

## Week five begins in the Philly abuse trial

Brian Roewe | Apr. 23, 2012 NCR Today

The fifth week in the trial of two Philadelphia clergy began this morning, following a week that presented more stories of abuse by former priests, as well as a surprising accusation.

The trial of Msgr. William J. Lynn is the first against a church official for the cover-up of sex abuse. He is charged with child endangerment and conspiracy for his role in an alleged cover-up of sexual abuse by priests in the Philadelphia archdiocese during his tenure as secretary of clergy from 1992-2004 under the late former archbishop Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua.

Lynn's co-defendant in the trial is Rev. James J. Brennan, a priest accused of a 1996 attempted rape of 14-year-old boy. Both he and Lynn have pleaded not guilty.

The biggest stir from last week's testimony centered on a West Virginia bishop, the Most Rev. Michael Bransfield of the Wheeling-Charleston diocese. On Wednesday, [multiple reports](#) [1] told of a witness who testified that he had been sexually abused by the Rev. Charles Gana inside a home owned by Bransfield, and that Gana had told him that Bransfield, who was a friend from their seminary days, was having sex with a boy.

The allegations date back to the 1970s when Bransfield was a priest in the Philadelphia area.

Bransfield has never been charged with sexual abuse and [issued a statement Thursday morning](#) [2] denying the accusations.

"I have never sexually abused anyone," he said. "I understand that I am a public figure and therefore subject to public criticism. The nature of these statements and the manner in which they were released however go way beyond any sense of fairness and propriety."

Another priest from West Virginia will play a role in the trial in the coming days. [According to the Philadelphia Inquirer](#) [3], a West Virginia judge ruled late Thursday that Msgr. Kevin Quirk must appear in court between April 29 and May 1. Quirk, now the judicial vicar and assistant to Bransfield, heard a case against Brennan in a 2008 canonical trial.

In order for the transcript from that trial to be presented, Quirk must appear in court to authenticate the document and his words it contains. Prosecutors hope the transcript will aid in refuting Brennan's denial of the charges against him.

Mid-week, the jury heard of allegations against the Rev. Thomas J. Smith, who accusers said orchestrated a Passion play where boys would strip naked and suffer whip lashings from other boys after Smith would pin a loincloth onto them, [according to the Associated Press](#) [4].

Other witnesses testified that Smith brought them to motel in the late 1970s, had them place ice in their underwear and then remove it so it could dry, the AP report said. Smith was defrocked in 2007.

---

**Source URL (retrieved on 07/27/2017 - 03:57):** <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/week-five-begins-philly-abuse-trial>

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.dailymail.com/News/201204190103>

[2] <http://www.dwc.org/component/content/article/189-latest-news/1254-a-statement-from-bishop-michael-j-bransfield.html>

[3] [http://articles.philly.com/2012-04-21/news/31379230\\_1\\_sexual-abuse-canonical-trial-church-trial](http://articles.philly.com/2012-04-21/news/31379230_1_sexual-abuse-canonical-trial-church-trial)

[4] <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/priest-abuse-jury-hears-bizarre-passion-play-16156044#.T5WUDLOiGbs>