News



Archbishop Philip Wilson of Adelaide, Australia, arrives at the Newcastle Local Court April 9. (CNS/EPA/Darren Pateman)



by James Dearie

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

July 3, 2018

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Archbishop Philip Wilson of Adelaide, Australia, was sentenced to 12 months home detention for failing to report child abuse, Australia Broadcasting Corporation reported July 3.

"I am of the opinion the sentence should not be suspended. It does not support the terms of general deterrence," Magistrate Robert Stone said at the hearing. "On that basis, the only available remaining option is full-time imprisonment or home detention."

"I am of the opinion the sentence should not be suspended. It does not support the terms of general deterrence," Magistrate Robert Stone said at the hearing. "On that basis, the only available remaining option is full-time imprisonment or home detention."

Wilson will be assessed for home detention until the next hearing Aug. 14. He will become eligible for parole after six months.

Wilson was found guilty of failing to report child sexual abuse in Newcastle Local Court May 22. In court, Wilson claimed he does not recall a 1976 conversation with a then-15-year-old victim of Fr. James Fletcher in which the victim had detailed abuse allegations.

When issuing the decision in May, Stone said he was "satisfied" that the victim had made a report to Wilson, who "knew he was hearing a credible allegation of abuse," but "wanted to protect the church and its reputation."

Wilson did not resign after the conviction, but released a statement the next day that said, "It is appropriate that, in the light of some of his Honour’s findings, I stand aside from my duties as Archbishop."

Pope Francis appointed Port Pirie Bishop Greg O'Kelly to serve as apostolic administrator to the Adelaide Archdiocese.

Advertisement

"The arrangements made by Pope Francis for my care of the Archdiocese as Apostolic Administrator remain in place," O'Kelly said in a statement after the sentencing July 3.

"The Catholic bishops of Australia acknowledge that the effects of sexual abuse can last a lifetime, but we hope that today's custodial sentence brings some sense of peace and healing to those abused by deceased priest James Fletcher," the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference said in its own statement.

"We will continue to work with all those in the Church and beyond who are seeking to put in place strong and consistent standards of safeguarding throughout Australia, including how we respond to allegations of sexual abuse."

[James Dearie is an NCR Bertelsen intern. Contact him at jdearie@ncronline.org.]