

BIG MEDIA SILENT ON BISHOP RHOADES

Every time there is a story about a priest accused of wrongdoing, it makes its way into the newspaper. If the accused is a bishop, it merits coverage by all the big media: print, digital, radio, and television. But when a bishop gets cleared of wrongdoing, they go mute.

On September 13, Dauphin County District Attorney Francis Chardo said that following a full investigation, it was determined that “there is no basis to conclude that Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades ever engaged in a criminal or otherwise improper relationship with a person whom we will refer to as J.T.” Harrisburg, Pennsylvania is the seat of Dauphin County.

Bishop Rhoades, who heads the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, and who was previously stationed in Harrisburg, was charged with molesting a teenager decades ago in Puerto Rico. But the stories told by J.T. (an ex-con) never added up. More important, his own mother said that Bishop Rhoades’ account was accurate.

Bishop Rhoades has had his reputation smeared, and the media are letting the false accusation stand. The Associated Press was alone among the big media to run a story on his exoneration. The story was covered by newspapers in Indiana and Pennsylvania, but it received no mention in the evening news on any broadcast or cable channel. The *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and all the other prominent newspapers, said nothing about it.

Sadly, we have become accustomed to this kind of biased journalism. When a bishop is accused, the story is given high profile, but when a bishop is exculpated, the story is buried. Small wonder why the public holds the media in low regard.

Catholics have more reason than every other segment of society to hold them in contempt.