

Published: December 4, 2002

Local News: Belvidere

## Priest relieved of duties

▪ The Rockford Diocese reacts to charges of sexual abuse from a female in Geneva.

By MIKE WISER, *Rockford Register Star*

[>> Click here for more about Mike](#)

Related stories

- [8 years for priest in sex abuse](#)

BELVIDERE □ The Catholic Diocese of Rockford relieved the leader of St. James Church of his duties after the pastor's arrest Tuesday on sexual abuse charges.

The Rev. Mark A. Campobello was charged with five counts of criminal sexual assault and five counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse by Geneva Police.

The allegations against Campobello stem from several incidents with a 14-year-old Geneva girl between January and May 1999 while he was an assistant pastor at St. Peter's Church in Geneva. Campobello joined St. James parish in Belvidere in June 2001.

Campobello is the fifth Catholic priest with ties to the Rock River Valley to face allegations of sexual misconduct this year. Nationwide, more than 200 priests have resigned or been removed as reports of abuse and cover-ups surfaced.

The national scandal hit the Rockford Diocese in May when Bishop Thomas Doran acknowledged it paid \$82,000 to three brothers who accused a priest of abusing them when they were children in the late 1970s.

Campobello's arrest comes three weeks after the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a revised sexual abuse policy for all priests. Doran was one of four U.S. bishops appointed to revise the church's policy.

□ Oh my, I don't know what to say, □ said Donald Callahan, one of three permanent deacons at St. James Church, when he learned of Campobello's arrest Tuesday night.

□ He is a real nice priest, a real nice guy ... I never saw anything

that would make me think something like that. □

The diocese also removed Campobello's authority to act as a priest. His punishment is consistent with the church law, said diocese spokesman Owen Phelps.

□ We are saddened by the allegations in this case involving Father Mark Campobello, and most especially, we express our sorrow to the alleged victim and her family, □ Phelps said.

□ Sexual abuse of minors is both a tragedy and a travesty, and we will not tolerate it in our diocese. □

Geneva Police Lt. Joe Frega said the Campobello investigation began Oct. 22 after a private attorney hired by the now-18-year-old alleged victim contacted the department.

Both Frega and Phelps said the Geneva allegations are the only ones they are aware of involving Campobello.

Campobello was released on \$75,000 bail and is scheduled to appear in Kane County court on Jan. 9. He could not be reached for comment.


Campobello was ordained May 18, 1991, in Rockford's Cathedral of St. Peter where he later served as an associate pastor. He also served in Rockford's Holy Family Parish and Holy Angels Parish in Aurora and was an assistant principal and spiritual director at Aurora Central Catholic High School.

Campobello's duties have been transferred to Associate Pastor Rev. Ricardo Hernandez, Phelps said. It was unclear when or if a permanent replacement would be found.

□ I hope it turns out to be nothing, □ Callahan said.

Contact: [mwiser@registerstartower.com](mailto:mwiser@registerstartower.com); 815-987-1377

 [Print This Page](#)

 [Close window](#)

**Rockford Register Star  [rrstar.com](http://rrstar.com)**