

PASTORAL LETTER OF THE BISHOP OF VANIMO

The Deception of the “Da Vinci Code”

Vanimo 11-6-2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In these days there is a lot of talking in PNG because of a book and a movie published with the title of the “*Da Vinci Code*”. The book is already available in many bookshops and the movie has recently been released and is already in our country. Vanimo will be one of the first places to receive this movie because we are in the gateway of Asia. Unfortunately a lot of Christian people who read this book have doubts about their Faith now and there is the risk that they will abandon the Catholic Church.

We all know the history of this Diocese regarding the practice of cargo cult and some traditional beliefs and it is with this reason that we must be careful that this new movie does not destroy our faith.

I. The content of the “Da Vinci Code”

This book claims to be historical, instead it teaches only personal and blasphemous ideas. The most surprising and heretical ideas are as follows:

- Jesus is not God. He is only a great man. It is the Roman Emperor Constantine who made him god, in the year 325.
- Jesus was just a man who married Mary Magdalene and had a daughter from her and her descendants are still alive today.
- The Bible is not telling the truth because it has been put together by Emperor Constantine only in the fourth century.
- The Catholic Church has been hiding such secrets until now.

II. Such content is totally false.

The author, Dan Brown, says that his book is based on history, but all the Biblical and Historical Scholars deny him. In fact all the Books of the New Testament were already written by the end of the 1st century and they declare that Jesus is God. We know that all the Apostles died to bear witness to the Divinity of Jesus.

The faith in the Divinity of Jesus was already strong in the 1st century and there is no evidence at all for saying that Emperor Constantine put together the Bible in the year 325 A.D (4th century).

As for the alleged marriage of Jesus, the Gospels tell us that Jesus proclaimed the sanctity of marriage, but at the same time he proclaimed that he was celibate.

The New Testament does not allow anybody to doubt about the Divinity of Jesus and about his celibate life.

What the “*Da Vinci Code*” says is totally false. It is only the fruit of a distorted fantasy and an attempt to denigrate the Catholic Belief.

III. It is not the first time that the Divinity of Jesus has been denied.

The Divinity of Christ has been denied various times in history. We can recall three specific moments in history:

- The very day of the Resurrection: when the soldiers referred to the Chief Priests everything that had happened, they were given a large sum of money and instructed to say: “*His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep*”. (Mt. 28:13)
- Some of the first Christians denied that Jesus is God (1 Jn: 1: 18-22).
- In the 4th century, a priest by the name of Arius taught that Jesus was the greatest of God’s creatures, to the point that he became Son of God by adoption, but He was not God by nature. It was one of the greatest and most widely spread heresy of any time. Arius was declared heretic and was excommunicated by the Catholic Church during the Council of Nicea (325).

The heresy of Dan Brown against the Divinity of Jesus and against His purity is not the first in history and will not be the last. Many others will come, and we have to be prepared for that.

IV. The reaction of the Apostles

In the New Testament we find many situations similar to the present one. But the Apostles reacted immediately. For instance:

- At the time of St. John the Evangelist some Christians abandoned the Catholic Faith and denied the Divinity of Jesus. They were rebuked by St. John as follows: “*Children... you heard that the antichrist was coming, so now many antichrists have appeared.They went out from us, but they were not really of our number.... Who is the liar? Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Whoever denies the Father and the Son, this is the antichrist*” (1 Jn: 1: 18-22).
- St. Paul himself has been facing people denying his teaching in Jesus Christ. When he realized that some people were denying his teaching he told the Galatians not to believe anybody changing the teaching he already gave to them. He said with strong words: “*...there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach (to you) a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, even if an angel from Heaven would come to teach them differently, “let that one be accursed.”* (Gal. 1:6-9)

V. How should we react?

First of all we must be aware that the *Da Vinci Code* wants to destroy our Faith. But if we lose our faith in the Divinity of Jesus and in his Resurrection, we are lost. In fact St. Paul says to the Corinthians: “*...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*” (1 Cor 15:17-18).

Therefore, in front of such a terrible menace, we have to protect our faith and the faith of our brethren, as follows:

- *Renew your Faith in the Bible, which is the Word of God. God cannot cheat us;*
- *Put the Bible in great honor in your little prayer room in your house;*
- *Read the Bible more than before. Read it everyday, alone and with your family;*
- *Start a Bible Group in your Parish and in your village;*
- *Ask your Parish Priest to give talks on this subject, and to organize debates about it;*
- *Listen to the Catholic radio, which very often talks about the Bible, as the Word of God;*
- *Be proud of your Faith and strengthen the faith of those who have doubt about it.*

In this moment Jesus is again offended and is in deep suffering. We cannot leave him alone as He was in the Garden of Olives. We have to stand up and show to everybody our Faith. Jesus says: *“Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father.”* (Mt 10: 32-33)

May the Lord bless and grant you the Grace to be strong in your Faith,

**+ Cesare Bonivento, PIME,
Bishop of Vanimu,
Feast of the Holy Trinity.**