

Debunking the DaVinci Drivel

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By Ann Aubrey Hanson

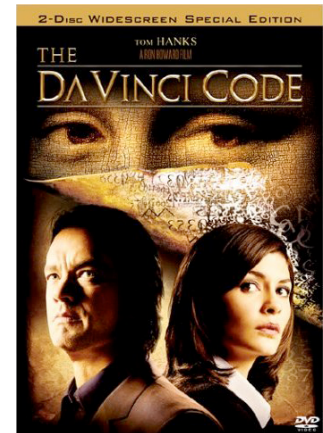
ENCINITAS, Calif. -- On May 19, 2006, "The DaVinci Code" movie will have a worldwide premiere. The film's trailer urges viewers to "seek the truth."

One can only hope.

Still, knowing that one in three adult Americans have read the novel by Dan Brown, and given the hype and Hollywood packaging of the movie, Catholics should prepare themselves for a renewed interest in the purported "truth" behind the "biggest cover-up in human history," as the promos put it.

"We are in the middle of a war," intones one character in the movie trailer, "one that has been going on forever, to protect a secret so powerful that if revealed, it would devastate the very foundation of mankind."

But is there anything real behind this breathless prose?



DaVinci 'Facts'

In Brown's tale, "researchers" discover that Christianity is one gigantic and audacious lie, that all of Western civilization has been founded on the biggest fraud in history. The truth as uncovered by these researchers is that Jesus Christ was never resurrected and never ascended into heaven.

In fact, he was just the dutiful husband of Mary Magdalene and a teacher who sought to unleash the "sacred feminine."

The *DaVinci Code* claims that the Catholic Church suppressed these truths about Jesus.

According to Brown, the true Holy Grail was not the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper and which later caught drops of his blood from the cross, but was rather Mary Magdalene, who allegedly bore the "blood of Christ" in the form of a child, who went on to form the "first race" of kings in France (ironically, the first Merovingian king, Clovis, was said to have converted to Roman Catholicism in 496 A.D.). According to the book, the Gospels were made up at the Council of Nicea when the sinister "Vatican" decided to toss aside the "sacred feminine" and declare Jesus a god.

(Never mind that the Vatican didn't exist at the time and that the dogma that Christ was Son of God dated to his actual lifetime.)

The book also includes false and slanderous claims about the Catholic organization Opus Dei, nonsense about the significance of "missing cups" in Leonardo's "The Last Supper" (look at the picture, they're all there), and laughable purported secret anagrams and clues hidden by Leonardo in his art.

Anyone taking the time to research any of these purportedly groundbreaking materials will quickly find that the "facts" disappear in a puff of smoke.

One suspects that Brown had no idea that the book would succeed as it has, and now finds himself forced to support his outlandish ideas at "truth" rather than the fiction he fashioned from whole cloth. His anti-Christian and decidedly anti-Catholic bias shows clearly.

In short, the book aims at nothing less than the rejection of the worship of Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Son of God and the creation of a new myth that legitimizes a return to the pagan worship of gods and goddesses.

Time for New Evangelization

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But mass media "has a gigantic power to persuade and deceive," according to Tom Allen, president and editor-in-chief of *CatholicExchange.com*.

His company has published, in a joint effort with Ascension Press, *The DaVinci Deception*, a book and program designed to help people understand the mendacity of *The DaVinci Code*.

"It's important to fight this movie for two main reasons," Allen told *The Southern Cross*, the Catholic newspaper of San Diego.

"These are the days of the New Evangelization, in the aftermath of Pope John Paul's pontificate and many of us in the lay office of the Church and also within the institutional Church have taken Pope John Paul's urgings very seriously, to stand up and defend Christ and the Church against that which would do her harm and also to spread the faith using the modern tools of mass communication."

Second, said Allen, "This is truly an insidious movie, based on an insidious book. It demands a response because it attacks the very foundations of Christianity in alleging that the Church was built upon a lie."

It is, said Allen, "a real risk to the faith of millions."

"So, we're responding both to Pope John Paul II and, ironically, to the movie producers, whose tagline for the film is 'Seek the Truth.' That's what we're urging people to do, and we're giving them the tools to discover the truth."

Seeking the Truth

Even the U.S. Catholic bishops have joined a growing coalition of Catholic groups in providing free teaching resources that counter the dishonesty promoted by the book and movie.

A new Web site (*jesusdecoded.com*) sponsored by the U.S. bishops' Catholic Communication Campaign (CCC) provides accurate information about the life of Jesus, and the origins of Christianity and Catholic teaching.

The site contains information about the nature of Jesus, his relationship with Mary Magdalene, the first four ecumenical councils, contemporaneous accounts of Jesus' life, the role of women in the Church throughout history, and the "Last Supper" paintings by Leonardo DaVinci and other artists of his era.

The site also contains information on the CCC's "Jesus Decoded" TV special, which includes interviews with international scholars versed in art, history, and Scripture who "help separate Catholic truth from popular fiction." It has been offered to NBC affiliates, but each affiliate's management makes the decision whether to air it.

The "Jesus Decoded" TV special will be available by mid-April on DVD from USCCB Publishing for \$19.95. A companion booklet, "The Authentic Jesus," sells for \$2.50, and a box of 100 parish bulletin inserts on the same theme sells for \$12. Prices do not include shipping and handling. Orders may be placed by phone at: (800) 235-8722.

Another valuable resource site is *DaVinciOutreach.com*, a joint project of Catholic Exchange, Ascension Press, Catholic Outreach, the Catholic League and Human Life International. Here, users will find excellent downloadable materials to equip individuals and parish groups.

The site features discussion group guidelines and questions for both adults and youth groups, as well as "homily helps" for pastors, parish action plans and announcements for the discussion nights.

The DaVinci Outreach also offers *The DaVinci Deception*, a 130-page, easy-to-read book that uses a question-and-answer format to tackle the key questions raised by *The DaVinci Code*. To order *The DaVinci Deception*, call (800) 376-0520 or visit *DaVinciOutreach.com*.

The Southern Cross
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