority of parishes having claims (often several) naming them. And, yes, some parishes are asked to give more than others, but only because they can, and have been blessed with more. In this way the settlement is like insurance: no one likes paying for it, but it can save from total catastrophe.

There is no third option: it'll either go one way or the other: parishes with the archdiocesan settlement, or should the settlement fail to be concluded, individual lawsuits against parishes. Parishes will not be able to simply "opt-out"; in lawsuits, they can lose their assets regardless. So, will we have doors of our churches sealed and marked "SEIZED" by law enforcement? Even by off chance a parish does *not* see individual lawsuits, a judge may rule that ALL parish assets are part of the Archdiocesan assets, and thus subject to the lawsuit settlements against the archdiocese, with the same unfortunate end result.

Many complain that this is unfair—that the parishes are paying for others' sins and crimes. Well, that is true, but the archdiocese is paying that bill as well. No one is now ministering has been credibly accused of any crime or is at fault for the situation we find ourselves in. But this is our current legal system for bankruptcies in the U.S., crafted so as to give at least *some* just compensation to claimants and, in our case, to the victims of horrible crimes. It's like this in any bankruptcy caused by crime, really; in the famous Enron or Lehman Brothers bankruptcies, only a relative few did criminal and/or irresponsible behavior, but *all* the workers who were simply doing their jobs lost them as well.

The best thing that individual parishioners can do is, understanding the dire situation that ALL of us are in, is to support and encourage your pastor and finance council members to contribute all that the

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parish is able; many are trying to “hold back” or make deals with the archdiocese out of justifiable concern for their parish and parishioners and of backlash from their people. But the archdiocese is trying to ensure that the parishes *continue* into the future, and any funds “held back” to the detriment of completing the bankruptcy very likely may go to attorney fees and parish settlements nonetheless should the settlement fail. So, the choice to that parish becomes: contribute as much as possible to make the parish secure or face an even *more* uncertain and potentially much more costly future.

It's a tough time, yes, but the Church has always had to endure tough times, and yet always comes out all the stronger through the resilience and indomitable faith and goodness of her people. It's a good time to remember St. Paul:

“We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints ... I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want ... As it is written, ‘He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack.’” (1 Corinthians 8:1-3,13-14)

So, let us trust in the goodness of God, and may He bless you and all your families always.

“[Jesus said] ... ‘you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.’” (John 16:22)