

BEHIND “60 MINUTES” SHOW ON BISHOP MALONE

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Buffalo Bishop Richard J. Malone was the subject of a recent edition of “60 Minutes.” But there was more to this story than what the CBS show aired. None of the parties to this story came to the table with their hands clean.

Bishop Malone has admitted making bad decisions, but he maintains that his overall record is defensible. The “60 Minutes” segment detailed some of those bad decisions. For example, giving Father Arthur Smith, a known homosexual predator, a clean slate, and then assigning him to the post of cruise ship chaplain was indefensible.

Some priests have come forward with complaints against Bishop Malone. But one of them, Father Bob Zilliox, who was critical on TV, tempered his remarks subsequently. He should have been more careful when he granted the interview. This is especially true when dealing with shows like “60 Minutes.”

The “60 Minutes” episode focused heavily on the claims made by Bishop Malone’s former executive assistant, Siobhan O’Connor; she worked for him for three years. The 35-year-old quit her job on August 10, but not before anonymously turning over to WKBW-TV copies of files she obtained. The ABC-affiliate ran a three-part series on her and the church documents, and that, in turn, led CBS to interview O’Connor.

Did O’Connor ever apprise Bishop Malone of her concerns? Yes, she spoke to him in March. He said he was handling these matters. Did she do anything further, in the five months before she quit? She wrote an opinion column in the *Buffalo News* in May, stating her sympathy for the victims of abuse, but she never said a word about any wrongdoing by the bishop

or anyone else in the diocese. "60 Minutes" did not ask her to explain herself.

O'Connor has moved quickly from the inquiring assistant to the courageous activist. According to CBS News, she wants a "cleansing" of the Church, saying that "full financial bankruptcy" is preferable to what she witnessed. That is quite a statement given her limited experience working with priests and bishops.

Interestingly, on November 13, when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops assembled in Baltimore for their fall meeting, she spoke at a rally organized by anti-Church zealots.

It appears O'Connor is fast learning the ropes of how to "cleanse" the Church. Most of those who work for the Catholic Church have never heard of Mitchell Garabedian, but somehow O'Connor has. He is a Boston attorney with a long-standing hatred of the Catholic Church—he does not hide his animus. He was at her side at a press conference on October 30 in Buffalo, saying he was prepared to defend her, if necessary.

Garabedian and I locked horns in 2011 when a Boston priest, Father Charles Murphy, died. As I said at the time, Murphy died "a broken man." The man who broke him was Garabedian.

In 2006, Garabedian sued Father Murphy for inappropriately touching a minor 25 years earlier; on the eve of the trial, the woman dropped her suit. In 2010, he sued the priest again, this time for allegedly fondling a man 40 years earlier. The accuser was deep in debt and his credibility was questioned even by his own family!

When Father Murphy died, Brian McGrory of the *Boston Globe* called what Garabedian did to him "a disgrace." I called Garabedian at the time to see if he had any regrets about pressing charges against Father Murphy, and he immediately went into a rage, screaming like a madman. I asked him to calm

down, but he continued to go ballistic, making sweeping condemnations of all priests. This is the kind of lawyer that the former executive assistant managed to find.

The media involved come across even worse. On October 30, Bishop Malone released an email that O'Connor sent to employees at the diocese the day before she quit. In it, she commended the bishop for his great work, saying "it has been a privilege to work by your side as you shepherd our diocese." She specifically singled out his holiness, as well as his "Sheen-like eloquence" (a reference to one of the Church's towering American figures, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen).

O'Connor closed her letter thanking Bishop Malone for "all the opportunities I've had and lessons I've learned while working for you and with you."

Remember, she had already leaked damaging information to the press about Malone. Did she lie about the bishop in her praiseworthy remarks, or is she simply a duplicitous activist?

When Bishop Malone released O'Connor's letter, the Associated Press, the most powerful wire service in the nation, took the occasion to make him the bad guy. In a short news story, it said, "Bishop Blasts Whistleblower Who Copied Sex Misconduct Files." Malone did nothing of the kind: He made public her letter, noting how contradictory it was. AP intentionally misled readers, trying to exculpate O'Connor.

CBS, and "60 Minutes" in particular, also deserve to be criticized. It has had its share of accused molesters working in the most important jobs in the company—Charlie Rose, Jeff Fager, and Les Moonves—yet it never has time to turn its "60 Minutes" cameras on them. In August, Brian Steinberg, writing for *Variety*, said, "The allegations are worthy of an investigation by '60 Minutes'—if only they weren't about the news division that produces the show."

Dozens of women have accused Rose, the CBS anchor and pundit,

of sexual misconduct—he allegedly likes to expose himself—dating back to 1986. According to a *Washington Post* blog story, “Rumors about Rose’s behavior have circulated for years.”

One of Rose’s assistants, Kyle Godfrey-Ryan, “recalled at least a dozen instances where Rose walked nude in front of her while she worked in one of his New York City homes.” He also made sexually charged phone calls to the then-21-year-old late at night or in the early morning.

Did she report it? Yes, she told Yvette Vega, Rose’s long-time executive producer. “She [Vega] would just shrug and just say, ‘That’s just Charlie being Charlie.’” To show what a class act Rose was, when he found out that Godfrey-Ryan told a mutual friend about his behavior, he fired her.

Before he became chairman of CBS News in 2011, Fager was the executive producer of “60 Minutes.” He then took over the reins at “60 Minutes” again in 2015. He has been accused by six women of sexual misconduct, especially when he was drunk. Fager is also accused of covering up for his sexually compromised workplace buddies who reported to him.

Moonves was CBS chief executive for 20 years; it ended in September when he stepped down amidst serious sexual misconduct allegations. He has also been accused of promoting several men known for their sexual misconduct. This may sound familiar: CBS quietly paid settlements to the women who complained.

Just recently, it was reported that more than 250 women who work at CBS have spoken to investigators. Some, however, refuse to talk because they don’t trust the company.

Not only will CBS not authorize “60 Minutes” to disclose the depth of its own sexual abuse scandal, it has the nerve to claim that all priests are engaged in a cover-up. The “60 Minutes” producer of the O’Connor segment, Guy Campanile, told

CBS News that “the church is made of people, but the ones in charge are priests [evidently they are not people] and priests are so good at keeping secrets.”

Would that include New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan, who outed Theodore McCarrick? It wasn't the media which did that. Moreover, just recently Dolan made public some accusations against one of his auxiliary bishops, stemming from alleged offenses that occurred decades ago. Does CBS—or any media outlet in the nation—have a program like the New York archdiocese that outs suspected abusers? Why not?

NBC is just as phony. Its Buffalo affiliate, WGRZ-TV, has unveiled a petition asking the public to pressure the Buffalo diocese to publicly release the full list of accused priests. If it were serious about the issue of sexual abuse—and not “getting the Church”—it would begin by pressing NBC to make public a list of all those employees who have been accused of sexual misconduct.

After all, Matt Lauer is hardly the only NBC employee to have been accused of being a predator. Last year, *Variety* wrote the following. “Lauer’s conduct was not a secret among other employees at ‘Today,’ numerous sources say. At least one of the anchors would gossip about stories she had heard, spreading them among the staff. ‘Management sucks there,’ says a former reporter....They protected the s*** out of Matt Lauer.”

Addie Zinone, who worked for Lauer, and media critic Ken Auletta, confirm that many others knew something was wrong. Joe Scarborough, co-host of MSNBC’s “Morning Joe,” had this to say about Lauer. “The whole theme was that he does the show and then he has sex with people, with employees. So this was whispered behind closed doors? No, it was shouted from the mountaintops and everybody laughed about it.” Including, evidently, Scarborough, who never said a public word about it.

Jessica Steyers, who worked at NBC Sports, has spoken out

about the constant harassment by coworkers, and the nonchalant reaction by executives. Karin Roland, a feminist who has examined NBC, says “this happens as the result of a culture and a pattern of protecting stars and making them untouchable.”

It is striking to read the accounts of those in the media who try desperately to exonerate their colleagues. Take Mr. “60 Minutes” himself, Jeff Fager. He said that “it is wrong that our culture can be falsely defined by a few people with an axe to grind who are using an important movement as a weapon to get even, and not the hundreds of women and men that have thrived, both personally and professionally.”

He is probably right about that. There are accusers who have an axe to grind. We know that some of the women at the Fox News Network who brought charges against men in senior positions never said a word about the offenses when they allegedly happened—they opened their mouths when it was opportunistic for them to do so.

The same could be said about some of those who wait decades to bring charges against priests—usually when there is big money available—but no one in the media is going to look into that issue. Even bringing it up is considered unfair. Most important, it is a lot more than “hundreds of women and men that have thrived” in the Catholic Church—there are literally millions of young boys and girls who have done so—but no one in New York or Hollywood has the guts to highlight the successes.

Most of the sexual abuse in the Catholic Church occurred in the last century, primarily between 1965 and 1985. But when it comes to sexual abuse in Hollywood and in the media, it is as bad today as it ever was. Lucky for them there is little interest in outing the dregs among them. They’d rather focus on accused priests from a half-century ago.