

## Diocese of Jackson

Statement on Lawsuit Filed in Hinds County Circuit Court on June 12, 2002

In a legal action seeking over \$48,000,000 in damages for alleged acts of abuse that occurred over thirty years ago, Kenneth Morrison and his immediate family members, have charged that the Catholic Diocese of Jackson and others, when informed of alleged abuse, did nothing. The Diocese of Jackson categorically denies allegations that it did nothing to stop or control the actions of its former priest, George Broussard. In fact, when the then Bishop of the Diocese, Joseph Brunini, found out about the claims, he insisted that Mr. Broussard receive psychiatric treatment and evaluation. Mr. Broussard continued psychiatric treatment until he left the priesthood in August, 1975.

The Morrison Complaint also claims a civil conspiracy occurred in which the Diocese of Jackson and others somehow participated. However, the only specific allegation contained in the Complaint is that the other dioceses throughout the country sent its abusive priests to a New Mexico treatment center beginning in 1976 -- three years after the Complaint states the Morrison abuse stopped. Without any further specific averments, the Complaint makes vague comments that the Defendants participated in a conspiracy of secrecy and silence. Other than sheer conjecture there are no facts stated in the Complaint that would support that the Catholic Diocese of Jackson participated in the alleged conspiracy. There are likewise unsupported and unspecified claims of breach of fiduciary duty, intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress and negligence. The Diocese of Jackson plans to answer and defend each of the Plaintiffs' causes of action.

Since January 1, 1994, the Diocese of Jackson has had its current policy in place that requires investigating current and past allegations of sexual misconduct by priests and religious. 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 the victims, their families, and others in the community is of particular concern to the Church. In accordance with our policy, all victims of abuse are offered counseling and pastoral care.