

CARDINAL PELL'S APPEAL IS JUSTIFIED

Australian Cardinal George Pell was convicted in December of molesting two choirboys in the 1990s, but it was not until February 25 that the details were disclosed; charges against Pell that would require a second trial over other allegations were dropped. Pell's lawyers are appealing the conviction.

There are many holes in the story that led to Pell's conviction. To begin with, one of the boys who was alleged to have registered a complaint overdosed on drugs and died. More important, the boy's mother said her son admitted, on two occasions, that Pell never abused him. This does not matter to the boy's father: He says he is going to sue the Church or Pell once the appeal is resolved. Let him. And let him sue his wife for libeling their son.

Regarding the other boy, the sole complainant, he said that Pell made him perform oral sex on him after saying Mass at Melbourne's St. Patrick's Cathedral two decades ago. Donohue has already written extensively about this, so we will not repeat it here.

However, we will offer a good summary of what this one boy alleges to have happened. The quoted parts are taken from a well-researched news story published by Rod McGuirk of the Associated Press; he writes from Melbourne.

"The jury convicted Pell of abusing two boys whom he had caught swigging sacramental wine in a rear room of Melbourne's St. Patrick's Cathedral in late 1996, as hundreds of worshippers were streaming out of Sunday services.

"[Robert] Richter, his lawyer, had told the jury that only a 'mad man' would take the risk of abusing boys in such a public place. He said it was 'laughable' that Pell would have been

able to expose his penis and force the victim to take it in his mouth, given the cumbersome robes he was wearing.

“The jury was handed the actual cumbersome robes Pell wore as archbishop. Over his regular clothes, Pell would wear a full-length white robe called an alb that was tied around his waist with a rope-like cincture. Over that, he would drape a 3-meter (10-foot) band of cloth called a stole around his neck. The outermost garment was the long poncho-like chasuble.

“More than 20 witnesses, including clerics, choristers and altar servers, testified during the trial. None recalled ever seeing the complainant and the other victim break from a procession of choristers, altar servers and clerics to go to the back room.

“The complainant testified that he and his friend had run from the procession and back into the cathedral through a side door to, as [Mark] Gibson, the prosecutor, said, ‘have some fun.’

“Monsignor Charles Portelli, who was the cathedral’s master of ceremonies in the 1990s, testified that he was always with Pell after Mass to help him disrobe in the sacristy.” He maintains the charges are totally false.

In other words, one of the alleged victims says he was never a victim, and the other can find no one—not one among over 20 who were with him that day—to support his story.

Keep Cardinal George Pell in your prayers. It is not easy for any priest, never mind a high-ranking one, to get a fair trial today. The hysteria and the animus that exist makes for a toxic environment.