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Houston Conference on The Da Vinci Code

450 gather for conference
setting the record straight on
The Da Vinci Code

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Heralded by television interviews, newspaper coverage, and a telephone bank of volunteers, some 450 Houstonians attended a May 6 conference to see and hear the other side of the story about *The Da Vinci Code*.

Presented by the Downtown Holy Cross Chapel and the St. Josemaria Institute, the two-part program was entitled "Da Vinci, the Catholic Church and Opus Dei." It featured a talk by Amy Welborn, author of *Decoding DaVinci: The Facts Behind the Fiction of the DaVinci Code* (Our Sunday Visitor, \$9.95), and the Houston premiere of *Passionately Loving the World: Ordinary Americans Living the Spirituality of St. Josemaria*, a film about people involved with Opus Dei, including Houston residents Wendy and Vince O'Bar.

Before the event, Elma Barrera of Houston's ABC's Ch. 13, reported that members of Opus Dei "are very excited to tell what Opus Dei is really about" and say that it "certainly is not what the book *The Da Vinci Code* says." In the same broadcast, Barrera interviewed wife and mother, Melanie Hebert, who said, "We know

there are a lot of misconceptions about Opus Dei. We are more concerned about the misconceptions about the person of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church that are in the book." Businessman Albert Chincuanco, organizer of the telephone bank, added: "The book at the end of the day is fiction. We want to clarify that Christ was not married, and orthodox Christian belief has withstood the test of time."

Welborn braved thunder storms and a fire at the airport to come to Houston to speak and answer questions. She said, "I was impressed by the youthfulness of the group and its international diversity."

Interviewed afterwards by WB Ch. 39 News, Welborn said that the problem with *The Da Vinci Code* is that the author "just doesn't tell the truth. He doesn't tell the whole story."

The O'Bar family featured in the film was on hand, helping 14 baby sitters - including a hired clown - care for and entertain around 60 children. They were interviewed by Ch. 39 reporter, Elizabeth Lee, who reported: "The O'Bars say that their mission is no secret. They say that they are living proof that *The Da Vinci Code* is pure fiction." Wendy O'Bar, with her husband and children at her side, explained: "Living and doing my work well, myself as a mother, him as a salesman, and helping my children to do what God wants them to do in this lifetime – that is what Opus Dei is really about."

The event's fresh and optimistic tone was well-received by the audience. Accordingly, more events like this are being planned in Houston and other Texas cities in cooperation with Catholic parishes that have asked Opus Dei to provide information and

speakers to help in the on-going process of decoding *The Da Vinci Code*.

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