



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

June 3, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

At the end of April, I had the privilege of celebrating Mass for many of the women and men involved in the Diocese of Manchester's safe environment efforts at a Diocesan Safe Environment Conference in Concord. We prayed for those who have suffered physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually from the devastating crime of sexual abuse in the Church. And we prayed for the many people, laity and ordained, who have worked faithfully to keep children and vulnerable adults safe in our parishes, schools, and ministries. Their work is challenging and incredibly important, and I am deeply grateful to all of them.

As you may be aware, on May 9, 2019, the Holy Father issued a *motu proprio* (an order of the Pope on his own initiative) called "*Vos estis lux mundi*" or "You are the light of the world." The *motu proprio* is a worldwide response to the evil of sexual abuse and mandates, among other things, compliance with all applicable laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors to the civil authorities, the provision of support and pastoral care for victims and their families, and timely and thorough investigations, and prohibits retaliation against those who make reports of sexual misconduct. The Diocese of Manchester and the majority of dioceses and eparchies in the United States have been implementing many of the measures set forth in the *motu proprio* since at least 2002, but these new instructions from the Holy Father ensure that these norms are carried out throughout the world in every country and every culture. The document also pledges to hold bishops accountable not only if they engage in sexual abuse or misconduct but also if they cover up such behavior of another. Further information about the new norms can be found on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

<http://www.usccb.org/news/2019/19-087.cfm>

From June 11-14, I will be joining my brother bishops of the United States at our Spring General Assembly in Baltimore, MD. At this meeting, we will discuss the implementation of the Holy Father's directives in this country. As you may recall, national discussions have been underway since November 2018, and we bishops were anticipating further direction from Pope Francis. Now that we have received such direction, I am confident that we will move quickly to enhance what is already in place and establish new, national procedures for dealing with allegations involving bishops.

Over the course of the past 8 years as diocesan bishop, I have met with victims and survivors of sexual abuse who have helped me to further understand the devastating effects that abuse has had on their lives, their faith, and their very being. It pains me to hear these accounts, but hearing from these people has reinforced my resolve to do all in my power to prevent these evils from occurring ever again. I therefore approach the June meetings with profound feelings of

determination and hope, the Hope that is Christ, who always promises to lead us through dark times into the light.

Please pray for me and for all of the bishops as we prepare to begin our deliberations in Baltimore. And please continue to support and pray for victims and survivors of abuse and all of those who have been affected by abuse and misconduct in the Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name "Peter A. Libasci" in a cursive script.

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci
Bishop of Manchester