



Roman Catholic

# Diocese of Tucson

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## Statement of:

**Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger**

**Bishop of Tucson**

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I am deeply grateful to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, for today's release of his *motu proprio*: *Vos estis lux mundi* ["You are the Light of the World"]. A *motu proprio* is a legislative and mandatory instruction issued by a Pope binding on all Catholics.

Catholic theology has always made an important distinction between acts that are merely sinful in nature (sins) and acts that are criminal (crimes). The Holy Father's document greatly helps to clarify the criminal nature of certain sexual acts involving minors, vulnerable adults, or instances where a cleric has abused his authority to coerce others into sexual acts. It further addresses in a clear and concise manner how Church authorities are to respond to allegations of sexual misconduct on the part of a bishop, as well as a procedure to be used when a bishop is accused of having failed to respond properly to allegations of misconduct. The document requires church officials to follow local reporting laws and provides a clear line of reporting through the papal ambassador to the Holy See. In all these ways I believe our Holy Father has helped to clarify the criminal nature of sexual abuse as well as given us a procedure that will enable the Church to respond more aggressively when receiving allegations of misconduct.

I anticipate that there will be considerable discussion at the forthcoming June meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. While the *motu proprio* was crafted for the universal Catholic Church, the document provides for structures that could be implemented on a regional or national level that might further facilitate reporting and responding to allegations of misconduct. I look forward to being a part of that discussion and the results that I believe will follow.

Again, I am deeply grateful to our Holy Father for his leadership and assistance with a grave evil that touches not only on the lives of Catholics and our Church but indeed is found in every sector of society. It is my hope that our Church's response might be an example for other organizations to take and an important step toward combatting the crime of sexual abuse everywhere.