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Killing Michael Rose



By Dale Vree

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The Register Steps Into the Ring

The Features Editor of the *National Catholic Register*, one **David Pearson**, says he's "hopping mad" at the *New Oxford Review* and Michael S. Rose (*Register*, June 30-July 6). He's decided to jump into the ring and let us have it.

First let's review the chronology. In the February 2002 NOR, Rose had a guest column called "MTV: A Recruiting Ground for Priests?," wherein he stated:

"In January 1999 the Diocese of Providence, one of the more liberal East Coast dioceses, initiated a major media blitz to 'target' potential candidates to the priesthood.... The Diocese has been running television commercials on the MTV network, a pop/rock music video station that doesn't exactly promote Catholic morals, thought, or teaching. The Diocese's Vocations Director explained that 'the best place to reach potential candidates would be on MTV and the Comedy Channel'.... Thoughtful Catholics wonder why a Catholic diocese would advertise to an audience that sits on the couch plugged into video music from bands such as Marilyn Manson, Godsmack, Limp Bizkit, and Porno for Pyros. This is the ultimate in 'cold call' marketing techniques, and even makes faithful Catholics wonder if the Diocese is trying to attract un-churched men [into the priesthood]. Jason Bodoin, who told me that he 'wouldn't be caught dead watching MTV,' wonders

why the Diocese would advertise on MTV instead of Mother Angelica's EWTN. Bodoin, who considers himself an orthodox Catholic, applied to the priestly formation program in the Diocese of Providence in 1999.... After being interviewed by a woman he describes as a 'radical ex-nun,' he was declared 'rigid,' 'hostile,' and 'reactionary' for holding to Church teaching on essential issues of the Faith.... Soon thereafter he received a rejection notice."

As was explained in the column, Jason Bodoin is a pseudonym, so as "to protect his identity as he seeks another diocese to accept him into seminary."

The essence of the above was reprinted in Rose's book *Goodbye, Good Men* (Regnery edition, pp. 237-38; Aquinas edition, pp. 338-39). In the book, Rose identified the Vocations Director as **Fr. Marcel L. Taillon**, and added another quotation from Fr. Taillon explaining the campaign as well as a quotation from the diocesan newspaper justifying the MTV commercials. Also, the pseudonym of the rejected candidate was changed from Jason Bodoin to **Patrick Simmons**. In the Introduction to his book, Rose explained why some of the people he interviewed chose pseudonyms: "Some of my sources have asked to remain anonymous for obvious reasons — priests, because they fear retribution from their bishops or brother priests; and current seminarians, because they believe their frankness would jeopardize their chances of being recommended for ordination.... Some former seminarians and those who have not yet been accepted into a formation program also chose to remain nameless to maximize their chances of being accepted into a diocese or religious order."

Then, in the May NOR in response to Rose's column, there appeared a letter from **Bradford Lefoley**, saying: "Let me introduce you to the priest behind the [MTV] media folly: He is the chaplain at the high school I attend, and allow me to give you some background on what he (being very influential at my school and deeply involved in Peer Ministry) has allowed...." Lefoley didn't identify Fr. Taillon by name, but he listed seven problematic items, adding, "These are just a few of many injustices on which this priest has remained silent or in which he has participated."

So why is the *Register's* Pearson so enraged by all this? Because Fr. Taillon is a "personal friend" of Pearson's. And Pearson describes Fr. Taillon in glowing terms: "steadfast," "dedicated," "very faithful," "holy," and a "great priest." Not only that, but Fr. Taillon is virtually on par with the eucharistic **Christ**: "I've seen him consecrate and adore and reverence and preach the Eucharist so zealously and so often that I can no longer call one to mind without thinking of the other."

Fr. Taillon may be holy, but holiness does not guarantee good judgment. One can certainly question the wisdom of trying to recruit holy priests from the MTV milieu. The Christ of the Eucharist earlier walked this earth, saying, "**Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces**" (Matthew 7:6). In this context, that's

probably too harsh, so let's go with a modern paraphrase of that verse which is most apt: "Don't be flip with the sacred.... Don't reduce holy mysteries to slogans. In trying to be relevant, you're only being cute and inviting sacrilege" (*THE MESSAGE* version). Rose's book is about certain kinds of men who have entered our seminaries and become priests, and who, as we all know, have turned against their vow of celibacy and torn the Church's reputation to pieces.

Well, Pearson comes out swinging, announcing that "I'm going to set the record straight on Father Taillon." Pearson is very agitated with the NOR for publishing Lefoley's letter. Pearson nonetheless says nothing about six of the seven particulars Lefoley listed. But he takes a swing at one of them. Here it is, in Lefoley's words: "Then there is the torture orthodox Catholic students are forced to endure in Lifeteen 'Liturgies,' in which the Blessed Sacrament is crushed into the floor and the electric guitars shatter what should be a sacred silence. During these 'Liturgies,' the priest in question has composed little ditties to the Blessed Mother out of such songs as 'Mambo #5.'" Pearson says this "allegation" is "despicable," but does not refute Lefoley's account and does not even say it's false. It's just a wild swing that completely misses the target.

Then instead of trying to land a blow, Pearson just talks trash: Lefoley is "hysterical" and his letter is "rubbish" and a "tirade" and a "wacky rant," even insinuating that Lefoley is "unbalanced mentally or emotionally."

Pearson lunges at the NOR, saying "Teen-agers [such as Lefoley] who rail against authority figures in their life should be at the top of the list of those whose accusations should never run unchecked." Thus, asserts Pearson, the NOR lacks "journalistic excellence." As a matter of fact, the Editor of the NOR did call Lefoley (on March 5, 2002) to get background on him and check out his story before printing the letter, something that is rarely done with letters to the editor. Pearson also lunges at Rose, saying that in the book Rose "shot his own credibility squarely in the foot." Pearson makes this grandiose judgment on the basis of reading only two pages of the book, those on his personal friend, Fr. Taillon. Pearson admits he's read nothing else in the book and makes bold to say he "will never" do so. Curiously, Pearson's lengthy piece is basically presented as a commentary on Rose's book. What kind of "journalistic excellence" is it that evaluates a book based on only two pages about a personal friend?

With regard to both Rose's column in the NOR and Rose's book, Pearson huffs and puffs at Rose: "Interview multiple sources. Only quote people willing to give their names and speak on the record." Pearson's piece as it appears on the Internet (ncregister.com) ends with this: "For sound journalism on the seminary crisis, see John Burger's 'What's Going on in the U.S.? Seminarians Have Surprising Answers to the Pope's Question' from the April 21-27 *National Catholic Register*."

OK, we read that article, and here's what we found:

- "One former vocations director, who asked not to be identified, felt that..."
- "One vocations director who asked not to be identified said that..."
- "Some observers said that many seminaries continue to..."

So much for "only quoting people willing to give their names"! And we found this:

The Burger article interviewed Fr. John Canary, rector of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Ill. (known simply as Mundelein), giving his take on the situation at Mundelein. Fr. Canary's verdict: All is well. (Not surprisingly, this Canary with a vested interest is no canary.) Did the *Register* cite "multiple" opinions about Mundelein? No. Just Canary's. But the *Register* could easily have done so. Burger made reference to *Goodbye, Good Men* in his article — and gave no indication that he found anything wrong with the book — but did not mention anything about Mundelein from Rose's book. Why not? Suffice it to say that Canary's Mundelein is, according to Rose's book, one of the most flagrantly homosexual-friendly seminaries in the country. And two of those who testify gave their actual names. See *Goodbye, Good Men* (Regnery edition, pp. 55, 59-63, 71-78); Aquinas edition, pp. 91, 95-100, 112-22).

So how is it that the *Register* demands certain things of journalists that it itself doesn't practice? With all this heavy breathing and flailing, Pearson only trips himself up. Not a pretty sight.

But there's more: The July 7-13 *Register* carries a letter from Rose defending his book. But the Editor of the *Register* jumps into the ring with a reply, suggesting that Rose has done "significant damage" to Fr. Tallon's "reputation" because Rose based his report on a nameless source ("it's bad journalism to base an investigative report on the testimony of an anonymous source") and that in "impugning" Fr. Tallon's reputation Rose may have committed a mortal sin ("for Catholics, the impugning of people's reputations — particularly those of priests and bishops — constitutes grave matter"). However, the information on Fr. Tallon's MTV commercials was not based on an anonymous source: it was based on Fr. Tallon's own words from an article in the diocesan paper of Providence. If Fr. Tallon's reputation has been damaged, it was a self-inflicted wound. And then the July 14-20 *Register* carries a letter defending Rose, and the Editor again jumps in with a reply, denouncing Rose again and pointing to John Burger's article in the *Register* as an example of sound journalism. As we saw, that article relied on anonymous sources, one of which even impugned the "doctrinal" integrity of "bishops" — is hypocrisy, we wonder, "grave matter"?

On top of this, the *Register* has rejected advertising for *Goodbye, Good Men* in its pages. Something funny is going on here.

When it comes to internal Church battles — the fight for the soul of the Church — the *Register* is usually content to sit in the crowd munching

peanuts. But not with Michael Rose. Fine. Actually, we're glad to see the *Register* jump into the ring — even if on the wrong side. Advice to the *Register* for next time: If you ever expect to lay a glove on anyone, you must get in shape, get a good trainer, and practice with a sparring partner. Above all, get your head in the game.

Until then...

Dale Vree, Editor of the *New Oxford Review*

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Editor's Note: Below is an article from CNS from October 8th. Though it is written by the liberal CNS, could it be that the Vatican will crack down? As much as faithful Catholics would hope, by the time it comes down the pike it could be so watered down with so many "exceptions" that it will have no teeth, carry no clout. If only it would. Anyway, we provide the story below as a tie-in to Vree's article above.

While you're reading it, you might ask, as we do, why has psychological screening become so necessary in the Conciliar Church? Before Vatican II there were no psychologists evaluating seminarians, only dedicated Pastors, Vocations Directors, Rectors and Spiritual Directors. Of course that was when vocations were sensed at the grade school and high school level, where prospective priests came from nourishing homes and parishes and all could attest to the candidate's sincerity. The minor seminary also served as a weeding out process as well as a harvesting ground for solid Catholic leadership in lay roles. This was often the case for many candidates, including this editor, realized he had been called, but not chosen by God for the sacerdotal office. Minor seminaries served as solid fields of orthodoxy in preparing young Catholic men to preserve the Truths and Traditions of Holy Mother Church for future generations.

The Revolution realized this was an obstacle to detroying the Church and so, the minor seminaries had to go and the major ones reformed and relaxed. Once the minor seminaries were eliminated, anyone could enter a major seminary if he had a college degree, was willing to go through the Vatican II-oriented psychobabble and conform to what was 'best' for the community in sacrificing his own individual spirituality. And we wonder today, forty years later what went wrong? To quote Dale, "Puh-lease!"

Vatican prepares draft directives against admitting gays as priests

By **John Thavis**, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Vatican has prepared a draft document containing directives against the admission of homosexuals to the priesthood, informed Vatican sources said.

The document takes the position that since the church considers the homosexual orientation as "objectively disordered" such people should not be admitted to the seminary or ordained, the sources said Oct. 8.

The question of excluding homosexuals from the priesthood had been quietly considered at the Vatican for years without finding a consensus. It received new and more urgent attention in the wake of U.S. clerical sex abuse cases, many of which involved homosexual acts.

The Congregation for Catholic Education prepared the draft document in collaboration with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and other Vatican agencies, the sources said. The draft was being circulated for comment in October among a wide range of consultants, including theologians, canon lawyers and other experts, they said.

At the same time, the education congregation has finished work on a separate document that examines how psychological sciences can be used in discerning vocations -- another hotly debated issue at the Vatican in recent years. Its publication was expected before the end of the year.

The document on psychological testing will take the form of guidelines or orientations for bishops to use in their seminaries, the sources said.

However, the draft document on homosexuals will take the form of directives or norms, to be used throughout the universal church, they said.

"The document's position (on admission of homosexuals to the priesthood) is negative, based in part on what the 'Catechism of the Catholic Church' says in its revised edition, that the homosexual orientation is 'objectively disordered,'" said one source.

"Therefore, independent of any judgment on the homosexual person, a person of this orientation should not be admitted to the seminary and, if it is discovered later, should not be ordained," he said.

Last year Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of the Vatican's doctrinal congregation, said in a Catholic News Service interview, "Persons with a homosexual inclination should not be admitted to the seminary."

In September a U.S. Vatican official at the Congregation for Bishops, Father Andrew R. Baker, articulated arguments against acceptance of homosexuals as priesthood candidates in an article published by the Catholic magazine *America*.

Father Baker said that if a man has a predominant or exclusive same-sex

attraction that in itself is grounds for bishops to have "a prudent doubt regarding the candidate's suitability" for receiving the sacrament of orders. Church law says if such a doubt exists the person should not be ordained.

Father Baker said homosexuality was a "disordered attraction" that can "never" image God and never contribute to the good of the person or society. He cited potential difficulties for homosexual seminarians or priests; they included problems dealing with their tendencies in a largely heterosexual society, questions about adherence to church teachings, and possible temptations presented in male environments like the seminary or the priesthood.

Father Baker said his article reflected his personal opinion and not the official position of the Vatican. While some Vatican officials have expressed similar views, others are concerned that such an attempt to "weed out" candidates to the priesthood would rely too heavily on interpretive evaluations of an individual's sexuality.

The officials who spoke to Catholic News Service said there was no definitive time frame for the document on homosexuality and admission to the priesthood.

"Only the Holy Spirit knows that," said one official.

Because of the sensitivity of the issues involved, Pope John Paul II and other top Vatican officials will be carefully reviewing it before publication, the sources said.

"There could be changes, especially because this is an interdepartmental (interdepartmental) work. There are some passages that must be written with very careful attention," said one official.

The wording in the catechism that describes the homosexual inclination as "objectively disordered" was added when the definitive Latin text of the catechism was released in 1997. Earlier editions of the catechism said homosexual acts were intrinsically disordered and said homosexual tendencies represented a trial for most people.

The document on psychological testing, titled "Orientations for the Use of Psychological Methods in the Admission and Formation of Candidates to the Priesthood," was discussed at the education congregation's plenary assembly in February.

At that time, the pope told the congregation's members that guidelines on the use of psychology to evaluate seminary candidates could help identify real vocations and ensure that such decisions are made with "a wider sense of awareness."

The pope said the support from psychological sciences should be used in



a balanced way as part of the overall vocational path, integrated in a candidate's formation program. He said recourse to psychological methods can only be understood in the context of the "climate of faith" that marks the vocational decision.

Psychological methods "do not eliminate every type of difficulty and tension, but favor a wider sense of awareness and a freer exercise of liberty" when it comes to the challenging choice of a priestly vocation, he said.

Many Vatican officials have privately voiced apprehension about over-reliance on psychological methods to screen candidates to the priesthood. The document is said to address those concerns by stressing a balanced approach that recognizes the potential contributions of psychology, but within a limited sphere of competence.

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