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## Priest's personnel files stay put

▪ A judge says the records aren't necessary since Mark Campobello's case appears to be resolved.

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The Rockford Catholic Diocese does not have to turn over personnel records on a priest who sexually abused two girls.

That was the ruling of Kane County Judge Timothy Sheldon Friday in a case involving Mark Campobello, a priest who most recently served St. James Parish in Belvidere.

In May, Campobello pleaded guilty to abusing two minor girls while serving at a parish in Geneva and a Catholic high school in Aurora in 1999-2000. He is serving an eight-year sentence at Illinois River state prison in Canton and can seek parole starting in May 2008.

Because the Campobello case appears to be resolved, Sheldon said, there is no need for Kane County prosecutors to see diocesan records on Campobello.

He made the ruling after Nemura Pencyla of the Kane County state's attorney's office asked the court to enforce its order for the documents. The order was issued a year ago during pretrial proceedings in the Campobello case.

The diocese refused and appealed to an appellate court, which ruled in May that Sheldon should review the documents in secret and give any relevant papers to the state's attorney.

Sheldon asked Pencyla why his office wants the documents now that the criminal case against Campobello is over.

"Because it's evidence. We're entitled to that evidence," said Pencyla. "It's a court order that they produce it.

"We are just asking that your rule be enforced."

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Lawyers for the diocese and Campobello argued there is no reason to review the documents.

"The state agreed to the plea and has no more interest in this case," said Ellen Lynch of the Hinshaw and Culbertson law firm, which represents the diocese.

If Campobello at any point asks for a review of his case, the issue of the documents could be revisited, Lynch said.

Campobello's lawyer, Van Richards of Elgin, said the state's attorney's office wants the records for no reason.

"There is no case, but they covet the files," Richards said. "Will they put them in their files and look at them on Friday afternoons?"

After the proceeding, Lynch said the diocesan stand does not contradict the church's promise of openness on cases of sexual abuse involving priests.

"This was a procedural issue, constitutional in nature, and we prevailed," she said.

Asked why not save time and money by turning the records over, since it is unlikely they would become public, she replied, "Who knows what the state would do? I doubt if they would lock them up in a file cabinet."

Two girls abused by Campobello are expected to ask for the records as part of civil suits they have filed against him and the diocese for money exceeding \$50,000.

The lawyer for the victims, Keith Aeschliman of Joliet, has said he will go after the personnel documents to prove the church was negligent in how it assigned the priest.

Campobello was ordained in Rockford in 1991 and served at Holy Family Parish here until 1994, when he went to Geneva. In 1995-96, he was at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Rockford. He went to St. James in Belvidere in June 2001 and was there until December 2002 when he was arrested. The diocese removed him from priestly duties but he remains a priest.

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