

1 Directives for the Implementation
2 of the Provisions of *Vos estis lux mundi*
3 Concerning Bishops and their Equivalents
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6 In the preamble to his Apostolic Letter issued *motu proprio Vos estis lux mundi*,
7 Pope Francis states: “The crimes of sexual abuse offend Our Lord, cause physical,
8 psychological and spiritual damage to the victims and harm the community of the
9 faithful. In order that these phenomena, in all their forms, never happen again, a
10 continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and
11 effective actions that involve everyone in the Church.” The responsibility to prevent and
12 confront such crimes in the Church, the Holy Father further declares, “falls, above all, on
13 the successors of the Apostles, chosen by God to be pastoral leaders of his People, and
14 demands from them a commitment to follow closely the path of the Divine Master.”

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16 Recognizing the desire of Pope Francis that “this commitment be implemented in
17 a fully ecclesial manner,” the bishops of the United States reaffirm that, “While bishops
18 are ordained primarily for their diocese or eparchy, we are called as well to protect the
19 unity and to promote the common discipline of the whole Church (CIC, c. 392; CCEO, c.
20 201). Participating in the college of bishops, each bishop is responsible to act in a manner
21 that reflects both effective and affective collegiality.”¹
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¹ USCCB, *A Statement of Episcopal Commitment*, in *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2018), 38.

23 These supplemental directives establish how the bishops in the United States of
24 America² ought to implement *Vos estis lux mundi* with respect to the receipt of reports
25 and the investigation of the conduct referred to in Article 1³ concerning bishops and those
26 equivalent to bishops in canon law. Moreover, for the purposes of these directives, a
27 Metropolitan who wishes to access additional resources to accomplish the directives
28 effectively, may seek to associate with another province for carrying them out.

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30 1. In accord with Article 2 §1, in order to establish a “public, stable and easily
31 accessible” system for the submission of reports, every province should publish broadly
32 in printed form, online, and other media means by which reports pursuant to Article 1 of
33 the motu proprio can be conveyed to the proper Metropolitan. Such means include the
34 third-party reporting mechanism to be arranged for by the United States Conference of
35 Catholic Bishops, implemented by the Metropolitan See, and published by each diocese.
36 In addition, each Metropolitan, in consultation with the suffragan bishops, should appoint
37 on a stable basis, even by means of an ecclesiastical office (see Article 2 §1), a qualified
38 lay person to receive reports of conduct about bishops referred to in Article 1. The
39 responsibilities of the appointed lay person are the following:

40 a. Engaging and interacting with the third-party entity arranged for nationally by
41 the USCCB to receive reports;

² In cases where the report concerns the Metropolitan or the Metropolitan See is vacant, these directives are to assist the suffragan bishop senior by promotion. For Eastern Catholics who do not have a Metropolitan in the United States, reports can be made directly to the Apostolic See or through the Apostolic Nuncio. The Apostolic See will authorize the procedure to be followed for the investigation.

³ All references to the motu proprio *Vos estis lux mundi* will cite only the Article by number throughout this document.

- 42 b. Receiving reports on behalf of the Metropolitan either through the third-party
43 entity or those made directly to the Metropolitan;
- 44 c. Informing the public about how to report cases involving bishops;
- 45 d. Advising the Metropolitan on whether a report is manifestly unfounded
46 pursuant to Article 10 §1, and on his compliance with applicable civil laws
47 requiring reports to civil authorities in accord with Article 19;
- 48 e. Gathering any needed additional information from the one making the report
49 in the event there is a need for clarification about details that are time, place,
50 and person specific.

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52 2. Pursuant to Articles 3 and 19, any Metropolitan who receives a report related to
53 Article 1 will promptly comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to making
54 reports to civil authorities and will cooperate in any eventual investigation opened by
55 civil authorities. The Metropolitan will support the right for one to make his or her own
56 report to public authorities, and will advise and encourage those affected to do so.⁴ If the
57 Metropolitan receives a request from civil authorities to suspend his investigation in
58 deference to an investigation being conducted by civil authorities, the Metropolitan will
59 immediately notify the competent Dicastery of the Apostolic See.

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61 3. In cases in which a Metropolitan receives a report that pertains to another
62 Metropolitan's jurisdiction, he will forward it expeditiously to the competent
63 Metropolitan and to the Apostolic See through the Apostolic Nuncio.

⁴ See USCCB, *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, Norm 11, and USCCB, *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, Article 4.

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65 4. In accord with Article 5, each Metropolitan is to establish, maintain, and supervise
66 competent persons to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of those
67 persons who claim to have been harmed pursuant to Article 1. Those coordinating such
68 assistance should provide a copy of the motu proprio *Vos estis lux mundi*, as well as these
69 Directives, to those persons who claim to have been harmed.

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71 5. In accord with Article 12 §1, once the Metropolitan has received authorization from
72 the competent Dicastery of the Apostolic See to investigate, and with due regard for his
73 charge to oversee the process, the Metropolitan should appoint an investigator chosen
74 from among the lay persons identified previously by the province.

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76 In accord with Article 13 §§1-2, the Metropolitan, in consultation with the
77 investigator, should also make use of other qualified experts (likewise appointed by the
78 Metropolitan) chosen predominantly from among lay persons who are called upon in
79 view of the nature of the report and the expertise needed to examine it.

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81 6. As noted above, and pursuant to Article 13 §1, the bishops of the province should
82 prepare a list of expert individuals, whom a Metropolitan may utilize when conducting
83 the investigation himself or through others and assessing the results of that investigation.
84 In an effort to assure the effectiveness of the process, persons expert in relevant fields,
85 such as law enforcement, criminal investigation, civil law, canon law, psychology and
86 social work, ~~may~~ should be identified.

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88 7. In accord with Article 12 §6, if a report of a conflict of interest or lack of
89 impartiality is brought to the attention of the Metropolitan, or if he considers himself to

90 be in a conflict of interest or is unable to maintain impartiality, he should promptly
91 inform the competent Dicastery of the Apostolic See of the report, along with his
92 response.

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94 Likewise, in accord with Article 13 §3, if a report of a conflict of interest or lack
95 of impartiality is brought against the investigator, experts or notary appointed by the
96 Metropolitan, the Metropolitan should be informed of the fact immediately.

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98 A Metropolitan should inform all persons involved in the investigation: (a) the
99 process by which they may notify the Metropolitan of a claim that he, or any person who
100 is assisting him in the investigation, may have a conflict of interest; and (b) that an
101 unsuccessful claim of conflict of interest will not result in prejudice, retaliation, or
102 discrimination against the claimant.

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104 8. With regard to Article 16 §1, each province ought to determine the appropriate
105 means by which it will establish a fund, should it choose to do so, or how it will
106 otherwise allocate costs for the investigation of reports received and for the pastoral care
107 of those who might have been harmed.

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109 9. In accord with Article 17 §1, at the conclusion of the investigation, the
110 Metropolitan is to transmit to the competent Dicastery of the Apostolic See, through the
111 Apostolic Nuncio, his *votum* and the acts of the investigation, including the names and
112 titles of the individuals from the expert list who were chosen to assist in the process, as
113 well as any other documents he deems pertinent.

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115 10. With due regard for Article 17 §3, the Metropolitan should inquire of the
116 competent Dicastery whether and how the person who made the report and whether the
117 public can be informed of the outcome of the investigation. The Metropolitan should also
118 inform the person making the report of the protections provided in Article 4 §2.

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120 11. In furtherance of the presumption of innocence enjoyed by the bishop (Art. 12
121 §7), all appropriate steps are to be taken to protect the reputation of the person under
122 investigation, to assure the exercise of other rights afforded him under canon law, and to
123 restore his good name if it has been illegitimately harmed.

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125 These Directives will be reviewed every three years by the United States
126 Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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