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Priest Faces Sex Abuse Complaint

Basil Congro Was a Former Pastor in Charleston

By Dave Munday
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A former Charleston priest is facing a civil complaint from a man accusing him of sexual abuse.

The complaint was filed last week against the Rev. Basil Congro, 57, who was pastor of Jesus, Our Risen Savior Catholic Church in Spartanburg until he was suspended in September.

Bishop Robert Baker of the Catholic Diocese of Charleston said he became aware of the allegation last June after the man claiming to be a victim contacted the diocese.

Baker said he suspended Congro after the Diocesan Sexual Abuse Advisory Board determined the allegation was credible.

The plaintiff says Congro abused him in the 1980s, when the victim was between 15 and 19.

Congro was priest then at St. Mary's Catholic Church in East Islip, N.Y.

After moving to South Carolina in the early 1990s, Congro also was pastor of St. Patrick and Our Lady of Mercy in Charleston, St. Mary on Yonges Island, Saints Frederick and Stephen on Edisto Island, and St. Anthony in Florence.

He also was chaplain pro tem at Christ the Divine Teacher at The Citadel.

Attempts to reach Congro for comment were unsuccessful.

There are no other pending complaints of sexual misconduct against Congro, Baker said in a letter sent to priests last week. Until the complaint is resolved, Congro will not be physically present at his parish, wear clerical garb or perform any other public priestly functions.

The complaint was filed in Nassau County civil court in New York and also names the bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre and several other priests as defendants.

Last May, bishops in the Carolinas and Georgia pledged to remove from the ministry any priest who has sexually abused a child, even if the abuse happened decades ago.

The Diocese of Charleston has acknowledged receiving allegations of sexual misconduct against 24 priests since the 1960s, and a dozen have been removed from ministry.