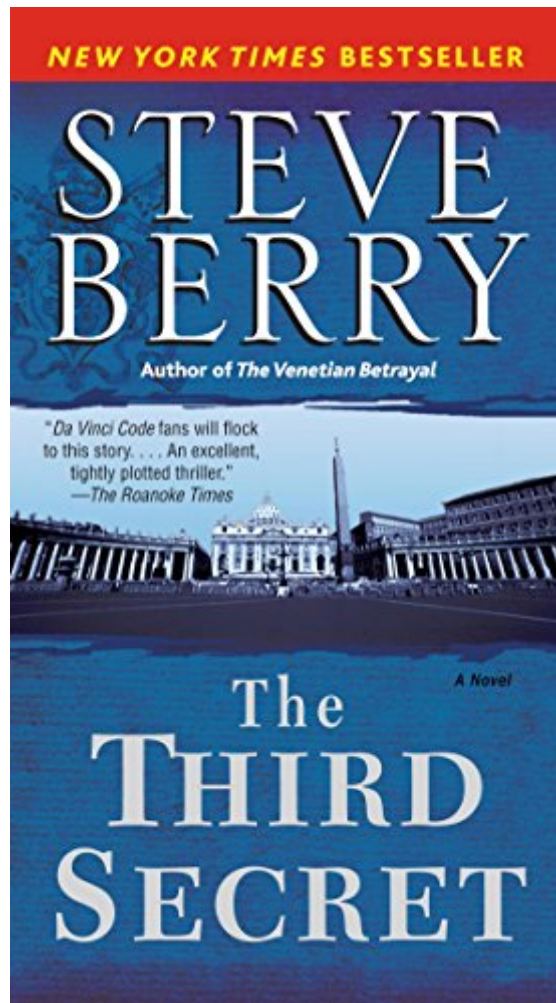


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The Third Secret: A Novel Of Suspense



Synopsis

BONUS: This edition contains an excerpt from Steve Berry's *The Columbus Affair*. Explosive in both its pace and its revelations, *The Third Secret* is a remarkable international thriller. Bestselling author Steve Berry tackles some of the most controversial ideas of our time in a breakneck journey through the history of the Church and the future of religion. Fatima, Portugal, 1917: The Virgin Mary appears to three peasant children, sharing with them three secrets, two of which are soon revealed to the world. The third secret is sealed away in the Vatican, read only by popes, and not disclosed until the year 2000. When revealed, its quizzical tone and anticlimactic nature leave many faithful wondering if the Church has truly unveiled all of the Virgin Mary's words "or if a message far more important has been left in the shadows. Vatican City, present day: Papal secretary Father Colin Michener is concerned for the Pope. Night after restless night, Pope Clement XV enters the Vatican's Riserva, the special archive open only to popes, where the Church's most clandestine and controversial documents are stored. Though unsure of the details, Michener knows that the Pope's distress stems from the revelations of Fatima. Equally concerned, but not out of any sense of compassion, is Alberto Cardinal Valendrea, the Vatican's Secretary of State. Valendrea desperately covets the papacy, having narrowly lost out to Clement at the last conclave. Now the Pope's interest in Fatima threatens to uncover a shocking ancient truth that Valendrea has kept to himself for many years. When Pope Clement sends Michener to the Romanian highlands, then to a Bosnian holy site, in search of a priest "possibly one of the last people on Earth who knows Mary's true message" a perilous set of events unfolds. Michener finds himself embroiled in murder, suspicion, suicide, deceit, and his forbidden passion for a beloved woman. In a desperate search for answers, he travels to Pope Clement's birthplace in Germany, where he learns that the third secret of Fatima may dictate the very fate of the Church "a fate now lying in Michener's own hands.

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Customer Reviews

Steve Berry's "The Third Secret" is a blending together of religious fact with fiction to create a creditable thriller based upon doctrines set forth by the Vatican. An apparition of the Virgin Mary observed by 3 peasant children in 1917 Fatima, Portugal and the disclosures made by her form the crux of the plot of the novel. The Virgin purportedly revealed 3 secrets, two of which were revealed by one of the children named Lucia. The third secret, however remained concealed within the walls of the Vatican only observed by papal eyes until its revelation in the year 2000. Father Colin Michener, papal secretary to present pope Clement XV has served the former Cardinal of Cologne faithfully for years. They forged a father son relationship and Michener was concerned by the popes behavior. Pope Clement had been spending an inordinate amount of time in the Riserva, a Vatican library whose contents were reserved for papal use only. Clement was a progressive pope altering rather than sticking to the old doctrines of the Vatican. Vatican Secretary of State Italian Cardinal Valendrea was at odds with Pope Clement. Having narrowly lost the papacy in the last conclave, Valendrea with lofty aspirations to become pope, favored a return to the principles of the past. Valendrea was a corrupt man using eavesdropping devices he had installed in the Vatican to keep members of the college of cardinals in line. Pope Clement became aware that the third secret of Fatima stored in the Reserva seemed incomplete. He recruited Father Michener to discover the missing segment of the secret by travelling to Romania to speak with a Father Tibor, the original translator of the account of the peasant girl Lucia.

[Warning: SPOILERS ahead] This is a good read. It moves along at a fast pace, it deals with a real-life mystery (because the prophecy, when revealed in 2000, really didn't seem inflammatory

enough to justify being kept secret for so long), and the wealth of detail about Vatican politics and procedures - however much of it may be accurate - is fascinating. I'd recommend it to anyone who wants mystery and excitement, in a book that's hard to put down, with some history lessons and thought-provoking controversy thrown in. But there are a couple of irritants. First, the writing style. Why does so much of the novel have to be written in the pluperfect tense? We are constantly reading 'he'd done this' or 'she'd said that', and the effect is that most of the book seems to be a series of recollections. A few flashbacks are fine, but this is overdone. And breaking up the narrative so that we switch back and forward between characters, each time leaving one at a cliffhanger moment, is a standard technique, but again, it becomes tiresome when it is done so repetitively. You feel like you're watching a TV show that has too many commercial breaks. Second, the endorsement of abortion in Mary's messages is done in a heavy-handed way that makes you wonder if it was a last minute addition. 'Hey, I've got away with having the Mother of God endorse priestly marriage, female priests, and homosexuality (though I think Berry is a bit ambivalent about that one - see below), maybe I can throw abortion in as well'. The desirability of priests being free to marry was well set up in the plot, but abortion just comes out of left field at the last minute.

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