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Philly abuse trial hears testimony about priest caught with porn

Brian Roewe | Apr. 10, 2012 NCR Today

In the Philadelphia sex abuse trial, the testimony this morning picked up where it ended Monday, exploring the career of former priest Fr. Edward M. DePaoli.

Msgr. William J. Lynn and the Rev. James J. Brennan both stand trial for their roles in an alleged conspiracy of covering up cases of priest sex abuse within the Philadelphia archdiocese. Lynn, the former secretary of clergy in the archdiocese from 1992-2004, is the first church official charged for his role in a cover-up of priest sex abuse.

According to a report from the Philadelphia Inquirer [1], the prosecution continued Tuesday to document the career of DePaoli. Defrocked in 2005, he pleaded guilty in 1985 to a child pornography charge and served a year?s probation while participating in mandatory mental health treatment.

DePaoli had been serving as a morals and ethics teacher at Bishop McDevitt High School in a Philadelphia suburb before his indictment.

The Inquirer story says that prosecutors presented a 1992 correspondence between DePaoli and Lynn, after DePaoli was once again caught with child pornography. The two discussed options that included possible retirement, as well as a reassignment to St. John the Baptist Church in Manayunk, Pa., though Lynn noted the other priests there didn?t want DePaoli to return.

Testimony from Monday showed that DePaoli ultimately ended up at St. Gabriel Catholic Church in 1995, according to multiple reports. While there, he was again caught with pornography, this time by a nun who received an unmarked package for him at her residency.

Sr. Joan Scary told the jury she had suspicions of DePaoli, and was threatened with removal from her position as director of education at St. Gabriel if she continued questioning DePaoli's past. Eventually, she was fired in 1996 after anonymously mailing one of the magazines addressed to DePaoli to then-archbishop of Philadelphia Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, the Associated Press reported [2].

The prosecution has brought forth numerous witnesses in the trial?s first three weeks in an attempt to present a pattern in the archdiocese of protecting priests rather than possible abuse victims. Others have told of abusive experiences with priests, including one witness who has accused Brennan of attempting to rape him in 1996 [3].

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

For more coverage of the Philadelphia sex abuse trial:

- In Philadelphia, a church at the crossroads [4] (April 9, 2012)
- Prosecutors seek to prove archdiocesan conspiracy [5] (April 9, 2012)

- Archdiocesan official accused of covering up abuse begins trial [6] (Feb. 27, 2012)

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