



# ***The Diocese of Knoxville***

Living our Roman Catholic faith in East Tennessee

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MEDIA ADVISORY  
March 16, 2020  
Contact Jim Wogan  
865-660-0189 ■ [jwogan@dioknox.org](mailto:jwogan@dioknox.org)

The Chancery  
805 Northshore Drive  
Knoxville, Tenn. 37919  
[www.dioknox.org](http://www.dioknox.org)

## **Nationwide service to report sexual misconduct involving U.S. bishops launched**

KNOXVILLE--- 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) or (800) 276-1562 in order to make a report.

When a report is received, it will be forwarded to the local metropolitan archbishop who will undertake the responsibility of initially assessing the report. Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz is the metropolitan who presides over the Province of Louisville, which includes the Diocese of Covington, Diocese of Lexington, Archdiocese of Louisville and Diocese of Owensboro in Kentucky and the Dioceses of Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville in Tennessee. In the event that a report is received that concerns Archbishop Kurtz, it will be forwarded to Bishop Roger J. Foys of the Diocese of Covington, who is the senior suffragan bishop of this province.

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting service allows individuals to relay to Church authorities any reports of a U.S. Catholic bishop who has:

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- 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.
- Intentionally interfered with a civil or church investigation into allegations of sexual abuse committed by another cleric or religious. (This includes a cleric overseeing a diocese/eparchy in the absence of a diocesan or eparchial bishop.)

The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service (CBAR) does not replace existing reporting systems for complaints against priests, deacons, religious or laity. CBAR responds 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 Knoxville's child protection policy (<https://dioknox.org/creating-a-safe-environment/>) and with proper civil authorities.

For more information on the reporting service and its operation, 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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