

Fence Post

St. Peter needs to begin the healing

Another week, another startling headline emanating from St. Peter's Parish in Geneva.

Is there no end to the seemingly endless stream of one sordid story after another all occurring under the careful watch of one Father Joe Jarmoluk?

From a person accused of murder leading our choir to a visiting priest convicted of sexually abusing two young girls (one of whom was student at St. Peter's).

Now, thanks to a Daily Herald news article, we have learned that the administration of the parish may have known of Mark Campobello's perverted sexual tendencies and encouraged other parish staff members to remain quiet about it.

Already, we have seen some parishioners respond to the Daily Herald's article by adopting the sad, but predictable theme of "If you don't have the facts to respond to the message ... attack the messenger."

In the eyes of all enlightened St. Peter's parishioners, Barbara Houston is a hero. She exhibited the courage and integrity to recognize that a tragic mistake was made and decided to do something about it.

Remaining silent and continuing to abide by Fr. Joe's wishes to not embarrass the parish would have been the easy way out.

Houston didn't take the easy way out. She knew the only way for our parish to heal was to have this story told.

Parishioners, and Houston's former co-workers at the parish school, who have an interest in

the future of St. Peter's should be ringing her phone off the hook thanking her for coming forward and doing her part to make St. Peter's a safer place for our children.

More despicable, however, is the suggestion advanced by some that the young victim or her family is somehow responsible for the acts committed by Campobello. This is a horrific twist to an otherwise sordid tale, and this tactic should be condemned by all. Anyone advancing this theme should be ashamed of themselves.

In a perfect world, this would be a terrific opportunity for the pastoral council to step up and publicly praise Houston for her bravery and to condemn any suggestions that the victim is responsible for Campobello's assault.

We can't undo the despic-

able deeds of Mark Campobello, but we can work together to heal the gaping wound that has been opened.

If we rise up and demand accountability from our pastor, then we can begin the healing.

The safety of the parish's children should be paramount to all other concerns. This is no time for Fr. Joe to be running away from the problem. It is time for our pastor to begin acting like a leader and address the hurt we are all feeling.

The parish is looking to Fr. Joe for guidance through this period. We can only pray that he will emerge from his defiant attitude, show compassion to Campobello's victims and assure us that our children are safe at St. Peter and lead this parish back from the abyss.

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Daily Herald

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