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Jury finds Lynn guilty of child endangerment

Brian Roewe | Jun. 22, 2012 NCR Today

After 13 days of deliberation, the jury in the landmark Philadelphia abuse trial has found Msgr. William J. Lynn guilty on one charge of child endangerment, acquitting him on a second endangerment charge and on one count of conspiracy.

The jury declared itself hung on both charges against Fr. James J. Brennan, who had been accused of attempted sexual assault of a 14-year-old boy in 1996. Prosecutors could choose to retry their case against him.

Lynn faced charges of child endangerment and conspiracy for his role in an alleged cover-up of priest sex abuse during his tenure as secretary of clergy for the Philadelphia archdiocese from 1992 to 2004.

Earlier in the week, the jury informed Common Pleas Court Judge M. Teresa Sarmina that it had reached a unanimous decision on only one count, and was hung jury on the remaining four against Lynn and Brennan.

Reports from inside the courtroom said that Sarmina urged the jury ? through what?s known as a ?Spencer charge? ? to continue deliberating, offering to allow them to rehear testimony if necessary.

After an off-day Thursday for a juror to attend to a family matter, the jury reconvened this morning, informing Sarmina they had reached a verdict in the early afternoon.

Barbara Dorris, victims outreach director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, called the day?s decision ?long overdue.?

?This day?and the relief, vindication and healing it gives clergy sex abuse victims?is long overdue. The guilty verdict sends a strong and clear message that shielding and enabling predator priests is a heinous crime that threatens families, communities and children, and must be punished as such,? she said in a statement released minutes after the verdict was announced.

?It is also the criminal justice system's "shot across the bow," sending a clear signal to all institutions: ?Protect kids, oust predators or go to jail,? Dorris said.

Check back at *NCR* later today as we will have more coverage and reaction to the landmark trial?s verdict.

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