

**Catholic Diocese of Jackson**  
**P.O. Box 2248**  
**Jackson, Mississippi 39225**

July 24, 2019  
Communications Office  
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**STATEMENT REGARDING REV. EDWARD BALSER**

JACKSON – Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz has removed Rev. Edward Balser from public ministry in light of a credible allegation of abuse against him which first occurred in 1953 when Balser was a seminarian. The misconduct happened for a number of years and continued after Balser’s ordination to the priesthood in 1956. The female victim was a minor throughout the duration of the abuse. The inappropriate touching did not involve sexual intercourse.

Balser, who is 90, retired in March 2003 at age 74, after having served 47 years in parish ministry in Jackson, Pearl and Flowood. This is the only allegation of abuse against him.

On January 25, 2019, while reviewing and preparing files for the release of the list of clergy credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors, the Diocesan Fitness Review Board examined Balser’s file and the accounting of the abuse. The allegation was deemed credible and the Board recommended removal from public ministry.

Bishop Kopacz met with Balser on February 3, 2019 and informed him of the decision to remove him from ministry. According to the Church’s canon law, Balser, as the accused had the right to appeal and he exercised that right.

The appeal was prepared by a priest advocate over a period of three months. It was presented to the Board on May 3, 2019. After further deliberation and consultation with an independent Church canon lawyer from outside the diocese, the Board met again on June 21, 2019. At this meeting, a Board member who had been appointed to write a response to the appeal, presented a summation of all the contents of the file along with a defined timeline of events. The decision of the Board was to deny the appeal and recommend to Bishop Kopacz that he carry out the January decision.

In accordance with Diocesan policy, having exhausted all appeals and completing the process, Balsler's name will be added to the list of clergy credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor. (<https://jacksondiocese.org/offices/child-protection/clergy-and-religious-credibly-accused-of-abuse/>).

Balsler will no longer be allowed to function publicly as a priest. His case will be submitted to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome.

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, Valerie McClellan, and Safe Environment Coordinator, Vickie Carollo, are available to assist in making a report. The contact number for the Victim Assistance Coordinator is 601.326-3728. The contact number for the Safe Environment Coordinator is 601.960-8471.

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