Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Following our promise from earlier this year, I, along with my brother bishops in the Archdiocese of Denver and the Diocese of Pueblo are announcing the start of a reparations program for child abuse victims.

Starting today, individuals who were sexually abused as minors by diocesan priests in the Archdiocese of Denver and the Dioceses of Pueblo and Colorado Springs may begin the process for filing claims with the Colorado Independent Reconciliation and Reparations Program (CIRRP).

Individuals who have previously notified the Dioceses of allegations of abuse will be sent CIRRP Claim packets; individuals who have not previously notified the Dioceses of allegations of abuse will be able to register with the program for an initial eligibility review. Eligible victims may file claims, regardless of when the abuse might have occurred.

The CIRRP is independent from Church control. Kenneth R. Feinberg and Camille S. Biros, nationally known compensation program administrators, have been working with the Colorado Bishops to design the program. The program will be overseen by an Independent Oversight Committee (IOC) consisting of:

- **Hank Brown**, former United States Senator, Chairman the Committee
- **Jeanne Smith**, former elected District Attorney for Fourth Judicial District of Colorado
- **Laura Morales**, First Bank
- **David Crockenberg**, former judge who presided in the District Court of the Tenth Judicial District in Pueblo
- **Nancy Feldman**, Victim’s Advocate

Feinberg and Biros are administering similar compensation programs for child victims of abuse covering Catholic dioceses in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and California. I urge you to learn more about this important program by visiting the CIRRP’s website, [www.ColoradoDiocesesIRRP.com](http://www.ColoradoDiocesesIRRP.com). The new program is voluntary. Victim-survivors can elect to enter this program as an alternative to pursuing their claims against the Church in court.

Feinberg and Biros will have complete independence to determine the eligibility of individual claims and they alone will determine the amount of compensation offered to any victim. The Dioceses have agreed to abide by Feinberg and Biros’ decisions and the
compensation determinations are not subject to appeal by the victim or the Dioceses.

Unlike civil litigation in the courts, this new program provides a process that is non-adversarial and protects victims’ privacy. Victim-survivors do not need to retain a lawyer to participate and there are no fees for participating. Compensation for fully completed and documented claims can usually be paid within 90 – 120 days.

Reparation amounts provided to survivors are at the sole discretions of those administering claims for the CIRRP. Initial funding for this program will be provided by existing Diocesan assets. While the number of potential claims is unknown currently, it is important to note that the Diocese will not fund the CIRRP using any money given to donor-designated funds, donations made to parishes, ministries or schools.

We have been providing pastoral care and financial support for victim-survivors here in the Diocese for many years. We will continue to do so. But we also understand that some victim-survivors are reluctant to come to the Church for assistance. Our hope with this new program is to give those who prefer to participate in an independent program a chance to seek redress and healing.

Since 2002, Catholic dioceses in Colorado have put in place strict policies and programs to protect young people and to create safe environments in parishes, schools and other ministries. Thousands of adults throughout the state have been trained in abuse prevention and reporting. Those in leadership positions have undergone background checks. Dioceses have implemented strict reporting requirements, working closely with local law enforcement officials to immediately report abuse allegations and remove accused perpetrators from ministry.

As a result, new cases of sexual misconduct by priests involving minors are rare today in the Catholic Church in Colorado. Nonetheless, the Bishops undertake this program in their continued efforts to provide avenues for victim-survivors of abuse to receive assistance to continue their healing.

The Colorado Dioceses have a longstanding commitment to the prevention of child abuse and to providing support for those who suffered sexual abuse at the hands of its clergy. We continue to express sincere sorrow for past failures that harmed the most vulnerable among us. We deeply regret the pain and suffering of survivors and any decisions that failed to protect them. The damage done to innocent young people and their families by sexual abuse in the past is profound. I realize, as you do, that no program, however well-intentioned and well-designed, can repair the damage done to victims and their families. But I pray that this new program might provide another avenue toward healing and hope.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

[Signature]

Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan
Bishop of Colorado Springs