

## New Program to Report Sexual Misconduct Involving U.S. Bishops Launched

**Hartford** – 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 receive and investigate reports pertaining to sexual abuse and related misconduct involving living bishops. In June 2019, one month after Pope Francis issued his order, the bishops of the United States approved an 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 launched on March 16, 2020. The service is operated by Convercent, Inc. an independent, third- party entity that provides intake services to private institutions for reports of sensitive topics through a secure, confidential, and professional platform. Individuals may go to **ReportBishopAbuse.org** in order to make a report of certain misconduct by a living U.S. bishop. Reports are also accepted by phone at **(800) 276-1562**.

The CBAR provides individuals the ability to report to Church authorities any incident concerning a living 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 vulnerable adult;
- produced, exhibited, possessed, or distributed child pornography, or recruited or induced a minor or a vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions;

The CBAR will also receive reports of a diocesan or eparchial living bishop, or a cleric overseeing a diocese/eparchy in the absence of a diocesan or eparchial bishop, who has intentionally interfered with a civil or church investigation into allegations of sexual abuse committed by another cleric or religious.

As an alternative to using the CBAR service, an individual may also report offenses committed by a living U.S. Catholic bishop to the local reporting individual for the province, which includes the Archdiocese of Hartford, and the Dioceses of Bridgeport, Norwich and Providence. Kathleen D. Nowosadko, the province’s local reporting individual, will receive reports either by email ([Kathleen.Nowosadko@aohct.org](mailto:Kathleen.Nowosadko@aohct.org)) or by phone (860-541-6475).

“This newly established reporting system is meant to ensure that all the clergy, whatever their rank or position in the hierarchy, will be held accountable for acts of sexual abuse and related misconduct in the Church in the United States. We are pledged to work and pray for an end to this great sin and crime, and for all the victim-survivors” commented Archbishop Leonard Blair, who serves as the metropolitan overseeing the implementation of the service for the province.

This new program for reporting misconduct by living U.S. bishops *does not* replace existing reporting systems for complaints against priests, deacons, religious or laity. It pertains only to complaints against living bishops for issues related to sexual misconduct. Other complaints

against bishops, such as theological concerns, liturgical abuses, church closings, priest assignments, etc. are beyond the scope of this reporting service.

The reporting of sexual misconduct by anyone in diocesan ministry other than a bishop, such as priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, or lay persons working or volunteering for the Church will continue to be handled in accordance with relevant diocesan child protection policy under the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* ([https://archdioceseofhartford.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/rev-safe-environment-hb-color.indd\\_.pdf](https://archdioceseofhartford.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/rev-safe-environment-hb-color.indd_.pdf)) and with proper civil authorities.

For more information on reporting misconduct by a bishop, priest, deacon or lay person, visit the website of the Archdiocese of Hartford: <https://archdioceseofhartford.org>.