

Church feels aftereffect of former priest's indictment

By Rita Hoover
Staff writer

Like the ground after an earthquake, St. Peter Catholic Church is still feeling aftershocks as a result of a former priest being indicted on sexual abuse charges last year.

Mark A. Campobello, 38, of Belvidere, is awaiting trial on 18 separate counts of criminal sexual misconduct involving two female minors, one of whom was an eighth-grade student at St. Peter Catholic School when the abuse was alleged to have occurred between January and May 1999. The other alleged incident occurred between Nov. 1, 1999 and March 31, 2000, with a student at Aurora Central Catholic High School. Campobello was employed as a teacher at that time.

A hearing to set Campobello's trial date is scheduled for 9 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 29, at the Kane County Judicial Center in St. Charles.

fully cooperates" with the state in Campobello's investigation.

Owen Phelps, director of communications for the Diocese of Rockford, issued a reply to Blaine's request, stating only that Doran was out of the diocese and "I am sure that when he returns he will answer all of his mail."

Jarmoluk, who recently announced he will be leaving the country Sunday, Feb. 1, on a three-month sabbatical, could not be reached for comment.

Bochte said speaking out has brought only positive feedback from other parishioners. "The naysayers have not reached out to me," said Bochte, who described receiving "very, very positive" e-mails, phone calls and letters from fellow parishioners.

"The tone of them is that I was saying

As parishioners struggle to heal the spiritual and emotional distress within their church community, the case has begun to gain media attention. On Jan. 20, the nation's largest support group for victims of clergy sex abuse sent a letter to the bishop at the Diocese of Rockford, asking him to chastise the Rev. Joseph Jarmoluk, the current priest at St. Peter's.

The letter, signed by Barbara Blaine, president of Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests, and its national director, David Clohessy, urged Rockford Catholic Bishop Thomas Doran to "immediately discipline" Jarmoluk for his "insensitivity" after he allegedly criticized a parishioner who had publicly questioned the church's stance on the case.

The letter states that parishioner Frank Bochte, a Geneva resident, was "publicly castigated from the pulpit" by Jarmoluk after "Bochte suggested in a letter to a local newspaper that contributions to the church be withheld until the diocese



Mark Campobello

something they all wanted to say," said Bochte, who describes himself as a life-long Catholic. He said he never felt "intimidated" and believes in speaking out when necessary.

St. Peter's parishioner and Geneva resident Barbara Houston agrees with Bochte.

"A priest is simply, wonderfully, a leader. But he should not be on a pedestal," she said.

As the Geneva church attempts to move forward during a difficult chapter in its history, Houston said parishioners like Bochte and herself represent "active members who love our faith and intend to stay. This kind of stuff is not going to drive us from our parishes but we are going to speak out. We expect our church to have the same decency as the civil society around us."