

## A matter of discourse

I have been interested, and amazed, to read the various comments and arguments people have made concerning the state of affairs at St. Peter's parish in Geneva.

Parishioners are divided on their feelings about their pastor, diocese and the handling of the Mark Campobello abuse scandal. So many people are speaking up on the issue without understanding the facts.

Many things I have read concern opinions and not facts, and sometimes the facts have been presented in a misleading way. Because this situation directly concerns my professional reputation, I need to speak up.

I have heard some comment that this discourse is not necessary because the truth will be known after the civil litigation goes to trial. That is an incorrect statement because it assumes that the matter will proceed to court and the records will be open to the public. In almost every case of abuse handled civilly concerning the Catholic Church, the suit has been settled out of court by the church and the victim. It is suggested that this occur so that the church will not face the embarrassment of having their business aired in public. It also allows victims privacy and the opportunity to move forward without further victimization. In any case, the facts of the case are not known and people can say what they want without the facts necessarily being accurate. These inaccuracies are what cause anger and feelings of betrayal.

The facts here are really simple. Mr. Rice elaborated on some of the facts, but key elements were left out.

I heard about the supposed abuse from a fellow teacher in 1999. That same day I reported the facts to my principal. These facts included the name of the victim and the name of the teacher who gave me the information. I concluded that she would report these facts to her superior, who would call the Geneva Police and ask for an investigation. She told me two days later that my facts were incomplete and therefore hearsay. On two different occasions over the next two years, she told me the same thing.

Monsignor Jarmoluk never had any conversation whatsoever with me during this time period, and I never discussed this with him.

Mr. Rice never interviewed me or I could have told him about this inaccuracy before it was printed and handed to parishioners. The comments in Mr. Rice's report state that Monsignor

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Jarmoluk asked me to give him more information and that he encouraged me to call the civil authorities are absolutely wrong. Monsignor Joe never had any such conversation with me. I finally reported directly to him in September of 2002. I assumed that he would follow the recommendations of the Conference of Catholic Bishops and report the possible abuse to the Geneva Police Department. He did not. He went to his

superior and a team was formed who investigated, and decided to leave the case open for further developments. I was not interviewed by that team.

No person from the Diocese of Rockford ever went to the Geneva Police to report the allegations. Any person living in the area may call the police and ask who reported the charge. The victim reported directly to the police department and within weeks Mark Campobello was charged with the crime. He now sits in jail, which proves that my information was credible. The Diocese of Rockford left him in a parish ministry near children for two months after they were informed of the allegations.

Catholics are torn on this matter because they have been led to believe that the media is criticizing their pastor and church. The facts remain that rules were put into place by the Catholic bishops to handle these allegations in fair and swift ways. The rules in this case were not followed and confusion reigned.

There is a protocol in place right now by the Catholic Office of Child and Youth Protection. We should demand that it be followed for the well-being of the victim and our parish. We should have someone sent to our parish to implement a program of understanding and healing, according to that office. The victims also have rights, according to the office. These moves do not have to happen after civil litigation. They should happen now.

Diocesan teachers today are encouraged to persevere until their superior, or they, personally report it. This is a better approach, and teachers know exactly how to report allegations.

I sincerely hope that any student, or the family of a student, whom I ever taught would understand that I would never knowingly have kept information confidential if I thought it was of a criminal nature.

I thought my superiors were following protocol. When I realized they were not, I continued forward until the matter was resolved.

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