

DIOCESE OF GAYLORD

611 WEST NORTH STREET
GAYLORD, MI 49735
PHONE: 989.732.5147
FAX: 989.705.3589

March 17, 2020

Dear Brother Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Administrators, Religious and Faithful:

In a world that is darkened by the pain of sin — particularly the devastating effects of sexual sin — we are reminded that, through our relationship with Jesus Christ, light can still break into the darkest valleys of our lives. This beautiful truth is expressed in Jesus' calling to each of us in the Gospel of Matthew: "You are the light of the world," or "Vos estis lux mundi." Pope Francis has reminded us to respond to this call of Jesus, and to shine forth by remaining relentless in our rejection of sin, our accountability, and bringing healing and hope to those who are suffering.

This week, the Holy Father's Apostolic Letter, *Vos estis lux mundi* (VELM), becomes operational and online. VELM establishes the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting service "CBAR," allowing any individual to relay to Church authorities abuse perpetrated by any U.S. Catholic bishop (or Eastern Rite eparchy). As I have affirmed in the past, we share a collective mission to prevent all abuse and defend the dignity of the human person, to respond with compassion to victims when abuse occurs, and to ensure offenders are properly prosecuted. The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting service is a continued step to stamp out the evil of sexual sin.

VELM strengthens the mission of the church to urge one to pursue holiness of life. In the opening lines of this Letter, Pope Francis noted: "Our Lord Jesus Christ calls every believer to be a shining example of virtue, integrity and holiness. All of us, in fact, are called to give concrete witness of faith in Christ in our lives and, in particular, in our relationship with others." How true it is for Christians to be the people they say they are. This is even more true for a priest and a bishop.

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting service is another tool that allows victims to pursue a remedy within the Church, while underscoring the critical role that law enforcement authorities have in addressing the potential criminal aspects for the sake of the common good. All victims, and the accused, deserve our best effort in bringing justice, hope, and reconciliation, and I welcome this next step. It strengthens our mission as Christians and provides a practical vehicle for victims to address wrongs.

Please see the attached resources for more information, and be encouraged: "Vos estis lux mundi."

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven J. Raica".

Most Reverend Steven J Raica
Bishop of Gaylord

Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service Resources

Any potential criminal misconduct, such as sexual abuse of a minor, should always be reported to local law enforcement. In addition, the **Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service, or CBAR**, has been established to receive **reports of sexual abuse and related misconduct by bishops**. To make a CBAR report:

ReportBishopAbuse.org

or (800) 276-1562



If you have any other kind of complaint about a bishop—such as parish assignments, church closings, or homily contents—please address those directly to the Diocese of Gaylord at (989) 732-5147.

Sexual abuse by a priest, deacon, staff member or volunteer of the Church should be reported to law enforcement and to the Victim Assistance Coordinator for the Diocese of Gaylord; *not to CBAR*. To be sure you get the help you need, phone numbers and addresses may be found at <http://www.dioceseofgaylord.org/how-to-make-a-report-212/>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS SERVICE?

The purpose of the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting (CBAR) service is to provide a third-party service for gathering and relaying to appropriate Church authorities reports of the following kinds of misconduct:

- 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;
- or, a U.S. diocesan or eparchial bishop, or other cleric overseeing a diocese/eparchy in the absence of a diocesan or eparchial bishop, who, in the exercise of their office, intentionally interfered with a civil or Church investigation into allegations of sexual abuse committed by another cleric or religious.

WHAT KINDS OF REPORTS SHOULD NOT BE MADE THROUGH THIS SERVICE?

All other complaints against bishops, such as theological concerns, liturgical abuses, church closings, priest assignments, etc., are beyond the scope of this reporting service. Such complaints *should not* be made through this reporting service.

If you wish to report, to the Church, sexual abuse or misconduct by other clergy or Church personnel

other than a bishop, please contact the Diocese of Gaylord's Victim Assistance Coordinator, Larry LaCross, at (989) 705-9010, instead. For more information, consult <http://www.dioceseofgaylord.org/how-to-make-a-report-212/>.

Although Church authorities who receive reports of the sexual abuse of a minor and certain other crimes will report them to civil authorities as required by law, this service is not intended as a substitute for calling the police. If you feel that you are the victim of a crime, please contact local law enforcement immediately.

WILL THIS SERVICE RESPECT MY PRIVACY?

Although reports made through this service will be routed to appropriate Church personnel and, as warranted, civil authorities for investigation purposes, the reports will otherwise be kept confidential. You are not required to provide your name or contact information, although you may choose to do so to facilitate the investigative process. Any data submitted will be protected through enhanced encryption.

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A REPORT?

Your report must include:

- the name of the U.S. Catholic bishop you are reporting;
- a description of the allegation, the place where it occurred, and the timeframe of when it occurred, as best you can remember.

It will be helpful if the report also includes as many relevant details as possible, such as the names of other individuals involved, as well as dates, times, known circumstances, or other information useful to assess the facts of the situation.

WHAT HAPPENS TO A REPORT ONCE IT IS SUBMITTED?

- You will be given an access number and personal password that can be used to follow-up on the status of your report. The service can provide automated status reports at a very general level, but it can also provide a confidential avenue of communication for asking more detailed questions about status.
- Your report will be forwarded to the proper Church authority, usually a Metropolitan archbishop (or a Senior Suffragan bishop if the report is about the Metropolitan, or if the Metropolitan See is vacant). All of the information you provide will be forwarded without any editing or revisions.
- At the same time, your report will be forwarded to a lay person who has been designated to assist the bishop in receiving reports.
- Reports involving potential crimes, such as those involving minors, will be reported to law enforcement.
- The Metropolitan (or Senior Suffragan) and designated lay person will review the report.
- The Metropolitan will then send your report to the Apostolic Nuncio along with an initial assessment.
- The Apostolic Nuncio will then send your report and the Metropolitan's initial assessment to the appropriate authority within the Holy See.
- Within thirty days, the Holy See will determine if a formal investigation is warranted. If so, it will authorize a bishop to oversee the investigation.
- If an investigation is ordered, it will be undertaken by qualified experts, including lay persons. Normally, the investigation is to be completed within 90 days of receiving the order from the Holy See.
- Once the Holy See receives the conclusions of the investigation, the Holy See will initiate the appropriate process that will lead to a final judgment.

WHO IS PROVIDING THIS SERVICE?

This third-party reporting system is provided by Convercent, Inc., which is a commercial vendor of ethics reporting services and has no authority within the Catholic Church. The service reflects Convercent's standard design for confidentially receiving and relaying reports, additionally tailored to fit the requirements of Church law. The service is paid for by the 197 dioceses and eparchies of the United States. The service is operated by the Metropolitan archbishops and Senior Suffragan bishops of each province, with the assistance of the designated lay people corresponding to each.

WHO INVESTIGATES THE REPORTS ENTERED INTO THIS SERVICE?

Neither Convercent nor the third-party system conducts any investigation. Instead, the system only gathers and routes reports to the appropriate Church officials in a manner consistent with canon law, so that they in turn can be investigated. Only those Church officials delegated with authority by the Holy See can conduct a Church investigation of a bishop. Reports involving potential crimes, such as those of sexual abuse of a minor, will be conveyed to civil authorities as well. In those cases, Church officials will suspend any canonical action in deference to any investigation being conducted by civil authorities until their investigation is complete.

WHICH BISHOPS ARE COVERED BY THIS SERVICE?

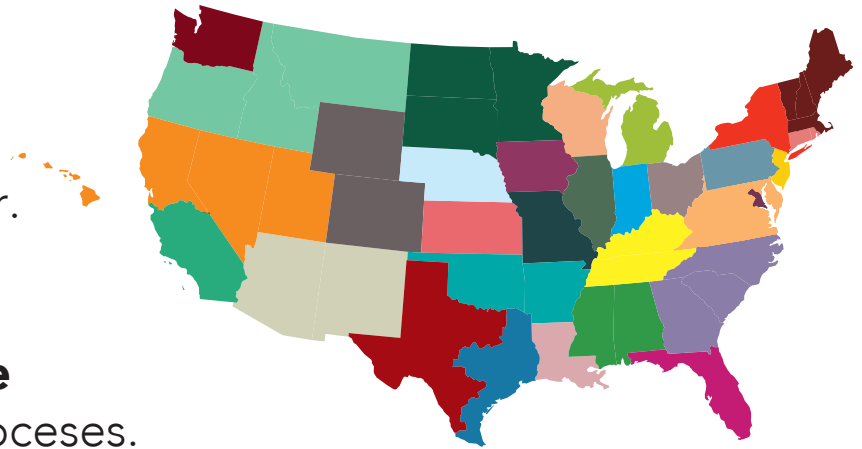
This reporting service may be used to report the actions or inactions of living U.S. Catholic bishops, whether active or retired, of U.S. dioceses or eparchies. This includes the Ordinary of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter and bishops of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, and current diocesan and apostolic administrators of vacant U.S. sees.

Who Is a Metropolitan?

The Catholic Church in the United States has **32 provinces**.



Each province is made up of **dioceses** that are grouped together.



A province has one **archdiocese** plus one or more dioceses.

The other dioceses in the province are referred to as **suffragan dioceses**.

The archbishop of the archdiocese, also known as the **metropolitan**, presides over the province.

With the **new law** set down in *Vos estis lux mundi*, a metropolitan may be authorized by the Holy See to undertake responsibilities for investigating reports involving bishops pertaining to sexual abuse in the Church.

Note: This explanation does not pertain to Eastern Catholic Churches in the United States.