

Diocese of Gallup announces cooperation with AG's office

Written by By Mia Poris Sun Editor
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The Diocese of Gallup received an inquiry Sept. 5 from New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas, requesting documents and records from the diocese.

In a Sept. 5 press release, the diocese said it looked forward to cooperating with the Attorney General to ensure the safety of all the members of the diocese.

Following an August Pennsylvania grand jury report, the AG's office is investigating all three Catholic dioceses in New Mexico — Gallup, Las Cruces and Santa Fe — for material related to priest-abuse allegations.

Last month's report showed that more than 300 priests in Pennsylvania sexually abused more than 1,000 children over 70 years. The report also revealed that a Pennsylvania bishop had sent priests to New Mexico to be treated.

Suzanne Hammons, spokesperson for the Diocese of Gallup, told the Sun in a Sept. 10 email that many state attorney generals "are now undertaking investigations of their own by requesting documents from Church officials."

The Diocese of Gallup, though, is "a little different," Hammons said.

The Gallup diocese underwent a Chapter 11 bankruptcy process in 2013, with the order confirming the plan released in 2016, Hammons said in an email.

The Diocese's files had already been reviewed as part of that process.

"We also have about half of our territory in the State of Arizona (one of the only Dioceses in the country in more than one state)," Hammons wrote.

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In order to be proactive in the protection of children, the Diocese of Gallup is reaching out to other potential interested parties, like the Arizona Attorney General.

Hammons said the Catholic Church, country wide, welcomes the intervention of outside authorities who would “step in and help us to root out abusers once and for all.”

The Diocese said in their press release that they remain committed to the ongoing protection of children, transparency and to providing healing for survivors of sexual abuse.

“Since the U.S. Bishops often speak and act as a body, this is an issue that must be addressed across the board,” Hammons told the *Sun* in an email. “Especially because traditionally, Church leaders have spoken about or acted on many issues — immigration, charity, abortion, etc. But many are now asking: why should we listen to Church leaders when they cannot seem to even get their own house in order? And it’s a fair question.”

By Mia Poris

Sun Editor