

CARDINAL DINARDO DESERVES BETTER

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on media treatment of Cardinal Daniel DiNardo:

There have been hundreds of media stories on Cardinal Daniel DiNardo in the month of November, and many were critical. He is the Archbishop of Galveston-Houston and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The treatment was often unfair, and leading the way was a CBS story that ran a week ago.

First of all, why DiNardo? The short answer—that he is the head of the USCCB and the bishops assembled in Baltimore two weeks ago for their biannual meeting—is incomplete. Why did the media go after Cardinal Donald Wuerl when the Pennsylvania grand jury report was issued in August (he previously served as Bishop of Pittsburgh)?

Wuerl was targeted because he was the most senior clergyman cited in the report. It did not matter that he had one of the best records of any bishop in the nation handling cases of sexual abuse—he was the biggest fish that the Church's foes could fry. That was certainly true of Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro; he was aided and abetted by the media. As I told my staff at the time, the next target will be another senior prelate.

CBS began its story by reporting on Rev. Manuel La Rosa-Lopez. He was arrested during the summer for allegedly abusing two minors. Here is what the viewers were not told.

The alleged abuse of a teen male took place at the end of the last century. The alleged victim never said a word about it until August 2018. As soon as this case was reported to the archdiocese, officials contacted the Children's Protective

Services. The next day an arrest warrant for the priest was issued, and he voluntarily turned himself in that evening.

Why didn't CBS tell its viewers this? By the way, DiNardo did not become Archbishop of Galveston-Houston until 2006.

The other alleged victim was a woman who claimed the priest kissed and fondled her when she was a teenager. She wrote about the priest in her diary, confessing that she was in a romantic relationship with him. When did this allegedly happen? In 2000. Curiously, she came forth with her story only days after the alleged first victim came forth with his old story.

Why didn't CBS tell its viewers this?

The CBS news story focused mostly on two other priests, Rev. John Keller and Rev. Terence Brinkman.

CBS said that Keller molested a 16-year-old male in 1998; it was reported to the archdiocese four years later. Keller denied that the fondling ever happened. An archdiocesan lay review board investigated this case and could not substantiate the accusation.

The CBS story said that Brinkman allegedly sodomized a 12-year-old male in the 1970s. The priest denied this happened. The lay review board investigated this case and could not substantiate the accusation.

These two cases—one from more than 20 years ago and the other from over 30 years ago—were the only accusations ever made against either priest during their 40 years of service to the archdiocese. Too bad CBS didn't tell this to its viewers.

It's also too bad that CBS didn't report that the archdiocese responded to more than 30 questions submitted by the network, yet, according to Church officials, "almost all of our responses [were] completely ignored by the CBS team."

Cardinal DiNardo deserves better. But in this sick environment, where priests are considered guilty before proven innocent—and high-ranking members of the clergy are seen as meriting even fewer rights—anything is possible. The public is being set up to believe the worst about the Catholic Church. That is the real story behind these accounts.