

**Statement Concerning Misleading Claims Made
by SNAP in an Unsolicited Mail Out Sent to Parents of Students
Attending Saint Joseph High School (Madison) and
St. Richard Elementary School (Jackson)**

Recently, parents of students at Saint Joseph High School (“St. Joe”) and Saint Richard Elementary School (“St. Richard”) have received a mail out from SNAP. The mail out contains misleading statements about a former teacher at Saint Joe, Reverend Jim Stein and Rev. Arnulfo Arandia.

SNAP is a national organization funded in part by plaintiffs’ lawyers representing the victims of abuse by priests. The Mississippi chapter of SNAP is directed by plaintiffs who have filed lawsuits against the Catholic Diocese of Jackson.

Reverend Stein is a Norbertine Order priest from Wisconsin, who taught classes at Saint Joseph High school during the 2001-2002 school year. In April of 2002, the Catholic Diocese of Jackson first became aware of pending criminal charges levied by a victim concerning an alleged felony sexual assault upon a minor that occurred in 1988. **The alleged assault occurred in Wisconsin in 1988. The actions did not occur in Mississippi and did not involve a St. Joe student.** Upon learning of these accusations, Rev. Stein’s teaching services were immediately terminated, the Bishop asked that he return to his religious community, and the Bishop suspended his priestly activities within the Diocese. After his termination of services, the principal of St. Joe, Bill Heller, met with the student body and told them of the reason for Rev. Stein’s departure. He also reminded the students that school counselors were available to talk about any aspect of Rev. Stein’s departure.

Rev. Arnulfo Arandia was a priest of the Archdiocese of Guayaquil, Ecuador. He worked within the Diocese from January, 2000 to June, 2002. The statements made by SNAP about Rev. Arandia are likewise misleading. **The alleged sexual misconduct occurred in Florida in 1988** and surfaced in 2002 when a civil lawsuit was filed against Rev. Arandia and a newspaper reporter from Florida contacted the Diocese for comment. Upon learning of the charges levied against Rev. Arandia, the Bishop immediately suspended his priestly duties within the Diocese.

The Diocese of Jackson has not received any complaints of abuse relating to Rev. Stein’s tenure at St. Joe or about Rev. Arandia. We encourage all parents and students to contact school counselors to report any allegations of misconduct. In addition to the availability of counselors, the Diocese has appointed victim’s assistance coordinator, Linda Raff, and you may contact her at (601) 355-8634 or the Vicar General of the Diocese at (601) 969-2290. Any claims of abuse should also be reported to the Mississippi Department of Human Services at (800) 222-8000 and (601) 362-1414.

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. 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. For more information about these policies and the 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, a statement concerning Reverend Arnulfo Arandia, and statements commenting on the pending litigation against Catholic Diocese can be found by clicking on "Diocesan Statements."