



FRIDAY-SATURDAY-SUNDAY  
October 11-13, 2002  
volume 13, no. 114

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# Killing Michael Rose



*By Dale Vree*

This article is reprinted with permission of Dale Vree, editor of the [New Oxford Review](#) from a September article.

## Part One of Two

**It seems that more and more conservative - AKA neo-Catholic - publications are coming to blows with those Traditional publications which are striving to preserve the Sacred Deposit of the Faith without compromise. The more volleys such publications as *Our Sunday Visitor*, *The National Catholic Register*, and *The Wanderer* launch at those who will not compromise or be fooled by the modernists' rhetoric such as *New Oxford Review*, *The Remnant*, *Catholic Family News*, *The Latin Mass* and many others, to name just a few, the more the former end up with powder burns for their cannons are canonically lacking and they are flailing around, their ammo dampened by compromise and contradiction. Such is the situation Dale Vree, editor of the *New***

## ***Oxford Review, focuses on in defending the 'scurrilous' attacks which have attempted to demean Michael Rose and his book *Goodbye, Good Men.****

It's hard for Catholics today to keep the Faith. The culture both mocks Catholicism and tries to entice Catholics into skepticism and licentiousness (often successfully). Worse still, the culture has invaded the Church, such that good Catholics must endure skeptical and licentious priests, liturgical abuse, New Age homilies, spiritual malpractice, watered-down catechesis, secularized "Catholic" schools, etc. While it's important to focus on all these grave problems, the question must be asked: What is their source?

The source, dear friends, is the seminary — not every one, but many of them. That's why we regard **Michael S. Rose's** new book on seminaries, *Goodbye, Good Men* (Regnery), as one of the most important Catholic books published in the past three or four decades. The book concretely and vividly describes how certain vocations directors and seminaries screen out manly orthodox men or, if such men manage to get in under the radar, persecute them or even force them out. Meanwhile, homosexuals and dissenters are welcomed and proceed to ordination.

The book's sources come not only from the public record but, crucially, from interviews with 150 people, of whom 125 are or were in seminaries, representing 50 dioceses and 22 major seminaries. That's a good data base, and they all tell essentially the same story. Were the book based on interviews with a handful of people, one might conclude that these are just tall tales from a gaggle of malcontents. But with so many folks concurring, the book rings true.

The book was researched and written in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Great Sex Scandals of 2002. Rose was on top of a situation that caught most of the Catholic world by surprise. Given the history of out-in-the-open and flagrant homosexuality at certain seminaries discussed by Rose, this book goes a long way in explaining how we could have so many degenerates and perverts in the priesthood.

Here, then, is a book that liberal Catholics wouldn't like. But how would centrist Catholics handle such a potent book? One case in point is offered by *Our Sunday Visitor* (OSV), another by the *National Catholic Register*. OSV's review (May 12) does allow that Rose "is doing important and courageous work" and that the book is worth reading, but calls the book "incendiary" and urges readers of the book to "bring a healthy dose of skepticism to Rose's claims."

OSV says the book is a "wholesale condemnation of an entire system." That's flatly untrue. Rose names eight seminaries — such as Mount Saint



Mary's in Emmitsburg and Holy Apostles in Connecticut — that are not undermining orthodoxy or orthopraxy.

OSV claims that Rose's thesis is that there is a "churchwide conspiracy against the orthodox and straight." Per the above, Rose explicitly says the discrimination is not churchwide; moreover, Rose does not use the word "conspiracy."

OSV asserts that to prove his case, "Rose would have to get data from many dioceses, seminaries and religious orders about how many candidates have applied, how many of those have been turned away and what the reasons for dismissal were. He might even have had to personally visit some of the seminaries he critiques and do on-site reporting...."

But the notion that the officials in charge would have co-operated with an investigative journalist with a reputation for orthodoxy such as Rose — giving the real reasons men were screened out or dismissed — is preposterous. After all, there was a systematic on-site investigation of seminaries ordered by Pope John Paul II in 1981 (the Holy See knew back then that something was rotten in American seminaries). Unfortunately, the task was delegated to certain unreliable U.S. bishops and the result was a whitewash. Given all the sex scandals that have surfaced in recent years, and especially this year, who could possibly deny that it was a whitewash?

Indeed, if it wasn't a whitewash, why did the summit meeting of all U.S. cardinals with the Pope in Rome on April 23-24 call for another Vatican investigation of U.S. seminaries? Here are the words of the call: "a new and serious Apostolic Visitation of seminaries and other institutes of formation must be made without delay, with particular emphasis on the need for fidelity to the Church's teaching, especially in the area of morality, and the need for a deeper study of the criteria of suitability of candidates to the priesthood." Note the word serious!

As for the line about "the criteria of suitability of candidates to the priesthood," **John L. Allen Jr.**, the *National Catholic Reporter's* ace Rome Correspondent, explained its meaning (May 3): "Observers took this point as an oblique way of calling for a much tougher policy concerning the admission of homosexuals to seminary study. [Bishop Wilton] Gregory [President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops] lent weight to this perception during an April 23 press briefing, acknowledging the existence of a 'homosexual atmosphere and dynamic' in some seminaries.... Gregory called for 'an ongoing struggle to be sure that the Catholic priesthood is not dominated by homosexual men.' Conservative Catholic commentators... have argued that tolerance of a 'homosexual subculture' in the priesthood was partly to blame [for the priestly sex scandals].... The summit endorsed that view." In other words, the summit essentially affirmed what Rose reported in his *Goodbye, Good Men!*

OSV's review is titled "Good Men Tells Only Part of the Story," and the

review concludes by saying that Rose's book is "not, by any means, the whole story." Again, Rose never claimed to be telling the "whole story" about our entire seminary system. But OSV is also asserting that the part of the story Rose does tell is not the "whole story" either, for, says OSV, Rose is "relying on the testimony of only the dissatisfied," just telling "their side of their stories."

But we already know the "official" side of the story: "Everything is fine." Indeed, in many cases Rose did cite the official side of the story, and the response was denial, denial, denial. Now consider: If many bishops — successors of the Apostles — would cover up for pedophile and homosexual priests, and if in certain cases getting the pertinent documents required a court order, does anyone seriously believe that vocations directors and seminary officials would come clean? Puh-leez! Gads, not even an investigation ordered by the Pope could get the real story out of them.

But OSV's review was rather mild compared to what would follow in OSV. In the news section of the June 23 OSV there's an article titled "Read All About It: Publishers Looking for Ways to Cash In on a Contemporary Catholic Crisis." The crisis referred to is that of the priestly sex scandals. The article cites books coming out by "Church-basher Garry Wills" and "ex-priest Eugene Kennedy" — and the new Regnery edition of *Goodbye, Good Men* by "Michael Rose." A little guilt by association? Of Rose's book, OSV says it was "scantily researched." Now, Rose spent two and one half years researching and writing the book and employed two research assistants. "Scantily researched"?

As for those greedy publishers trying to cash in on the scandals, that OSV article, dated June 23, failed to mention that *Our Sunday Visitor* itself was bringing out a book on the scandals on June 28. Of course, *Our Sunday Visitor* wasn't trying to "cash in." Oh, no — no, no!

Curiously, *Our Sunday Visitor's* book, written by **Fr. Benedict Groeschel**, actually vouches for the authenticity of Rose's book. Says Fr. Groeschel: "I know for a fact that much of what Rose says is true, and that good, orthodox, chaste seminarians were discriminated against in some seminaries."

But there's more. In the news section of the July 14 OSV there's an article on Rose's book titled, "Goodbye! Scurrilous Journalist?" with the subtitle, "Blooming Bad," presumably an allusion to Rose's name. The essence of the article is this: "Rose bases his findings exclusively on interviews with men who say they were drummed out of seminaries for being 'too orthodox.' He never checked their stories, didn't do any original research, didn't even call up the seminaries to hear their side of the story.... Now the rector of the American College at Louvain, Belgium, which took a blistering attack from Rose, has published a formal response on the seminary's website ([www.acl.be](http://www.acl.be)). **Father Kevin Codd** said a former seminarian's charges that he was molested by the former rector and another seminarian were 'scurrilous' and had been proven by outside investigators to be 'wholly

without merit or substantiation.' He said Rose never contacted the seminary to verify or seek a response to the charges...."

Rose then wrote a letter to the Editor of OSV to defend himself. Rose was told by the Editor that the letter, at 950 words, could not be printed because it was too long, but that Rose could re-write the letter with a 250 word limit. How strange! OSV has a special section in its letters section called "A Continuing Conversation" for lengthy letters. We checked through some recent issues of OSV and found, in the June 2 issue, a letter of 744 words. OSV could easily have printed Rose's original letter, minus the less crucial last three paragraphs, and the word count would have been a hundred or so less than 744.

Since OSV doesn't want to allow Rose to defend himself fully, we are printing his original letter in its entirety. Here it is:

Dear Editor,

Your unsigned article on my book *Goodbye, Good Men* ("Goodbye! Scurrilous Journalist?" July 14) presents a number of gross factual errors. In fact, there is so little that is accurate in the article that I presume the anonymous author has not even read the book.

First, it is reported that I base my findings "exclusively on interviews with men who say they were drummed out of seminaries for being 'too orthodox.'" That is demonstrably false. Although I did conduct 150 personal interviews, I did not base my findings exclusively on these. Many of the interviewees had substantial documented evidence from which I quoted. Textbooks, class notes, syllabi, and tapes of class presentations used in seminary courses were also reviewed and presented as evidence in the book. Comparative statistics were presented, and a vast amount of relevant information from previously published sources was culled together under one cover as additional documentary evidence. Furthermore, not only did I interview many former and current seminarians, about one-third of the interviewees are now ordained priests. They are not men that I found to have axes to grind, but concerned priests who sincerely care about the well-being of the seminaries. Other interviewees served at one time as seminary professors or vocations directors.

Second, it is reported that I never checked their stories. This is also false. And I allegedly "didn't do any original research." Again, false — in fact I hired two research assistants in the course of writing *Goodbye, Good Men*. I am then faulted for not giving the seminaries their side of the story. Yet, in many cases I quoted from written documentation provided by the seminaries in question. Yes, they were denials. The denials from rectors and bishops have been the same everywhere over past decades — couched in the same self-interest that grounds the excuses about shuffling around sex abusers. The response is

invariably: "All is well." The problem with the accounts in *Goodbye, Good Men* is that typically no "crime" was committed, so that the untruthfulness of the empowered will not be judged in a neutral venue — e.g., the jury box. The sex abuse acts are not so easily spun away.

Third, your article misquotes Father Kevin Codd, the rector of Louvain's American College Seminary in his formal response to my book. OSV claims that Fr. Codd "said a former seminarian's charges that he was molested by the former rector and another seminarian were 'scurrilous.'" In fact, Fr. Codd did not write that at all. The seminarian in question never charged that he was molested by anyone. If the author of the article would have read the relevant section in the book he would have known that.

In *Goodbye, Good Men* I report that the seminarian charged that he was "harassed" repeatedly by a fellow seminarian, and that his complaints were not taken seriously by seminary staff. OSV quotes that the seminarian's charges were proved by "outside investigators to be 'wholly without merit or substantiation.'" However, Fr. Codd wrote that the allegations were investigated by **Bishop Edward Braxton**, President of the American College. First, Bishop Braxton is not an "outside investigator," and second, if Bishop Braxton ever did investigate the matter he never bothered to contact the seminarian who made the allegations, even after the seminarian made an extraordinary effort to make himself available.

Fourth, I am also accused of not giving the rector's side of the story. Again, if the author of the article read the section in question he would see that I did indeed give voice to the rector, who was quoted directly from written documents that are duly footnoted.

According to their official website, the American College at Louvain (in Belgium) had seven theology students and four pre-theology students during the 2001-02 academic year. One has to wonder why a seminary operated directly by the U.S. bishops has only a handful of students. Fr. Codd calls the American College "healthy." How can any seminary be said to be healthy when only 11 seminarians are being sent there out of the entire United States? Eleven students does not even justify paying the heating bill at the seminary. Contrast these numbers to the only other overseas seminary specifically serving Americans: The North American College, known as one of the most conservative seminaries in Rome, presently has a student body of a healthy 175.

The OSV article also inaccurately summarizes my conclusions. Oddly enough, the best summary of my conclusions might be expressed by **Archbishop Elden Curtiss**, who wrote in the October 5, 1995, issue of OSV that the priest shortage is "artificial and contrived." Furthermore, he continued, "It seems to me that the vocations 'crisis' is precipitated by people who want to change the Church's agenda, by

people who do not support orthodox candidates loyal to the magisterial teachings of the Pope and bishops, and by people who actually discourage viable candidates from seeking priesthood and vowed religious life as the Church defines these ministries." That is the crux of *Goodbye, Good Men*.

It is also worth noting that **Father Benedict Groeschel** in his new book *From Scandal to Hope*, published by *Our Sunday Visitor*, favorably recommends *Goodbye, Good Men* as contributing to a better understanding of the roots of the present sex abuse scandals. It even appears that Fr. Groeschel corroborates the factual basis of my book: "I know for a fact that much of what Rose says is true, and that good, orthodox, chaste seminarians were discriminated against in some seminaries" (p. 59).

Michael S. Rose  
Cincinnati, Ohio

The big question in all this (and in the next New Oxford Note) is: Why are moderate Catholic papers such as *Our Sunday Visitor* and the *National Catholic Register* so desperate to discredit Michael Rose's book?

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