

# St. John's archdiocese downsizing to pay compensation to early Mount Cashel victims

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**Published:** a day ago

**Updated:** 8 hours ago



The Roman Catholic Basilica of St. John The Baptist in St. John's. — Joe Gibbons/The Telegram

## Roman Catholic parishioners told some church properties expected to be placed on the real estate market

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ST. JOHN'S, N.L. — The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. John's has told parishioners to expect downsizing and property sales to raise funds to pay compensation to victims of sexual abuse at Mount Cashel orphanage in the 1940s, '50s and '60s.

A statement by Archbishop Peter Hundt was to be read out by priests and officiants at weekend masses, including Sunday morning's livestream from the Basilica in St. John's. The statement was released to the media later Sunday.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Court of Appeal held the archdiocese vicariously liable for the abuse by certain members of the Christian Brothers lay order at the former orphanage.

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Archbishop Peter Hundt of the Archdiocese of St. John's. — Telegram file photo

The archdiocese is working with a team of advisors on a major restructuring plan, according to the statement by Hundt read out at Sunday masses. Over the coming weeks, church properties are expected to show up on the real estate market and Hundt said the church is still in the information-gathering stage.

"This plan will involve consolidation and downsizing at both the diocesan and parish levels," the statement said.

"While the resolution of these claims will have significant implications for the parishes and parishioners of our archdiocese, we must remember that the Catholic faith is not based on bricks and mortar.



Message from the Archbishop to be read after the Prayer after Communion at all the weekend Masses March 20-21, 2021 (i.e. public Masses on the Burin Peninsula and online Masses throughout the Archdiocese) and, following the weekend Mass(es) to be posted on parish websites.

## **Update from the Archbishop re. the Mount Cashel Judgement**

Dear People of the Archdiocese of St. John's:

As you know our Archdiocese is actively working to address the claims of abuse at the Mount Cashel Orphanage in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, for which the Newfoundland and Labrador Court of Appeal has held us vicariously liable.

As a Catholic community, we are called to provide an environment of compassion to victims who have experienced abuse and to do all we can to bring healing to the victims, their loved ones and the entire community of faith.

Presently, we are working with a team of advisors on a major restructuring plan to provide a resolution of the victims' claims. This plan will involve consolidation and downsizing at both the diocesan and the parish levels. While the resolution of these claims will have significant implications for the parishes and parishioners of our Archdiocese, we must remember that the Catholic faith is not based on bricks and mortar. It is a faith based on a belief in a God of love and mercy who invites us to trust in Him and to share His love with one another. If we remain firm in this belief in God's goodness, and if we seek to reflect it in how we deal with our present situation, we can be assured that God will be with us in our efforts and that the final result will be a blessing to us all.

Over the coming weeks you may expect to see some properties listed on the real estate market. There may also be discussions at a parish level around potential changes that may come. We ask you to have patience throughout this process. We are still very much in an information gathering stage and when decisions are made we will communicate those directly. For now, we must do the necessary work to evaluate all aspects of our archdiocese.

I am convinced that if we journey together through this process with trust, patience and goodwill, we can help address the pain of the past and lay the foundation of hope for the future.

As we move forward with this process, I ask that you please join with me in praying for God's guidance, healing for the victims, and understanding, compassion and patience for us all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Peter Hundt  
Archbishop of St. John's

Contributed

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Geoff Budden of St. John's law firm Budden and Associates said he's pleased to see the archdiocese is taking what he sees as difficult, but necessary, steps.

"Our primary goal as always is to see the judgments are satisfied and the men who have waited so long (will) receive compensation at the earliest opportunity," Budden said. "That is what we continue to press."



Geoff Budden fought for victims in the Mount Cashel civil case for more than 20 years. Keith Gosse/The Telegram

Hundt's statement also spoke of the duty to the victims.

"As a Catholic community, we are called to prove an environment of compassion to victims who have experienced abuse and to do all we can to bring healing to the victims, their loved ones and the entire community of faith," he said.

Hundt asked for patience from parishioners as decisions are made.

"For now, we must do the necessary work to evaluate all aspects of our archdiocese," he said.

In February, Hundt told parishioners to expect a financial impact.

Since the Supreme Court of Canada declined to hear the church's appeal of the decision, more than a dozen new victims who previously hadn't sought legal advice have contacted Budden's firm.

The compensation owed by the church is in the tens of millions of dollars.

In 2018, in the Newfoundland and Labrador Supreme Court, trial judge Alphonsus Faour ruled the archdiocese could not be found vicariously liable for the conduct of the Christian Brothers. The Court of Appeal concluded the trial judge made errors of law on that point, and that both the relationship between the archdiocese and the Brothers was sufficiently close to justify finding the archdiocese vicariously liable, and that it would have to pay damages to the victims.

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The former Mount Cashel Orphanage building in St. John's. Telegram file photo - Glen Whiffen

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The Mount Cashel sexual abuse scandal is most widely associated with the abuse of boys of a different era — the 1970s and 1980s — the revelation of which prompted the 1989-90 Hughes Inquiry. That era was not part of this civil case, and the boys from earlier decades were not part of compensation from the provincial government when it settled a block of cases from the '70s and '80s more than 20 years ago.

Besides the 60 original clients of Budden's firm, the decision could also affect the unresolved cases of about 20 other claimants represented by other lawyers.

The Christian Brothers were removed from the original lawsuit because they went bankrupt. Lawyers have said some payments to claimants made from the bankruptcy weren't enough to compensate for



the abuse.

In 2014, the Christian Brothers apologized to all victims of sexual abuse by members of the order.

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