

Pastor's Column

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"The Da Vinci Code"

Did I read the book? Yes. It was an extremely entertaining adventure story. I couldn't put the book down once I started to read it. I was very taken up with it. Brown's book is a great mystery story with a religious background, context, and some far-out hypotheses worth investigating. How could I not be entertained?

It is important to remember that the book is a bestseller, and it is on a bestseller list entitled: FICTION.

Do I plan to see the movie? Yes. Any movie directed by Ron Howard and starring Tom Hanks has got to be good! They both have a track record of reputable and well-done movies. They command attention and respect.

It is important to remember that the movie is an artistic expression of the novel. The novel is FICTION and, thus, the movie is FICTION.

We live in an age of information and communication. Indeed information is our society's mainstay. It is one of the most important commodities of the world's economy. Today there is no question that cannot be asked and no question that is unworthy of an answer. It is what makes the world go round. For better or for worse (and I think better), we are living in a world of ever-greater transparency. The questions will be asked, and they should be answered.

Rather than getting defensive about "The Da Vinci Code," and advocating boycotts and stamping our feet that people are desecrating our Traditions with misleading or false statements, I encourage us to view the book and the movie as a "teachable moment." Instead of advocating some self-righteous position that demands that questions shouldn't be asked, we should seize the moment calmly to hear the question and then to respond with the appropriate answer: "No, that is not what the Catholic Church believes...This is what our Teaching and Tradition proclaim... This is what we believe."

Many people say that if the book were about Jewish Traditions or Islamic Traditions it could not "get away with" the twisting of truth as understood by those Traditions. But because it is about Christian Tradition, and in many respects, about Catholic Tradition, we, instead, just "roll over and play dead." We should

respond defensively as Jews or Muslims might.

My response is that because Jews or Muslims may respond in that fashion does not mean we should. Maybe our Jewish and Moslem brothers and sisters who would choose to act defensively could learn from the way in which we respond. Let it be a "teachable moment."

The book and the movie are causing people around the world to make Jesus, the Church, Church History, and religion important topics of conversation—a "teachable moment."

There are even "pilgrimages/tours" being organized to take people to the various religious sites and shrines mentioned in the book. There are many tours available (one example—<http://davincicodetours.co.nz>). How many people would have spent thousands of dollars to venture to France specifically to see the Chapel of Saint Sulpice before the popularity of "The Da Vinci Code?" Again, a teachable moment!

Here are some web sites that can provide many answers and perspectives to your questions and concerns: www.americancatholic.org. When you arrive on the web site, click the pages entitled: "Was Mary Magdalene in love with Jesus? The Da Vinci Dialogue" and "The Da Vinci Code and the Catholic Church: What Catholics Believe About Jesus." Also navigate to www.jesusdecoded.com. This website is sponsored by the Catholic Communications Campaign.

There is a great deal of information available to you to help you answer and counter the claims raised by the fictional data in "The Da Vinci Code."

In the coming weeks, I would be glad to have a "Da Vinci Code" corner in the Bulletin. If you have a question arising from the book or movie, let me know. I will attempt to answer it to the best of my ability and pass it on to the Parish at large. The questions raised and the answers given will provide a "teachable moment" for all of us!

F. Mike