News



Archbishop Philip Wilson of Adelaide, Australia, arrives Aug. 14 at Newcastle Local Court. The Australian court has approved house arrest of Archbishop Wilson, who had been found guilty by an Australian court of failing to inform police about child sexual abuse allegations. (CNS/AAP/Reuters/Darren Pateman)

by Catholic News Service

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Adelaide, Australia — August 14, 2018

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An Australian judge approved home detention for Archbishop Philip Wilson, the retired archbishop of Adelaide who was found guilty of failing to report child sexual abuse allegations in the 1970s.

The archbishop's lawyer said Aug. 14 that the archbishop will appeal his conviction but would begin serving his sentence immediately. He was sentenced July 3 to one year's detention, but with the possibility of parole after six months.

The Newcastle Magistrates Court ruled that he could serve the sentence at a relative's house; Australian media reported that it would be the home of his sister. He will be required to wear a location monitor.

When Wilson was convicted in May, he stepped aside from his duties in the Adelaide Archdiocese while remaining the archbishop. In late July, however, he offered his resignation to Pope Francis, explaining in a statement that "there is just too much pain and distress being caused by my maintaining the office of archbishop of Adelaide, especially to the victims of Father [James] Fletcher."

Francis accepted the resignation July 30. Earlier, the pope had named Bishop Gregory O'Kelly of Port Pirie apostolic administrator of the archdiocese.

"The arrangements made by Pope Francis for the care of the archdiocese by the apostolic administrator" remain in place "while the search for a new archbishop continues," said a statement released by the archdiocese Aug. 14.

"Bishop O'Kelly said he was keeping Archbishop Wilson in his prayers as he formally commences this stage in his life, while also remembering the victims and survivors of abuse in the church," the archdiocesan statement said.

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A Newcastle court found that, in 1976, Wilson had been told by a 15-year-old boy that he had been indecently assaulted by a priest, but that Wilson chose not to go to the authorities despite believing the allegations were true. Fletcher, the abusive priest, was convicted in 2004 of nine counts of child sexual abuse and died in 2016

in prison.

Wilson, who had led the Archdiocese of Adelaide since 2001, is the highest-ranking church official to be convicted of covering up abuse charges. He recently was diagnosed with early stages of Alzheimer's disease, and throughout the magistrate's hearing he testified that he had no memory of the conversation with the 15-year-old.