

Reverend Thomas J. Bender

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1933
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	May 13, 1967

Employment/Assignment History

5/1961 – 6/1962	St. Joseph, Ashland, PA
6/1962 – 6/1965	St. Joseph, Girardville, PA
6/1965 – 6/1966	Holy Family, New Philadelphia, PA
6/1965 – 6/1966	Marian High School, Tamaqua, PA
6/1966 – 6/1971	Nativity High School, Pottsville, PA
6/1966 – 1/1970	St. Kiern, Heckscherville, PA
1/1970 – 6/1970	St. Mary, St. Clair, PA
6/1970 – 6/1971	St. John the Baptist, Pottsville, PA
6/1971 – 10/1971	Bethlehem Catholic HS, Bethlehem, PA
10/1971 – 12/1972	St. Francis Orphanage, Orwigsburg, PA
12/1972 – 2/1982	Our Lady of Good Counsel, Gordon, PA
6/1973 – 2/1982	Diocesan Tribunal, Allentown, PA
2/1982 – 6/1986	Most Blessed Sacrament, Bally
6/1983 – 6/1987	Liturgical Commission, Diocese of Allentown
6/1986 – 6/1987	St. Francis of Assisi, Allentown, PA
6/1987 – 7/1987	St. Anthony of Padua, Easton, PA
7/1987	Northampton Deanery, Ministry to Aging
7/24/1987	Regional Director, Council of Catholic Nurses
3/01/2002	Leave of Absence
5/06/2005	Retired
	Dismissed from Priesthood

Summary

A review of information received from the Diocese of Allentown indicates that the church was aware of Father Thomas J. Bender's predatory behavior as early as 1972, when Bender was caught in a car with a male student from Nativity High School, where Bender was assigned. It was reported by a Deacon, who also was a Pennsylvania State Trooper, that a second Trooper discovered the two in the car, both with their pants off. A report by Monsignor Anthony Muntone to Thomas J. Welsh, then Bishop of the Diocese, stated that the first Trooper gave Bender "a lecture and sent him on his way." A "Summary of Case" memorandum relating to Bender indicated that, when confronted, Bender admitted to the incident but claimed this was the first time anything like this had happened. He continued to serve as a priest.

In 1984, a known victim reported that Bender abused him in 1981, while the victim was in seventh grade. The victim reported that he was abused in Bender's bed, where oral and anal sex occurred. When confronted at the Chancery, Bender admitted to abusing the victim. He was sent to psychotherapy but again continued to serve as priest. In 1986, the victim was hospitalized for a drug overdose and subsequently admitted to the Northwest Institute of Psychiatry. The Diocese paid the first week's fee of \$4,000. The victim and his family decided to report Bender to legal authorities and also filed a civil suit.

In 1987, Bender was put on a leave of absence. He was eventually arrested, convicted and, in 1988, sentenced to probation. A condition of his probation was that he could not have an occupation where children would be exposed to his influence or intentions. In the same year, the Diocese encouraged Bender to seek laicization. Instead, Bender remained on his leave of absence until 2002, when he applied for retirement benefits. The Church granted Bender his retirement and provided him a monthly living allowance and paid for health insurance, life insurance, retreat and workshop fees, and car insurance.

In 2004, the Diocese received additional reports of sexual abuse by Bender. One known victim reported being abused in the early 1960's. Another known victim reported being abused by Bender in 1966. The second victim reported that the abuse occurred in the parish rectory and while on camping trips. On both occasions, the Diocese reported the allegations to the appropriate District Attorney's Office. No further information was provided as to the outcome of these reports of abuse.

In 2006, while collecting retirement benefits from the church, Bender was arrested in Long Island, New York, while traveling to meet what he believed was a fourteen-year-old boy for sex. The "boy" was an undercover detective whom Bender had attempted to lure to a hotel room in Levittown, New York. At the time of arrest, Bender was found to be in possession of condoms, beer, pornography, a digital camera, candy, gum, toothpaste, and a laptop computer. Bender was sentenced to 10 years of incarceration and lifetime probation. As of April 2018, he remains on the sex offender registry of the State of New York.