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## Card. Pell acquitted of all charges. Released from prison after 400 days

Australian Cardinal George Pell, sentenced to 6 years in prison on charges of paedophilia - the decision was upheld in Victoria state's Court of Appeal last August - has been acquitted of all charges today by the High Court, the highest court in Australia, and is in the process of being released. Pell was found guilty of sexual abuse in 1996 in the sacristy of Melbourne Cathedral, when he served as archbishop of the diocese, on two 13-year-old choristers caught drinking Mass wine. The court ruling was announced this morning in an almost empty courtroom in Brisbane due to Covid-19 restrictions. The news will be posted on Twitter at 10am (local time). **“I have consistently maintained my innocence** while suffering from a serious injustice. This has been remedied today with the High Court's unanimous decision.” These are the opening remarks of a long statement released by Cardinal George Pell, published shortly after the decision was delivered. “I look forward to reading the judgment and reasons for the decision in detail”, the Cardinal wrote. “I hold no ill will toward my accuser, I do not want my acquittal to add to the hurt and bitterness so many feel; there is certainly hurt and bitterness enough. my trial was not a referendum on the Catholic Church; nor a referendum on how Church authorities in Australia dealt with the crime of paedophilia in the Church.”

**“The point was whether I had committed these awful crimes, and I did not.**

The only basis for long term healing is truth and the only basis for justice is truth, because justice means truth for all”, His Eminence writes. In the statement, Cardinal Pell thanks all those who prayed for him and wrote him thousands of letters of support. “I want to thank in particular my family for their love and support and what they had to go through.” The Cardinal's words of gratitude extend to his small team of advisors, friends and especially to the entire legal team “for their unwavering resolve to see justice prevail, to throw light on manufactured obscurity and to reveal the truth.”



[In a statement, the archbishop recognizes that today's ruling “will be welcomed by many, including those who have believed in the Cardinal's innocence throughout this lengthy process. We also recognise that the High Court's decision will be devastating for others. Many have suffered greatly through the process, which has now reached its conclusion.” Speaking on behalf of all Australian bishops, Msgr. Coleridge assured the bishops' unwavering commitment to ensure justice and protection of minors, reiterating that “any person with allegations of sexual abuse by Church personnel should go to the police.”](#)



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