

Catholic Diocese of Jackson
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**Statement Regarding the Removal from Ministry
of Rev. Robert Olivier**

On Dec.12, 2006, the Diocese of Jackson first learned that in the late 1950's, while serving on his first assignment as a newly ordained priest, Rev. Robert Olivier had inappropriate sexual contact, but not intercourse, with a teenage female parishioner. Upon receiving the report of abuse, the Diocese began an investigation of the accusation and temporarily suspended Rev. Olivier of his priestly duties.

During the investigation, Rev. Olivier, aware of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and its zero tolerance policy, admitted to the contact which lasted over a four year period. On Dec.19, 2006, after completion of the investigation and with the recommendation of the Diocesan Fitness Review Board, Bishop Joseph Latino removed Rev. Olivier from ministry.

The USCCB *Charter* requires that where sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is admitted or established, the offending priest or deacon will be removed permanently from public ministry. Consistent with the *Charter*, the Diocese of Jackson has adopted a policy that a priest who has abused a minor can never again serve the Church in priestly ministry. This policy of zero tolerance is required to verify the integrity of the ministry of every priest and deacon at work in the Diocese – even for allegations that are decades old.

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 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.

The Diocese therefore urges 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. Mrs. Raff's telephone number is 601-355-8634, ext. 728.

Over the past twenty years, the Diocese has developed and implemented a safe environment program. The Diocese has publicized standards of conduct for priests and deacons, as well as diocesan employees, volunteers, and any other church personnel in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people. The Diocese conducts ongoing background evaluations and extensive training for all diocesan and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors. 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 Fitness Review Board and again in 2002 so that it would reflect the U.S. Bishops' *Charter* adopted in June 2002 in Dallas.

For more information about Diocesan policies and procedures, you can visit our diocesan website at www.jacksondiocese.org.

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