

Assignment Record– Rev. George J. Cooley

Summary of Case: George J. Cooley was ordained for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati in 1976. While a seminarian he had been placed on leave of absence for fondling a fellow seminarian; a year later he was deemed a good candidate for priesthood by Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Pilarczyk. Cooley went on to assist at Sacred Heart parish in Fairfield, then Guardian Angels in Cincinnati. He was also chaplain at a summer camp for children, Fort Scott. In 1978 a 10-year-old boy told camp authorities that Cooley had molested him the night before. There were no consequences for the priest. The following summer another boy alleged abuse. Archbishop Joseph Bernardin was informed; Cooley was sent to counseling. During his time at Guardian Angels in the early 1980s, Cooley was accused of molesting several boys. The father of one of the boys went to the rectory and punched Cooley in the face. Cooley was removed from the parish and made chaplain at Good Samaritan Hospital. He was also chaplain at the College of Mount St. Joseph and worked as a part-time counselor at Christian Family Services. At Good Samaritan, a wheelchair-bound man complained of inappropriate advances by Cooley. The priest was ultimately accused of having sexually abused at least 6 boys at Guardian Angels, ages 8-15.

Cooley was arrested in 1990 after several men reported past abuse by him as minors. He pleaded guilty to molesting 4 boys and spent 3 months in jail. In 1994 he was sent to jail for 15 months for stalking one of his victims. He was arrested again in 1996 for soliciting sex from a police decoy posing as a male prostitute. This time he was placed under house arrest and given 3 years' probation. He was laicized in 1998.

Ordained: 1976

Laicized: 1998



Start	Stop	Assignments	Town/	State	Position	Notes
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			Accusations			
1976 Archdiocese of Cincinnati Archbishop was Joseph Louis Bernardin (1972-1982).	1981	Sacred Heart	Fairfield	OH	<u>3/3</u> , 2/2 In charge of <u>altar boys</u> .	Sacred Heart had a school with 368-430 students. Cooley <u>had fondled</u> a fellow seminarian at St. Gregory Seminary in 1971. Then Auxiliary Bishop and seminary rector, Daniel Pilarczyk , had Cooley go on a leave of absence, then declared him a good candidate for priesthood a year later. He finished his studies at St. Mary's Seminary. and was ordained in 1976.
1976 1976	1979	Badin High School Fort Scott	Cincinnati • Accused of molesting a <u>10-year-old boy</u> at Fort Scott in the summer of 1978. The boy told his camp counselor the	OH	Faculty member <u>chaplain</u>	Fort Scott was a summer camp for children.

			<p>counselor the next day, who reported the incident to Cooley's supervisor, Fr. John Porter. Porter took no action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the summer of 1979 another boy reported abuse by Cooley at Fort Scott. The boy's father told Archbishop Bernardin. Bernardin told Auxiliary Bishop Pilarkzyk who referred the matter to personnel director, Rev. Philip Seher. Seher spoke with the boy's father, but did not inform police. Cooley was sent to counseling. 			
<p>1981</p> <p>Bernardin was succeeded as Cincinnati archbishop by Daniel Edward Pilarczyk</p>	1984	Guardian Angels	<p>Cincinnati</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 6 boys from Guardian Angels alleged sexual abuse by Cooley. These included a 12-year-old boy 	OH	2/5	<p>Guardian Angels had a school with 862-839 students.</p> <p>Cooley ingratiated himself with parishioners and their</p>

(1982-2009).			<p>and his 9-year-old brother who came forward in the early 1990s, a 15-year-old boy during a rectory sleepover in 1983, and another boy a year later. This boy's father went to the rectory and punched Cooley in the mouth. Police were not called. Cooley was removed from the parish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooley was indicted in 2003 for the sexually abuse of a boy from 1984-1988, beginning when the boy was age 8. 			<p>families, who were happy to allow the priest to spend time with their children, including taking them on camping trips and sleepovers in the rectory. They had not been told of the earlier allegations against him.</p> <p>After his removal, Archbishop Bernardin thanked Cooley in a letter for his "good work" at Guardian Angels.</p>
1984	1986	Good Samaritan Hospital	<p>Cincinnati</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A man in a wheelchair complained of inappropriate advances by Cooley during his time at Good Samaritan. 	OH	associate chaplain	
		Christian Family Services	<p>Cincinnati</p>	OH	part-time counselor	

1986	1990	College of Mount Saint Joseph	Cincinnati	OH	<u>chaplain</u>	
1990	1997	Leave of Absence				<p>In 1990 several accusers came forward, including the two brothers from Guardian Angels who had gone to law enforcement after their frustration with lack of action by the archdiocese. Cooley was <u>arrested</u>. He <u>pleaded guilty to molesting four boys</u> in 1991 and spent three months in jail. In 1994 he was <u>jailed again for 15 months for stalking one of his victims</u>. In 1996 Cooley was sentenced to <u>house arrest and 3 years' probation for soliciting sex</u> from a police decoy posing as a male prostitute.</p> <p>Cooley was <u>laicized</u> in 1998</p>

					<p>1998.</p> <p>He was indicted in 2003 for allegations of abuse of a boy from 1984-1988, beginning when the boy was age 8. A judge threw out the case due to the statute of limitations, saying police should have pursued the charges years before.</p> <p>Cooley held a license to teach in private and religious schools until December 2006, when it was revoked.</p>
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Priests in a Parish: We use the following convention to show a priest's place among the clergy of a parish: 1/2 means that he is the first priest listed in the *Official Catholic Directory* (usually the pastor) and that there is a total of two priests at the parish. The shorthand 3/4 means that the priest is listed third on a four-priest roster. See our [sample page from the Directory](#).

Sources: *Official Catholic Directory* (Kenedy & Sons, 1977-1997).

- [Sex Abuse Cases Not New Locally](#), Cincinnati Enquirer, March 16, 2002
- [How the Church Hid the Sins of Father Cooley](#), By Dan Horn, The Cincinnati Enquirer, April 14, 2002
- [Cooley Regrets Turning Victims 'against God'](#), By Richelle Thompson, The Cincinnati Enquirer, April 14, 2002
- [Abuse Robbed Family of Faith](#), By Richelle Thompson, April 14, 2002
- [Two Ex-Priests Indicted on Sex Abuse](#), By Dan Horn, The Cincinnati Enquirer, March 22, 2002

2003

- [Charges Dismissed against Ex-Priest](#), By Dan Horn, The Cincinnati Enquirer, October 10, 2003
- [Status Report on Clerics Credibly Accused of Child Abuse](#), Archdiocese of Cincinnati, no date
- [Priests in Sex-Abuse Cases Keep Their Teaching Certificates](#), By Jim Provance, Toledo Blade, October 6, 2006
- [Alleged Molesters Fall through Cracks](#), Toledo Blade, October 7, 2006
- [Defrocked Priest Loses Teaching License](#), Toledo Blade, December 13, 2006

Note: The *Official Catholic Directory* aims to report the whereabouts of Catholic priests in the United States on January 1 of the *Directory's* publication year. Our working assumption is that a priest listed in the *Directory* for a given year was at the same assignment for part of the previous year as well. However, Kenedy and Sons will sometimes accept updates well into the year of publication. Diocesan clergy records are rarely available to correct this information. The *Directory* is also sometimes misleading or wrong. We have tried to create an accurate assignment record, given the source materials and their limitations. Assignment records are a work in progress and we are always improving the records that we post. Please [email us](#) with new information and corrections.

This assignment record collates Cooley's career history as it is represented in the *Official Catholic Directory* with the allegations against him, as reported in the media. We make no representation regarding the truth of the allegations we report, and we remind our readers that the U.S. legal system presumes that a person accused of or charged with a crime is innocent until proven guilty. Similarly, individuals who may be defendants in civil actions are presumed not to be liable for such claims unless a plaintiff proves otherwise. Admissions of guilt or liability are not typically a part of civil or private settlements. For more information, see our [posting policy](#).

This assignment record was last updated on April 10, 2023.