

Church wants to shield files on ex-priest in abuse case

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GENEVA - A state appeals court will hear arguments on whether the Roman Catholic Church must surrender documents about a former Geneva priest accused of sexual abuse.

The hearing is scheduled for May 6 before the 2nd District Appellate Court in Elgin on a request from the Rockford Diocese to shield its investigation of Mark A. **Campobello**, who lived at St. Peter Catholic Church in Geneva.

**Campobello**, 39, a native of Crystal Lake, has pleaded not guilty to aggravated criminal sexual assault and aggravated criminal sexual abuse for alleged acts in 1999 with a 14-year-old girl while he lived in the church rectory.

On May 1, 2003, Judge Timothy Q. Sheldon ordered the diocese to surrender records of an investigation that it conducted on **Campobello** before he faced criminal charges.

The diocese refused, arguing that the disclosure violated its First Amendment rights.

**Campobello** also has pleaded not guilty to similar crimes that allegedly occurred in 1999 and 2000 with a 15-year-old girl who was a student at Aurora Central Catholic High School, where he worked as an assistant principal.

The diocese transferred **Campobello** to St. James Parish in

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Belvidere, where he served as a parochial administrator until he was arrested in November 2002 on the Geneva allegations. He was relieved of his duties the next month.

**Campobello** was indicted on the Aurora charges in October.

**Campobello** is a 1983 graduate of Crystal Lake High School. He was ordained in 1991. He served at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Crystal Lake, and at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in McHenry before going to Kane County.

If convicted of the most serious offenses, **Campobello** could be sentenced to 15 years in prison.