

# Catholic Diocese of Jackson

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## Statement of the Diocese of Jackson regarding the Criminal Conviction and Sentencing of Paul West

Paul West was a teacher and principal at St. Francis School in Greenwood, Mississippi from July 1993 until October 1998. The Diocese of Jackson cooperated fully in the State of Mississippi's recent criminal conviction of Paul West, including providing background testimony at his trial on the diocese's list of clergy who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors. The list was first provided to the Attorney General in 2002 and then updated and released publicly in March of 2019.

The Diocese reported the initial allegation against Paul West to the Department of Human Services and the Greenwood Police Department in 1998 and reported the subsequent allegations to the Leflore County District Attorney in 2018. West was removed from ministry after the original 1998 complaint.

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 has dedicated substantial time and resources to ensure 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.

Over the past thirty years, the Diocese of Jackson has developed and implemented a safe environment program. The Diocese has publicized standards of conduct for its 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. Beginning in 1986, the Diocese implemented a written policy and procedure regarding reporting and handling of sexual misconduct claims. The policy was updated in 1994 with the addition of a Diocesan Fitness Review Committee and again in 2002 so that it would reflect the mandates of the Bishops' *Charter*.

Anyone who has been a victim of abuse or exploitation by clergy, religious or lay church personnel and has not yet reported it is encouraged to do so. The Victim Assistance Coordinator, Erika Rojas, is available to assist in making a report. The contact number for the Victim Assistance Coordinator is 601.326-3736.

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