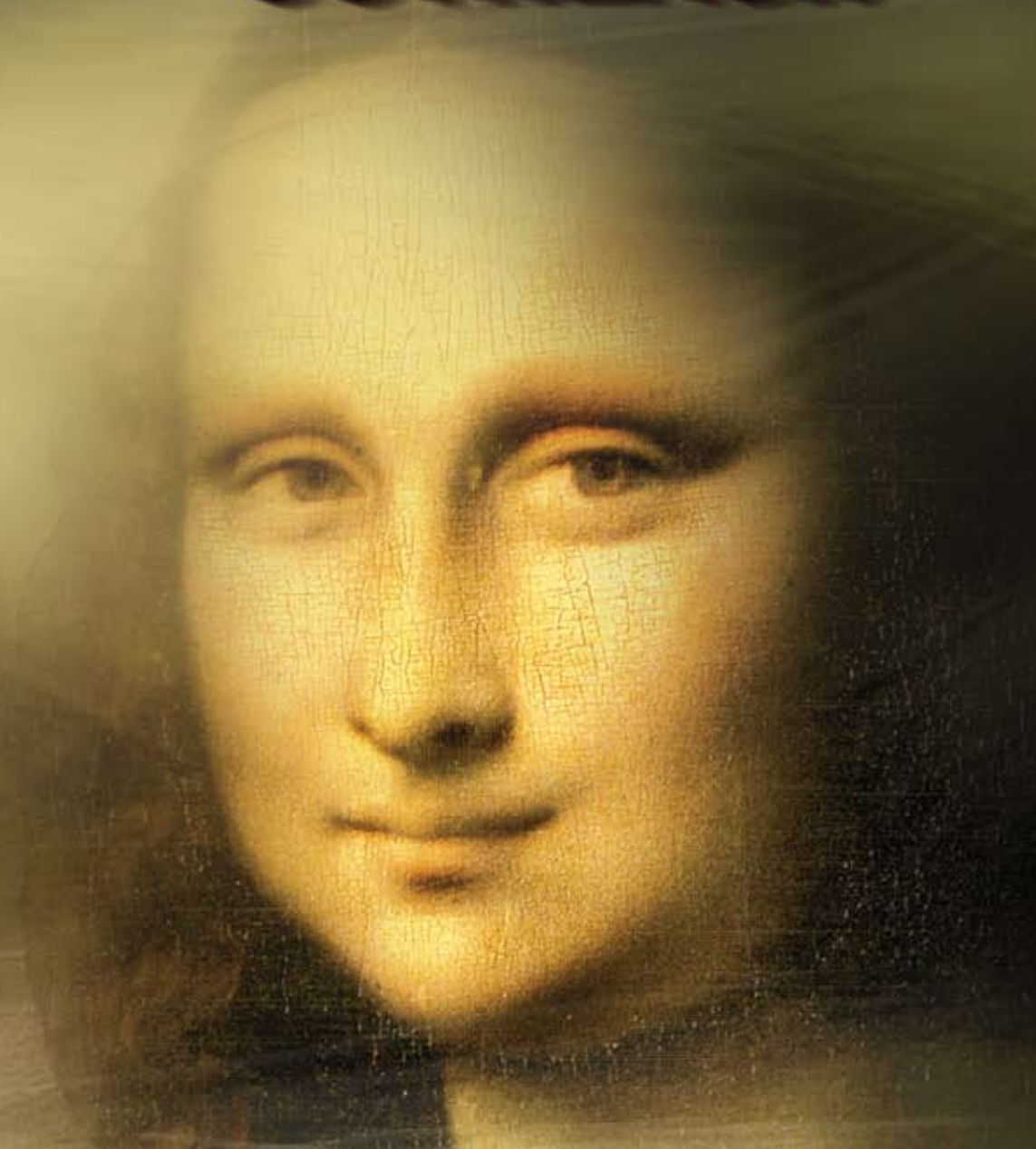


# DAVINCI OUTREACH



**YOUTH MINISTRY  
NIGHTS GUIDE**



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# DA VINCI OUTREACH

*A Catholic response to The Da Vinci Code*

## YOUTH MINISTRY NIGHTS 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 youth nights contained in this guide.

This guide is divided into two sections:

1. General Guidelines
2. Youth Nights and Promotional Materials

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 designed to be used in conjunction with *The Da Vinci Deception*, which adequately and succinctly answers many of the questions that teens are asking about Dan Brown's totally fictional story. This guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the new book *The Da Vinci Deception*, published by Ascension Press, as a complement that will help you flesh out the truths found in *Deception* for your teens. With this in mind, each youth night lists specific questions (noted by number) in *The Da Vinci Deception* **for the speaker to highlight.**

We recommend that each of your teens have a copy of *The Da Vinci Deception*. In this way, the youth night 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 several copies for your group to use during the nights is a good option.

The importance of encouraging teens **NOT** to see this movie cannot be overstated. Its popular appeal 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 for 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 watch *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!** This might be considered a *faux pas* for many, but *spoil the* movie for them by giving away key plot points. Tell your teens, “I’ll save you a few bucks: He 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. 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 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 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 youth nights that specifically address various doctrines undermined by *The Da Vinci Code*. 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.

## YOUTH NIGHT #1

# DA TRUTH ABOUT *DA VINCI CODE!*

The battle over *The Da Vinci Code* is really a battle between truth and lies. Dan Brown spins a huge lie in which the very premise is the denial of Christianity, the denial of the true identity of Jesus Christ. Truth is a critical issue for today's teens, who hear from multiple sources that *they* can decide what is "true for them"—i.e., *subjective* truth. Embracing such relativism leads teens down a path of confusion and immorality. Our task is to promote Jesus Christ as the Truth and His Church as possessing the fullness of Truth. The only way to defeat a lie is to tell the *da Truth!*

### OBJECTIVES:

1. To give students an appreciation of the Church as possessing the *fullness* of Truth.
2. To show teens convincingly that the truths of the Catholic faith withstand objections and distortions.

### SUPPLIES:

- *The Da Vinci Deception*
- Jar of candy
- Judge outfit with wig and gavel
- Two people dressed as attorneys in courtroom dress. One will wear a "Church" placard around his or her neck while the other wears a placard with the initials "AAS" (*American Association of Symbology*)
- Bailiff
- Barker/Sideshow outfit (i.e., striped suit and cane)
- Scale
- Very fake looking Leonardo da Vinci costume
- Projector/ Television
- DVD player/VCR
- DVD or VHS copy of the movie *A Few Good Men*
- CD music and CD player/Sound System
- Copies of small group questions
- Pizza (or snacks and refreshments)
- Bible

**ATMOSPHERE:**

The aim is to create a courtroom environment. Use a desk or table as the judge's bench, from which the judge will emcee the night's activities. Use other tables (or desks) for the attorneys' desks. Students will act as the jury. The entire night will take place as an interactive courtroom skit.

**START HERE:**

The following games are all interactive ways to shift the focus back and forth between "TRUTHS" and "LIES" throughout the whole night while teaching and having fun along the way.

**I. TRUTH: GUESSING GAME**

Have some opening songs either cranking through a system or played live by your music leader. As the last of the opening songs is ending, have the MC/Judge bang his gavel and yell:

*"All rise! The court is now in session. The case of the Church versus the American Association of Symbolologists will now begin. As you know, the AAS has claimed that the Church is just a man made organization tricking innocent believers. The Church is always ready to defend itself as the Body of Christ filled by the Holy Spirit. Mr. Church Attorney, please proceed."*

**CHURCH ATTORNEY:** Thank you, your honor. To begin, I would like to present the court with exhibit "A"—a jar of counted candy.

**AAS ATTORNEY:** I object, your honor. I don't like (whatever is in the jar), I prefer (name some other candy)

**JUDGE:** Overruled.

**CHURCH ATTORNEY:** Thank you. As I was saying the jar before me is no ordinary jar. Rather, it is a jar with a specific amount of candy in it ...

Have the attorney introduce this game as if making opening remarks to a court. Let the students guess how much candy is in the jar. The winner gets the candy. After the guessing is done, quiet the teens down. Have a team member act as a "plant" in the crowd who yells out an obviously false number. When shot down by the emcee, the person who was planted in the crowd yells "I know that I should have won... I just *know* it! My number felt right!!" and then runs out of the room.

**CHURCH ATTORNEY:** Hey, you know what your problem is? You can't handle the truth!!

## 2. LIE: WEIGHT SKIT

The judge would then call upon the AAS attorney to proceed. He or she calls the Barker as a “witness to the truth.” The Barker comes out with a scale and says he can guess anyone’s weight. He therefore considers himself an expert witness on truth. The Barker calls up people in order to guess their weight.

[*Important Note:* With the real and serious struggle that many girls have with eating disorders, be very careful about which girls are picked for this game. Be sure that you have several girls chosen beforehand who are willing to get their weight guessed. Surprise some guys.]

The Barker, of course, makes obviously incorrect guesses. Finally ...

**AAS ATTORNEY:** Okay, okay. I’m done. Your witness.

**CHURCH ATTORNEY:** Did you guess any of their weights right?

**BARKER:** I thought they were right.

**CHURCH ATTORNEY:** But what did the scale say?

**BARKER:** Does it matter?

**CHURCH ATTORNEY:** Of course it does!

**BARKER:** I thought I was right ... I mean ... You’re just stubborn. It doesn’t matter what things like a scale or the Bible say—I *know* that I’m right! (Barker runs out the room.)

**CHURCH ATTORNEY:** You know what your problem is? You can’t handle the truth!!

## 3. TRUTH: BIG CIRCLE GAME

Have teens sit in a large circle, and have the Church attorney explain that if the following description matches them, they must run across the circle to sit in another place. The attorney then calls out certain characteristics or traits, such as, “Red hair” “No socks” “Wearing a hat” “Have two brothers” etc... End this with a team member “plant” yelling about the fact that they never got a chance to run across. However, they are obviously wrong. (i.e.: This person’s hair color, shirt color or some other trait was called out several times, but they just did not hear it or understand it.) The person refuses to believe that the Church attorney called their characteristic (shirt color, etc.) argues with the Church attorney for a few seconds then yells “Why do you always lie to me!” and then runs out of the room

**CHURCH ATTORNEY:** You know what your problem is? You can’t handle the truth!

**4. LIE: LEONARDO DA WITNESS**

**AAS ATTORNEY:** For my next witness, I call up Leonardo Da Vinci.

**CHURCH ATTORNEY:** I object. Your honor, Leo is dead and there is no way we could speak to him, much less know what his intentions were concerning specific art pieces like the *Mona Lisa* or *The Last Supper*.

**JUDGE:** Sustained.

**AAS ATTORNEY:** But, Your Honor ...

**JUDGE:** I said, *sustained!*

**AAS ATTORNEY:** If the glove doesn't fit, your honor, you must acquit. (Runs out of the room)

**CHURCH ATTORNEY:** You know what his problem really is – (Begin to say it and then let the students yell it out) You can't handle the truth!!

[*Note:* At this point, the judge says it is time to rule. The Church Attorney pleads that he has one more piece of evidence and one more key witness.]

- 5. SHOW VIDEO CLIP:** The clip is from the movie *A Few Good Men*—the courtroom scene with the famous line, “You can't handle the truth!” The video clip used should be from DVD time code 2:05:49 until 2:06:30.

[*Important Note:* Be sure to preview the above video clip before playing it for your teens. The clip contains two instances of profanity, with the phrases “snotty bastards” and “for Christ' sake.” Consider the age and maturity of your teens and use your discretion before showing this clip. If you decide the clip is inappropriate, watch the clip and use only the most powerful 15-20 seconds that are profanity free.]

**PRAYER:**

[*Note:* The Church attorney introduces the speaker for the night who serves as the “key witness.” Since we intentionally started the night quickly and dramatically to draw the teens in, we postponed the “opening prayer” until now. Your speaker can lead the prayer before his or her talk.]

*Heavenly Father, you are omniscient—which means that you know all and see all things. We come before you this evening, asking for wisdom and courage to stand tall upon your truth in the face of controversy and confusion. Help us to be convicted of the truth so that we can truly live in freedom. (Conclude with the Our Father)*

### SPEAKER & MESSAGE:

- **THE DA VINCI DECEPTION:** In preparing for this talk, refer to questions 3, 7, 8, 24, 25, 26, 31, 37 and especially 41 and 42, in order to best understand Brown's false claims.
- **RELATED SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:** "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)
- **POINTS OF EMPHASIS:**
  - Though there are many things and people in our world who prevent us from experiencing the truth, it is our responsibility to question everything in our world in light of the Gospel truth.
  - Jesus is *the* Truth. He is the Truth which sets us free. There is no objective truth apart from Jesus Christ. The enemies of truth will use all sorts of deception to try and lead people from the Truth. We must stay close to the Church and Jesus in order to prevail. The Truth—in the person of Jesus—will shatter the lies just as light shatters the darkness.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why it is so hard for so many people to acknowledge that Truth exists?
2. If Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, what implications does this have for your faith?
3. What are some things that prevent you from seeing the truth and experiencing it in your life?

### BRING IT HOME:

Conclude the night with fun songs and pizza (or other snacks). *Reminder to Youth Team Leaders:* Be browsing through the crowd, looking for teens to talk with and open doors for questions or concerns based on the night. Give teens an easy way to contact you regarding questions or concerns they may pick up before the next youth night.

## YOUTH NIGHT #2

# YOUR LAST SUPPER 'TIL TOMORROW NIGHT

*The Da Vinci Code* takes one of the holiest events from the life of Christ—the celebration of the Passover and institution of the Holy Eucharist—and uses bogus, “hidden” symbolism to fabricate a marriage between Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ by falsely interpreting Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*. Our job is to reclaim the Last Supper for what it truly is. Teens will be inspired by the real meaning of the Last Supper and be grateful for the grace of the Eucharist in their lives.

### OBJECTIVES:

1. To teach and inspire teens about the Eucharist and give them an understanding of the Last Supper as the institution of this most holy sacrament.
2. To use the popularity of the book and movie to draw attention to Leonardo’s famous *The Last Supper* and to challenge teens to reconsider the impact of the Eucharist as a source of grace in their lives.

### SUPPLIES:

- *The Da Vinci Deception*
- TV or Projector with sound system
- Laptop Computer or DVD player
- Copies of “Your LAST SUPPER ‘til Tomorrow Night” flyer
- Pizza (or snacks and refreshments)
- Plates, napkins, cups, etc.
- Digital Camera or Video Camera

### ATMOSPHERE:

**STEP 1:** A few days before your Youth Night, the youth minister (or other team leaders) should take pictures or video of teens in their favorite hangouts, at school, at home, at extracurricular activities, etc. These images will be used to make a short video or PowerPoint presentation that will be shown during the Youth Night activities. Give yourself the time you will need to transform pictures and video into a seamless presentation.

**STEP 2:** The atmosphere for the actual youth night should be one of a banquet hall or dining room. Have a table (with a tablecloth and place settings) in the front of the room. This will be used for the following icebreaker.

### **ICEBREAKER: HERE MOUSEY, MOUSEY!**

This icebreaker is always a crowd favorite.

**STEP 1:** Prior to the students' arrival for the night, set up four large bowls on the table you have prepared, each covered with a towel. In the first three bowls, place different types of food which are easily recognizable by taste, such as candy bars, etc. In the fourth bowl, place a small, live white mouse (available at any pet store) along with a large marshmallow which you tape to the side of the bowl.

**STEP 2:** Next, as the students are arriving, select four to participate in the icebreaker, two boys and two girls. Take all four teens outside of the youth room, out of the earshot of the rest of the group.

**STEP 3:** Bring the first student in blindfolded, and instruct them and the crowd that the object of the game is to see which of the four contestants can correctly guess, by tasting, the contents of each of the four bowls in the shortest amount of time.

**STEP 4:** The blindfolded student will proceed easily through the first three bowls and will likely "freak out" upon detecting the contents (i.e., the mouse) in the fourth bowl. Repeat these steps for the next two students and enjoy the fun that ensues.

**STEP 5:** While the third student is inside the youth room playing the game, a team leader is outside filling in the fourth student on the gag. The gag is much more believable if the fourth student is a guy. Inform this student that, while there is a mouse in the fourth bowl, there is also a large marshmallow taped to the side of the bowl. Instruct the fourth student to go through the motions of the game for the first three bowls. Then, have him pretend like he is trying to grasp the "elusive little mouse" in the fourth bowl. But after a couple of seconds, he should grab the marshmallow and slam it into his mouth. To say that the crowd will go absolutely bonkers is an understatement.

### **START HERE:**

Show the PowerPoint presentation or video of the teens (taken earlier) and develop a conspiracy theory of sorts around their actions and what *it looks like* they're doing. For instance, a girl getting into her car: "Look at Rebecca stealing that car! We all know she can't afford a Honda. Why would you do such a thing?" The key here is to be serious, and if you are really into it, make a connection between the various slides and teens to show how all of those little actions, interpreted by you, signifies a really big conspiracy, e.g., overthrowing the government, etc.

**PRAYER:**

*Lord Jesus, you give us your Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity as real food and real drink to nourish us and sustain us. Help us to never take you for granted and to always be grateful for your presence to us in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Help us to grow in our understanding and appreciation of your presence in our lives and in the world. Amen.*

**SPEAKER & MESSAGE:**

**THE DA VINCI DECEPTION:** Refer to questions 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, and 23 in order to help gain understanding into Brown's false claims.

**RELATED SCRIPTURES:** Luke's institution narrative: Luke 22:14-20

**POINTS OF EMPHASIS:**

- As ridiculous as the Video/PowerPoint activity seems, this is *exactly* what Dan Brown does in *The Da Vinci Code*. He takes events out of context, fabricates a few big lies, and develops a huge conspiracy theory based on these distortions.
- Drive your point home by referring specifically to question number 23 in *The Da Vinci Deception*, which states "For some reason, people will more readily believe a really huge lie than a small one," and emphasize how Brown banks on the reader not going back to count the cups on the table.
- Explain to students what the Last Supper was really about: The Institution of the Eucharist.
- Illustrate through personal examples how the Eucharist has impacted your life and how you have witnessed the grace of the sacrament at work in the lives of others. This is a good opportunity to use a brief student testimony or story relevant to the powerful grace of the sacrament.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How has the Eucharist impacted your faith?
2. What role does the Eucharist play in the Catholic faith?
3. Would you be willing to consider that frequent reception of the Eucharist helps one along the journey of holiness? Why might this be the case?

**BRING IT HOME:**

Say a closing prayer and conclude the night with fun songs and pizza (or other snacks). *Reminder to adult and youth team leaders:* Be browsing through the crowd looking for teens to talk with and opening any doors for questions or concerns based on the night. Give teens an easy way to contact you with any questions or concerns they may pick up before the next youth meeting.

## YOUTH NIGHT #3

# CODE CRACKING

Teens have a deep need to experience real meaning. While they are sometimes content to settle for the thrills and frills that come with cheap entertainment, their deepest yearning is for the Truth—for God Himself. As such, most teens have a magnetic attraction to anything that smacks of the “mysterious.” Our job is to debunk the conspiratorial notions of *The Da Vinci Code*, e.g., that the Holy Grail is really Mary Magdalene and that she and Jesus were married, the Catholic Church “made” Jesus divine, etc.—while redirecting our kids toward the real meaning found in God’s revelation. God is hidden in the world, hidden in a manger, hidden on a cross, and even hidden in the teens themselves. Our task is to reframe this search for mystery by having them discover the wonderful mystery of a sacramental world.

### OBJECTIVES:

1. To get teens to understand how ludicrous the notion that there exists—or ever existed—a conspiracy by Church leaders to deceive the faithful by suppressing a hidden “code.”
2. To help teens realize that there is no such “code” and that there has never been one.
3. To reinforce the role of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition in our Faith.

### SUPPLIES:

- *The Da Vinci Deception*
- Projector/ Television
- DVD player/VCR
- DVD or VHS of the movie *A Beautiful Mind*
- CD music and CD player/Sound System
- Copies of small group questions
- Pizza (or snacks and refreshments)
- Bibles
- 125 balloons
- Inexpensive Combination Lock and Box or Bag that the lock could secure
- Three \$5–10 gift certificates to stores or restaurants (e.g., Best Buy, Chili’s, etc.)
- Seven candy bars

### ATMOSPHERE:

Decorate the room with pictures of numbered codes or combination locks or safes, etc. Draw some pictures of the Bible interspersed among keys and other things to create a mysterious, “code-like” feel.

**START HERE:**

Play some recorded music or have your house band play some upbeat songs. While the music is playing, prepare the supplies for your icebreaker.

**ICEBREAKER: BALLOON STOMP**

**STEP 1:** Have your youth leadership team blow up about 125 regular balloons. Inside ten of them, place combinations to a locked box sitting in front of the youth room (or hints to find a bag that is hidden somewhere in the room or elsewhere in your facility).

**STEP 2:** Inside the box or bag, place some small prize like a candy bar or gift certificate to a local coffee shop. Tell the teens that there are hidden prizes in ten of the balloons for whoever finds them by stomping those balloons.

**STEP 3:** Toss the balloons out and watch the chaotic fun ensue.

**PRAYER:**

*Jesus, you are the key to understanding all mysteries of the universe. Help us to trust you and your Church as we search for the truth of the past and what it means for us tonight and in the future. We ask all this in your name. (Conclude with the Our Father)*

**SPEAKER & MESSAGE:**

**THE DA VINCI DECEPTION:** In preparation for this talk, refer to questions 1, 2, 3, 13, 18, 70, 71, 73, and 96.

**VIDEO CLIP:** Show the clip from the movie *A Beautiful Mind* (DVD time code: 1:34:30—1:36:39). This segment shows Professor John Nash when he has already become mentally ill. We see Nash looking at the magazines and newspaper cut-outs on the wall in his garage. He truly believes that all these codes, connections, and conspiracies exist, but in reality they exist only in his mind. The clip concludes with Nash almost drowning his son due to his obsession with code breaking.

**RELATED SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:** “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure buried in a field which a person finds and hides again and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” (*Matthew 13:44*)

**POINTS OF EMPHASIS:**

- o Point out the similarities between Professor John Nash and Dan Brown: the “Code” exists only in his mind, not in reality. It is merely a work of fiction, not fact as he claims. Our search is not for the elusive Grail but for a real “treasure” of the Kingdom.
- o There is a certain mystery surrounding the cult of the Grail. This mystery is reinforced in *The Da Vinci Code’s* erroneous claim that there is a “code” to be cracked, and that, when cracked, it will bring us to the elusive treasure of the Grail.
- o The real search for the Grail should take us down a communion aisle every Sunday, so we can drink from the real chalice which contains the holy Blood of Christ.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you think Jesus means when he talks about “a treasure”?
2. What do you think is significant about the treasure being hidden?
3. What is something you treasure? Why?
4. Compared to your most treasured possession, how does your faith measure up?
5. What is one thing you can do to put your faith life in a place of higher importance in your life?

**BRING IT HOME:**

Say a closing prayer and conclude the night with fun songs and pizza (or other snacks). Reminder to adult and youth team leaders: Look for teens to talk with and open doors for questions or concerns based on the night. Give teens an easy way to contact you with questions or concerns they may pick up before the next youth meeting.

## YOUTH NIGHT #4

# “GIVE ITALIAN IDOLATRY!

One would be hard pressed to find a teen in America that has not heard of the popular television reality show *American Idol*. By creating a spoof off of this popular reality show, teens will understand how a new “idol”—*The Da Vinci Code* has emerged with its web of lies. Teens will be challenged to embrace a broader understanding of idolatry, which will enable them to critically evaluate how much importance they place upon their relationship with Christ.

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Illustrate for teens how easily pop-culture can make almost anything an idol.
2. To show teens how *The Da Vinci Code* has become an idol among many in the world due to its conspiracy theory and sensationalistic lies.

### SUPPLIES:

- *The Da Vinci Deception*
- Sound System with Karaoke machine or Karaoke music
- Guitar/Piano microphone
- PowerPoint with words to popular student songs (for the Idol Competition)
- Leonardo Da Vinci costume
- Poster board and yarn
- Four sheets of plexiglas
- Pizza (or snacks and refreshments)
- Five gift certificates or other prizes for five winners of the night’s games
- DVD Lord of the Rings-Return of the King scene

### ATMOSPHERE:

*Everything is Italian.* Find Italian flags, a picture of the Pope’s coat of arms, and red white and green everything. Red checkered table-cloths for the snack-tables would be a good touch. You could have your entire youth team leadership dress up in black suits and black sunglasses (Italian Mafia). Have them learn a few welcoming words in Italian and greet all the teens this way, using dramatic hand gestures all night long. Whenever it seems appropriate, have the whole team of youth group leaders clap their hands together three times simultaneously and sing out a fake and silly Italian operetta line, such

as “Mama-mia, Mama-mia, Mama-mia.” To cap it off, have some volunteer parents dressed up and decked out to the max with camera equipment as paparazzi.

### ICEBREAKER: PLEXIGLAS PIZZA

As teens arrive for the night, select eight teens and place marks on their hands. When the time for this icebreaker arrives, have the teens come to the front of the room and pair them up in groups of two. Have four youth leaders come out with sheets of plexiglas that has pieces of pepperoni and cheese pizza stuck (smeared) to both sides. The object is to position the contestants on either side of the plexiglas to see who can eat all of the pizza on their side of the glass the fastest. During the game, you can play the song “That’s Amore” by Dean Martin. The teens are going to look like they are kissing, which will have the crowd roaring for sure! After the game, you can throw a handful of cheap “string cheese” mozzarella sticks into the crowd just for kicks. Cheap gift certificates to a local Italian restaurant or pizza joint are ideal prizes for the four winners.

### START HERE:

Students will come prepared to compete in an *American Idol*-type performance, though in order to compete they will need to dress as though they are in Italy. Some could be from Venice, perhaps Mafioso. Some could dress like they are from ancient Rome. A youth team leader should dress as Leonardo da Vinci (wearing a placard with his name) and carry a picture of the Mona Lisa along with a copy of *The Da Vinci Code*. The competition part is simple. Allow students who have come dressed up for the night in their Italian garb, to perform whichever song they wish. You should be prepared to either play or have karaoke music for some popular Italian songs such as “That’s Amore.” Youth team leaders would be sitting at a judges table barking out comments about each performer. When all students have performed, the game concludes by awarding one person the title of “Italian Idol” and a gift certificate as their prize.

### PRAYER:

*Lord, we know that you are God and there is no other. But at times, we act as if we have forgotten who you really are and forgotten that you have given us life and every good gift that we have. Help us to focus tonight and to be real about what is most important in our lives. You are the reason that we live. May all of our words, thoughts and actions tonight be pleasing in your eyes as you look upon us with love. Amen.*

**VIDEO CLIP:** *Lord of the Rings—Return of the King*—“My Precious!”—Scene 1 from 0:00:00—4:42:00

**SPEAKER & MESSAGE:**

**THE DA VINCI DECEPTION:** To best understand the idolatry found in *The Da Vinci Code*, prepare your talk by referring to questions 45, 46, and 47.

**DEFINE IDOL:** Help the teens define “idol.” Get teens to offer a few examples. The question becomes, “If an idol is something that we worship, what defines *worship*?” While the teens try to define worship, help them understand that in a sense, worship *defines us*. To whom or what do we give our time, energy, honor and devotion? Is it Jesus or is it anyone or anything else?

**THE VIDEO:** The video will illustrate how easily something can transition from valuable possession (or habit) to an idol, and subsequent obsession. You can let the clip run for another 30-45 seconds if you have time and want to illustrate how covetousness and idolatry lead to death, i.e., sin.

**RELEVANT SCRIPTURE:** “Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

**POINTS OF EMPHASIS:** Emphasize how easy it is to make an idol of something, such as a book like the Da Vinci Code. People are going crazy about it, and it’s a pack of lies. The point is that we can make an idol out of anything. Refer back to the *Lord of the Rings—Return of the King* and point out how exactly Smeagol has made an idol of the “precious ring.”

**CLOSING:** If you have the time and the resources, go to: [www.dumbboxproductions.com](http://www.dumbboxproductions.com) and order an “IAMTHIRD” T-shirt to be given away to someone at the end of the talk. This phrase (see below) is a motto that reminds us of our priorities and calls us back to worship of the One true God.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

These following questions can be answered in small group or large group settings:

1. What is something that symbolizes the ring in your life?
2. What is something that you obsess over or that has taken the place of God in your life?
3. Is there *someone* whose place in your life has nudged out other important things?
4. What is one thing you could do to bring this person and other important things back to their rightful places?
5. What is something or someone that can help you evaluate and act on your spiritual values and priorities?

## BRING IT HOME:

Remind your teens of the phrase “I am third” and help them to see the wisdom of placing God *first*, others *second*, and ourselves *third* in life. Use a couple of reflective songs that can help them to reflect on the peace and freedom that comes with prioritizing Jesus in our lives above all else, ridding our lives of idols. Lead them in a closing prayer that helps them to offer themselves to Christ in love, prioritizing him above all else.

Created by: Roy Petitfils and Matt Hebert

Editor: Brian Butler

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



[www.DumbOxProductions.com](http://www.DumbOxProductions.com)

**DUMB OX PRODUCTIONS** is a Louisiana approved 501c (3) non-profit organization dedicated to spreading the love of Jesus Christ to teenagers through the teachings of the Catholic Church. This ministry reaches young people with hope and truth by seamlessly mixing theology and entertainment through various media, such as print, video, television, film, music and websites. We provide interactive retreats and professional speakers who share gripping stories and utilize creative educational products to engage teenagers who live in the modern pop-culture of the 3rd millennium. We meet teenagers in their world and challenge them to begin or deepen a personal relationship with Christ, helping them to begin discernment of the vocation that God has for them.

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