

Diocese: Campobello left for treatment

Publication Northwest Herald  
Date May 07, 2004  
Section(s) Local News  
Page

By ADAM KOVAC

Shaw News Service

ELGIN - Mark **Campobello** received mental-health treatment after allegations of inappropriate relations with two teenage girls, an attorney for the Rockford Diocese said Thursday.

The revelation surfaced before the state 2nd District Appeals Court in Elgin, where attorneys for the diocese and Kane County prosecutors argued whether church records about the former priest should be made public.

Prosecutors sought documents about **Campobello's** transfer from Kane County and an internal investigation of the allegations as part of their criminal case against the 39-year-old Crystal Lake native.

**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 moving to Kane County.

**Campobello**, who now lives in Belvidere, is scheduled to stand trial May 24 for sexual abuse and sexual assault, crimes that allegedly occurred while he lived at St. Peter Catholic Church in Geneva.

The appellate court's ruling will have far-reaching effects on balancing church doctrine and the sanctity of the confessional

versus state law, said Joshua Vincent, a Chicago attorney working for the diocese in the appellate case.

"Whatever decision the court makes will be an important one," Vincent said after heated oral arguments. "Society has a lot at stake here."

Judge Timothy Q. Sheldon in May 2003 ordered church officials to surrender the information so prosecutors and **Campobello's** criminal defense attorneys could review the reports in private.

But Vincent said the documents contain records that are shielded by medical privacy laws about communication between the diocese and a mental-health facility where **Campobello** was treated.

Disclosing details of the investigation also would violate the diocese's First Amendment rights because they include statements that **Campobello** made to other priests when he was questioned about the allegations, Vincent said.

"The church is trying to do something beneficial to address this problem, and the state is trying to use it against them," Vincent said.

Kristine Karlin, a Mount Prospect attorney for the Illinois appellate prosecutor's office, argued that prosecutors seek only information that explains why **Campobello** was ordered to a new parish and to undergo mental-health treatment.

"I assume the state is getting at: Was he admitted for treatment because of his sexual abuse of this girl?" Karlin said.

She said an inspection of the documents might show whether **Campobello** confided in people other than doctors or priests.

Kane County Assistant State's Attorney Jody Gleason, who is prosecuting **Campobello**, said the appellate court case is not expected to delay his criminal trial unless the justices issue their opinion before jury selection begins.

**Campobello** was arrested in November 2002 after a teenager told Geneva police that she had sexual contact with **Campobello** in 1999, when she was 14, while he lived in the rectory at St. Peter. The diocese stripped **Campobello** of his duties the next month.

In October 2003, **Campobello** was indicted on additional charges after a former female student at Aurora Central Catholic High

School, where he worked, accused of him of similar offenses in 1999 and 2000.