

Apostolic Letter  
Issued *Motu Proprio*  
By the Supreme Pontiff  
Francis

**“YOU ARE THE  
LIGHT OF THE  
WORLD”**

*“Vos Estis Lux Mundi”*





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*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden”* (Mt 5:14). 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.

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, so that personal sanctity and moral commitment can contribute to promoting the full credibility of the Gospel message and the effectiveness of the Church’s mission. This becomes possible only with the grace of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts, as we must always keep in mind the words of Jesus: *“Apart from me you can do nothing”* (Jn 15:5). Even if so much has already been accomplished, we must continue to learn from the bitter lessons of the past, looking with hope toward the future.

This responsibility 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. Because of their ministry, in fact, bishops, *“as vicars and legates of Christ, govern the particular churches entrusted to them by their counsel, exhortations, example, and even by their authority and sacred power, which indeed they use only for the edification of their flock in truth and holiness, remembering that he who is greater should become as the lesser and he who is the chief become as the servant”* (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 27). What more closely concerns the successors of the Apostles concerns all those who, in various ways, assume ministries in the Church, or profess the evangelical counsels, or are called to serve the Christian people. Therefore, it is good that procedures be universally adopted to prevent and combat these crimes that betray the trust of the faithful.

I desire that this commitment be implemented in a fully ecclesial manner, so that it may express the communion that keeps us united, in mutual listening and open to the contributions of those who care deeply about this process of conversion.

Therefore, I decree:

## TITLE I

# General Provisions

### Art. 1—Scope of application

§1. These norms apply to reports regarding clerics or members of Institutes of Consecrated Life or Societies of Apostolic Life and concerning:

- a) delicts against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue consisting of:
  - i. forcing someone, by violence or threat or through abuse of authority, to perform or submit to sexual acts;
  - ii. performing sexual acts with a minor or a vulnerable person;
  - iii. the production, exhibition, possession or distribution, including by electronic means, of child pornography, as well as

by the recruitment of or inducement of a minor or a vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions;

- b) conduct carried out by the subjects referred to in article 6, consisting of actions or omissions intended to interfere with or avoid civil investigations or canonical investigations, whether administrative or penal, against a cleric or a religious regarding the delicts referred to in letter a) of this paragraph.

§2. For the purposes of these norms,

- a) “*minor*” means: any person under the age of eighteen, or who is considered by law to be the equivalent of a minor;
- b) “*vulnerable person*” means: any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offense;
- c) “*child pornography*” means: any representation of a minor, regardless of the means used, involved in explicit sexual activities, whether real or simulated, and any representation of sexual organs of minors for primarily sexual purposes.

## Art. 2—Reception of reports and data protection

§1. Taking into account the provisions that may be adopted by the respective episcopal conferences, by the Synods of the bishops of the Patriarchal Churches and the Major Archiepiscopal Churches, or by the Councils of Hierarchs of the Metropolitan Churches *sui iuris*, the dioceses or the eparchies, individually or together, must establish within a year from the entry into force of these norms, one or more public, stable, and easily accessible systems for submission of reports, even through the institution of a specific ecclesiastical office. The dioceses and the eparchies shall inform the pontifical representative of the establishment of the systems referred to in this paragraph.

§2. The information referred to in this article is protected and treated in such a way as to guarantee its safety, integrity, and confidentiality pursuant to canons 471, 2° CIC and 244 §2, 2° CCEO.

§3. Except as provided for by article 3 §3, the Ordinary who received the report shall transmit it without delay to the Ordinary of the place where the events are said to have occurred, as well as to the Ordinary of the person reported, who proceed according to the law provided for the specific case.