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Philly abuse trial: Lynn takes the stand

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NCR Today

This morning, Msgr. William J. Lynn took the stand for the second day in his landmark abuse trial in Philadelphia.

From the Philadelphia Inquirer:

During hours of tense testimony in a Common Pleas courtroom, Lynn tried to counter charges that he spent a dozen years burying sex-abuse claims and shuffling accused priests around the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

He repeatedly told jurors that his bosses, notably Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua, directed the church's response to child-sex abuse allegations, and he denied knowingly putting children in harm's way.

"I thought I was helping people," Lynn said. "I thought I was helping priests, and in those circumstances, I thought I was helping victims, as much as I could."

Lynn, 61, is accused of child endangerment for his role in recommending assignments to priests accused of past abuse. He is the first U.S. church official to stand trial for his role in the cover-up of abuse.

During questioning by his defense lawyers, Lynn testified that he had compiled a list of active archdiocesan priests accused of sexual misconduct, but had no knowledge that it had been stored in a safe.

The former Philadelphia archdiocese secretary of clergy also said he had no knowledge of orders from his superior -- former Philadelphia archbishop Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua -- that the list be shredded,

saying he only delivered it to him, and never saw it again.

The prosecution's cross-examination, which continues today, peppered Lynn with questions, the Inquirer reported, challenging his record of protecting children and his decision not to reach out to possible victims.

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