Directives for the Implementation
of the Provisions of *Vos estis lux mundi*
Concerning Bishops and their Equivalents

In the preamble to his Apostolic Letter issued motu proprio *Vos estis lux mundi*,

Pope Francis states: “The crimes of sexual abuse offend Our Lord, cause physical,
psychological and spiritual damage to the victims and harm the community of the
faithful. In order that these phenomena, in all their forms, never happen again, a
continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and
effective actions that involve everyone in the Church.” The responsibility to prevent and
confront such crimes in the Church, the Holy Father further declares, “falls, above all, on
the successors of the Apostles, chosen by God to be pastoral leaders of his People, and
demands from them a commitment to follow closely the path of the Divine Master.”

Recognizing the desire of Pope Francis that “this commitment be implemented in
a fully ecclesial manner,” the bishops of the United States reaffirm that, “While bishops
are ordained primarily for their diocese or eparchy, we are called as well to protect the
unity and to promote the common discipline of the whole Church (CIC, c. 392; CCEO, c.
201). Participating in the college of bishops, each bishop is responsible to act in a manner
that reflects both effective and affective collegiality.”

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These supplemental directives establish how the bishops in the United States of America ought to implement *Vos estis lux mundi* with respect to the receipt of reports and the investigation of the conduct referred to in Article 1 concerning bishops and those equivalent to bishops in canon law. Moreover, for the purposes of these directives, a Metropolitan who wishes to access additional resources to accomplish the directives effectively, may seek to associate with another province for carrying them out.

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

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

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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.
b. Receiving reports on behalf of the Metropolitan either through the third-party entity or those made directly to the Metropolitan;

c. Informing the public about how to report cases involving bishops;

d. Advising the Metropolitan on whether a report is manifestly unfounded pursuant to Article 10 §1, and on his compliance with applicable civil laws requiring reports to civil authorities in accord with Article 19;

e. Gathering any needed additional information from the one making the report in the event there is a need for clarification about details that are time, place, and person specific.

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. In accord with Article 12 §6, if a report of a conflict of interest or lack of impartiality is brought to the attention of the Metropolitan, or if he considers himself to
be in a conflict of interest or is unable to maintain impartiality, he should promptly inform the competent Dicastery of the Apostolic See of the report, along with his response.

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

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

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

9. In accord with Article 17 §1, at the conclusion of the investigation, the Metropolitan is to transmit to the competent Dicastery of the Apostolic See, through the Apostolic Nuncio, his votum and the acts of the investigation, including the names and titles of the individuals from the expert list who were chosen to assist in the process, as well as any other documents he deems pertinent.
10. With due regard for Article 17 §3, the Metropolitan should inquire of the competent Dicastery whether and how the person who made the report and whether the public can be informed of the outcome of the investigation. The Metropolitan should also inform the person making the report of the protections provided in Article 4 §2.

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

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