

✓ 5/06

Rev. Kevin Shanley, O.Carm.
8433 Bailey Rd., Darien, IL
(630) 969-4141 60561-5305

Life is Worth Giving

THE DAVINCI CODE IS INTERESTING STORY BUT UNRELIABLE HISTORY

Few books, especially novels, have remained on the best seller list longer than Dan Brown's "The DaVinci Code." It is well-written, face-paced, gripping, surprising, and filled with intelligent research and detail — but it is still very basically a work of fiction and not ~~really~~ reliable history. As an old Irish proverb reminds us: "All stories are true, and some of them actually happened.

The basic premise of this story is another well-told tale of the search for the Holy Grail, the cup that was used by Our Lord at the Last Supper on the original Holy Thursday when Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist which is celebrated by believing Christians for all time.

This ancient and holy search has been carried on in the Arthurian Tales by the Knights of the Round Table, in many other books and ~~stories~~ stories, and in various movies and other forms of the entertainment media. This in itself makes the tale a fascinating one even in the 21st Century.

Dan Brown, the author, is an intelligent and well-versed writer in this mode. He is also quite knowledgeable in some of the early Christian experiences around Christ's time.



Fr. Kevin Shanley, O. Carm.
8433 Bailey Rd
Darien IL 60561-5305

(DAVINCI CODE)/ 2

He is also well aware of the impact that Christianity had on the Roman Empire and especially ^(ON) Constantine the Great. Brown's research includes the history of the Knights Templars and their activities during the Crusades and afterwards, their Priory of Sion, along with information on the Louvre Museum in Paris, and artists such as Da Vinci and others. He even includes the "Opus Dei" (work of God), a conservative Catholic group, plus the Vatican and its intrigues.

These topics are a more than volatile mixture for any novel, and the author uses them well. However, a basic premise of the novel is that Jesus and Mary Magdalen were married and have still living descendants in France. This is where fantasy replaces factual history.

However, the alleged proof in the novel focuses on Da Vinci's famous painting "The Last Supper." The author purports to prove that Mary Magdalen is actually painted into the picture. Such a happening would then tend to make Jesus merely human and not the divine Son of God. Proof of the marriage, according to the novel, has been hidden away for 2,000 years, and the Catholic Church wants to destroy this "Holy Grail" of information so that the Faithful will continue to believe in Christ's divinity, and a male-dominated attitude will continue to exclude women from active participation in the Church.

-more-



Fr. Kevin Shanley, O. Carm.
8433 Bailey Rd
Darien IL 60561-5305

(DA VINCI CODE); 3

For many of the Christian Faithful, and others, this is a great non-leap of Faith that Christianity has been duped for over 2,000 years. Much too much to ask of believers! The novel, however, does have an appeal for history buffs, conspiracy seekers, and puzzle solvers — as long as they understand that the work is fiction.

The story opens with the murder of Jacques Sauniere, the elderly curator of the Louvre Museum in Paris. A baffling cipher found next to the corpse implicates Robert Langdon, a Harvard University symbolist who happens to be lecturing in Paris at the time. The French Police want to blame the murder on Langdon even though he had never met the victim. The cipher puzzle brings to the case Sophie Neveu, a talented French Police cryptologist. It turns out that the victim is actually her grandfather and he is a member of the Priory of Sion, a secret society whose members down through the ages have included Leonardo Da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, and Alessandro Botticelli.

Sophie Neveu believes in Langdon's innocence and joins him in solving the various ciphers and riddles which add greatly to the delight of the novel as readers tend to attempt to aid in the quest.

A daring escape from the Louvre brings the couple to a private Swiss Bank in Paris where they find another piece of the puzzle.

-more-



Fr. Kevin Shanley, O. Carm.
8433 Bailey Rd
Darien IL 60561-5305

(DA Vinci CODE)/ 4

Concealed in one of the bank's armoured cars, they escape once again from the French Police and drive to the estate of an eccentric English nobleman who turns out to be a member of the secret society guarding the Holy Grail. The trio stage yet another daring escape from the police via a Land Rover and a jet plane to land in England where the Holy Grail is rumored to be kept in hiding. A visit to the Templar Church and Westminster Abbey in the London area uncovers still more clues and riddles, along with a few more eliminations of people connected to the case.

The story concludes at Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland where Sophie Neveu finds a remnant of her long-lost family, and also the final solution to the various riddles surrounding the search for the Holy Grail. She also finds true love with Robert Langdon.

If a reader is able to overlook the fictional basis of the novel, i.e., the relationship of Jesus and Mary Magdalen, the story is worth reading. The Catholic Church, their hierarchy, and Opus Dei are presented in a negative way. But the novel attempts to break the mold of ordinary suspense novels, and is difficult to stop reading [✓]one the story begins to unfold. Just remember that it is a fictional novel, not an "authentic history book. (Fr. Kevin Shanley, O.Carm.)