



Keeping in Touch

A quarterly newsletter for Catholic homeschooling families

AMDG

JMJ

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Spreading Joy with an Old Fashioned Letter

We are sitting in the van in the post office car park. Today, Imogen has the honour of collecting the post from our box. She is running towards us clutching a small bundle of envelopes and there is a huge smile on her face.

"I've got a letter. It's from Tess," she announces. She leans over the seat and drops an envelope onto Felicity's lap. "There's one for you too, Felicity."

"Did I get a letter?" asks Sophie. Little people just love receiving mail but don't always remember that the best way to get a letter is to first write one of their own.

Felicity examines her envelope and remarks, "Such beautiful stationery and look at the handwriting. I wonder who it's from." She finally decides to tear open the envelope regretting that she has to damage her beautiful piece of mail. "It's from Jan. I should have known. She always takes such care with her letters." After a few moments scanning the letter, Felicity adds, "It's not only the handwriting and paper: what Jan has written is beautiful too. She is such an accomplished letter writer."

Jan is a fellow parishioner and we have collected many exquisite cards and letters from her in the years we have known her. All Jan's cards are handmade and she always adds such a touching and thoughtful message in her copy-book script. When we receive one of Jan's creations we feel so cared about, so loved. She has gone to a lot of trouble just for us.

Jan has not lost the art of letter writing as so many of us have. She doesn't own a computer and perhaps has not been distracted by email. I love receiving and sending emails: they are easy and quick to send and help us all stay in touch. But there is a time and place for the old fashioned letter too. There is always such a feeling of pleasure when we find a letter waiting for us in our post box. It is read and re-read, passed around and read again.

I have been trying to encourage my children to improve their letter writing. It is easy to motivate the little ones to write.

The only problem is setting aside enough time to help them. Art and craft supplies can come in handy when writing letters with younger children. Letters can be dictated or written on various kinds of papers such as photocopy, lined or coloured. Cards and postcards, either home-made or purchased, are also suitable. Pencils, pens, markers even crayons can be used for the writing. Colours, especially gold and silver, look effective. Decorations can be added around the edges of the letter using stamps, pictures, stickers and glitter. We have made our own envelopes out of wrapping paper using sticky labels as address labels. The only problem the little ones have is getting mum to remember to post their creations!

I encourage our older children to correspond by letter too. There are always thank you letters to be written, Godparents to stay in contact with and grandparents who treasure every note from a grandchild. I have recently been working on letter writing with Duncan. I have these awful visions of him leaving home and never hearing from him again. I have told him he can't leave home until he is a competent letter writer: until I am sure he will write to me regularly and tell me all his news. (It's strange: he can write pages and pages of a story but gets stuck thinking about what to say in a letter.) Letter writing can seem like such an unnecessary skill in these days of mobile phones but we don't know what situations we will find ourselves in, in the future. Letters are the only means Felicity and I have of communicating with each other in between our visits to the convent. Felicity's missives from the other side of the enclosure are so entertaining and are stamped with her personality: they are a great consolation.

The older children like to write using the computer and I must admit that for long letters this is my preference too. Letters turn out so much neater. But there is no real substitute for good handwriting and I have been trying to convince the children it is a skill they really should work on. Maybe one day they will find themselves without access to a computer. This is the situation Felicity finds herself in: the nuns do not own a computer.

It is also courteous to write neatly and legibly.

I don't write nearly as many letters as I should but I do write lots of notes. I try to have a supply of cards and stamps on hand. Attractive cards of good quality can be found for a dollar each. I buy a large supply together with a booklet of stamps at regular intervals. It only takes ten minutes to write a thank you note, a birthday greeting or a few lines to stay in touch.

When Felicity was studying with the Open University, she received back one of her assignments several weeks later than she was expecting it. With her work was a note from her tutor, together with a giant Freddo frog. The chocolate was offered as an apology for the delay in marking. It was a nice touch and we thought about how we could include little extras with our own letters. We decided the additions had to be small and inexpensive: we didn't want the receiver to feel they had to send us something in return. Here are some of our ideas:

Dried flowers, leaves, seed pods, herbal or special tea bags, packets of seeds, feathers, shells, used stamps, stickers, holy cards, holy

(handmade, maybe laminated), photos, buttons, a piece of ribbon or lace, decorated paper hearts or snowflakes, paper dolls and pictures to colour and sweet treats.

By making cards or using inexpensive ones, and adding a small extra, we can afford to remember many friends' and family's special days such as birthdays. It really is the thought and not the expensive gift which counts.

Perhaps you need to catch up on your letter writing or the children have lots of thank you notes to write. First put together a letter writing kit: search the craft cupboard for supplies, buy a stack of inexpensive cards and collect together some small items to include as an extra touch. Then set aside some family writing time. While the children are improving their handwriting, practising their spelling and enjoying creating they will be spreading much joy and happiness by making someone's day very special. And maybe you will experience the pleasures of having a full mailbox yourself!

Sue Elvis

Book Review

'Angel in the Waters'

Written by Regina Doman.

Illustrated by Ben Hatke.

Published by Sophia Institute Press

Reviewed by Gerard Doodeman

"Do you remember being in Mommy's tummy?"

"Yes"

"What was it like?"

"It was warm, and dark, and there was an angel there."

This is the conversation that took place between the authoress and her two year old sister that inspired this wonderful book.

'Angel in the Waters' is about a baby's time in the womb, birth and first experiences after birth.

The child in the womb is kept company by his/her (we are not told their gender) guardian angel. They learn about this thing called 'mother' and of the journey to the world outside. After birth the angel promises to be with them through their whole life and, when it is time, lead them to the world outside this world.

'Angel in the Waters' is a favourite of my children as we prepare to welcome our own new baby into this world.



A word from Miss Mason - On Nature Study

**“As soon as he is able to keep it himself,
a nature diary is a source of delight to a child.
Every day's walk gives him something to enter...” --Charlotte Mason**

Six points Miss Mason puts forth in her discussion of the instruments of education (pg 177 of Home Education):

- a) *That the knowledge most valuable to the child is that which he gets with his own eyes and ears and fingers in the open air.*
- b) *That the claims of the schoolroom (including the homeschool room) should not be allowed to encroach on the child's right to long hours of daily exercise and investigation.*
- c) *That the child should be taken daily, if possible to scenes—moor or meadow, park, common, or shore—where he may find new things to examine and so add to his store of real knowledge.*
- d) *That vigorous healthful play is, in its turn, as important as lessons, as regards both bodily health and brainpower.*
- e) *That the child, though under supervision, should be left to himself—both that he may go to work in his own way on the ideas he receives, and also that he may be more open to natural influences.*
- f) *That the happiness of the child is the condition of his progress, that his lessons should be joyous, and that the occasions of friction in the schoolroom are greatly deprecated.*

FITZROY FALLS HOMESCHOOLERS' CAMPS

Camps are held twice each year at the popular Fitzroy Falls Conference Centre.

To secure a place, you need to send a \$50 deposit made out to Homeschooling Catholics, soon after the opening date for bookings as these camps are very popular. The opening dates for bookings these camps are:

April camp bookings open 1st November.
Please send bookings to Mr & Mrs Brearley
Park St, Wingello. 2579

September camp bookings open 1st May
Please send these bookings to Mr & Mrs Vieira
1585 Taralga Rd, Tarlo. 2580 phone 4829-0113

Please note the September camp is almost full, but a list will be compiled of interested people in case we get any cancellations. So, if you're interested in coming to this years' camp please phone before sending any money.

A great day for Catholics as we celebrate the Opening of Campion College



Amid much anticipation from the tertiary education sector and the Catholic community, Australia's first Liberal Arts institution, Campion College, was officially opened on March 24th.

More than 40 members of the clergy, dozens of political and business dignitaries and hundreds of guests attended the opening onsite at the College in Old Toongabbie.

"Campion College is not only a novel and exciting prospect, but a welcome addition to both Australian tertiary education and Australian Catholic education," said Cardinal Pell, who was represented at the opening by Bishop Julian Porteous.

Modelled on the prestigious Catholic Liberal Arts Colleges of the United States and Europe, Campion College is the first of its kind in Australia, offering an integrated and interactive program of study to teach students to acquire knowledge, think and cultivate wisdom.

There are 16 students studying on campus, four of which are home schooled and others have had some experience of home schooling. Celeste Badman from Maryborough and Tim Wallace from Brisbane are with us, enjoying their first semester having obtained a scholarship from Callanan Foundation. As Celeste says "Campion College embodies for me the ultimate dream, the opportunity of discovering truth and therefore freedom"

Most students use their scholarship to pay living expenses and differ their fee payment through FEE HELP. Kieran Jackson from Northern NSW is a recipient of the Parramatta scholarship, which is not linked to teaching as a profession. Bethany Fahey lives on campus and has found a friendly atmosphere at Campion College. Bethany completed a TAFE program prior to coming to Campion but is enjoying the challenge of the non vocational course immensely. (More information on funding and scholarships are below).

All of our students study a broad range of subjects including history, literature, philosophy, science, mathematics and theology. Classes are taught by Campion's outstanding scholars in small class groups, heightening participation and encouraging students to become life-long thinkers and learners with a passion for excellence.

"With the motto '*Educating for Eternity*', Campion College hopes to educate students to become the leaders of their societies and of the Catholic faith, and we believe that we will produce generations of graduates who will be active contributors to their society," said Campion President Dr John Fleming.

In his opening address today, Dr Fleming discussed the dedication of Campion to providing a quality liberal arts education, based on the great books and ideas that have shaped Western culture - a distinct break from the vocationally-orientated direction of many Australian universities.

“Driven by economic concerns Arts faculties in most universities have increasingly felt the pressure to produce ‘popular’ courses that will attract students, any students, and courses that might satisfy the increasingly shrill call from sections of the business community for more vocationally orientated university qualifications. These drivers are at odds with the purpose of a university.

“Campion College is needed in Australia. In one sense it is a return to the original idea of a university. In another sense it represents a real attempt to provide students with the kind of education that seriously addresses the question of meaning, taking full account of the Christian religion and the Catholic Faith in particular which has been such a formative influence in Western culture,” said Dr Fleming.

The College is located at Old Toongabbie, near Parramatta and is funded entirely by private donations.

Originally a Marist Fathers seminary, the heritage building has been extensively renovated to provide world-class learning facilities, and is equipped with state-of-the-art lecture theatres and a well-resourced library featuring many rare and valuable items.

Campion College is seeking university status, and within two years will offer post-graduate degrees in education, business and media and communications.

Campion has received some feedback that there is a belief that fees for studying at Campion are too expensive. Here, Paul Abela, the College's Development Officer explains FEE HELP and the 15 scholarships currently available each year.

Home schooling families are quite rightly concerned about the cost of tertiary education, and particularly the cost of going to Campion College, because we believe homeschoolers are aware of the benefits of a Campion education and would prefer to see their children at Campion College.

This is particularly so for families with many children who all need to be educated and educated in a way which is complimentary to their previous experiences and in an atmosphere of care and Catholic spirituality.

Unfortunately the reality of tertiary education today is that these days the vast majority of students seek loans to pay for their education. Campion has been approved to access FEE HELP which is the private sectors version of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). It is a loan from the Commonwealth government which is repaid at 4% per year through the tax system.

It is important to know that students do NOT need to pay for Campion upfront and only ever start paying back their loan when they are in a position to do so... this being only after a student earns over \$38,000 per year at 4% of their income. This being the case, in the first year of earning this much money, students would pay approx \$1600 to the government through their tax. Naturally it takes a while to pay this off but as income increases it becomes less burdensome.

Professor Simon Mariginson, a leader in commentary on higher education believes FEE HELP to be a “cheap loans scheme” as it does not attract interest and has a high repayment threshold. Students are admitted to a secular university through HECS are required to pay in the same way through the tax system at about \$7,300 per year, this being about \$5,000 plus a 25% loading. Students who seek full fee places at university are charged well above this, about \$15,000 per year.

Campion fees are in line with most private fee's this being between \$11,000 and \$13,000 per year. Thus if students were to attend the Sydney Institute of Business and Technology (SIBT) the private arm of Macquarie University, the cost is for a Diploma is \$13,000 per year.

Students are given the choice to live on campus. Campion charges \$275 per week for room and board for 40 weeks. However many students have found it just as easy to live off campus at lower rates in Toongabbie and some with Catholic families. For example, one student pays \$180 per week but cooks for himself.

Shared accommodation currently in Parramatta is averaging about \$130 per week, a furnished room is being advertised for on the net this week for \$125 per week.

Campion does understand that costs are a factor and now have 15 scholarships and hope to have more by the time 2007 roles around.

Here is a summary of these

Campion Teaching Scholarships	Open Scholarships
<p>The Catholic Education Offices (CEO), of the Archdioceses of Sydney and Melbourne have agreed to provide scholarships for students wishing to enroll at Campion College with the intention of pursuing a career in teaching.</p> <p>The scholarship provides for an amount of \$7000 to be paid to a student each year for four years whilst they attend Campion and study to be a teacher. There are four scholarships per year available at each Archdiocese.</p> <p>The Dioceses of Lismore has also made available \$5000 per year for four years to one student already enrolled at Campion who wishes to pursue teaching and wishes to teach on the NSW North Coast.</p> <p>Graduates will need to commit to two years of teaching in a school run by that CEO.</p> <p>A post graduate qualification in teaching will most likely be offered at Campion from 2007, and this, combined with a Bachelor of Arts in the Liberal Arts, will allow you to qualify as a teacher.</p>	<p>The L W Kelly Scholarships of the Callanan Foundation.</p> <p>Four scholarships for \$7000 per year for three years. These are being made available by the Callanan Foundation on an equity basis, contributing scholarships to students who may not be able to afford to come to Campion College. Students need to make a case to be awarded the scholarship.</p> <p>Parramatta</p> <p>The Diocese of Parramatta have made two scholarships available of \$7000 over three years. A preference in awarding these scholarships are for the students to live in the area and have some musical ability.</p> <p>To be considered for all these scholarships applicants must be practicing Catholics.</p> <p>Students wishing to apply for these scholarships should obtain a form from Campion and lodge an application concurrently with their Application for Admission to Campion College.</p> <p>All scholarship money can be used in any way to make it easier for the student and family. Students who can commute to campus and live at home can use the money to pay there FEE HELP debt others can use it for accommodation.</p>

I trust that this assists Home Schooling families more seriously consider Campion. Campion is the type of college which understands homeschoolers and we want to ensure that every opportunity is given for a remarkable and excellent education.

Paul Abela

Finn

By Callum Elvis

I have always had an obsession with pets (even if these crazes do not last long). But most of my enterprises have never passed the \$7.50 rat. However, shortly before February 2006 I caught wind of an opportunity to acquire one of my fascinations. I researched, read and provided facts, and slowly twisted Mum and Dad around.

Finally they agreed, but on one condition: I must clean my room before my birthday. I agreed thinking, hah! How easy! But on Wednesday 14 of February (four days before my birthday), I was still to be found with a bedroom currently occupying the state of "Disaster Zone". Hurriedly I went into over-drive, picking up rubbish at a rate of three pieces a minute. Mum was getting angry, "You'll get no presents at this rate!" she warned. (She really meant it.) But by Friday afternoon, I felt that I had completed this somewhat mammoth task. Every shelf and side was scrubbed, the floor visible and even vacuumed!

Saturday morning was bright and cheerful. After something of a hesitant start the day began to race along. After lunch, Mum proposed that we should go look for this "Wonder Pet" that I wished to buy. Alas, we went from pet store to pet store, but not a wonder pet was to be found. Dejectedly we went home. Then Dad had brilliant idea: we would ring up and see if my pet could be ordered. Welby pet store said, "Yes" and that the pet would be in on Monday. I was elated and eagerly ticked off the days until Monday with more anticipation that I had my birthday.

Monday morning we received the news that my pet had arrived. That afternoon we rushed over to buy it. The shop doors practically burst as I rushed through them. There, near the counter, was the object of my desire, a pair of white ferrets! The lady took them out to show me. I had to choose one. There really wasn't much of a choice: they were both practically the same. Both were snowy white with red eyes.

I chose and hurried to the counter. Somewhere in between those two points, we managed to also get a house, a ferret keeping book, and 2kg of food. I puffed up with pride as the ferret was boxed and paid for.

We housed him in the guinea pigs' old indoor cage (they had been recently turfed out to a hutch outside). From the start he was trouble. I was "slightly" afraid of him biting and he was bursting with excitement. When we let him out, he cavorted around the room leaping and flaring. I was terrified and could not bring myself to pick him up, thinking that he would attack me. This problem was solved by me buying a leather gardening glove and Mum buying some stop chew: a bitter foul-tasting acidic spray that we sprayed on our hands. We had one more problem, a name. No one had any very good ideas. Then I decided that he'd be called Glorfindle. This worked for a while, until Mum began to call him Doorhandle. I endured this for a while, but then, in desperation shortened his name to Finn. Since then he has acquired the nick-name "Ferret Features".

Finn is very smelly (so says everyone but me!). Dad says it's a furry smell. And I have to give him a bath every now and then. He hates it. When he is splashed with water, you can see how thin he is. He looks very much like a drowned rat!

Finn sleeps for twenty hours out of each day. He curls up under the rag I've given him and doesn't make a sound. All you can see is a covered lump, gently rising and falling with each breath.

Finn is a carnivore and he eats ferret food (or kitten food): both are dried meat shapes.

Exercise is great fun. My bedroom is his play area. When I put Finn down, he at once runs off. He has a curious walk: he walks with his back arched and stretches out, then arches his back again. This movement is very much like that of a slinky. He loves to explore: he is always into everything he can get at. I once even caught him "ferreting" through my drawers. When he's happy, he lets out a quiet "dook, dook" noise, a bit like a chicken! .

A Public Act of Reparation in Sydney

by Richard Lyon

Sometimes I take him for walks, using the guinea pigs' leash. He loves it outside. He finds the grass excellent to burrow in.

Not long ago, Mum decided that I wasn't paying enough attention to Finn: he kept trying to chew his way out of his cage, through metal bars. I protested, but Mum decided to see about selling him. We obtained permission to put a notice into the Welby pet shop. But meanwhile (as I dragged the notice writing out as long as I could) a larger cage arrived, ordered by Mum (and forgotten about) some time ago. We put Finn into this and he was perfectly happy (I still haven't written the notice).

Just a few days ago, Mum saw a mouse in the living room while Dad, Imogen, and I were out (at choir). When we got home, she told us. We rubbed our hands with glee. At last Finn could earn his keep. We fetched him from his cage and set him down near the chair. He went wild, bouncing around the room. But he didn't catch the mouse. It happened again. The mouse was seen scooting under one of the living room chairs. We again fetched Finn. This time we placed him near the chair and lifted it up. The mouse burst from underneath, running straight for Finn. He leaped three feet into the air and bolted, too scared attack.

Ferrets breed only once a year, around Christmas. If you do want to buy a ferret, think carefully. Can you stand the smell? A ferret may not be the best thing to have around if you have little children/brothers and sisters or mothers ('I've found out from experience). Finn likes to nip at my little sister's ankles and he tries to hang off the bottom of Mum's skirt. Do you have the energy to exercise him every day?

Finn and I are on good terms. The glove has become a play-thing and there are no more remarks about selling him (yet). I think a ferret is an exciting, amusing pet but a lot of work!

Callum Elvis

Dear friends,

Better let you know how things went that Thursday night (18th) for you probably will not find out otherwise.

We staged the Public Act of Reparation across the street from the George Street Greater Union Cinema, which allowed free access to the establishment (a police directive) while it also gave movie-goers a better view of our 5m x 1.5m banner that read:

"The Da Vinci Code blasphemes Our Lord Jesus Christ, disdains the Truth and maligns the Catholic Church. We offer Our Divine Saviour this Public Act of Reparation and decry this religious vilification." It was a good thing we did for we had a sizeable crowd. Not everyone could spend the full three hours (6:00-9:00pm), but we estimate between 250-300 people participated over the course of the evening. We were joined by Fr Terence Mary and Fr John Rizzo, with the statue of Our Lady of Fatima presiding. We prepared a flyer at the last minute (see page 14) and half-way through the event we had distributed all 1,500 copies. We prayed the rosary and sang hymns, while a few of our numbers engaged in lively discussions with passers-by. One of us even ventured into the cinema foyer and distributed our flyer amongst those in the box office queue. The event went very smoothly, with the police officers (there were only two) commenting that it was the "best protest we have ever been assigned to".

Channel Nine took extensive footage shortly after we commenced and Channel Seven followed suite later in the evening. Fr Terence was interviewed by 2GB Radio, but the only confirmed coverage we know of was on Channel Seven's "Sunrise" program (Friday morning). Not that media coverage was our intent, but we gave them the opportunity to show some impartiality. In this regard, "The Sydney Morning Herald" has again blatantly shown for which side they are barracking.

In the Thursday (18th) edition, the SMH carried the following articles on

"The Da Vinci Code":

- "The sound of no hands clapping"
- "The secret they'll share with everyone"
- "Da Vinci's night a lesson in decorum" (which

mentions that no protesters showed up for the two advance screenings of the movie in Sydney; if we had known of them, we would have obliged)

- "Why Catholic women are getting cross"

The same edition of the SMH also carried two opinion pieces: "The tale ignites an overdue debate" ("...about the power, history and masculinity of the Catholic Church") and "Lie wrapped in truth is still a lie" which is the only piece I have read that actually defends the Catholic Church (albeit incompletely) against the "novel's" slanderous insinuations against the Spouse of Christ (and the authors are Anglicans!).

Here follows the list of articles from the SMH Friday (19th) edition (the day after our rally):

Halfway through the rally we spoke to the assembly addressing a few of the concerns raised in regards to this effort:

- Earlier in the day we had received a number of calls inquiring if the movie had been officially condemned by the Church. First off, there are certain heinous sins which by their very nature do not require "official" condemnation (for instance, serial rape, murder or paedophilia), and to suspend one's judgement and consequently one's reaction in these cases could actually be a sin of omission. Blasphemy is certainly a heinous offence, worse than all the others I listed. However, we are gladdened to know that many Church leaders have unequivocally denounced "The Da Vinci Code", most notably Cardinal Francis Arinze and Archbishop Angelo Amato (the latter is Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith). Cardinal Arinze called upon lay Catholics to do something: "Christians must not just sit back and say it is enough for us to forgive and forget... Sometimes it is our duty to do something practical." Numerous American prelates (15 and counting) have supported similar initiatives in the United States. The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt Bishop of the Diocese of New Ulm, Minnesota wrote to our sister organisation in America "I offer you and the members of American TFP my support in protesting the movie version of "The Da Vinci Code". Having read the novel, I believe that it deliberately seeks to

undermine the historical as well as theological truths about Jesus Christ as presented in the Gospels and verified by the Tradition of Christian faith. Many people will unwittingly be deceived by the outrageous claims that are made in this work by Dan Brown. Surely there is evil in its intent. Americans speak with their wallets. I encourage all decent, truth-loving persons to boycott this film and to ask others to do the same."

I am not aware of an Australian bishop who has made similar declarations. However, ABC Radio did report Friday (19th) morning that the Apostolic Nuncio to Australia had declared that there was no reason to be concerned that "The Da Vinci Code" would have a negative effect upon Christians for both the novel and movie are avowedly fiction. I have serious reservations with the Nuncio's line of thought.

Assuming "The Da Vinci Code" is "merely" a work of fiction, there is still reason for concern. As a friend pointed out to me, a filthy joke is still filthy. Blasphemous fiction still offends Our Lord. An analogy we included in our flyer will help illustrate my point.

Imagine that, for whatever morbid reason, some sleazy journalist decided to make money by writing a novel in which he depicted our mother as having an adulterous affair; that she consequently gave birth to a child and when her husband eventually uncovered the truth, she had him murdered. Even though the book was a work of fiction, we would be considered the most ungrateful of children if we went to see a movie based on this book and watched such fantasies involving our mother being enacted on the screen. As Catholics, we are bound to love God even more than our own mothers, and we should be even more offended to know that He is being blasphemed in this movie. The movie is an affront to the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ even if it is "merely" a work of fiction.

However, statements by Dan Brown (the author) raise serious concerns regarding what he means by "fiction". In the flyer in which we announced our Act of Reparation, we quoted an interview in which he affirmed: "I began

the research for "The Da Vinci Code" as a sceptic. I entirely expected, as I researched the book, to disprove this theory [concerning the relationship between Our Lord and St Mary Magdalene and subsequent cover-up], and after numerous trips to Europe and two years of research, I really became a believer." He also affirmed in an interview to "Time" magazine that if he were writing it as non-fiction, the book would not be different. A program I saw on SBS (Newshour with Jim Lehrer) noted Dan Brown's ambiguity and informed that the author now refuses to give interviews.

There are many more thoughts I would like to share with you on this topic, but it has taken me over a week of my "spare" time to write this email. In a later edition of "Quest" (the next issue is already closed) we will carry some articles on this matter. I will bring this current missive to a close, reiterating the principal points:

- 1) Far worse than being merely "historically inaccurate", "The Da Vinci Code" is blasphemous (whether or not it is fictional in the mind of the author);
- 2) We should take advantage of every opportunity that comes our way to clarify this matter to Catholics and non-Catholics alike;
- 3) We can also express our compassion for Our Lord by boycotting theatres that are showing the movie (I am very critical of the "othercott" idea; how can one entertain one's self in one room while Our Lord is being blasphemed in an adjacent room) and by boycotting Sony products;
- 3) The preceding 2 points are excellent forms of reparation (while it does not dispense private devotional forms of reparation, i.e. holy hours, rosaries, etc.).

I have also attached a few photos taken that night.

In closing, one might ask if the Public Act of Reparation was a success. As you know, in spite of critical reviews (thus making it a lousy "artistic" piece of blasphemy), the movie scored the second largest grossing international release in history and if I am not mistaken, it recovered all expenses on its first three days. So if our primary goal was to turn away potential viewers, we failed. But our

primary goal was to prove our love for Our Lord by showing that we were not afraid to publicly decry the grievous insult being levelled against Him on a monumental scale while the majority of His followers remained either ignorant or indifferent. This we achieved, and we are grateful to Him for allowing us this honour: of standing by Him at this tragic moment as His Mother, St John and the Holy Women stood by Him at the foot of the Cross, mindful that we represented hundreds more who could not be there in the flesh.

God bless,
Richard

Ps I recommend to your prayers a good friend of ours in Sydney, Mr George Karam, who was just diagnosed with rampant cancer this weekend. George and his dutiful wife Elvyre have kindly assisted us in numerous small practical tasks over recent years, freeing me up a bit to focus more time on my primary duties (which--granted--has Included more marches & protests this year than I would have liked; I definitely prefer more "positive" action, but there are times when one has no other alternative than to cry out and say "Stop! Don't you see what you are doing?").



Gemma-Rose

Gemma-Rose is my two year old sister who is cuddly and sweet. She has a lot of nicknames and sometimes she likes one so much she won't answer to Gemma-Rose. One of her favourite names is Belle. She likes watching *Little House on the Prairie*. She sometimes likes to be called Mary or Laura because they are her favourite characters. A thing she likes to do is play Little House with her as Laura, Charlotte as Mary and Sophie as Carrie or Grace. I usually fill in for all the rest of the characters such as Ma or Pa. Gemma-Rose has a special nickname for me which is Cinderella. Gemma-Rose calls one of my brothers King Kong. She can't say the k sound so it comes out as Ping Pong which makes us laugh.

Gemma-Rose speaks really clearly now and make herself understood. This can sometimes get me into trouble. One day Gemma-Rose said to Mum, "Cinderella got a hole. I show you. Come with me". And she took Mum's hand and ran to my room to lift up my skirt and point to a hole in my brand new tights while saying triumphantly, "There!" Gemma is very intelligent. Once I needed to mop the floor and I was doing something so I said, "Gemma can you please get the wet wipes and the mop?" and off she went to find them.

I will never forget when she was born. Dad told Felicity in the night that Mum had gone to the hospital. The day before Gemma-Rose was born, Mum and I had been walking through a parking lot and Mum tripped over an edge of concrete. She fell and grazed her knee quite badly. We went into St Vincent de Paul's (Bowral) to do some shopping and as soon as the ladies saw Mum's knee they insisted on bathing it and sorting it out.

Gemma is really friendly although she pretends to be shy. She LOVES attention and she gets it. Everybody coos over her hair and her eyes. Her hair is platinum blond and her eyes are the most beautiful blue. All of our family have blue eyes. When she was a baby she wasn't very well so we all carried her round and now when I look back, I think it is a wonder that she ever grew legs at all. This all goes to show that she loves attention and is used to getting a lot. So now she wants and seems to think it is her privilege to get a LOT of attention whether we like it or not.

When Felicity went to the convent, Gemma-Rose to her surprise and joy, found that she was to have her own bed. We did some moving around of beds and Gemma-Rose and I ended up sharing Felicity's old room. Gemma-Rose was delighted with her bottom bunk. But Mum thought she would soon be asking to go back to Mum's room. Gemma-Rose used to wake up a lot in the night and it was Mum's job to see to her. Now I have to put her back to sleep whenever she wakes up. I don't really mind waking up in the night except when I wake up grumpy in the morning.

There are lots of ups and downs to having a little sister who loves you very much, like her seeking shelter from reprimands by running to you and you feel like a traitor when you hand her over for punishment. I love Gemma-Rose and I will not change her for a MILLION DOLLARS.

Imogen Elvis

CHARITY ON THE PART OF THE SUPERIORS

Anonymous

Superiors would do well to remember St Bernard's advice to his brother, Bartholomew, when appointing him abbot of one of his communities.

"How shall I handle men?", asked Bartholomew, and Bernard replied, "By remembering that they are men. That was my first mistake. I thought they were Angels. They aren't. They are only men and some of them are babies. The Holy Rule tells you all. Meditate it carefully. Lay aside all harshness. There is one danger I warn you of: - 'Be careful of the murmuring , discontented soul; especially when it breaks forth in abuse and insult of yourself. Remember then that you are a physician, not a lord a and prepare for that soul's delirium not punishment. But soothing treatment. Have tenderness, charity and consideration.' I think the ideal abbot is he who can be a mother in his caresses but a father in his corrections. We are members under a thorn-crowned Head, it is true; we are austere contemplatives, it is also true; but the truest of all things is that wayfarers, foot-sore prodigals limping our way home to God, exiles who are lonely , very lonely, and men who have sensitive hearts. Don't break them. Don't even ache them. But attune them all to the great Heart of Christ and you can do that through gentleness that is never weakness, kindness and consideration that is never sentimental, charity that is as virile as was the Christ' And again he writes:-

"Never hurt the feelings of anyone under you.

Be loved by all because you love all". Take for you motto the words of St.

Benedict's rule:-Strive to be the servant of all rather than a sovereign.

Strive to be what you are called—a father."

FRIENDS OF THE SUFFERING SOULS

Mt. St. Michael PO Box 73 Helensburgh NSW, 2508

An organization formed to assist the souls in Purgatory by arranging for Masses to be offered each and every day of the year for their benefit.

The Friends of the Suffering Souls is an organization that assists the souls in Purgatory by arranging for Masses to be offered each and every day of the year for ALL THE SOULS IN PURGATORY and especially for deceased members.

There is ONLY ONE OBLIGATION incurred by becoming a Friend of the Suffering Souls. Each member has to organise on behalf of the association at least one Mass each year. This Mass has to be offered for: "All the souls in purgatory especially those members of FOSS"

Members can however organise as many Masses as they wish to add to the novena but they must organise at least one. So in a similar manner to the Living Rosary of St. Philomena, we combine together to offer a continuous novena of Masses for all the Holy Souls and especially for deceased members.

More Information: 'www.1earth.net/~foss'

Email: 'e.mail@1earth.net'

Why Are We Here?

We are here to offer a **Public Act of Reparation** to Our Lord Jesus for the blasphemy levelled against Him by *The Da Vinci Code*. The movie version of Dan Brown's bestseller is being released here tonight, multiplying the number of instances where its blasphemous assertions will be repeated.

Why Is The Da Vinci Code Blasphemous?

Blasphemy is contemptuous speech against God. The central theme of *The Da Vinci Code* is the uncovering of a centuries old "secret" hitherto suppressed by key figures within the Catholic Church: that Our Lord Jesus Christ married St Mary Magdalene and that their bloodline is in fact the "Holy Grail." Such an assertion denies the Divinity of Christ by implicitly reducing Him to the level of a mere creature: it is tantamount to saying that He is not God.

But It Is Only Fiction!

Just because something is not true does not mean it is not offensive. A filthy joke is still filthy, and in a society with a minimum sense of dignity, children are taught to abhor such indecency. Blasphemous fiction is still blasphemous.

Neither should the intention of the perpetrator mitigate our compassion for the offended; who would ever think of consoling a mother who has just lost her son in a car accident by saying "at least he was not murdered!" While wilful murder is definitely worse than manslaughter, such considerations are tactless—to say the least—when attempting to mitigate the sorrows of a loving mother who has suffered such a loss. Similarly, when Our Lord Jesus Christ is blasphemed, the fact that the blasphemy is avowedly "fictional" is of little consolation to a Christian worthy of the name; Our Lord is offended, nonetheless.

However, there are serious concerns about what the author means when he avows it is a work of fiction, for Dan Brown has also affirmed that if he were writing it as non-fiction, it would not have been different: "I began the research for *The Da Vinci Code* as a sceptic. I entirely expected, as I researched the book, to disprove this theory, and after numerous trips to Europe and two years of research, I really became a believer."

An Act of Love

A proof of love is to suffer with the beloved when he is offended: the greater the offence, the greater our compassion should be. At one time or another we have all suffered ingratitude, we may have been defamed or even worse calumniated. In those hours of sorrow, our true friends are revealed, for they are the ones who decry the wrong committed and console us by assuring us they realise we have been wronged.

Imagine that, for whatever morbid reason, some sleazy journalist decided to make money by writing a novel in which he depicted our mother as having an adulterous affair; that she gave birth to a child and when her husband eventually discovered who was the true father, she had him murdered. Even though the book was a work of fiction, we would be considered the most ungrateful of children if we went to see a movie based on this book and watched such fantasies involving our mother being enacted on the screen.

As Catholics, we are bound to love God even more than our own mothers, and we should be even more offended to know that He is being blasphemed in this theatre. Hence we are here to publicly express our compassion for Our Divine Saviour by praying, singing religious hymns and decrying this senseless affront to His Divine Person.

What Do We Hope to Achieve?

Sony Pictures are the producers of this movie and they are obviously afraid that this film will receive negative publicity; in America they have hired a prominent public relations firm, Sitrick & Co, in an attempt to stave-off any controversy. They have also hired a second American firm, Grace Hill Media, which specializes in courting Christian audiences. We hope to prove to Sony that their fears are founded; that there are Catholics who are offended when Our Lord is blasphemed and the Catholic Church is vilified. We also want to inform the public in general our reasons for doing so. But our primary reason is to emulate the example of Veronica—she who during the Passion of Our Saviour braved the Roman soldiers and angry mob to wipe the Holy Face of Our Lord—and publicly display our compassion for Our God and King when He has once again been the victim of man's selfishness.

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