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On the "Studi Cattolici" cartoon

A statement from Opus Dei's Rome Communications Office on the "Studi Cattolici" cartoon.

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"As could be expected, the cartoon published by the magazine Studi Cattolici has offended Muslims and drawn the attention of journalists and others. Making a joke about Dante putting Mohammed in hell is a serious error. It is one thing to appreciate Dante's Divine Comedy and a very different thing to joke

about this particular scene in the present climate and in a Catholic magazine.

Obviously this event comes in the context of the unfortunate publication of cartoons in Denmark, which was considered provocative (but, nonetheless, did not justify violent reactions). A debate ensued concerning the compatibility of freedom of expression with respect for persons' beliefs.

The cartoon's publication is further framed by the current debate in many countries regarding the false and unjust depiction of the Christian faith in *The Da Vinci Code*. For several months Catholics and other Christians have been asking the novel's publishers and the movie's producers to respect their beliefs. The issue at stake here is how to make compatible freedom of

expression, a free market and respect for religious beliefs.

As we participated in the discussions about *The Da Vinci Code* we have tried to show maximum respect towards all parties. We have tried to show others the kind of treatment we ask for ourselves. Anything else would be inconsistent and hypocritical.

The Prelature is not responsible for Studi Cattolici. However, some members of Opus Dei work in this publication, and understandably this fact has created some confusion. Also, many Muslims and persons from different religious beliefs cooperate with the works of Opus Dei. Consequently our office has been receiving queries concerning this matter, and we have felt it necessary to provide a response.

The editors of the magazine have stated that they did not intend to

offend anyone and publicly apologized for any offense they may have given. In accord with what we have expressed repeatedly over the past several months, we feel obliged to unite ourselves to this request for forgiveness.

Whenever one gives real but unintentional offence, it is necessary to acknowledge it and ask for forgiveness. As the founder of Opus Dei used to say, to err is human and to rectify is Christian. We hope that we, the members of Opus Dei, may be able to express with deeds the ideals that we hold in our hearts."

Manuel Sánchez Hurtado