

STATEMENT REGARDING REVEREND JAMES STEIN'S CRIMINAL TRIAL IN WISCONSIN

News reports indicate that a former St. Joseph High School teacher, Reverend James Stein, has pled no contest to allegations of felonious sexual assault of a child occurring in 1988.

Before beginning work at St. Joe for the 2001-2002 school year, Reverend Stein provided a valid Wisconsin teaching certificate and obtained a valid Mississippi teaching certificate. St. Joe's principal has testified under oath that before hiring Stein, he did not know of Stein's previous misdemeanor conviction (in 1991, Stein pled guilty to a misdemeanor charge of a fourth degree sexual assault of an adult).

In 2002, as soon as the principal of St. Joseph High School found out about the Wisconsin criminal charge, Stein's employment was terminated, and he was asked to return to Wisconsin. Shortly after Stein's termination of employment, the school met with the students and faculty twice. The school's principal told them of the "abuse" allegations, and encouraged the students to come forward with any complaints. The principal met with each of Stein's classes after the school-wide communication and told them that counselors were available. He asked that the students report any incidents of abuse to him or to the school's counselors.

In response to a 2004 SNAP letter that contained misleading information, St. Joe sent a letter to all school parents letting them know about the charges pending against Stein. The letters encouraged all parents and students to contact school counselors to report any allegations of misconduct. The letter specifically offered that counselors were available, and identified a victim's assistance coordinator, Linda Raff. Her telephone number and the number of the diocese were provided to the parents. **Neither the school nor the Diocese has received any complaints of sexual misconduct from any students concerning Reverend Stein's tenure at St. Joseph School.**

Sexual misconduct by church personnel violates human dignity and the mission of the Church. 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. 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 and statements commenting on the pending litigation against Catholic Diocese can be found by clicking on "Diocesan Statements."