

Rev. John F. Bench

Summary of Case: A priest of the Pittsburgh diocese, Bench relocated to the Charleston, SC diocese in 1980. He was removed from active ministry in December 1993 after he was accused of molesting a child. Bench admitted to the abuse. He asked to be reinstated as a priest in Florida in 2000. Bishop Baker of Charleston was going to approve the reinstatement, but changed his mind when the parents of Bench's victim complained. Bench died in Florida in 2009.

Ordained: 1964

Died: 2009

Start	Stop	Parish/Assignment	Town/ Accusations	State	Position	Notes
1964 Pittsburgh bishop was John Joseph Wright (1959- 1969), followe d by Vincen t Martin Leonar d (1969- 1983)	1971	St. Henry's	Pittsburgh	PA	2/2	St. Henry's had a school with 748-476 students.
1971	1976	St. Edward's	Blawnox	PA	2/2	St. Edward's had a school with 104-63 students, and beginning in 1975, a kindergarten with 16 students.

1976	1980	St. Joseph's (German)	Pittsburgh	PA	1/3	St. Joseph's had a school with 396-320 students.
1980	1985	Presbyterian College	Clinton	SC	Campus Ministry	
Charles ton bishop was Ernest Leo Unterk oefer (1964- 1990)		Clinton Rehabilitation Center	Clinton	SC	Chaplain	
		Knights of Columbus		SC	Chaplain	
			the Pee Dee	SC	Episcopal Vicar	The Pee Dee is a region in the northeastern corner of South Carolina.
1980	1985	St. Boniface	Joanna	SC	1/1	
		St. Mary's	Yonges Island	SC		
1980	1985	Holy Spirit	Laurens	SC		This was a mission of St. Boniface in Joanna.
1980	1982	St. Mark's	Newberry	SC		This was a mission of St. Boniface in Joanna.
1985	1986	Mission Parish	Pawley's Island	SC		This was a mission of St. Mary's in Georgetown.
1986	1987	St. Andrew's	Andrews	SC		This was a mission of St. Mary's in Georgetown.

1987	1989	St. Leo the Great	Andrew's	SC		This was a mission of St. Mary's in Georgetown.
1985 Unterkoefler was succeeded by David Bernard Thompson (1990-1999)	1991	St. Mary's (Our Lady of Ramsom)	Georgetown	SC		
1991	Dec. 1993	Holy Cross	Pickens • Bench was accused in 1993 of molesting a child. Bench admitted to the abuse.	SC	1/1	Bench was removed from Holy Cross in Dec. 1993 due to allegations of child sexual abuse.

Dec.1993	2002	Absent on Leave				<p>Bench is not indexed beyond the 2002 <i>Directory</i>.</p> <p>In 2000 Bench asked to be reinstated in Florida. Bishop Baker <u>was going to allow the transfer to a Florida diocese</u>, but reconsidered after vigorous protest by the parents of Bench's victim.</p>
2002	2009					<p>Bench <u>died</u> June 6, 2009 in Englewood, FL.</p>

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](#).

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 Bench's career history as it is represented in the *Official Catholic Directory* with allegations as reported in the media. We make no representation regarding the truth of the allegation 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 October 9, 2025

Sources: Official Catholic Directory (New York: P.J. Kenedy and Sons, 1965-2002)

- [2 Priests Accused of Sex Abuse Resign](#), By Bo Emerson and Keith Graham, Atlanta Journal and Constitution, December 30, 1993
- [Bishop: Abuse Allegations Used to be Covered up](#), January 9, 1994
- [Dallas Morning News](#), June 12, 2002
- [Secret Sins](#), By Tony Bartelme, Post and Courier (Charleston, SC), April 28, 2002
- [Obituary](#), legacy.com