



# DIOCESE OF STEUBENVILLE

P.O. Box 969  
422 Washington St.  
Steubenville, OH 43952

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Dino Orsatti  
Diocese of Steubenville  
Director of Communications  
Editor, The Steubenville Register  
Office: 740 282-3631, ext. 340  
Email: dorsatti@diosteub.org

## **Dioceses across Ohio and around the country launch a service to report sexual misconduct involving U.S. Bishops**

STEUBENVILLE – In May 2019, Pope Francis released his apostolic letter, *Vos estis lux mundi* (“You are the light of the world”) to address the issue of sexual abuse and bishop accountability in the global Catholic Church. *Vos estis* calls upon the metropolitan archbishops to undertake the responsibilities for receiving and assessing reports involving bishops that pertain to sexual abuse and related misconduct. In June 2019, one month after Pope Francis issued his order, the bishops of the United States convened for their general assembly in Baltimore and approved the implementation plan for carrying out the directives of the Holy Father here in the United States.

As part of this ongoing commitment to carrying out *Vos estis*, the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service (CBAR) was established. The service is operated by Convercent, Inc. an independent, third party entity that provides intake services to private institutions for reports of sensitive topics such as sexual harassment through a secure, confidential, and professional platform. Individuals may go to [ReportBishopAbuse.org](http://ReportBishopAbuse.org) in order to make a report. Reports are also accepted via (800) 276-1562.

When a report is received, it will be forwarded to the local metropolitan archbishop who will undertake the responsibility of initially assessing the report.

The Diocese of Steubenville is a suffragan diocese of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and our metropolitan is Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr. In the event that a report is received that concerns Archbishop Schnurr, then it will be forwarded to Bishop George V. Murry, who is the senior suffragan bishop of this local province.

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting service allows for individuals to relay to Church authorities any reports of 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 diocesan or eparchial bishop, or a cleric overseeing a diocese/eparchy in the absence of a

diocesan or eparchial bishop, who has intentionally interfered with a civil or church investigation into allegations of sexual abuse committed by another cleric or religious.

Pope Francis has structured the handling and investigation of the complaints using the metropolitan archbishops. What does this mean?

- The Catholic Church in the U.S. has 32 provinces.
- Each province has one archdiocese plus several dioceses.
- The head of the archdiocese (the archbishop) is also known as the “metropolitan,” and he presides over the province.
- The other dioceses are referred to as “suffragan” dioceses.

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service (CBAR) does not replace existing reporting systems for complaints against priests, deacons, religious or laity. CBAR was designed to respond only to complaints against bishops for issues related to sexual misconduct.

The reporting of sexual misconduct by anyone in diocesan ministry who is not a bishop, such as priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, or lay persons working or volunteering for the church should continue to be handled in accordance with the Diocese of Steubenville’s child protection policy [www.diosteub.org/child-protection](http://www.diosteub.org/child-protection) and with proper civil authorities.

For more information on the reporting service and how it works, please visit: [ReportBishopAbuse.org](http://ReportBishopAbuse.org). While the mandate by Pope Francis in *Vos estis* echoes many of the practices that the Catholic Church in the United States has already implemented since 2002 with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, this new order applies to the bishops and to the worldwide Catholic Church, making clear the pope’s concern of the issue of sexual abuse in the church at a global level.

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