

July 25, 2007 - IA - 153 claims filed
DAVENPORT (IA), Des Moines Register, (AP)

More than 150 people filed sexual abuse claims in bankruptcy court against the Roman Catholic Diocese of Davenport by last week's deadline, the chairman of a creditor's committee said.

A federal bankruptcy judge set a July 16 deadline to file claims of abuse by priests. The diocese filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy last fall and is selling some of its property to settle claims.

Michl Uhde, who leads the committee, said Tuesday the 153 claims is about double what he expected.

"It takes a lot of guts for them to come forward and ask for help," said Uhde, who won a \$1.5 million jury verdict against the diocese for abuse he suffered at the hands of a now-dead priest. "It's the first step in the healing process for them."

Richard Davidson, attorney for the diocese, declined comment.

Although the deadline for filing claims has past, Uhde said the committee plans to set up a fund that will help victims who come forward later.

"We are going to make a provision for future claims," Uhde said. "We know this 153 number is not the total of all abuse claims. We want to make sure anyone who comes to the reality down the road will be taken care of."

The Diocese of Davenport, with about 100,000 members, has settled 43 cases for about \$10 million. The diocese had a half-dozen lawsuits pending against it when it filed for bankruptcy; those plaintiffs are included in the list of 153 bankruptcy claimants, Uhde said.

All of the claims will be vetted to analyze their validity, Uhde said. He expects that process to be completed around the end of the year.

Craig Levien, who has represented many of the people who have settled with or sued the diocese, said he is encouraged by the number of people who came forward.

However, he said: "There is no question we are just seeing a fraction of the people these priests abused."

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