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Holy See Press Office Communiqué

Pope Francis has promulgated the Apostolic Letter in the Form of *Motu proprio* "Vos estis lux mundi" concerning new measures to be adopted to prevent and fight sexual abuse committed against minors, against vulnerable persons or abuses carried out with violence, threat or abuse of authority.

This *Motu proprio*, the product of reflection and collaboration during and after the meeting of the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences and Supreme Moderators of the main religious Institutes held last February, represents a further commitment of the Church in this area.

"Vos estis lux mundi" contains several innovative elements that aim to improve coordination between the dioceses and the Holy See. In particular, within a year all dioceses must establish stable and publicly accessible systems to report cases of sexual abuse and their cover up. Furthermore, this *Motu proprio* obliges all clerics, as well as men and women religious, to report to the competent ecclesiastical authorities the abuses of which they become aware. The reported cases must thereafter be promptly verified and handled in accordance with canon law. As for reports regarding Bishops, the *Motu proprio* introduces procedural measures that, as a rule, charge the Metropolitan of the pertinent ecclesiastical Province with verifying what has been reported. Also established for the first time are time restrictions within which investigations must be carried out, as well as the procedures to be followed by the Metropolitan, who can make use of the specific professional contributions of the lay faithful.

Finally, the *Motu proprio* emphasizes the care of people harmed and the importance of welcoming them, listening to them and accompanying them, offering them the spiritual and medical assistance they need.

It is our profound desire that this new *Motu proprio*, accompanied by prayer and animated by conversion, will contribute to eliminating the scourge of sexual abuse of minors and the vulnerable.