

Philly abuse trial: Jurors read defendants' grand jury testimonies

Brian Roewe | May. 1, 2012 NCR Today

The trial of two priests alleged in a conspiracy of covering up cases of priest sex abuse in the Philadelphia archdiocese has opened its sixth week to hearing prior grand jury testimony from each of the defendants.

Today, prosecutors from the Philadelphia district attorney's office presented the grand jury testimony of William J. Lynn, in relation to former priest Sylvester Wiejata.

Lynn was the secretary of clergy in the archdiocese from 1992-2004, during which time he reviewed allegations against Wiejata of inappropriate touching of a teen girl and sexual advances toward young women, as well as an affair with a married woman.

Wiejata was defrocked in 2002, six years after his ordination.

[From the Philadelphia Inquirer](#) [1]:

In August 2000, Lynn told the grand jury, he received an anonymous call from a woman, who said she knew of Wiejata history because she had an affair with him. She said that she came home and discovered Wiejata there fondling and kissing her 13-year-old daughter.

In his testimony before the grand jury, Lynn struggled to explain to the prosecutor why he did not try to discover the child's identity and why he did not consider calling the police. Although his phone memo notes had the name of a person named "Pat" on the pad, Lynn insisted that he did not know if this was the name of the anonymous caller.

Lynn said he did not contact the West Grove parish to see if the name matched with anyone who attended the Assumption church. Nor did he call police, telling the grand jury prosecutor that "I wasn't thinking in terms of a crime." Lynn also told the grand jury that he had doubts about the caller's credibility because she admitted to an affair with Wiejata. "I thought she might be vindictive," he said.

The report said Lynn ultimately ordered Wiejata to meet with him in August 2000, where the priest admitted to his sexual misconduct with the teen girl.

Lynn faces charges of conspiracy and child endangerment for his role in an alleged cover-up.

On Monday, jurors heard grand jury testimony from Lynn's co-defendant, the Rev. James J. Brennan, who is accused of attempted rape of a 14-year-old boy in 1996.

[CNN reported](#) [2] that in his 2008 testimony, "Brennan repeatedly denied having any physical contact with the 14-year-old, in what may be the closest jurors get to hearing directly from the priest other than having him on the witness stand."

"No, nothing happened physically between us -- nothing," Brennan testified, according to CNN.

During the same grand jury testimony, Brennan admitted he was "just devastated" when he learned of the accusations against him. The [Inquirer said the testimony 'wasn't a smoking gun' for the priest](#) [3], since it showed him repeatedly contradicting the testimony of his accuser.

The paper reported that Brennan acknowledged sleeping in the same, king-sized bed as the boy, but said both remain clothed and slept on opposite sides. The transcript of the grand jury testimony revealed Brennan saying "it was the boy, not he, who asked about penis sizes and erection. He repeatedly denied any physical contact and said the teen never objected," the Inquirer reported from the courtroom.

Both Lynn and Brennan have pleaded not guilty to the charges against them.

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[3]

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