

Big Picture  Local Focus
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Page: 8

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Let's help St. Peter church, victims heal

With regard to the ongoing dilemma at St. Peter's Church in Geneva and other issues pertaining to that and the Rockford Diocese. I guess what you have here is a process being worked out in the media. Some are very tired of it and want it to go away and others are outraged by the evolution and velocity of the negativity that persists.

We, your readers, have seen other issues that have gone on for months nonstop in the press. One example is the Corron School issues. Obviously, the Catholic church does not yet have in place a newspaper or other forum where we can discuss issues and differing viewpoints. This is why the American press has helped uncover our sex abuse scandal and other issues we are currently trying to come to grips with.

Hopefully we, as an American Catholic Church, will someday have a better way to discuss our problems and issues in-house and an appropriate way to resolve them. Right now we don't. So thank you for helping us sort some things out in the press.

I am a member of the Rockford Diocese and St. John Neumann in St. Charles. We learned long ago in our faith that what wounds one part of the body wounds all of us. This issue is about children. This issue is about innocent children sexually abused by trusted shepherds in the American Catholic Church. Two children were sexually abused in the Rockford Diocese.

Two teachers came forward in the media and told their stories of what happened to the St. Peter's student sexually abused by Mark **Campobello**. Two civil lawsuits have been filed against the Rockford Diocese and our Bishop Thomas Doran.

Then came the "due diligence" report spoken about from the St. Peter's pulpit July 18 and handed out to any parishioner from the rectory of St. Peter's who wanted to read it. This 12-page report was paid for by Msgr. Joe Jarmoluk and put together by Canice Rice, his attorney.

I kept looking for the "Christian Charity" spoken about on page 10 of this report. On the very next page, Attorney Rice speaks of the possibility of Father Joe suing people. Why? Because they told the truth or they pushed for the truth to come out in support of the victims? As I studied the report, the prevailing spirit of Attorney Rice's report was "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down." I don't think that is the Catholic Church's teaching on charity.

I appreciate the courage it took Alison Ward and Barb Houston to come forth with the truth and exposing any errors in judgment used in the process. I have known Barb Houston and her family for years. We have worked side by side bringing issues forward in the community with other good people. I cannot in conscience sit by and allow anyone to discredit or devalue her or her fine reputation as a parent, teacher, or parishioner. This character assassination has also deeply wounded Barb's family and her many friends in the Geneva community.

For anyone who wishes to show a sign of support, concern, or care for the victims in the Rockford Diocese, you can write to the two young ladies by the following process: the victim from Saint Peter's, Journey of Healing (Mary), P.O. Box 534, Geneva, Ill 60134; the victim from Aurora Central Catholic High School: Journey of Healing (Ann), P.O. Box 534, Geneva, Ill. 60134. The names of the victims were chosen to protect their privacy.

To the parish family of St. Peter's, no one is attacking your parish. You also have been victimized and traumatized by some very serious events. No one is discrediting the many awesome, wonderful, and important ministries you have. The Geneva community is greatly enriched because of the long enduring critical work you are involved in. What you do and who you are as a parish community impacts the Geneva community. We stand with you at this time, and we not only want you to survive, but we want you to recover, heal, and flourish. You are not powerless over the tragedy that happened to you. You each can do something to encourage a real authentic healing model.

Write our bishop (Most Reverend Thomas G. Doran D.D., J.C.C., Bishop of the Diocese of Rockford, 555 Colman Center Drive, P.O. Box 7044, Rockford, Ill. 61125) and ask him to send professionals who intervene in parishes where sexual abuse has happened. The professionals have to have skills and expertise in this area. There are many parishes and dioceses around America who have embarked on this journey and they are healing.

In closing, there are many people in the Geneva Community who care about the kids who got hurt, and their families. There are many who care about all the folks at Saint Peter's. There are many people from different faith denominations who are praying for deep authentic healing for all involved.

Mary Lu O'Halloran

Geneva

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