

A MESSAGE FROM THE ABBOT AND HEADMASTER

OCTOBER 8, 2025

Dear Delbarton Community,

We previously wrote to you about the civil trial in a sexual abuse lawsuit against St. Mary's Abbey and Delbarton School in Morris County Superior Court when jury deliberations commenced on Monday.

Today, the verdict in this case was announced, finding St. Mary's Abbey and Delbarton School liable for plaintiff's damages. The jury awarded total damages of \$5 million of which St. Mary's Abbey and Delbarton are responsible for 65%, or \$3.25 million.

Crucially, the jury unanimously found that St. Mary's Abbey and Delbarton School did not violate the New Jersey Child Sex Abuse Act, meaning we did not know of the alleged abuse and there was no intentional misconduct. The jury will reconvene next week to determine if any punitive damages are to be added to this verdict.

We are still extremely disappointed in the verdict in this trial. While the communities of St. Mary's Abbey and Delbarton School have genuine compassion for any victim of abuse, we do not believe that the damages awarded in this case are either fair or reasonable, and our legal representatives are considering all legal options.

The alleged incident in question in this trial occurred fifty years ago, when modern safeguards did not exist at secular or religious schools or other youth-serving institutions. That fact cannot be an excuse for abuse of any kind, but it is a truth that must be reflected in the verdict.

This lawsuit was the first civil sex abuse case against the Catholic Church in New Jersey to go to trial under a 2019 law that revived older, previously expired civil claims, allowing alleged victims of child sex abuse to sue. As disappointed as we are in the verdict, we appreciate the hard work over the past five weeks by Judge Sceusi and the members of the jury.

Today, to protect the well-being of the students in our care, we create and maintain a safe environment through policies and procedures which are regularly reviewed and affirmed by [Praesidium](#), the leading independent accrediting firm in the field of abuse prevention. Delbarton is one of only seven secondary schools in the United States to earn Praesidium accreditation and was recently reaccredited in September 2025.

Delbarton continues to attract a record number of applications from academically strong young men and enjoys a high level of alumni and parent engagement. We are confident that all members of the Delbarton community are offered an opportunity to excel in a safe and supportive environment.

Thank you for the prayerful support we received from so many of you during this time. We look forward to continuing our mission of educating tomorrow's leaders in fidelity to our Benedictine Catholic mission.

Yours in Christ and St. Benedict,



Abbot Jonathan Licari,
O.S.B.
Administrator, St. Mary's
Abbey



Fr. Michael Tidd, O.S.B.
Headmaster, Delbarton School