

August 12, 2005 Statement of The Catholic Diocese of Jackson Concerning Discovery Issues

The Catholic Diocese of Jackson is fully complying with all trial court and Supreme Court orders concerning discovery of documents and information in the Morrison lawsuit as well as other pending lawsuits.

Currently, the Supreme Court has on appeal another factually similar case, *Angie Phillips v. Catholic Diocese of Jackson*, involving the Diocese as a defendant. In that case the trial court ruled that Ms. Phillips' lawsuit was not filed timely and therefore is barred by the statute of limitations. The issue of timely filing of lawsuits was not before the Supreme Court in the Morrison appeal. When given the opportunity, the Diocese believes that the Hinds County Circuit Court will adopt Chief Justice Smith's observation on the statute of limitations issue: "The three Morrison brothers allege [that they were abused] from 1970 to 1974. When their father learned of the abuse he promptly confronted [the abuser] and reported the abuse to [the Catholic Diocese of Jackson]. Dr. Morrison had *actual notice* in 1973 of the abuse, so therefore, [the Morrison brothers] claims are barred by the statute of limitations." Opinion at page 62.

Sexual misconduct by church personnel violates human dignity and the mission of the Church. On a national level, in 2002, the Catholic Church in the United States addressed the misconduct issues by adopting the Charter for the Protection of Children and the procedures for implementing the Charter, the "Norms." In addition to requiring mandatory safeguards, the Charter and Norms provided for an audit of each diocese to ensure that the adequate policies and procedures to protect the children of the Church. Audits of all of the dioceses were conducted in 2003 and 2004.

In November of 2004, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops voted to authorize a third round of audits of every diocese in the United States to determine whether they established and are maintaining mandatory safeguards for children and discipline plans for guilty church personnel. The Bishops' Conference also approved collecting data on new abuse claims, litigation and related costs. In order to deter and prevent future abuse, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice has been hired to provide follow-up research and to manage another study to analyze the reasons for abuse by church personnel. The Bishops' Conference expects to release the results of the study next October. In addition, the Bishops confirmed that they intend upon continuing the ban on Church work for abusive priests.

Beginning in 1985, the Diocese of Jackson implemented a written policy and procedure regarding reporting and handling of sexual misconduct claims for lay and church personnel. The Diocese of Jackson passed the 2003 and 2004 audits and received commendations for its programs established to prevent abuse and to investigate claims of abuse by church personnel. Some of the Diocesan programs receiving commendation were implemented in 1985.

The Diocese is committed to ensuring that children being served by the Church are not at risk of sexual abuse by church personnel. The spiritual well-being of all victims, their families, and others in the community is of particular concern to the Church. For more information about these policies and procedures, we encourage you to visit the diocesan website at www.jacksondiocese.org and click on “Protecting God’s Children.” Additional information regarding SNAP’s tactics and statements commenting on the pending litigation against Catholic Diocese can be found by clicking under “Diocesan Statements.”