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Wheeling, W.Va. — November 27, 2019

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West Virginia's Roman Catholic diocese said Tuesday that it wants a former bishop to pay it more than three-quarters of a million dollars after a series of alleged sexual and financial scandals.

Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Bishop Mark E. Brennan released a "plan of amends" he said was presented to former Bishop Michael J. Bransfield at the request of Pope Francis.

The plan calls for Bransfield to pay the church \$792,638 in financial restitution and apologize to those he was accused of sexually harassing and intimidating. The money would be placed in a fund to pay for counselling for victims of sexual abuse, Brennan said.

A church investigation earlier this year found sexual misconduct allegations against Bransfield to be credible and determined that he misused diocese funds on personal vacations, alcohol and luxury goods.

Brennan said Bransfield has consistently declined to come up with his own plan for making amends. He urged Bransfield to accept this arrangement "for his own spiritual good and his own healing as a man who professes to follow Christ."

Bransfield resigned last year and has previously denied wrongdoing. He didn't return a voicemail left on a number listed in public records.

The pope in July barred Bransfield from public ministry, prohibited him from living in the diocese and said he would have to make amends "for some of the harm he

caused."

Bransfield had been investigated for an alleged groping incident in 2007 and was implicated in court testimony in 2012 in an infamous Philadelphia priestly sex abuse case. He strongly denied ever abusing anyone and the diocese said it had disproved the claims.

West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, who has sued Bransfield and the diocese alleging they covered up arguably criminal behavior, called Tuesday for the church to release all its investigative reports on the former bishop.

"It is time for the Diocese to truly come clean and begin to put this horrific scandal behind it," he said.

The Wheeling-Charleston diocese includes nearly 75,000 Catholics and 95 parishes throughout West Virginia.

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