



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

July 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

Last May, Pope Francis issued [*Vos estis lux mundi*](#) (“You are the light of the world”), a *motu proprio*, following the Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church in February 2019. One integral piece of *Vos estis lux mundi* (VELM) is the requirement that all dioceses must provide a system to report and deal with allegations of abuse by cardinals, bishops, patriarchs, and heads of religious institutes, along with ensuring that anyone who covers up or fails to adequately respond to allegations of abuse while in one of these positions is held accountable.

In the United States, the system is called the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting service (CBAR). The system is run by a third-party, Convercent, Inc., and is operational in our diocese. Convercent, Inc. is a commercial vendor of ethics reporting services and has no authority within the Catholic Church. You can reach the hotline at reportbishopabuse.org or at 800-276-1562.

Any individual can report an allegation of abuse by a U.S. Catholic Bishop or report a person 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 member of a religious order. CBAR is secure and confidential. The privacy of individuals making a report will be respected, and identities will not be shared outside of the appropriate civil and Church authorities who need to act upon the report. The ability to make an anonymous report is also available. Once a report is filed, the filer is given an access number and password that allows them to follow-up on their report.

VELM is a significant step forward for the global Church in continuing our commitment to protect God’s children from the sin of sexual abuse. Many of the directives outlined in the document have been in place in the United States for almost two decades, upon the adoption of the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#). It affirms these practices already in place:

- A commitment to care for the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of survivors and their families
- The duty to comply with civil law and the appropriate civil authorities
- The guarantee of a prompt investigation
- The assurance that laity will be involved

Survivors have courageously come forward and reported what happened to them. Their reports can lead to justice, a safer environment and help those who need healing. CBAR adds new ways to protect our young people and bring justice to those who committed evil acts. The Church stands ready to welcome and adopt these improved measures. More information can be found on the diocesan website at <https://bit.ly/GRdioceseReportAbuse>

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids