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Philly abuse trial: Closing statements expected Thursday

Brian Roewe | May. 30, 2012 NCR Today

With the defense resting its case Tuesday, closing arguments in the first trial of a church official for the cover-up of sex abuse were scheduled to begin Thursday.

Msgr. William J. Lynn is charged with two counts of child endangerment and one count of conspiracy for his role in an alleged cover-up of priest sex abuse in the Philadelphia archdiocese. Lynn served as secretary of clergy from 1992-2004 under former archbishop Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua.

The Philadelphia Inquirer reported Wednesday morning [1] that prosecutors and defense lawyers met Wednesday with Common Pleas Court Judge M. Teresa Sarmina in a closed-door session to discuss the orders she would give jurors.

Over the final three days of testimony, Lynn faced an intense line of questioning from the prosecution.

According to the Inquirer, on Tuesday Lynn restated his previous assertion that he did what he could to help victims [2]:

> "I did much more than had been done before I got there," Lynn said, later adding: "I have many victims that told me I helped them."
>
> After the former Archdiocese of Philadelphia clergy secretary left the witness stand, the landmark trial moved briskly toward a conclusion.
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> Lawyers for Lynn and his codefendant, the Rev. James J. Brennan, called their final witnesses - friends, relatives, parishioners, priests, and nuns who praised the defendants as law-abiding citizens.
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> Common Pleas Court Judge M. Teresa Sarmina told jurors to return Thursday for closing arguments. Deliberations could begin by the end of the week.
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> Nearly 60 witnesses have testified during the 11-week trial.

Unseen in the trial, however, was videotaped testimony from Becvilaqua, who died in February. Also never called to the stand were Bishops Edward Cullen and Joseph Cistone, two of Becvilaqua?s aides alleged to have knowledge of an order from the archbishop to shred a list of priests suspected of abuse compiled that Lynn in 1994.

Fr. James J. Brennan, Lynn?s codefendant in the case for charges of sexual assault of a 14-year-old boy, chose not to testify.

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[1] http://www.philly.com/philly/news/breaking/20120530_Judge__lawyers_meet_on_Philadelphia_clergy_sex_abuse_case
[2] http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20120530_Defense_rests_in_clergy_abuse_trial.html