



DIOCESE OF BILOXI

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 7, 2008

To the Clergy, Religious, and Laity of the Diocese of Biloxi

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

Today, March 7, I have been informed that a complaint has been filed in Circuit Court with an allegation against Bishop Joseph Lawson Howze, retired bishop of Biloxi. The lawsuit alleges that Bishop Howze behaved inappropriately with an adult man. The event allegedly took place in January, 2007.

A video tape recorded the event in question. The video, without any audio, does not clearly indicate what actually happened. When this video first came to my attention, because it is our practice to always fully cooperate with civil authorities, we promptly reported the matter to the District Attorney. At no time was any effort made to hide the matter. Respecting the confidentiality owed both adult parties in this matter, no public announcement was made at that time.

The Diocese offered to pay for counseling for both Bishop Howze and the man bringing the complaint. The complainant did not accept the offer.

Since Bishop Howze is a retired bishop, he is not under the authority of the Diocese of Biloxi, nor the Bishop of Biloxi.

I am hopeful that the truth will be discovered. We have no fear of the truth. Whatever actually occurred, we will deal with it as a community of faith. We know that we, as members of the Church, are not perfect. We do not belong to the Church because we are perfect. Quite the opposite, we belong to the Church because we know we need the forgiveness and support of the Lord Jesus and of one another.

I ask for your prayers. Please pray for Bishop Howze and for the man making the accusation. Let us also pray for one another. This is a most difficult moment in the life of the Church of the Diocese of Biloxi. We know that the Lord is with us. With the help of God, and of one another, we will handle this challenge as well.

May God bless each of you.

Sincerely in the Lord,

*+ Thomas J. Rodi*

Most Reverend Thomas J. Rodi  
Bishop of Biloxi

Please read this letter at all Masses this weekend.