



PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Press Statement of Cardinal Sean O'Malley, OFM. Cap., President of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors on the publication of the updated motu proprio *Vos estis lux mundi*.

The Church's ongoing work of preventing sexual abuse by ministers of the Church received a further boost today with the publication of the definitive version of Pope Francis's motu proprio *Vos estis lux mundi* (You are the light of the world).

In May 2019, Pope Francis established new norms regarding the requirement to ensure adequate processing of reports of sexual abuse by priests or members of religious life. Today's document makes permanent these important protections for those reporting abuse and holds Church leaders accountable for any failures to carry out their responsibilities in this regard.

For many people, the reality of child sexual abuse in the Church was further compounded by the cover up or negligence by bishops and religious superiors in properly disciplining offenders and thereby preventing further harm from happening. No doubt problems remain, which we can see from reports of the mishandling of abuse claims. However, the permanence of these norms established by today's document puts to an end the culture of impunity within our Church. Pope Francis has reconfirmed the serious responsibilities on bishops and others in leadership positions to ensure robust safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and are effective.

This new initiative of the Holy Father will help to further facilitate access to justice for victims of abuse and will help to promote safe spaces in the ecclesial community more

broadly. Moreover, for those of us who are part of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, this updated text represents a new impetus for our mission and for our commitment to place our various professional competencies at the service of the Church.

Responding to the original desire expressed by the Pope when he established the Commission in 2014, we have sought to be a concrete, affective and effective presence in collaborating with the local churches in their important role task of accompanying those who have suffered the drama of abuse. A few days ago, the Holy Father underscored the damage done by the mishandling of instances of sexual abuse by clergy and religious and urged the Pontifical Commission to include the implementation of *Vos estis lux mundi* as a part of its mandate. He said:

“I have asked the Pontifical Commission to supervise the adequate implementation of *Vos estis lux mundi* so that those who are abused have clear and accessible pathways for seeking justice. Those parts of the Church where efforts at promoting adequate prevention measures are still in the early stages because of a lack of resources need special attention. The cruel inequalities that plague our societies must not be allowed to plague our Church!” (Message to the II Latin American Congress on Safeguarding, Paraguay)

We therefore welcome this revised version of *Vos estis lux mundi*, which strengthens our urgent work to support and monitor all dioceses in setting up public systems for receiving reports of alleged abuse by Church ministers. We are also committed to making such reporting systems openly known and accessible to the persons concerned.

Furthermore, and as much as possible, those impacted by abuse should be kept informed about the status and the eventual outcome of any case pursued because of any accusation made. Communicating the process of the Church’s disciplinary system goes to the heart of its effectiveness. Judgments should be made available to interested parties especially to those making accusations and the victims of sexual abuse.