

R.I. MEDIA TARGET PRIESTS



Bill Donohue comments on the way priests are treated by some media outlets in Rhode Island:

In December 2012, the Diocese of Providence learned of accusations against Father Barry Meehan; he was accused of sexually molesting adolescents. The police were immediately contacted. In January 2013, he was suspended and removed from ministry; the diocese is awaiting a decision from the Vatican to permanently remove him. Last Friday, he was arrested and indicted. Had he been a clergy member of another religion, the media would have recorded the arrest and moved on. But Meehan is a priest, and that matters greatly to the *Providence Journal* and NBC 10.

The *Providence Journal* got so excited that it published a timeline of all sexual abuse cases involving Rhode Island priests since 1972. NBC 10 got so jacked up that it summoned its I-Team: it scoured public records looking for more dirt (it actually began its investigation last year).

We could find no evidence that the *Providence Journal* has ever provided its readers with a timeline of sexual abuse cases involving ministers, rabbis, or public school teachers. Nor do we know of an NBC 10 I-Team report on this subject. Yet they don't lack for material.

Just this month, Rev. Jeffrey Nichols was sentenced to five years in prison for sexually abusing a student, one for each year he molested her. But there was no timeline and no I-Team report by either the newspaper or the TV channel. That's because Nichols is a minister. Indeed, he committed his crimes while serving as principal at a Baptist school.

And how did the *Providence Journal* respond to Minister Nichols? It printed a small AP story; NBC 10 simply noted the same AP story on its website, providing no TV coverage, much less an I-Team investigation.

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