

Top church official indicted in Philly abuse probe

by [Daniel Burke](#)

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(RNS) Advocates for victims of clergy sexual abuse are hailing the indictment of a senior Roman Catholic official in the U.S. on charges of endangering the welfare of a child for failing to remove abusive priests from ministry.

The accusations against Monsignor William Lynn, former vicar for clergy in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, represent the first time a U.S. prosecutor has brought abuse charges against a member of the Catholic hierarchy since the church's clergy sex scandal exploded in 2002.

"This indictment will send shivers up the spines of hundreds of chancery officials across the country," said David Clohessy, national director of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests.

Three other Catholic priests and a school teacher were accused last Thursday (Feb. 10) of raping two boys after a Philadelphia grand jury issued a scathing, 124-page report.

Lynn was vicar for clergy in Philadelphia from 1992-2004. "The rapist priests we accuse were well known to the Secretary of Clergy, but he cloaked their conduct and put them in place to do it again," the grand jury said.

Lynn denied the accusations through his attorney. If convicted, he faces a maximum of 14 years in prison. His attorney, Tom Bergstrom, told The Associated Press: "We certainly don't concede for a moment that he knew he was putting children at risk."

Also last week, the vicar for clergy in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles resigned after the archdiocese acknowledged a priest who had admitted to sexually abusing a teenage girl during the 1960s was given a parish assignment in 2009.

The priest, the Rev. Martin P. O'Loughlen, had also been appointed to the archdiocese's sexual abuse advisory board. Former Los Angeles vicar for clergy Monsignor Michael Meyers resigned on Friday.