

Good afternoon.

I stand here today sorry, grateful and humbled.

I am sorry the Hoffman family has had to endure so much hurt and pain. I have said it before, but it bears repeating – we failed you. The Archdiocese that I lead and love, the Archdiocese that you trusted, failed to protect you in a way that has had a huge impact on your lives. I will always be sorry for the harm caused to your family and loved ones, to other victim/survivors, and to this community.

To the Hoffman family – I am also grateful. Grateful that you reported the abuse perpetrated on you. Your courage when this happened – and now – inspires me and those with whom I work. I am confident you have helped others come forward.

I am also grateful to you and other survivors who have reached out and met with me. What you have shared during our time together has changed me. You have helped me be a better priest, a better bishop and a better, more understanding, human being. Additionally, I need to express my gratitude to your family for continuing to help me and others work more effectively with the many in our Church and community who have been harmed.

I am humbled by knowing that without the courage of the Hoffman family - and so many others who persisted to hold us accountable – we would not be here today – able to stand with Ramsey County Attorney John Choi and his team, and talk about the promises kept, the progress made, and how we can move forward together so that our churches, schools and communities are safe. One thing that we have learned through this experience is that addressing sexual abuse in our Church is a duty that will never cease. We have learned that vigilant prevention is never a distraction from the work of the Church. Rather, it is intimately related to the work of the Church, which is preaching the Gospel and manifesting God's love in the world. We cannot do one effectively without the other. How can we be faithful to the one who said "Let the children come unto me" if we are not committed to protecting those who are vulnerable and seeking his healing for those who have been harmed?

The conclusion of this period of oversight by the Ramsey County Attorney's Office is a time for neither celebration nor relief. This is certainly not a time to relax. Quite the opposite. Hard, persistent work to maintain vigilance across the 12 counties of the Archdiocese must continue. We must honor the common

request of nearly every victim/survivor I have met – “Do everything you can to make sure this never happens to another child.”

To keep that promise, I pledge to build on our relationship with the Ramsey County Attorney’s Office. We value and respect County Attorney Choi and his team for their commitment to keeping our communities safe. I will always be grateful for their role in assisting the Archdiocese in pursuing its goal of effective cultural change.

Indeed, we have gratefully learned from Judge Warner and the Ramsey County Attorney’s Office that the work of creating safe environments is so important that it is far beyond the work of any one bishop or individual. I can assure you, Mr. Choi, and the people of this community, that I will continue to collaborate with those who can make a difference. I think about lay women and men who have come forward to help us and who know all too well the effects of abuse – extraordinary individuals like the Hoffman family, Patty Wetterling and Dr. Jim Richter (the latter who both serve so generously on our Ministerial Review Board). I look forward to working more closely with a growing number of abuse survivors – like Frank Meuers – and others who have offered to share their experiences and their expertise – helping us create safer environments and building better relationships with our sisters and brothers who have been harmed by people in the Church.

I welcome as well the continued insights and accountability offered by the laity who serve on our Review Board, as well as by the members of our newly constituted Archdiocesan Corporate Board, that was undeniably strengthened by the Settlement Agreement. I will be counting as well on the members of our new Lay Advisory Board, and on the thousands of employees and volunteers who serve in parishes and schools throughout this Archdiocese. Along with Bishop Andrew Cozzens, our many faithful clergy, and our committed lay staff, these women and men will continue to be vitally important as they provide feedback, overview and recommendations based on their vast experience and expertise.

Drawing on their input, and grateful for their help, I was pleased that the Archdiocese was able to submit to the Court this morning its Safe Environment Plan for moving forward. I trust that the faithful of the Archdiocese and the citizens of this community will hold us to that commitment. I am confident that with their help, your help, our Church can and will do better. Thank you.