

June 6, 2006
Catholic Diocese of Jackson Statement
Mississippi Court of Appeals Decision Affirming
Dismissal of Abuse Claims Filed by Angie Phillips

On July 18, 2003, Angie Phillips filed a lawsuit seeking \$12 million in damages from the Catholic Diocese of Jackson claiming that two different priests abused her beginning in 1972 and 1973. The Diocese of Jackson sought dismissal of her lawsuit because it was not filed within the time period allowed by law. On July 15, 2004, the trial court granted dismissal of the lawsuit finding that Ms. Phillips had not timely filed her cause of action. Ms. Phillips appealed that ruling. The Mississippi Court of Appeals affirmed the trial court's dismissal. Today, the Court of Appeals specifically rejected Ms. Phillip's assertion that the time period for filing a lawsuit be tolled. In its ruling, the appeals court confirmed that Ms. Phillips failed to provide evidence that the Catholic Diocese engaged in any conduct to conceal the alleged abuse or that it otherwise engaged in conduct that would have prevented her from discovering that she might have a lawsuit against the diocese.

The diocese believes that the trial court and the Mississippi Court of Appeals were correct in applying a judicial time limit to these actions. Bishop Joseph Latino and the Diocese of Jackson are pleased with today's ruling but are ever mindful of those who have suffered from abuse by priests or others. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those victims.

We urge anyone who has been a victim of abuse by church personnel, who has not yet reported the abuse, to come forward and do so. Our victims' assistance coordinator, Linda Raff, a licensed social worker, is available to assist in making a report. Please contact Mrs. Raff at 601-355-8634, ext. 728. For more information about our policies and procedures, we encourage you to visit our diocesan website at **www.jacksondiocese.org**.

The Diocese of Jackson is committed to protecting children. Sexual misconduct by church personnel violates human dignity and the mission of the Church. The Diocese of Jackson 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. Beginning in 1986, the Diocese implemented a written policy and procedure regarding reporting and handling of sexual misconduct claims for lay and church personnel. That policy was updated in 1994 with the addition of a Diocesan Review Board and again in 2002 so that it would reflect the U.S. Bishops' Charter adopted in June 2002 in Dallas.