



Office of
The Archbishop

100 East Eighth Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

513-421-3131 Ext. 2810

June 17, 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

Over the last several months, many of us have been outraged and horrified by revelations of sexual abuse and cover-ups of such abuse perpetrated by some bishops in our country. This past week, I, along with the other bishops of our nation, gathered in Baltimore for the spring general assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The very important work of debating and voting on measures to eradicate the grave evil of sexual abuse from our Church, which we had planned to accomplish last fall at the plenary assembly, was finally able to be addressed. With the release of Pope Francis' apostolic letter *Vos estis lux mundi* in May, we were ready at this assembly to take concrete steps forward and implement important procedures for accountability throughout the hierarchy of the Church in the United States.

At this most recent meeting, the bishops of our country approved three documents related to reporting and investigating claims of abuse or the intentional mishandling of such cases by bishops. These newly approved directives establish the following:

- Protocols to deal with bishops who were removed from office or resigned their office for reasons of sexual abuse or intentional mishandling of cases.
- Reaffirmation of the commitment bishops make to live according to the Gospel and to place themselves under the same high standards applied to their priests, deacons and lay personnel.
- Direction for dealing specifically with reporting and investigating complaints against bishops.

The bishops also approved the creation of a third-party reporting system designed to receive confidentially reports of sexual abuse or the intentional mishandling of abuse cases committed by bishops. The independence of such a system is meant to help prevent any member of the hierarchy from interfering in the investigation of alleged misconduct. Please see the attached press release from the USCCB for more information regarding this third-party reporting system. Currently in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, we have a reporting system already in place to handle abuse and misconduct allegations of all types, EthicsPoint. To make a report call, 1-888-389-0381.

These steps implemented by the USCCB are important in our response to the sin and crime of sexual abuse, but they are not the end. Until the scourge of sexual abuse is completely eradicated from the life of the Church, we will still have work to do. As members of the Church, we are all called to lives of holiness and meant to become saints in God's Kingdom. There is absolutely

no place in the Church for toleration of any kind of sexual abuse, especially committed against people who are particularly vulnerable for reasons of age, ability, or status. As your bishop, I promise to continue to do everything in my power to ensure a safe environment for all people – children and adults – involved with any of our various ministries.

I ask you to join me in praying for all the victims of sexual abuse and for a renewed commitment on the part of all of us to follow Christ more closely, so that the Church may once again shine out as a light to the nations by the witness of her holiness.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis M. Schnurr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr
Archbishop of Cincinnati

June 13, 2019

BALTIMORE—The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have taken three separate votes that will lead to the establishment of a third-party reporting system designed to receive confidentially, by phone or online, reports of possible violations by bishops per Pope Francis's *Vos estis lux mundi*.

The bishops voted overwhelmingly in favor of each of the elements necessary to establish a third-party reporting system yesterday.

By a vote of 205 to 16 with 3 abstentions, the General Assembly voted to authorize the design of a third-party system for receiving confidentially, by phone or online, reports of possible violations by bishops of *Vos estis lux mundi*.

By a vote of 200 to 21 with 2 abstentions, the bishops voted to authorize the Executive Committee to develop a more detailed proposal for a third-party reporting system, including financial, structural, and other necessary adjustments to account for *Vos estis lux mundi*, for review and approval by the Conference's Administrative Committee at its September and November 2019 meetings.

Additionally, the bishops voted in favor of committing to activate the third-party reporting system by no later than May 31, 2020 by a 220 to 4 vote with 1 abstention.

Vos estis lux mundi, allows until May 31, 2020 for the development of local systems to receive such reports. Accordingly, May 31, 2020 is the earliest date the body can safely commit to activation of the system without interfering with the varying schedules of the Metropolitans and senior suffragans in developing local capacity to receive and process complaints from that system.

It is important to note that anyone who has suffered sexual abuse by clergy should not wait for this national reporting system to be in place before reporting abuse. Individuals who may have been abused should contact local civil authorities to file a report as soon as possible, and may also report to Church authorities by existing means, such as Victims' Assistance Coordinators. After reporting to civil authorities, individuals can also register a complaint with the metropolitan for issues related to sexual abuse or an abuse of power.