

MORE JUSTICE NEEDED IN PHILLY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams:

On June 29, Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams, on trial for 29 counts of bribery, extortion and fraud, abruptly pleaded guilty to bribery. He was immediately remanded to jail by a judge who pronounced himself “appalled” by the evidence he had heard in this trial.

Yet Williams’ conduct in this sordid tale of corruption is only a part of his long record of abusing his office. His targeting of Catholic clergy—particularly Msgr. William Lynn—stands out as among the most egregious of the injustices he has perpetrated as District Attorney. *Indeed, it is the most unethical assault ever conducted by a D.A. against a high-ranking member of the Catholic clergy in American history.*

In 2010, Williams, the newly elected District Attorney—unable to nail a bishop with allegations related to sexual abuse of minors—set his sights on Lynn, a top archdiocesan official. In 2012, he succeeded in having Lynn convicted on grounds that were shaky from the beginning.

Subsequently, the courts have overturned that conviction *three times*—in December 2013, December 2015, and August 2016. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that the trial court had “abused its discretion” in allowing in evidence unrelated to this case. Yet each time, Williams insisted on retrying Msgr. Lynn, clearly abusing *his* prosecutorial discretion. As Williams goes to jail, Msgr. Lynn awaits yet another trial—even though he has now served virtually all of the minimum three years of his sentence.

That Williams has a personal vendetta against the Church is further evidenced by his admission, as part of his guilty

plea, that he stole \$13,000 in income from his mother that was supposed to go to a Catholic nursing home in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. In other words, he was ripping off the archdiocese while continuing an unjust prosecution of one of its top officials.

Seth Williams faces the punishment he deserves for having “betrayed and sold his office,” in the words of Judge Paul Diamond. True justice, however, demands that the Philadelphia D.A.’s office now put an end, once and for all, to its *unjust* persecution of Msgr. Lynn.