



'Da Vinci Code' draws laughs from journalists

John Thavis

CANNES, France

Toward the end of the movie "The Da Vinci Code," the main character, Robert Langdon, tells his sleuthing partner, Sophie Neveu: "You are the last living descendant of Jesus Christ."

That line, meant to be the dramatic apex of the film, drew laughs from many of the approximately 900 journalists who viewed the film's first press screening May 16 at the Cannes Film Festival.

The derisive laughter, along with widely critical comments from reporters afterward, summed up the Cannes press reaction to the much-heralded launch of the movie. When the credits ran, silence and a few whistles drove home the response.

The movie sticks to most of the book's controversial religious elements, while softening some of the edges.

Directed by Ron Howard and starring Tom Hanks, it faithfully depicts the novel's story of intrepid American "symbolologist" Langdon, who follows a coded trail leading to a supposedly age-old secret: that Christ was not necessarily divine, that he was married to Mary Magdalen and that their descendants survive today.

The church is the bad guy in this conspiracy-theory version of Christianity, and is depicted as suppressing all evidence of Jesus' alleged marriage.

But one striking difference about the movie is that it lacks anything resembling the famous "fact" page that prefaced the novel, in which author Dan Brown claimed that "all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate."

The film doesn't make any claim to accuracy of any kind — artistic, historical, religious or biblical.

Brown's preface also made a point of saying the Priory of Sion, the novel's organizational keeper of the secret, was real — even though it was unmasked as a fraud

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Orlando nuns receive honorary doctorates from Rollins College

From left, Sisters Cathy Gorman, Gail Grimes, Teresa McElwee and Ann Kendrick, four nuns of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Apopka who have worked tirelessly to improve life for the poor and marginalized, smile after receiving honorary doctor of humane letters degrees from Rollins College in Winter Park. At right, Sister Kendrick, who gave the commencement address, receives applause.



TFC PHOTOS BY CAROL FERRAZZANO

'Masses to Avert Storms' ask for God's protection

Teresa Lantigua Peterson

ORLANDO

As a new hurricane season lurks around the corner, many in central Florida will stock up on water, plywood and batteries. But churches in the area are stocking up on prayers, as well as materials to survive the storms.

Several parishes will celebrate "Masses to Avert Storms" June 1, the first day of hurricane season, to ask for God's protection during the unpredictable season that lies ahead.

Bishop Thomas Wenski, for the second year, will also celebrate a Mass to avert the storms June 1, at 12:20 p.m. at St. James Cathedral, in Orlando.

In fact, this is the second year St. Brendan

Parish in Ormond Beach will celebrate a special Mass on the first day of hurricane season. After sustaining damage to its building and property during hurricanes Charley, Jeanne and Frances two years ago, parishioners turned to God for wisdom, understanding and a calm hurricane season.

"After dealing with three hurricanes in 2004 and after suffering damage throughout the parish, we decided that it would be best to turn this dreadful memory into an avenue to increase our faith," said Stan Zerkowski, director of liturgy at St. Brendan Parish.

The parish has a symbol of its strong faith, an icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa, which was blessed by Pope John Paul II and dedicated by then-Bishop Norbert M.

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Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina inspires 'Hurricane Helpers'

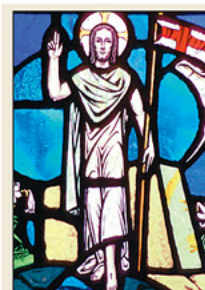
MELBOURNE

Father Eamon Tobin, pastor of Ascension Parish in Melbourne, never forgot the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath.

"I was amazed at the devastation, both in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast," Father Tobin said. "I had never seen anything like it."

More than any other storm in

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