

Opus Dei New York Communications Office: Press Statement on The Da Vinci Code and Harambee

Statement on the occasion of
the "Harambee Celebration" at
the Dahesh Museum (580
Madison Avenue), May 15, 2006.

05/15/2006

**Video about Harambee (Low &
High quality) The Da Vinci Code**

presents a deformed picture of the Catholic Church, by portraying it as a 2000 year-old fraud. Despite repeated public statements that the movie is only fiction, Sony Pictures has refused the request of several Catholic organizations to place a disclaimer stating this fact at the beginning of the movie.

What is more, Sony Pictures is heavily marketing the movie with the slogan “Seek the truth,” implying that the movie is to be taken as more than mere fiction. This lack of sensitivity toward the religious beliefs of Catholics and all Christians is just as deplorable as a similar lack of sensitivity toward any other religion or any ethnic group.

As we have stated several times with respect to *The Da Vinci Code*, we are not interested in controversy. Any controversy there may be has been initiated by Sony’s grotesque

portrayal of the Catholic Church, the Pope, bishops and monks.

Nevertheless, we will continue to speak calmly, openly and constructively. We will continue to take every opportunity to explain the truth about Christianity, the Catholic Church and Opus Dei.

To present the true face of the Catholic Church and counteract *The Da Vinci Code*'s false depiction, we propose to spread awareness of the service that Catholics are carrying out in Africa. We appeal to all Catholics and anyone of good will to aid the efforts of the many Catholic institutions who are devoted to providing aid to those in need in Africa.

We draw particular attention to Harambee, which was started by members of Opus Dei in 2002 at the canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. Harambee raises funds for

proven educational programs run by Africans themselves. Harambee is currently trying to raise \$1 million in countries of Europe and America to support four projects, one run by Franciscan friars, one by Canossian sisters and two by members and cooperators of Opus Dei.

Besides raising funds for these four programs, we hope that today's celebration of Harambee here in New York will call attention to the *real* activities of the *real* Catholic Church, in contrast to the caricature presented in *The Da Vinci Code*.

We invite those who feel pained by *The Da Vinci Code*'s lack of respect for Christians and the Church to express their feelings constructively, by spreading awareness about educational or charitable projects carried out by Catholics in Africa, or by making a small donation to support them.

Beyond the real help such a donation will make, it will also symbolically recognize the dedication of countless Christians and Catholics serving in Africa. In this way, we hope that the public controversy about *The Da Vinci Code* will have a positive result and not be reduced to sterile polemics. As Pope Benedict XVI noted in his first encyclical, "Deus Caritas Est": "Love is therefore the service that the Church carries out in order to attend constantly to man's sufferings and his needs, including material needs" (n. 19).

Tax-deductible donations to Harambee can be made at www.harambee-africa.org. Donations by check can be sent payable to Rosemoor Foundation, Harambee, P.O. Box 1541, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10051-1541.

Many other programs in Africa are worthy of support, and we encourage everyone to select one.

More information about the event can be found at: <https://opusdei.org/article/a-constructive-response-to-the-da-vinci-code-a-celebration-for-africa/> .

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