

CATHOLIC DIOCESE *of* JACKSON

## Statement Regarding Allegations against former Bro. Paul West

Posted on July 29, 2018 by Maureen Smith

### Statement Regarding Allegations against former Bro. Paul West

An allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by former Brother Paul West, OFM while in ministry at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Greenwood has been brought forward to the Diocese of Jackson Fitness Review Board. The allegation has been considered and found to be credible.

Parish assignment included serving as a Brother at St. Francis of Assisi Church, Greenwood from June 1993 – November 1998.

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.

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 Board 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 Diocese of Jackson places no deadline or time limits on reporting. The Victim Assistance Coordinator, Valerie McClellan and Vicar General, Fr. Kevin Slattery 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 Vicar General is 601/969-2290.

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