

## **Monsignor Thomas J. Benestad**

### **Biographical Information**

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1945
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	May 23, 1970

### **Employment/Assignment History**

1970	St. Bernard, Easton, PA Lafayette College Newman Center Notre Dame High School
1973	St. Thomas More
1978	Leave of Absence Holy Rosary
1980	St. Bernard
1988	Our Lady of Perpetual Help Papal Foundation
2001	Sabbatical
2002	St. Francis of Assisi
2005	Notre Dame of Bethlehem
2006	Leave of Absence
6/2007	Resigned as Pastor Leave of Absence
9/2007	Ascension, Boca Raton, FL
6/2009	Retired-Pastor Emeritus, Notre Dame of Bethlehem

### **Summary**

Records including e-mail exchanges between the victim and the Diocese of Allentown indicate that, in 2011, a known victim reported to the Diocese that Monsignor Thomas J. Benestad sexually abused him from 1981 through 1983. The victim was nine years old when the abuse began. Correspondence demonstrated that the Diocese reported the allegation to the Northampton County District Attorney's Office, which conducted an investigation and found the victim's allegations to be credible.

In a statement to Northampton County Detectives, the victim said that his first memory of abuse happened while he attended CCD class at St. Bernard's, where Benestad was assigned. The victim was taken out of class by a nun and delivered to Benestad in his office. The victim had worn shorts to CCD, which was against the rules. The victim was told that shorts were not proper attire and that not wearing proper attire was sinful. The victim was told to get on his knees and start praying. Benestad unzipped his pants and told the victim to perform oral sex on him. The victim did as he was told. Benestad also performed oral sex on the victim. The victim recalls that, after the abuse, Benestad would produce a clear bottle of holy water and squirt it

## **Summary**

into the victim's mouth to purify him. The District Attorney's Office found the applicable statute of limitations had expired and no charges were brought against Benestad.

Additional complaints have been made against Benestad, who has denied all accusations. The Diocese elected to rely on Benestad's word rather than the word of the victims and the determinations of law enforcement. No attempt was made to remove Benestad from ministry. Benestad was granted retirement, resides in Boca Raton, Florida, and assists with a local parish.