

Archbishop Lori Welcomes Church Laws on Abuse, Episcopal Accountability

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“With utmost gratitude to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, I welcome his Motu Proprio, *Vos estis lux mundi* (“*You are the Light of the World*”), which creates new Church law establishing uniform and universal requirements for allegations of child sexual abuse, as well as for those who abuse their authority, including bishops,” Archbishop William E. Lori said.

“Today’s announcement from Rome sends a clear and unequivocal message that Pope Francis has heard the voices of Catholics and others throughout the world, ensuring that the Church will not tolerate any behavior that threatens to harm another, regardless of position or rank. I am especially grateful that the norms are very much aligned with the considerable feedback I have received from the faithful of the Archdiocese of Baltimore over the past nine months.

“In addition to mandating how allegations of child sexual abuse are handled, the Pope also calls for clear standards of pastoral support for victims and their families and for whistleblower protections for those making allegations. I am further heartened that the Pope places emphasis on the handling of allegations of those who abuse vulnerable adults and on allegations of sexual abuse through intimidation and coercion by those in positions of authority.

“Today’s document also calls for the creation of a reporting system for allegations against bishops, something that we implemented here in the Archdiocese of Baltimore last January. Our system of accountability and transparency has provided a model for similar reporting systems in the Archdiocese of Boston and in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

“I look forward to gathering with my brother bishops of the United States next month in Baltimore to discuss the timely implementation of these important and essential safeguards that will strengthen our longstanding policies, such as zero-tolerance.

“As Church leaders continue on the path of repentance, reform and renewal for our entire Church, we must continue to remain vigilant and to seek new ways of advancing transparency, accountability, and healing for those harmed by members of the Church.”

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