

“NIGHTLINE” GUILTY OF INJUSTICE AND HYPOCRISY

On the April 16 edition of ABC’s “Nightline,” there was a segment on the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church that focused on Chicago Archbishop Francis Cardinal George. The segment took him to task for the way he handled a case dealing with Rev. Daniel McCormack. We blasted “Nightline” for its failure to deliver the whole story and ABC for its glaring hypocrisy.

In the segment, “Nightline” focused on the decision of Cardinal George to allow Rev. McCormack back into the ministry after the police investigated abuse allegations and found him innocent. This is what happens every day in America—those found not guilty resume their jobs. Cardinal George’s decision was the logical consequence of innocent until proven guilty. The fact that McCormack was later guilty of groping a male doesn’t change what’s at stake. Moreover, “Nightline” failed to tell the whole story.

In the initial case, the police and Cook County prosecutors did not find any credible allegations against Father McCormack. Interestingly, the Department of Children and Family Services concluded that McCormack may have been guilty but never notified the archdiocese or the school where the priest was working that it was conducting an investigation. To top it off, the agency didn’t even bother to tell them after it suspected he might be guilty.

What was really mind-blowing was ABC’s hypocrisy. In 2003, Steve Bartelstein, the New York anchor at WABC-TV, was accused of sexually harassing and stalking a male writer and producer at the station. WABC launched an investigation and concluded there was no evidence to remove Bartelstein and allowed him to keep his job; he was fired in 2007 for another matter. And

last year in Miami, ABC reporter Jeff Weinsier at WPLG was arrested for carrying a loaded gun on school property while investigating school violence. He kept his job, too. If ABC had subjected them to their Cardinal George standard, they would have been canned immediately. Does ABC have any shame?

We called on ABC to make an apology to Cardinal George and all priests.