

**JULY 8, 2004 STATEMENT OF THE  
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF JACKSON  
CONCERNING RECENT COURT RULINGS**

In the past few weeks there have been two divergent rulings in different lawsuits filed against the Catholic Diocese of Jackson in the Hinds County Circuit Court. The lawsuits seek millions of dollars in damages from the Diocese for alleged abuse occurring over twenty years ago. In cases with almost identical issues, but different plaintiffs, Judges DeLaughter and Yerger reached differing rulings. On June 18, 2004, in the lawsuit entitled *Angie Phillips vs. Roman Catholic Diocese of Jackson et al.*, Cause No.-03-8211 Judge Swan Yerger, the senior judge for the Hinds County Circuit, granted summary judgment dismissing Ms. Phillips case against the Catholic Diocese of Jackson and other defendants because the statute of limitations had run on Ms. Phillips' claims. Judge Yerger further denied a request by the plaintiff to conduct discovery before ruling on the request to dismiss the case.

On July 7, 2004, in *John Does 6 through 9, Plaintiffs vs. Roman Catholic Diocese of Jackson et al.*, Cause No. 251-02-1816, Judge DeLaughter, who previously dismissed the cases filed by Does 8 and 9, issued an interim opinion refusing to grant the Diocese's motion for summary judgment at this time against Doe 6 and Doe 7, who seek compensation for alleged abuse occurring in 1977 and 1979. The opinion clearly states that the ruling was without prejudice and consequently the Defendants can renew their summary judgment motions at a later date. The ruling does not mean that the case will proceed to trial or that the plaintiffs will be successful, but the court's ruling provided that the parties should conduct discovery before it considers the statute of limitations issue further. The Diocese is considering an interlocutory appeal of this decision.

Sexual misconduct by church personnel violates human dignity and the mission of the Church. 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. In accordance with diocesan policy, all victims of abuse are offered counseling and pastoral care. The Diocese has adopted and published a diocesan-wide policy entitled "Protection of Children." A copy of this policy is available on its website, [www.jacksondiocese.org/childpage.htm](http://www.jacksondiocese.org/childpage.htm). The Protection of Children policy updates and revises the previous policies that in one form or another have been in place since the late 1980s. The policy is consistent with the Norms and Charter passed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Diocese has received a commendation for its efforts.