

**JOHN DOES 10 AND 11 v. THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE
OF JACKSON ET AL.**

**STATEMENT CONCERNING THE RULING OF THE COURT ON MAY 17, 2004 RELATING TO THE
SCHEDULED DEPOSITION OF BILL HELLER, PRINCIPAL OF ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL**

John Does 10 and 11 seek more than \$36 million in damages from the Catholic Diocese of Jackson for the alleged acts of a priest occurring in 1963 and 1973. They have scheduled the deposition of Bill Heller, who has been the principal at St. Joseph High School since the fall of 2000. They have requested that he produce documents relating to the employment of Reverend Jim Stein. A hearing was held on May 17 concerning whether the deposition would proceed as scheduled and whether documents had to be produced at the deposition. The Court ruled that the deposition could proceed but that the employment records did not have to be produced until a subpoena was reissued.

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.

The Diocese of Jackson has not received any complaints of abuse relating to Rev. Stein's tenure at St. Joe. The Catholic Diocese of Jackson and St. Joe has encouraged 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 a victim's assistance coordinator, Linda Raff, and advised parents and students that they may contact her at (601) 355-8634 or the Vicar General of the Diocese at (601) 969-2290. We have also advised the parents and students that they can report claims of abuse to the Mississippi Department of Human Services at (800) 222-8000 and (601) 362-1414.

Since 1986, 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 statements commenting on the pending litigation against the Catholic Diocese can be found by clicking on "Diocesan Statements."