



For Immediate Release

Launch of Nationwide Service to Report Sexual Misconduct Involving U.S. Bishops

Seattle, Wash. March 26, 2020 – In May 2019, Pope Francis released his apostolic letter *Vos estis lux mundi* (“You are the light of the world”) to address the issue of sexual abuse and bishop accountability in the global Catholic Church. *Vos estis* calls upon the metropolitan archbishops to undertake the responsibilities for receiving and assessing reports involving bishops that pertain to sexual abuse and related misconduct. In June 2019, one month after Pope Francis issued his order, the bishops of the United States convened for their general assembly in Baltimore and approved the implementation plan for carrying out the directives of the Holy Father here in the United States.

As part of this ongoing commitment to carrying out *Vos estis*, the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service (CBAR) was established. The service is operated by Convercent, Inc., an independent, third-party entity that provides intake services to private institutions for reports of sensitive topics such as sexual harassment through a secure, confidential and professional platform. Individuals may go to ReportBishopAbuse.org to make a report. Reports are also accepted at (800) 276-1562.

When a report is received, it will be forwarded to the local metropolitan archbishop who will undertake the responsibility of initially assessing the report. Archbishop Paul D. Etienne is the metropolitan who presides over this province, which includes the following dioceses: Seattle, Yakima and Spokane. In the event that a report is received that concerns Archbishop Etienne, then it will be forwarded to Bishop Joseph Tyson in Yakima, who is the senior suffragan bishop of this local province.

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service allows individuals to relay any reports of a U.S. Catholic bishop who has:

- forced someone to perform or to submit to sexual acts through violence, threat or abuse of authority;
- performed sexual acts with a minor or a vulnerable person;
- produced, exhibited, possessed or distributed child pornography, or recruited or induced a minor or a vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions;
- intentionally interfered with a civil or church investigation into allegations of sexual abuse committed by another cleric or religious.

Pope Francis has structured the handling and investigation of the complaints using the metropolitan archbishops. What does this mean?

- The Catholic Church in the U.S. has 32 provinces.
- Each province has one archdiocese plus several dioceses.
- The head of the archdiocese (the archbishop) is also known as the “metropolitan,” and he presides over the province.
- The other dioceses are referred to as “suffragan” dioceses.

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service (CBAR) does not replace existing reporting systems for complaints against priests, deacons, religious or laity. CBAR was designed to respond only to complaints against bishops for issues related to sexual misconduct.

The reporting of sexual misconduct by anyone in diocesan ministry who is not a bishop, such as priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, or laypersons working or volunteering for the church should continue to be handled in accordance with the Archdiocese of Seattle’s child protection policy through the Safe Environment Office and with proper civil authorities. For more information on the reporting service and how it works, please visit ReportBishopAbuse.org or review on the Archdiocese of Seattle’s [Protect & Heal website](#).

While the mandate by Pope Francis in *Vos estis* echoes many of the practices that the Catholic Church in the United States has already implemented since 2002 with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, this new order applies to the bishops and to the worldwide Catholic Church, making clear the pope’s concern for the issue of sexual abuse in the church at a global level.

About the Archdiocese of Seattle

The Archdiocese of Seattle encompasses all of Western Washington, stretching from Canada to Oregon and from the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. There are 169 parishes, missions and pastoral centers in the archdiocese, with more than 500 weekly Masses celebrated in eight languages. Archbishop Paul D. Etienne leads the archdiocese with his two auxiliary bishops, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo and Bishop Daniel Mueggenborg. For more information about the Archdiocese of Seattle, visit seattlearchdiocese.org.

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