

Press statement on The Da Vinci Code

The Opus Dei Communications Office in Rome released the following statement regarding The Da Vinci Code film.

02/16/2006

Rome, February 14, 2006 -- We continue to receive many inquiries about *The Da Vinci Code* film.

As we stated on January 12, we are not interested in controversy and will not encourage a boycott of the film. We will continue to approach

this situation in a calm, open and constructive way.

The Da Vinci Code offers a deformed image of the Catholic Church. The publicity surrounding the book and the film provide a good opportunity to explain what the Church as it truly is.

In the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* , Pope Benedict XVI noted that charity is an essential characteristic of the Church: “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).

In that vein, this could be a good time to spread awareness of the work of service that Catholics are carrying out in Africa. It is also a good moment to aid the efforts of many Church institutions in Africa, which continues to suffer some of the

world's greatest emergency situations.

Many people feel pained by *The Da Vinci Code*'s lack of respect for the beliefs of Christians. We invite them to express these feelings peacefully and constructively, by spreading awareness about educational or charitable projects carried out by Catholics in Africa, or by making a small donation to support them. We realize that such a donation is a symbolic gesture, but it would also have a concrete and positive effect.

Harambee 2006 is currently supporting four projects promoted by African Catholics, two of them by members of Opus Dei. There are also many other initiatives worthy of support by all, and it is not difficult to select one.

Raising awareness of African Catholics' solidarity efforts is a way to keep public controversy about *The*

Da Vinci Code from becoming sterile. It is a way of ensuring that the debate have positive results: concrete assistance to those in need, and a greater awareness of this essential aspect of the Catholic Church.

At the same time, we continue to believe in Sony Pictures' capacity to be sensitive and constructive.

It is easy to see that it is not enough to offer the injured parties an opportunity to defend themselves, while the offense continues. Acting well means avoiding offense while it is still possible.

Three months remain until the film's release. Therefore, we continue to hope that the final version of the film will not contain references that might hurt Catholics. A conciliatory gesture like this would be much appreciated, especially in these times

when we are all lamenting the painful consequences of intolerance.

There is still time for Sony Pictures to make a contribution to peace and harmony that would be of great importance in the current moment. Sony Pictures can demonstrate that freedom of expression is compatible with respect for religious beliefs, and it can show that respect is a free choice resulting from sensitivity, not a consequence of censure or threats.

With a conciliatory decision, Sony Pictures would do a great service to the cause of dialogue between cultures and would honor its own respectable reputation.
