

The Da Vinci Code portrays fictional Mary Magdalene

I've been getting a number of phone calls lately from friends, all asking the same question: Do I think Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene?

That's not a question that I recall confronting in the many decades of my life. But now a spotlight has been focused on it, with people of all, and no, faiths speculating about it.

The reason the question is being raised at this time is no mystery. It has to do with the best-selling book *The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown, soon to be made into a movie.

The novel, and I stress it is fiction, not only claims that Mary Magdalene was Jesus' wife but maintains they had a child and heirs, all of which was kept a secret in the centuries to come.

And what did the Italian painter Leonardo da Vinci have to do with this fictional tale? The author presents him as a member of a clandestine organization charged with protecting this secret.

The idea of a married Jesus is so titillating to some that it even became the subject of a late fall ABC special titled "Jesus, Mary and daVinci." A number of people, from authors to professors of religion, appeared in interviews to debate the subject. I think that anyone who has studied church his-



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The Bottom Line

tory would agree that the final product was a mishmash of part truths, fables and varied opinions bearing little relationship, if any, to historical, handed-down truths taught by Christ on earth.

This whole question was not new to me. I had the privilege of doing religious studies at Oxford University with a scholarly teacher, N.T. Wright, an impeccable New Testament scholar. I learned about the noncanonical writings that appeared in the first few centuries after the death of Jesus Christ. There were gospels supposedly written by the apostle Philip, Thomas, James (constantly referred to as the "brother" of Jesus), Peter, and even, yes, Mary Magdalene, among others.

By the time I was at Oxford, much study had been done on the documents discovered near Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945, which contained Gnostic writing, an early Christian heresy.

This discovery brought new popularity to the cache of these apocryphal "gospels." As for the writers of these Gnostic texts, Wright concluded:

"They represent a new movement entirely, which has explicitly cut off the roots of the 'resurrection' belief in Judaism, its Scriptures, its doctrines of creation and judgment. This is a form of spirituality which, while still claiming the name of Jesus, has left behind the very things that made Jesus who he was and that made the early Christians who they were."

I learned then, and still believe, that the early Christian fathers ultimately underscored the books we have in the New Testament as the only true and authoritative ones based on study, prayer and inspiration. I believe most religious scholars would conclude that "sacred books," written in the names of the Apostles, discovered later, were forgeries.

Without doubt, Mary Magdalene is a very special saint, beloved by Jesus, who appeared first to her after his resurrection because he loved her dearly — as he loves all of us. *The Da Vinci Code* should be seen for what it is — a work of titillating fiction.

Antoinette Bosco is a columnist for Catholic News Service.

Some lack chance to move home

To the editor:

Therese Borchard's column "Parents should create adults, not 'adulthoodescent'" was a brief but thorough depiction of the reality facing many young adults after college. After getting the taste of independence that college provides, if not requires, I'm sure it pains most new graduates at the prospect of moving back home if only temporarily and regardless of circumstances. The brightest and most marketable graduates can easily find themselves unable to get the start needed in order to survive without the support of a solid home base.

My transition from college to living on my own was just as difficult as many budding adults today, not because of a struggling economy but because I did not have the option of moving back in with parents who were separated and both lived far away. Many times during the frequent changing of addresses and the hunger for stability did I wish I could settle into adulthood and its responsibilities without the preoccupying uncertainty that robbed me of real joy and greatly limited a spiritual awareness I had grown to take comfort in. I longed for the security of home in order to prepare more effectively for a productive and simple life.

In today's economic strains, many parents are finding themselves in similar difficult situations possibly creating yet another type of "adulthoodescent" in the near future. I've endured my rocky years and have come to believe that Faith and Gratitude are still the basic pillars toward freedom no matter what our age and circumstances.

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Battle waged against evil

To the editor:

Comparison of soldiers with abortionists is illogical and goes beyond pro-abortionists' rationalization.

The unborn do not yet have the gift of reason. The born mature and learn to choose between right and wrong.

The military defend against governments who can choose and prefer to kill.

In the days of St. Francis there was no government approved abortion, no possibility of mass destruction, and no speedy international travel, ballistics ...

You faced your enemy. The unborn can't.

Even in this day, there are those who stay cloistered as did St. Francis. A pupil of his, St. Anthony, disagreed. He went out into the public to teach the Franciscan message and serve. We need both prayers and works.

St. Michael Archangel led the faithful angels who threw the rebels out of heaven.

David killed Goliath. Christ threw money-changers out of the temple in righteous indignation.

There are those who choose to serve and protect us and not let God's truth and good be demolished by those who choose evil.

Otherwise, why did St. Michael and other angels eject the devils from heaven? The war between good and evil flourishes on earth. Pax et bonum.

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