

DAVINCI OUTREACH



**TEACHERS
RESOURCE GUIDE**

DA VINCI OUTREACH

A Catholic response to The Da Vinci Code

TEACHERS RESOURCE GUIDE



Dumb Ox Productions

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GENERAL GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

This document is a guide designed to help pastor anyone who works with teens. The guide helps adults teach and minister to teens about the controversy surrounding Dan Brown's book *The Da Vinci Code* and the new film starring Tom Hanks. Teachers, catechists, youth ministers, campus ministers, and parents will all benefit from the ten lesson plans contained in this guide.

This guide is divided into two sections:

1. General Guidelines
2. Lesson Plans

The purpose of these guidelines is to give those who work with teens an understanding of the deceptive nature of *The Da Vinci Code*, specifically with regard to teenagers. The resources in the following pages will be best used in conjunction with *The Da Vinci Deception*, published by Ascension Press, which adequately and succinctly answers many of the questions that teens are asking about Dan Brown's [very] fictional story. This guide will help you flesh out the truths found in *Deception* for your teens. With this in mind, nearly every activity and lesson plan refers to corresponding questions (noted by number) in *The Da Vinci Deception*.

In each lesson, we begin by giving a list of corresponding question numbers from *The Da Vinci Deception* for you to read before launching into your lesson. Although we make recommendations throughout the guide of when and where to use these questions with your class, we encourage you to use them in the way that best suits your needs. We recommend that each of your students have a copy of *The Da Vinci Deception*. They will benefit most if they read the noted questions and answers either before the lesson, or if you have the time, during the lesson. In this way, the lesson will build upon their knowledge and provide many opportunities for deeper discussion of the issues at hand. If you can't purchase a copy for every student, buying a class set is a good option.

The importance of encouraging teens **NOT** to see this movie cannot be overstated. The popular appeal of this fictional thriller will undoubtedly be immense, and it is crucial that Catholics focus on the truths contained in our Faith. By emphasizing these truths, we can shine light into corners of darkness so that doubt can grow into faith.

THE POWER OF FILM

It is important to understand the profound impact a movie of this magnitude will have on the faith of teenagers. This generation of teens is growing up in an era when the media has given them reasons to be skeptical about Christianity, especially about the Catholic Church.

It is crucial for adults who are involved with teens in any capacity to understand the affect the film version of *The Da Vinci Code* will have on this generation of youth. It is naïve to think that teens will not want to see this movie. It is equally naïve to think that teens will not believe many of the egregious errors found throughout the story.

Teens will be talking about the buzz created by this film months—if not years—from now. They deserve to understand the significant fabrications within the story that are intended to undermine the Catholic faith. This purpose of this guide is two-fold:

1. Adults must understand the fraudulent claims and significant theological errors found in *The Da Vinci Code* so they can explain the faith clearly to questioning teens.
2. It is important for you to *take the initiative* in talking with teens about these subjects. This may be a challenge because some teens who *want* to believe the conspiracy theories of *The Da Vinci Code* may not want to discuss them with someone who they know will defend the teachings of the Church. Most teens love controversy, so your challenge is to help them to decipher fact from fiction in *The Da Vinci Code* and to engage them in dialogue that will help them to better understand Jesus Christ, the Church, and the Catholic faith.

WHY TEENS SHOULD NOT SEE (OR READ) *THE DA VINCI CODE*

There's an old saying that applies here: "I don't have to get bit by a rattlesnake to know that it hurts!" In order to deal with this book of lies and partial truths, it is not necessary for teenagers to read the book or see the movie. It is a good idea to do all that we can to encourage teens *not* to see *The Da Vinci Code* for several reasons.

1. **It Sows Seeds of Skepticism:** *The Da Vinci Code* expressly plants seeds of doubt and skepticism. It deliberately tries to convince the reader/viewer that the Church and its leaders are fraudulent con-artists trying to cover up the greatest scandal of all time.
 - a. *Sensory Appeal:* The motion picture industry spends billions of dollars in creating a moviegoing experience that affects viewers on every level. From recliner-like seating to state of the art digital sound, the moviegoer is lulled into letting his or her guard down and ends up being uniquely influenced by "other worldly" sounds and images. These same tools can and have been used to build up the Kingdom of God, but *The Da Vinci Code* uses them to tear down the Body of Christ and create doubt and skepticism about the Catholic faith.

- b. *Visual Stimulation*: Visual stimulation is the most effective means of reaching kids today. Teachers and presenters can often be more effective by recording themselves on video and playing their lecture back than by giving a live presentation to kids. From television and video games to the Internet and video iPods, teens are magnetically drawn to visual stimuli, which make them more susceptible to believing whatever they see presented. Many psychologists agree that film is the most powerfully stimulating medium because of its “layering effect.” The blend of light and sound stimuli slows down the brain’s ability to discern rationally as it perceives information, i.e., the “layering effect” hampers its ability to filter information and subtly leads it into a receiving mode similar to that of a sponge. Thus, whatever teens see on film (good or bad) is likely to affect them more profoundly than what they read in a book or even hear on the radio.
- c. *False Sense of Safety*: For many parents, going to the movies is one of the few “safe” and—depending on the movie—moral activities for their teens to do. For example, for many teens it was “cool” to go see *The Chronicles of Narnia*, an excellent film which can inspire them to live a virtuous Christian life. As in all things, prudence is necessary to monitor teens and decide what they should be allowed to absorb into their minds. Just as responsible adults never knowingly allow teens to put harmful drugs into their bodies, they should not knowingly allow them to put something similarly harmful into their minds.
2. **Many Teens Lack a Firm Grounding in the Truths of the Faith**: In general, teens lack the knowledge to make the necessary distinctions about questions that have huge implications for their Catholic faith. *The Da Vinci Code* joins a few outright lies with a few partial truths and uses them to support an entire web of deception that seeks to undermine the very foundations of Christianity. Again, since reading the book can cause confusion in kids, seeing the movie with all its bells and whistles will only make matters worse.

HOW TO BEST CHALLENGE TEENS TO NOT SEE THE MOVIE OR READ THE BOOK

I. UNDERSTAND THE TEEN’S PERSPECTIVE

- **POISON**: “Everyone is seeing (reading) it.” One can never underestimate the power of peer pressure in adolescence. The need for acceptance by peers is almost unfathomable during this tumultuous time in their lives.
- **ANTIDOTE**: **Tap into your teens’ need to be special.** A basic premise in understanding teenagers is that they need and want to be special and to be acknowledged as such. During adolescence, young people begin differentiating themselves from everything around them, so as to discover their unique selves. Use this to your advantage. Ask your teens: “Is being just like everyone else your goal?” To which they will likely respond: “No.” You can then reinforce the idea that following

Christ and the Church is the most counter-cultural thing they can do in our society. Then, make sure to be present for them when they make the counter-cultural decision to not see the film.

- **POISON: “The movie trailer looks so cool!”** Granted, major film companies have the money and the skill to create effective trailers. The *Da Vinci* trailer looks “cool” to teenagers because it is intriguing—it promotes an air of mystery about the film. There is a real danger here. The high-caliber production values of *The Da Vinci Code* will surely create viscerally powerful images to complement its fast-paced plot, making it a potentially mesmerizing film.
- **ANTIDOTE: Spoil it!** Though considered a *faux pas* for many, spoil the movie for your teens by giving away key plot points. Tell them, “I’ll save you a few bucks: The film claims Mary Magdalene is the Holy Grail and she was married to Jesus and they had children together. How ridiculous can you get?” Derailing some of their initial excitement about this “mysterious movie” can decrease their curiosity a bit.
- **POISON: “I’ve already read the book. Seeing the movie won’t hurt.”** Let’s face it: Whether we like it or not, there are many teens and adults who have already read *The Da Vinci Code*. There’s a lot of power in the imagination that wants to come full circle by watching Ron Howard and Tom Hanks “bring it to life” for them.
- **ANTIDOTE: Reinforce the Truth.** Use *The Da Vinci Deception* to clearly explain to teens how destructive this “fictional thriller” (masquerading as “fact”) can be to their faith. Challenge them to use their free will and power of self-determination by refusing to give their financial support to people who spend their time and energy trying to make money by distorting the most precious beliefs of billions of people around the world.

2. POSITIVELY SHARE THE TRUTHS OF THE FAITH

Defend Without Sounding Defensive: It is important not to be *defensive* while *defending* the truths of the Faith. Teens often react to defensiveness by thinking: *They must have something to hide*. It is essential to calmly and confidently present truths in a creative and winning manner. This guide will help you do just that! The Church is on the offensive (in the best sense of that term). Remember Jesus’ words to Peter? The gates of hell will not prevail against us, so we need not be afraid, timid, or defensive.

The Power of Curiosity and Controversy: The only good that will come from *The Da Vinci Code* is that it offers a unique opportunity for sound catechesis and apologetics. Undoubtedly, the film will raise questions and curiosity among teens. We certainly don’t want to avoid the conversations and opportunities that the controversy surrounding this movie will stir up. *If you get your facts straight, this could be one of the greatest opportunities for you to share the truths of the faith with skeptical teens*. It is important for adults to make the proper distinction between natural curiosity and doubtful skepticism. Curiosity seeks truth whereas skepticism says “Convince me or you’re a liar!” *The Da Vinci Code* tries to incite the latter.

Always Be Prepared: “If you are flying with small children, remember to place the oxygen mask over your own mouth and nose first before helping a child with theirs.” Anyone who has flown has heard this familiar instruction from a flight attendant. It is a reminder that adults cannot help children if

they themselves cannot breathe. In the same way, reading the book or watching the movie without sufficient grounding in the Truth can make one susceptible to deceptions. In short, before you get into a discussion about *The Da Vinci Code* with your teens, do your homework! Read *The Da Vinci Deception*.

TIPS FOR TALKING WITH TEENS WHO HAVE ALREADY SEEN THE FILM (OR READ THE NOVEL)

Again, teens should be highly discouraged from seeing the movie or reading the book. However, if they see the movie or have read the book (or both), here are some ideas for working with them through some of their questions.

Identify Significant Areas of Concern: The problem with *The Da Vinci Code* is that it mixes bold lies with partial truths, which form the basis of an entire web of deception, distortion, and exaggeration. Identifying its key lies, mistakes, and exaggerations will help teens put this confusing and deceptive piece of fiction in proper perspective. Key problem areas include:

- DIVINITY OF CHRIST
- INERRANCY OF REVELATION
 - DEPOSIT OF THE FAITH
 - SACRED SCRIPTURE
 - MAGISTERIAL TRADITION
- ROLE OF MARY MAGDALENE IN CHURCH HISTORY
 - SACRED FEMININE
 - NATURE OF SEXUALITY
 - HOLY GRAIL
- HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE LAST SUPPER
- PURPOSE AND MISSION OF OPUS DEI AND THE NATURE OF PERSONAL PRELATURES WITHIN THE CHURCH (ECCLESIOLOGY)
- ROLE OF CORPORAL MORTIFICATION AND SUFFERING

Focus on Facts: Remember, the truths of the Faith can stand on their own. Your task is to present those truths in an appealing manner. Teens, having seen the movie or read the book, may be persuaded by *The Da Vinci Code's* sensationalistic and emotional appeal. *It is critically important to constantly bring them back to the facts.* Be sure to get the facts straight. Then clarify the facts again.

Ask Teens Basic Open-Ended Questions: It is important to let teens “talk through” their experience of the movie or book. Remember, if they are not talking with you about it, they will certainly be talking about it with someone else. It is important for them to discuss their thoughts with a grounded, knowledgeable, and faith-filled person. One of your goals is to get them to verbalize the nonsense found in *The Da Vinci Code*. You can do this by asking them simple, open ended questions such as, “What do you think about all this *Da Vinci Code* stuff?” or “How much of what you’ve heard do you think is true? Why?” Listening to their responses will earn you the right to be heard and will give you an opportunity to speak with them about the book/movie. Once you get them talking, keep trying to

ascertain what specific facts they remember that contradict the Faith. Challenge their tendency to just be “wowed” by the Hollywood appeal of the movie by getting them to focus on the most basic—and illogical—premises of the story, all of which are easily refutable using *The Da Vinci Deception*.

USING THIS GUIDE

To get the most out of this guide, we recommend that you read it through in its entirety. There are many good ideas in these pages, and by reading through them all you will inevitably gain new insights for future conversations with your teens. In this way, you will understand how to support the other leaders in your teens’ lives. This is a time when we need to work as a team, synthesizing all of our efforts in order to make a powerful impact on our teenagers.

Remember to use your time wisely and don’t take any opportunity for granted. We have tailored lessons that specifically address various doctrines undermined by *The Da Vinci Code*. Since there are so many lesson plans, we encourage you to look through them for the ideas that fit your needs best. You could pull pieces of multiple lesson plans into one lesson if time does not allow you to spend an entire week or two on *Da Vinci* issues. However, it is also important to realize that these materials are not just about *The Da Vinci Code*. Rather than being merely apologetic in nature, they actually help your teens gain a deeper understanding of those areas of the Faith that are being challenged.

As disturbing as *The Da Vinci Code* is, let us recognize and take advantage of the fantastic opportunity this controversy provides us to take discussions of the Catholic faith into classrooms, faculty lounges, offices, movie theaters, grocery stores, living rooms, restaurants, and everywhere. Don’t miss your opportunity to pray for your teens and for all those whose faith may be challenged due to this damaging cultural phenomenon.

LESSON I

“QUID EST VERITAS?”

(WHAT IS TRUTH?)

MAKING THE CASE FOR OBJECTIVE TRUTH

[Note: These activities can be used to teach truth in a theology, math, history, or science class—all academic disciplines based upon objective truth. The student will be able to differentiate between objective truth and subjective truth.]

OBJECTIVES:

1. To aid students in their understanding of the nature of objective truth as distinguished from subjective truth.
2. To train students to acknowledge the reality of objective truth in the world and to acknowledge that it affects them, whether or not they acknowledge or recognize it.
3. To help students recognize the fictional nature and obvious lack of truth in the novel *The Da Vinci Code*.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 24, 25, 26, 31, 37, 41, 42 and 96.

MATERIALS:

- A jar full of counted Skittles™
- One snack bag of Skittles™ (to be used as a prize)
- Computers with Internet connection (optional)
- Coffee mug

PRAYER: *A Student's Prayer* (by St. Thomas Aquinas)

Come, Holy Spirit, Divine Creator, true source of light and fountain of wisdom! Pour forth your brilliance upon my dense intellect, dissipate the darkness which covers me, that of sin and of ignorance. Grant me a penetrating mind to understand, a retentive memory, method and ease in learning, the lucidity to comprehend, and abundant grace in expressing myself. Guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress, and bring it to successful completion. This I ask through Jesus Christ, true God and true man, living and reigning with You and the Father, forever and ever. Amen.

OPTIONAL TECHNOLOGY APPLICATION

As an effective pre-assignment, students can search the Internet to determine if *The Da Vinci Code's* “Fact” page is truly factual. They could focus on the Priory of Sion, *Les Dossiers Secrets*, and Opus Dei. Be sure to limit their research to the following websites: www.opusdei.com, www.catholic.com, and www.priory-of-sion.com. Once the students open the Opus Dei home page, point out several examples that show it to be a trustworthy website, such as links to the

Vatican. Tell them that one needs the Vatican's permission to link a website to theirs. Explain that the Opus Dei website contains the official teachings and claims of the organization—not just someone's distorted opinion of the group. Show them the biography of St. Josemaria Escriva, pointing out the details of his canonization. Then have them go to www.catholic.com, the website of Catholic Answers, ranked in the top ten of the most popular Catholic websites. Illustrate for students the professionalism of these sites

and their many links to legitimate organizations, groups that are above reproach and certainly not involved in any conspiracies such as those alleged in the Code. Further this discussion by informing your students that Catholic Answers is a well-respected Catholic apologetics organization whose purpose is to clarify questions regarding the Faith. Then have them visit the Priory of Sion website, which is a mix of opinion and research but is useful to help them clarify some of *Code's* erroneous claims.

ACTIVITY: THE TRUTH ABOUT SKITTLES™

PROCEDURES:

1. Show the students a jar of pre-counted Skittles. Begin by asking the students how many Skittles are in the jar, keeping track of which student is the closest to and which student the furthest away from the correct figure without letting the students know. Without telling them the correct answer, ask them which student should receive the prize (i.e., a small bag of Skittles).
2. Let the students attempt to explain who the winner of the game should be and why. During this discussion, work in the question of which flavor of Skittles is their favorite. Additionally, ask them to argue why their flavor is the best (yes, there is a reason for this tactic). Eventually, tell the class the correct number of skittles. After the excitement and disappointment subside, attempt to give the prized bag of Skittles to the person who was *furthest* from the real answer. Protests will ensue. Let the real winner try to explain why he or she should get the prize rather than the person whose guess had been the furthest from the actual number in the jar.
3. The analogy can now be clearly drawn that there is one and only one TRUTH in the world – *objective* truth. The student's *subjective* opinion about the number of Skittles in the jar does not change the *objective* reality.

DISCUSSION #1—My Coffee Mug named Spot

PROCEDURES:

Hold up a coffee mug (or some other normal classroom object). Tell your students that this object is your dog, a Dalmatian named Spot. Then ask them what they think the coffee mug is. They may say that you're crazy, but then you can work into the discussion that it is not one's opinion that really

matters on an issue of objective truth. True, it is called a “coffee mug” because that is the name we have assigned to this object, but in its essence we certainly know that the mug is not the substance of a dog. It has no fur or flesh and it doesn’t bark. Instead, it’s made of ceramic, etc. Objective truth corresponds to reality, i.e., to how things really are.

DISCUSSION #2—Just Jews

PROCEDURES:

Hold up a picture of Jews interred at a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. Pretend for a moment to support the idea that they are not human beings, because they are “just Jews.” Tell them that Hitler was just trying to make the world a better place. Make the students argue for the humanity of the Jewish people. Use this analogy to make the point again that objective truth corresponds to *the way things really are*. The Holocaust was wrong, regardless of the *opinions* of the Nazi Party. It was objectively wrong because torturing humans **is** wrong regardless of Hitler’s beliefs. Conclude by emphasizing that mistaken ideas about truth have serious consequences. **Important Note:** It is crucial to conclude this discussion by clearly retracting your “pretend” statements about the Jews. *Make it very clear* that you were only using this as an analogy to make a point. Finish by stating firmly that Jews *are indeed* human beings created with no less dignity than anyone else. Explain that you used this as an extreme historical example to make a point of equal severity.

DISCUSSION #3—The TRUTH about Sports

PROCEDURES:

Talk about football. Why are there referees? Why is there instant replay? Can a referee make a bad call, only to be overturned by the replay? What is the significance? Does our perception make it so or is it so because it matches reality?

FINISH WELL

End these discussions using *The Da Vinci Deception* questions in order to clearly identify factual errors in *The Da Vinci Code*. Some examples include: the original name of the *Mona Lisa* (question #16), the real Priory of Sion (questions #24-26), Opus Dei (question #8), or *Les Dossiers Secrets* (question #25). Students will clearly see that Dan Brown’s assertions are *false*. Therefore, *The Da Vinci Code* is a story that does *not* correspond to the way things really are; it is not objective truth.

LESSON 2

LUNATIC, LIAR, OR LORD

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

*Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Son of God, one in being with the Father, who suffered and died for our sins, and on the third day rose from the dead. This is the fundamental Christian truth. If Christ is not actually divine, then billions of believers have been duped by a lie. If Christ is not divine then there is no redemption from sin and no entry into heaven possible for the faithful. The central claim of *The Da Vinci Code* revolves around denying this most basic belief of Christianity. Use this lesson to teach the truth of the identity of Jesus Christ.*

OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop in students a greater understanding of Christ's divinity, the monumental implications this truth holds for Christianity and its Scriptural basis.
2. To help students to become more confident and proficient in navigating and researching the Bible.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 42 and 98.

MATERIALS:

1. Bibles
2. Loose leaf paper (or notebook)

PRAYER: *The Nicene Creed*

With your students, pray this foundational statement of the Catholic faith, written specifically to counter the false teachings of Arianism, a heresy which denied the full divinity of Jesus. Arians taught that Jesus was *created* by God the Father and therefore could not be fully God. The key is that Jesus was never "created"—he has always existed. In the Incarnation, his Divine Person took on human nature. The Nicene Creed clearly proclaims Christ as fully divine, one in being with the Father. Here is the modern wording of the Creed:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with

the Father. Through Him all things were made. For us men and our salvation He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day He rose again in fulfillment of the scriptures: He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PROCEDURES:

1. Read the following Scripture passages aloud.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:12-19
 - Hebrews 10:19-23
2. Conduct a brief discussion regarding the meaning of the above Scripture passages, with special emphasis given to the drastic ramifications that would come into play if Christ were not divine (i.e. no redemption from sin, etc). *[Note: If you are unfamiliar with these ramifications, please spend some time before the lesson to review these Scripture verses and the doctrines pertaining to them.]*
3. Assign the following Scripture passages to your students and have them write a three paragraph essay on the reality of Jesus Christ's divinity. If the Bible they are using has footnotes, remind them to read those as well.

John 1:1-14	Prologue
Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41	Calming of the Sea
Matthew 9:1-8	Healing the paralytic and forgiving his sins
Matthew 12:1-8	Picking grain on the Sabbath (footnote on 12:8)
Mark 14:61-64	Jesus before the Sanhedrin
Luke 3:21-22	Jesus' baptism
John 5:1-30	Cure on the Sabbath/Work of the Son
John 6:47-59	Bread of Life
John 8:23-30	I AM
John 8:48-59	Older than Abraham
John 18:1-8	Arrest of Jesus - "I AM"
John 10:29,30; 17:22	The Father and I are One

5. Select a few students to read their papers to the class (and possibly discuss them).
6. Then break the students into either four or eight groups, depending on the size of the class. Assign each group to read and discuss one of the first four sections of question 98 (A,B,C,D) in *The Da Vinci Deception*. Have each group report back with the central point of why their particular argument falls apart.

FINISH WELL

Finally, read *The Da Vinci Deception* question 98, section “E”—*Jesus is Lord*, to the class and recap why this is the only true and logical choice of the five positions. If you want, you can create your own “further learning” or “further reflection” assignment using the Scriptures the students read in class to strengthen the case for Jesus being the Lord, the Son of God.

LESSON 3

THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT MARY!

(BUT WHICH ONE?)

MARY, MARY, AND MOTHER CHURCH: THE REAL SACRED FEMININE

The Da Vinci Code claims that the Catholic Church is opposed to—and has therefore suppressed—the “sacred feminine.” Nothing could be further from the truth. The Church has consistently revered the feminine, especially in the form of Mary, the Mother of God; Mary Magdalene; and in Holy Mother Church. In conjunction with *The Da Vinci Deception*, use these lessons to teach the *real* “sacred feminine” to your students.

[*Note:* Each activity in this lesson can be used as its own class period. You can use these activities as back to back lessons, or use whichever one suits the needs of your students the most. Notice that if you use *Activity #1* as well as *Activity #2*, you may skip the first procedure in the second activity as it is identical in both.]

ACTIVITY #1—CATHOLIC RESPECT OF THE FEMININE

OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop in students an appreciation and knowledge of the respect the Catholic Church has for the feminine.
2. To increase students’ piety and knowledge of Mary, Mother of God—the model of true femininity.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 45, 47, and 89.

MATERIALS:

1. Copies of the *Church and the Feminine* worksheets
2. Class set of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
3. A copy of *Mulieris Dignitatum* (optional)

PRAYER: *Hail, Holy Queen*

PROCEDURES:

1. The Catholic Church honors Mary as the sinless and virginal Mother of God. The Church has declared that Mary was conceived without sin and at the end of her life was assumed—body and soul—into heaven. Mary is the spiritual mother to all Christians, model of prayer, submission, and obedience to God and a wonderful saint to ask for intercession. (For further study, see *Catechism* paragraphs #273, 484-511, 963-975, 2030, 2617-2619, or do a search for “Mary” at www.ewtn.com.)
2. Using the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, have the students to complete the *Church and the Feminine* worksheet (found at the end of this lesson).
3. Use the worksheet and following questions to discuss the relationship of the Church with true and sacred femininity.

FINISH WELL

Read the following selected portions of John Paul II’s document, *Mulieris Dignitatum (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women)*, in an effort to concretely show your class that the Church highly respects women, and discourages any suppression of them that is present in our modern day society:

“...the Church desires to give thanks to the Most Holy Trinity for the ‘mystery of woman’ and for every woman—for that which constitutes the eternal measure of her feminine dignity, for the ‘great works of God,’ which throughout human history have been accomplished in and through her. After all, was it not in and through her that the greatest event in human history—the incarnation of God himself— was accomplished?”

Therefore the Church gives thanks for each and every woman: for mothers, for sisters, for wives; for women consecrated to God in virginity; for women dedicated to the many human beings who await the gratuitous love of another person; for women who watch over the human persons in the family, which is the fundamental sign of the human community; for women who work professionally, and who at times are burdened by a great social responsibility; for “perfect” women and for “weak” women - for all women as they have come forth from the heart of God in all the beauty and richness of their femininity; as they have been embraced by his eternal love; as, together with men, they are pilgrims on this earth, which is the temporal “homeland” of all people and is transformed sometimes into a “valley of tears”; as they assume, together with men, a common responsibility for the destiny of humanity according to daily necessities and according to that definitive destiny which the human family has in God himself, in the bosom of the ineffable Trinity.” (no. 31)

In addition to *Mulieris Dignitatum*, there are other great documents detailing the Church’s respect toward women. If you teach in an all-girls school they could be useful in promoting authentic Catholic femininity. A simple answer would be to buy the collection of John Paul II’s writings and speeches on women called *The Genius of Women*, published by the USCCB. If that cannot be done, here are some selections that can be found online through the “library” link at www.ewtn.com:

By Pope John Paul II

Letter to Women – June 29, 1995

Mary Sheds Light on the Role of Women – December 6, 1995

Motherhood: Women’s Gift to Society – December 7, 1996

Culture Needs Women’s Genius – August 6, 1995

Mary Shows us God’s Respect for Women – November 29, 1996

By the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World – May 31, 2004

THE CHURCH AND THE REAL FEMININE

NAME: _____

DATE: ____ / ____ / ____

DIRECTIONS: Read through the following paragraphs from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and then complete this worksheet.

CCC #963, 969, 492, 169, 721

1. What titles does the Church give Mary and why?
2. What gender specific title is given to the Catholic Church?
3. Do these titles sound as if the Church is trying to eliminate the feminine in Christianity?
4. What is special about the conception of Mary?
5. How does Mary stand in relation to Jesus and all Christians?
6. How is Mary more blessed than any other person?
7. After reading these paragraphs from the *Catechism* how would you describe the Church's feelings towards women (young and old alike)?

ACTIVITY #2 – MARY THE MOTHER OF GOD – THE REAL SACRED FEMININE

OBJECTIVES:

1. To have students develop an appreciation and knowledge of the respect the Catholic Church has for the feminine.
2. To increase students' piety and knowledge of Mary, the Mother of God – *the* model of true femininity.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 45, 47, and 89.

MATERIALS:

1. Copies of the *Litany of Mary* and the *Feasts of Mary*
2. Internet access, if done in one class period

PRAYER: Litany of Mary

V. Lord, have mercy on us.

R. CHRIST, HAVE MERCY ON US.

V. Lord, have mercy on us. Christ hear us.

R. CHRIST, GRACIOUSLY HEAR US.

God, the Father of Heaven –

HAVE MERCY ON US. (repeat at end of each phrase.)

God, the Son, Redeemer of the world,

God, the Holy Spirit,

Holy Trinity, One God,

Holy Mary –

PRAY FOR US. (repeat at end of each phrase.)

Holy Mother of God,

Holy Virgin of virgins,

Mother of Christ,

Mother of divine grace,

Mother most pure,

Mother most chaste,

Mother inviolate,

Mother undefiled,
 Mother most amiable,
 Mother most admirable,
 Mother of good counsel,
 Mother of our Creator,
 Mother of our Savior,
 Virgin most prudent,
 Virgin most venerable,
 Virgin most renowned,
 Virgin most powerful,
 Virgin most merciful,
 Virgin most faithful,

Mirror of justice,
 Seat of wisdom,
 Cause of our joy,
 Spiritual vessel,
 Vessel of honor,
 Singular vessel of devotion,

Mystical rose,
 Tower of David,
 Tower of ivory,
 House of gold,
 Ark of the covenant,
 Gate of Heaven,
 Morning star,
 Health of the sick,
 Refuge of sinners,
 Comforter of the afflicted,
 Help of Christians,
 Queen of Angels,
 Queen of Patriarchs,
 Queen of Prophets,
 Queen of Apostles,
 Queen of Martyrs,
 Queen of Confessors,
 Queen of Virgins,
 Queen of all Saints,
 Queen conceived without Original Sin,
 Queen assumed into Heaven,
 Queen of the most holy rosary,
 Queen of Peace.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
SPARE US, O LORD.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
GRACIOUSLY HEAR US O LORD.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
HAVE MERCY ON US.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

**R. THAT WE MAY BE MADE WORTHY OF
 THE PROMISES OF CHRIST**

PROCEDURES:

1. The Catholic Church honors Mary as the sinless and virginal Mother of God. The Church has declared that Mary was conceived without sin and at the end of her life was assumed—body and soul—into heaven. Mary is the spiritual mother to all Christians, model of prayer, submission, and obedience to God and a wonderful saint to ask for intercession. To study further see *Catechism* paragraphs #273, 484-511, 963-975, 2030, 2617-2619 or www.ewtn.com, using “Mary” as a search term.
2. Teach about the different ways Mary, a woman, is honored by the Church and the faithful. You can use the Rosary, scapulars, First Saturday devotions, etc. as examples. (To get things rolling, you may want to start with a few questions for this teaching/discussion, such as, “How many of you wear a Marian medal or the scapular?” or “Have you ever prayed the Rosary?”)

3. Review the Marian Feasts of the Church:

January 1 – Solemnity of Mary

January 8 – Our Lady of Prompt Succor

February 2 – Presentation of the Lord

February 11 – Our Lady of Lourdes

March 25 – Annunciation

May 31 – Visitation

June 27 – Our Mother of Perpetual Help

July 16 – Our Lady of Mount Carmel

August 15 – Assumption

August 22 – Queenship of Mary

September 8 – Birth of Mary

September 12 – The Most Holy Name of Mary

September 15 – Our Lady of Sorrows

September 24 – Our Lady of Walsingham, England

October 7 – Our Lady of the Rosary

November 21 – Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

December 8 – Immaculate Conception

December 12 – Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Month of Mary is May.

The Month of the Rosary is October.

Mother’s Day is the second Sunday of May.

The Feast of the Immaculate Heart is the Saturday following the Second Sunday after Pentecost.

*The First Saturday of each month is also dedicated to Marian devotions.

4. Assign different titles and feasts of Mary to students for them to research and write a paragraph explaining the title or feast. This can be done by using reference works, the Internet, assigning research as homework or through a lecture.
5. If time allows, have your students briefly explain their research to the class. (If you have lectured thoroughly on Mary, you may want to skip this step.)

FINISH WELL

Allow each student to pick their favorite title or feast of Mary and write their own prayer based on that particular title or feast. Begin and end each class period for the next couple of weeks by having the students pray the prayers they have written.

ACTIVITY # 3—WHO WAS MARY MAGDALENE?

OBJECTIVES:

1. To have students develop an appreciation and knowledge of the respect the Catholic Church has for the feminine
2. To give students a scriptural and balanced understanding of the real Mary Magdalene

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, and 79.

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MATERIALS:

1. Bibles
2. Copies of the *Who was Mary Magdalene* worksheet

PRAYER: *A Prayer to Mary Magdalene*

Saint Mary Magdalene, woman of many sins, who by conversion became the beloved of Jesus, thank you for your witness that Jesus forgives through the miracle of love. You, who already possess eternal happiness in His glorious presence, please intercede for me, so that some day I may share in the same everlasting joy. Amen. (This prayer and others can be found at www.ewtn.com)

PROCEDURES:

1. Have your students use their Bibles to answer the questions on the *Who was Mary Magdalene?* worksheet.
2. Use the following discussion questions to wrap up and close the activity.

[*Important Note:* Please make sure that if you are teaching this lesson that you have read the relevant questions out of *The Da Vinci Deception* in order to lead a student discussion on Mary Magdalene.]

- If Peter and others were trying to hijack the Church, do you think that they would have made themselves, rather than women, encounter the risen Lord first? Do you think that Mary Magdalene would have appeared at the crucifixion and burial?
- If the Catholic Church were trying to hide Mary Magdalene, why would the Church recognize her as a saint, call her the “apostle to the apostles” and give her a feast day—July 22nd?
- Why would Mary Magdalene recognize and call Jesus “teacher” rather than “husband” or “beloved” when she saw him after his Resurrection?
- Did any of the scripture passages you read call Mary Magdalene a prostitute? Have your students read (or read aloud to them) question 71 from *The Da Vinci Deception* to help them understand the identity of Mary Magdalene and the questionable charge of prostitution.

FINISH WELL

Assign your students a take-home assignment of writing a respectful, creative and prayerful poem from Mary Magdalene’s perspective on Easter morning, detailing her encounter with the risen Lord. Let the students read their poems the next day in class.

WHO WAS MARY MAGDALENE?

Name _____

Date _____

Use the following Scripture citations in order to answer the questions below.

Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:40-41, 16:1, 16:9; Luke 8:1-3; John 19:25, 20:1-18

1. How was Mary Magdalene involved in the ministry of Jesus Christ?
2. Which disciples of Christ were present at his crucifixion?
3. Who watched Christ's burial?
4. Which women went to anoint the body of Jesus?
5. Who was the first person to see and talk to the resurrected Jesus? What was the title used to address the risen Lord?

LESSON 4

OUR MAGISTERIAL AND CONCILIAR CHURCH

UNDERSTANDING THE CHRISTOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF NICAEA

The Magisterium—the teaching authority of the Church made up of the pope and bishops in union with him—is founded on a firm Scriptural basis. It has guided the Church through many dangerous eras of history, guided by the “Spirit of Truth” (John 14:16-17) while not allowing “the gates of hell to prevail” against it (Matthew 16:18-19). *The Da Vinci Code* depicts these holy leaders who follow the Holy Spirit’s guidance as evil men who are only concerned with worldly power. The job at hand is restoring faith in these servants of God who guide the Church.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To help students understand the nature of the Magisterium, i.e., as ordained by God and rooted in Scripture.
2. To help students recognize that the Magisterium acted throughout the entire first four centuries to maintain and promote the true revelation of Jesus Christ.
3. To have students realize that the Council of Nicaea was a continuation of the revelation of God against the heresy of Arianism.
4. To further the writing skills of the students.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 54, 55, 56, 57, and 65.

MATERIALS:

1. Internet access for students
2. Bibles

PRAYER: *The Nicene Creed* (promulgated by the Council of Nicaea)

With your students, pray again (as in Lesson 2) the Nicene Creed, which emphasizes the apostolic nature of the Church:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father. Through Him all things were made. For us men and our salvation He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day He rose again in fulfillment of the scriptures: He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PROCEDURES:

1. Have the students look up the following Scripture passages and summarize in their own words the meaning of each. Have them share their thoughts with the class. It is very important never to let the class period end without giving the proper understanding of the verses!
 - Matthew 16: 18-19
 - John 16:13
 - John 14: 16-17, 26
 - 1 Timothy 3:15
 - Acts 15:28
 - Ephesians 2:20
 - Ephesians 3:4-6
 - 2 Thessalonians 2:15

2. Remember—the Magisterium’s role in the Church is to guide the transmission of divine revelation. These Scripture passages support the notion of a divinely inspired Magisterium that teaches infallibly on matters of faith and morality.

3. Ask the following questions to your students and discuss them:
 - What do these scripture passages mean for the Church?
 - If God is good and keeps His promises (which He is and does) would he allow the Church to teach errors?
 - Explain how the Council of Nicaea, as an ecumenical council, meets the requirements of magisterial infallibility (use the Scripture verses just studied, especially Acts 15:28 combined with Ephesians 3:4-6 and John 16:13).

FINISH WELL

Have your students read (or read aloud to them) questions 55 and 56 in *The Da Vinci Deception*. The knowledge learned here will prepare them to write a paper about the continuity of the magisterial teaching about Christ's Divinity. Tell them they must include at least one source from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries as well as one specifically from the Council of Nicaea itself. Use this opportunity to teach your students how to refute the claim that Nicaea was the first to declare the divinity of Christ. Use the following two websites as resources to complete this lesson:

- www.catholic.com – Search for the divinity of Christ in the “God and Christ” section in the “library” and search their “Fathers Know Best” page which highlights the writings of early Church fathers.
- www.ewtn.com – Search in the “document library” for “Nicaea”.

LESSON 5

REAL RESURRECTION

THE TRUTH OF JESUS' RISE FROM DEATH TO LIFE

St. Paul fully knew the consequences when he wrote, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain" (1 Cor 15:17). *The Da Vinci Code* attempts to capitalize on modern man's distrust of miracles by leading its readers to think that Jesus' resurrection is just a myth. The work of modern Christians is to reclaim our place in "intelligent society" by making rational and reasonable arguments for Christ's resurrection a standard part of our catechesis of teenagers. Use this lesson, along with question 98 in *The Da Vinci Deception* as cornerstones of your catechesis concerning the historicity of the resurrection.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To equip students with convincing reasons for believing in Jesus' resurrection from the dead.
2. To offer students convincing reasons to trust the New Testament accounts of the resurrection.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 42, 44, and 98.

MATERIALS:

1. Bible
2. DVD/Video of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* (if unavailable, use the book)
3. DVD/Video of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*
4. Television
5. DVD/VCR player

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father and God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive and is the Lord of life. In the waters of baptism, you raise us with him and renew your gift of life within us. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ, and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PROCEDURES:

1. Begin by asking the students if the tomb of Jesus was empty on Easter morning. Regardless of their answers, ask them why or how they know this. Many students will answer "yes," that the

tomb was empty, and most will give one of three responses to support their answer. First, many will say the Bible informs them of this; second, because they have been taught it by parents, Church personnel, or a teacher. The third answer is that they do not know. The problem is that most teens lack a reasoned belief in why the tomb was empty—much less why we believe Christ rose from the dead. So the smallest reason to disbelieve can shake their faith. This lesson builds faith upon real evidence that the tomb was empty, and therefore why belief in Jesus' resurrection is more reasonable than disbelief in Jesus' resurrection.

2. Explain the differences between fact, reason and argument (or proof). A *fact* is a statement that describes a thing as it really is. A *reason* is a fact that can help establish another statement as a fact. An *argument* is a set of reasons by which someone shows something to be a fact, if not totally, at least beyond a reasonable doubt. Tell your students, "Today we will develop an argument which shows that the resurrection of Jesus is the most reasonable explanation of the empty tomb."

STEP #1: THE TOMB OF JESUS WAS FOUND EMPTY. Read aloud Acts 3:11-16, part of Peter's speech at Pentecost. Point out that in verse 15 Peter testifies to the crowd that God raised Jesus from the dead and says that they are witnesses of this fact. Remember, in order for Peter to logically make this claim, the body of Jesus *must* have been gone from the tomb. This confirms that indeed the tomb was empty; otherwise someone would have produced the body of Jesus when the apostles started preaching his resurrection. Remember that both Romans and Jews were eager to disprove the claim of resurrection! They would have checked the tomb, and if they had found a body, they certainly would have made a big deal about it.

STEP #2: IF THE TOMB WAS EMPTY, THERE ARE ONLY THREE EXPLANATIONS.

Explain to the students that these are the three options to describe the tomb on Easter morning:

1. Jesus' body was not in the tomb, because it was *stolen by authorities*.
2. Jesus' body was not in the tomb, because it was *stolen by the disciples*.
3. Jesus rose from the dead. The Resurrection is true.

3. Use the following to rationally and reasonably discuss with the students why the resurrection is actually the most reasonable interpretation of the empty tomb. Walk your students through the following logical path with a dialogue format. Help them answer the questions for themselves.

EXPLANATION #1: BODY STOLEN BY AUTHORITIES

Q. *Who wanted to steal the body of Jesus?*

A. Certainly not the Jews or Romans—they wanted Jesus dead and buried. There was no motive for any of the authorities to steal the body of Jesus. They were glad he was gone.

EXPLANATION #2: BODY STOLEN BY DISCIPLES

Q. *Could the body have been stolen by the disciples?*

A. No. Have the students look up the following scripture citations: Acts 7:54-60; 5:40-41; and 9:1-19. Have students answer the following questions (this can be a verbal discussion or written activity):

- What happened to the disciples for preaching the resurrection of Jesus?
- Do you think you would react the way they did if you knew you were preaching a lie?

- What happened to Stephen?
- Why would he do this if he knew Jesus was dead and not raised?
- Even if all the original disciples were suffering from delusions, what would make Saul convert to Paul?
- Would you give up peace and happiness for a lie?
- Would you give up prestige and power for a lie?
- Would you suffer for a LIE?
- Would you die for a lie?

EXPLANATION #3: JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD

Q. Could the third explanation be possible?

A. Absolutely! It is true that ultimately belief in the resurrection will take faith. But let your students know that intelligent people have *reason* as well as faith on their side when it comes to this truth. Read to them 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 in which St. Paul says that not only did Jesus appear to the twelve after the resurrection, but he also appeared to *over 500 people at one time*. Lastly, if the other two options have been eliminated, whatever choice is left is most probable.

4. Show the clip of the children's discussion with the Professor in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (if the movie is unavailable, find the passage in the book and read it aloud). In summary, Peter and Susan tell the Professor that they are worried about Lucy because she seems to be imagining things or making up a magic wardrobe and lying about it. The Professor wisely asks if anyone else has witnessed Lucy's odd behavior. When they say that their brother Edmund tells a different story than Lucy, the Professor asks which one is usually more truthful. Without hesitation, they confirm that Lucy is the more truthful one. In a flash, they saw that it was logical to believe Lucy, *even though she was saying something that they never thought possible*. But no other explanation made sense. It is the same way with the resurrection of Jesus.

FINISH WELL

If time allows, show the short clip of Jesus' resurrection from *The Passion of The Christ*. Next, ask students about their impressions from the segment in light of what they have learned. Conclude your class by praying the resurrection prayer from the beginning of the lesson, hopefully with new meaning and belief.

LESSON 6

INSPIRATION, INERRANCY, AND REVELATION

THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH, AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH, SO HELP ME GOD

One of the most damaging effects of *The Da Vinci Code* is that it attempts to undermine the reliability of the Bible. It is important to assure students that the Bible was not written in an ivory tower by guys who were meditating all day. Rather, through the process of the Holy Spirit working through human authors, the Bible became the most reliable book on the planet, teaching us the truths of God and the story of salvation history. The Bible, coupled with Sacred Tradition, forms the whole of revelation interpreted for us by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. Use this lesson to remind your students that God loves us too much to leave His message for us unprotected; this is why he sent us Jesus, the Word of God, and this is why Jesus gave us the Church to protect and pass on to us one deposit of faith.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To strengthen students' faith in God revealed in both Scripture and Tradition and instill a proper understanding of the doctrine of inspiration.
2. To develop students' understanding of the inerrancy of Sacred Scripture.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 51, 52, 59, 60, 61, and 62.

MATERIALS:

1. Bibles

PRAYER: *The traditional Holy Spirit Prayer*

Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful. Enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. Let us pray: O God, who did instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant in us the same Spirit to be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

PROCEDURES:

1. Instruct students to line up around the room in a circle.
2. Whisper to the student standing next to you a sentence. Example: “As a kid I worked on a farm and farmed the way my dad farmed the farm.”
3. Instruct the students to pass along your sentence, by whispering from one to the next.
4. When the message has gone around the entire room, have the last person repeat it out loud. Note whether or not the message is still correct. (It usually is not!)
5. Have students return to their desks and process the experience by asking them, since they cannot manage to keep one sentence straight, how has Sacred Scripture managed to survive for almost 2000 years, still remaining accurate?
6. Have students read aloud questions 61 and 62 from *The Da Vinci Deception*. Discuss and answer any questions your students may have at this point. [Note: The difference between the spiritual inerrancy and historical accuracy must be made to the students. Inerrancy of scripture is the Divine promise that all that God wanted to be said was said without addition or subtraction. Though the Scriptures contain within them many historical events, the Church cautions us not to use the Bible as a history textbook, but rather as a vehicle of God’s revelation to humanity.]
7. Use the following questions and points to further help your students recognize that the Bible must be true:
 - Is God all good and all loving? Yes.
 - Did God want to save the apostles? Yes.
 - Did God save the apostles through His Son Jesus Christ? Yes.
 - Does God want us saved? Yes.
 - Does God have a specific revelation for our salvation? Yes.
 - When did Jesus live, die and rise from the dead? When was the revelation of Jesus Christ as Son of God? Around 2000 years ago.
 - If Jesus came to save us and yet his life (and message) on earth occurred 2000 years ago, how are we to know what we need about salvation?
 - If God is good, wouldn’t He have a plan for His revelation to be transmitted through time so that all in time might come to believe?
 - Through the course of history, which Church has consistently transmitted the same message?
 - How has the Sacred Tradition of the Catholic Church preserved the truth of revelation throughout history?
 - *Fact:* Historically, Christian churches that have held only to Sacred Scripture as revelation have fragmented and become more numerous.

- It seems that Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition as *one* deposit of faith are necessary for an accurate and complete transmission of God's revelation.

Note: The above is an adaptation of Cardinal Newman's argument for the necessity of the Magisterium, which can be found online at: www.newmanreader.org.

FINISH WELL

Have your students read the following scripture passage: John 15:16-17 and 1 John 4:16b. In pairs, ask the students to share their understanding of God's love working through the Holy Spirit so that Truth is maintained throughout history in order that we might be saved. If time allows, have some students share their thoughts with the whole class.

LESSON 7

CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

The Da Vinci Code makes sexuality an idol to be worshiped. To combat this false teaching, we turn to the true teachings of Christ and the Church.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To familiarize students with the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality.
2. To help students learn that sex is for the purpose of marital union and procreation.
3. To familiarize students with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and facilitate them in learning to use it.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 48 and 93.

MATERIALS:

1. Individual copies of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
2. Individual copies of *The Church and Sexuality* worksheet

PRAYER: *Prayer to Saint Maria Goretti*

O Saint Maria Goretti, who, strengthened by God's Grace, did not hesitate, even at the age of twelve, to shed your blood and sacrifice life itself to defend your virginal purity, deign to look graciously on the unhappy human race which has strayed far from the path of eternal salvation. Teach us all, and especially modern youth, with what courage and promptitude we should flee anything that could offend Jesus and defile our souls with sin. Obtain for us from God a great horror of sin so that keeping our souls undefiled we may live holy lives on earth and win eternal glory in heaven. Amen. (This prayer can be found at www.mariagoretti.org)

PROCEDURES:

1. Explain that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) contains the teachings of the Faith.
2. Show students the numbering system of the *Catechism* and explain how the *Catechism* is organized.

3. Have them use CCC #2331 to 2400 to complete the following work sheet. Discuss the questions and answers with the students.
4. Encourage your students to quietly reflect for a few minutes in an effort to truly seek God's will in their lives as to whether or not they are called to a priestly vocation, religious vocation or to marriage. Many youth do not answer God's call to priesthood or religious life, because they are never invited to really entertain those notions.
5. After you have encouraged their prayer and thought in this matter, let them know that for the sake of this assignment, they will assume that they will enter into the vocation of marriage. Have your students write letters addressed to their future spouses regarding their own commitments to live lives of purity. Encourage them to take this time to learn how to love rightly as they save sexual expressions of love for marriage. In order to help them focus their writing, use the following questions:
 - a. What would you like to tell your future spouse about your wishes for their dating life until you finally meet?
 - b. What do you want to tell your future spouse about your future dating plans until you finally meet?
 - c. Describe the sort of love you want to share with your future spouse.

FINISH WELL

Have your students read (or read aloud to them) paragraphs 3, 4, and 5 of question 48 in *The Da Vinci Deception*. Pairing the knowledge from the lesson and from these paragraphs, have your students write a short essay comparing the Christian view of sexuality to the current post-modern views of sexuality espoused in our pop-culture (music, movies, etc.). If time allows, have students share their discoveries with the class. [Note: Remember that the goal here is to help your students connect the often immoral messages of our culture with the pagan worship of sexuality found in *The Da Vinci Code*.]

THE CHURCH AND SEXUALITY

NAME: _____

DATE: ____ / ____ / ____

Directions: Use the Catechism of the Catholic Church to answer the following questions.

1. According to CCC #2337, what is the Church's definition of chastity?
2. What does chastity mean in your own words?
3. Read CCC #2361 and 2362. What are some of the ways the Church describes sex and sexuality?
4. What are the two purposes of human sexuality? (#2363)
5. What does the Church mean by "conjugal fidelity?" (#2364-2365)
6. What does the Church mean by the "fecundity of marriage?" (#2366-2372)

LESSON 8

“PUT TO DEATH THE PARTS OF YOU THAT ARE EARTHLY”¹

THE ROLE OF CORPORAL MORTIFICATION IN CHRISTIANITY

The concept of *corporal mortification*, which literally means literally “the death of the flesh,” follows the Pauline theology of taming the flesh and subordinating it to the spirit. *The Da Vinci Code* exaggerates and falsely portrays this discipline of a healthy spiritual life. The Church solidifies the proper understanding of corporal mortification by requiring Catholics to abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent and to fast on certain holy days (i.e., Ash Wednesday and Good Friday). Christianity has asserted that sacrifice is necessary for spiritual growth. In this way, the Church ensures her members will grow spiritually by requiring sacrifice in penitential seasons and recommending it during Ordinary Time.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To help students understand the proper role of suffering in the Christian life.
2. To help students understand why the Church asks its members to offer sacrifice.
3. To help students understand the role sacrifice plays in one’s spiritual growth.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 7 and 8.

MATERIALS:

1. Bibles
2. Paper and pen

PRAYER: *The Traditional Morning Offering*

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, the union of all Christians. I offer them for the intentions of our Bishops and all Apostles of Prayer, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.

¹ Colossians 3:5-6

PROCEDURES:

1. Ask the students if anyone has ever tried to lose weight by dieting and exercise or to train for an athletic competition. (Student athletes are good to ask because they generally have very rigorous physical routines and diets.)
2. Have one student describe exactly what he or she did in order to accomplish their goals in this area. Have them also share whether or not their routine was easy. If they have been doing their routine a while, they may say “yes.” If they do, ask them if it was easy when they started.
3. Next, ask the students if they have ever reached a plateau in a sport which seemed insurmountable before their coach offered a different solution to help spring the athlete further into success than they thought they could go. For example, a baseball player who just can’t hit a curve ball may swing 100 times before the coach helps him adjust his stance, enabling him to better hit the curve. Make the connection to being stuck in the same place spiritually for a while. The Church offers us the practices of fasting and other forms of sacrifice as disciplines that can help spring us out of spiritual stagnation and into spiritual growth.
4. Ask if they have ever heard of the saying “No pain, no gain.” Ask them what they think this means.
5. Ask the students if the Church asks any sacrifice from them. (Lent, fasting, offering up discomforts, etc.)
6. **Assignment:** Have students look up the following two scripture passages (Colossians 1:24-25 2 and 3:5-6). Based on what they have read, have them write one paragraph explaining the two purposes that sacrifice and suffering can play in a person’s spiritual life.

Note: It is important that the teacher eventually give students the correct answer—suffering and sacrifice is used to “put to death” our passions, properly ordering our fallen passions and resulting appetites under God. Practicing spiritual disciplines such as these not only help the individual grow, but can also gain grace for other members of the Body of Christ. It is a clear teaching of the Church that Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection were perfect and sufficient for salvation. The union of our suffering with Christ’s to gain grace does not diminish Christ’s suffering in the least.

6. Use the following questions to discuss the students’ understanding of the two scripture quotes:
 - What did Paul mean by “put to death” parts of you?
 - How can we accomplish this?
 - Does this scripture help one’s understanding of why the Church asks its members to fast and offer sacrifices at different times?

FINISH WELL

Many coaches have detailed training regimens for athletic success. Remind the students of the rigorous schedules they talked about in the beginning of class. Have them write a few paragraphs on the following question:

If you were a spiritual coach in the Church what would be the spiritual regimen that you give your players in order to condition them to win the spiritual victory of Heaven?

Have the students share their responses with the class.

LESSON 9

DONATELLO ME WHAT IT MEANS!

THE DIFFICULTY AND DANGERS OF INTERPRETING SACRED ART

In the realm of sacred art, it can be dangerous to prematurely attempt to interpret or “read into” an artist’s work without a thorough grounding in the artist’s philosophy and technique. *The Da Vinci Code* makes false conclusions based on an inaccurate interpretation of Leonardo Da Vinci’s famous *Last Supper*. This lesson will help students understand that while interpretation of sacred art can often be difficult, sometimes the message is fairly clear. In this case, students will see that Dan Brown’s claims are very “creative” in the sense that they create a reality that does not exist.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To help students understand that Dan Brown’s interpretation of Leonardo’s *The Last Supper* is flawed.
2. To help students develop an appreciation for the extremely difficult task of artistic interpretation and the dangers of “reading into” artists’ work without substantial knowledge of the artist.

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, and 23.

MATERIALS:

1. Picture of Donatello’s *David* (easily downloaded from the Internet)
2. Picture of Leonardo’s *The Last Supper* (also easily downloaded from the Internet)
3. General Art Supplies
4. Computer (laptop)
5. Digital projector
6. Projection Screen

PRAYER:

Father, you alone hold the cup of salvation. We thank you that from your abundance you allow the streams of life to brim over into our hearts that we may love you, serve you, and adore you more fully. We ask of you the grace to participate in the mystery of your son’s Eucharistic Sacrifice more intimately and a greater appreciation for the Salvation he merited for us. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PROCEDURES:

1. Have the students draw a symbol that represents who they are. Indicate to the students that they will be sharing their work in front of the class. Students will show their drawings to the class, which will then attempt to guess what the intention was behind the symbols.
2. After the class gives their interpretation, allow the artist to say what it was he/she was trying to express in their work, making sure to emphasize when there were sharp contrasts between what the class saw and what the artist intended.
3. Ask the students to imagine how hard it would be to guess each others intentions if they came from different countries, cultures, or even time periods.
4. Draw the analogy of how very hard it is to draw out an artist's intentions if they did not specifically reveal what their intentions were.
5. Show the students a picture of Leonardo's *The Last Supper*. Ask students which figure they believe is the focal point of the painting (Jesus).
6. Then instruct students **NOT** to think of a pink elephant. After a second or two, ask the class (by show of hands) how many of them actually did think of a pink elephant.
7. Tell them about Dan Brown's theories regarding Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, emphasizing that the focal point is Jesus, not John the beloved disciple. Tell students that this is another example of the "power of suggestion"; the pink elephant analogy was the first. Tell your students that if you tell them that John the Beloved is really Mary Magdalene, they might see it by "power of suggestion," even though that was not what caught their focus when they first saw the picture.
8. Share with them Donatello's *David*. Instruct students regarding the style of art which portrayed young males as very effeminate. Let them come to the conclusion that if Leonardo Da Vinci was the only Renaissance artist to portray young males as effeminate characters, there might be something to Dan Brown's claim. However, since nearly all period artists used this same technique, it follows logically that it was a mere reflection of style rather than a coded conspiracy!

FINISH WELL

Have your students meditate briefly on the picture of *The Last Supper*. In order to fully drive home the attempted deception tell students about the book's claim of a "missing" chalice. Next, have students count the cups on the table, whereupon they will find a cup for everyone. At this point, read question 23 in *The Da Vinci Deception* aloud to your students.

Finish the meditation by telling your students that you will tell them what the picture is about. Just because there is not a golden chalice like one see in the Catholic Mass doesn't mean there was one *missing*. Thirteen cups—thirteen people—no missing cup! Finish the meditation telling your students what the picture is *really* about. Lastly, as they look at the picture, read to them Luke 22:14-20, the account of the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist.

LESSON 10

OPUS WHAT?

THE ROLE OF OPUS DEI IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

[Note: Although obviously relevant for Religion class, this lesson is also well suited for use in an English or Study Skills class.]

One of the beautiful things about the Catholic Church and her rich tradition is the variety of styles which she encourages her members to explore in living out their faith. One of the ways this is done is through personal prelatures such as Opus Dei. These prelatures serve the Church by living out a unique charism which God granted to their respective founders. God granted St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, a passion for empowering the laity to live out their faith through the faithful exercise of their daily duties.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To familiarize students with the nature and role of the Catholic institution known as *Opus Dei*.
2. To develop writing skills of students.
3. To develop students ability to navigate/research material on-line.

MATERIALS:

1. Computers with Internet access for students
2. Copies of questions
3. Paper and pens

THE DA VINCI DECEPTION: Use questions 7, 8 and 43.

PRAYER:

O God, through the mediation of Mary our Mother, you granted your priest St. Josemaría countless graces, choosing him as a most faithful instrument to found Opus Dei, a way of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfillment of the Christian's ordinary duties. Grant that I too may learn to turn all the circumstances and events of my life into occasions of loving you and serving the Church, the Pope and all souls with joy and simplicity, lighting up the pathways of this earth with faith and love. Deign to grant me, through the intercession of St. Josemaría, the favor of ... (make your request). Amen. (Conclude with an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.)

PROCEDURES:

1. Have your students read (or read aloud to them) question 8 in *The Da Vinci Deception*. Use this information to highlight, in a brief discussion, the blatant errors that Dan Brown and others put forth about this official Roman Catholic institution. Use this as a point of departure for your students to research and learn the truth about Opus Dei.

2. Inform the students that they should answer the following questions using only the Opus Dei website, www.opusdei.com. Then have the students follow directions and answer the following questions. You can either give the search hints or allow them to search the entire site. Explain to the students that the official website for Opus Dei is being used so that the truth of what this organization actually teaches can be researched. Inform them that many websites may put forth opinion instead of fact, but that the Opus Dei website accurately represents what Opus Dei claims and teaches. [Note: The following questions can be answered by using the FAQ link on the Opus Dei homepage. If you do not have access to the Internet with your class, take the basic information found at the website—especially the mission and charisms of Opus Dei—and give that to your students.]
 - a) What do the words “Opus Dei” mean?
 - b) What is a “personal prelature”?
 - c) What are the different kinds of members in Opus Dei?
 - d) How would Opus Dei proclaim that a married individual should seek Jesus Christ?
 - e) What are Opus Dei’s teachings on women?
 - f) Can priests join Opus Dei?
 - g) What is a *cooperator* in Opus Dei?

[Note: The following questions can be answered by using the “About Opus Dei” link on the Opus Dei homepage.]

- a) What is the aim or mission of Opus Dei?
 - b) What are seven charisms of the spirit of Opus Dei?
 - c) In your own words, describe each of these charisms.

3. After these questions are complete (whether in or out of class) review the answers as a group. Assigning the lesson out of class will allow more time for classroom discussion.

FINISH WELL

Have the students write several paragraphs, either individually or in small groups, creating their own religious order or Catholic prelature. Have them come up with a name, requirements for membership and special charisms, etc., that they would want their organization to have. If time allows, have students share their creations with the class.

Created by: Roy Petitfils and Matt Hebert

Editor: Brian Butler

Contributing Editors: Kelley Brown, Lisa Butler, Dr. Chris Baglow



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