



# The Vatican Prophecies: Investigating Supernatural Signs, Apparitions, and Miracles in the Modern Age

*John Thavis*

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**“The process by which these supernatural events are authenticated is expertly told by John Thavis, one of the world’s leading Vaticanologists. In fact, that a book on so secretive and complex a topic is so deeply researched, beautifully written, and artfully told is something of a small miracle itself.”—James Martin, S.J., author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage***

**From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Vatican Diaries*, a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at how the Vatican investigates claims of miraculous events**

Apocalyptic prophecies and miraculous apparitions are headline-grabbing events that often put the Catholic Church’s concept of “rational faith” at odds with the passion of its more zealous followers. To some, these claims teeter on the edge of absurdity. Others see them as evidence of a private connection with God. For the Vatican, the issue is much more nuanced as each supposed miraculous event could have serious theological and political consequences. In response, the Vatican has developed a highly secretive and complex evaluation system to judge the authenticity of supernatural phenomena.

Former journalist John Thavis uses his thirty years’ experience covering the Vatican to shed light on this little-known process, revealing deep internal debates on the power of religious relics, private revelations, exorcisms, and more. Enlightening and accessible to Catholics and non-Catholics alike, the book illustrates the Church’s struggle to balance the tension between traditional beliefs and contemporary skepticism.

## The Vatican Prophecies: Investigating Supernatural Signs, Apparitions, and Miracles in the Modern Age Details

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## From Reader Review The Vatican Prophecies: Investigating Supernatural Signs, Apparitions, and Miracles in the Modern Age for online ebook

### Rick Vickers says

Very interesting book on the inside of the Vatican. Did you know the best Vatican considers all ghostly visits event signs of Satan/Evil

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### Nancyann says

A scholarly yet readable work for the masses. The title adequately describes the content of the book. John Thavis presents careful research describing modern day miracles, apparitions, etc., that Church experts must decide if indeed are divine signs. The satanic dark side is also given its due again with verified stories of exorcisms. Vatican specialists are named and background history provided that emphasizes the seriousness with which the Vatican takes all claims. You do not have to be Catholic to enjoy The Vatican Prophecies, but it will probably be an easier read for those who are.

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### Tinika says

“If supernatural occurrences were once a sign of health in the mystical body of the Church, the hierarchy now views them as free radicals, unstable elements that need to be better controlled.” (p9)

The above statement, taken from the introduction of The Vatican Prophecies, pretty well sums up the attitude towards miracles, apparitions and the like found in the upper echelons of the Church today. What was once a local occurrence can no longer be treated in the time-honoured way. (Move at a glacial pace and hope the whole thing goes away.) Thanks to the Internet, there is a ready audience of sceptics and believers debunking and championing long before the Vatican can weigh in. “Not surprisingly, when the supernatural goes viral, it outstrips the Vatican’s ability to investigate and verify.” (p 10) In Chapter 2, Mother of God? John Thavis uses Medjugorje as an example. It took the Vatican almost thirty years of daily apparitions before appointing a commission to look into the phenomenon; meanwhile, millions of pilgrims have already made their way to this once obscure village in Bosnia-Herzegovina to marvel and pray with the seers. On the one hand, What took you so long? and on the other, How can so many of the faithful be so wrong? It is a very good time to look at how the Vatican is coping with the onslaught of apparitions, miracles, possessions and end-time prophecies instantly being made available to a world-wide audience.

(The last part of the book devotes half a chapter to the church’s view on aliens. They are included here even though they are more sci-fi than paranormal - until they show up, of course.)

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### Don Heiman says

John Thavis' book "The Vatican Prophecies" was published by Viking Press in 2017. The book covers topics related to Catholic Church magisterium and laity debates on spiritual practices about good/evil, saints,

apocalypse, relics, miracles, and sacred images. The book has internal script references but only a two page acknowledgement for citing references. The book also lacks research reference notes and an academic bibliography. I found some of Thavis' scholarship interesting, but on balance I was disappointed with his journalistic reporting style and weak reference notes. (P)

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## Scott says

How does the Vatican walk the "miracle" highwire in our modern age? The Catholic Church is founded on literally miraculous events, and every year there are scores of believers (and cynics) who claim to have witnessed a miracle - whether a faith healing, a statue of Mary that weeps tears of blood, or the face of Jesus appearing in their toast. While it would be easy for some to dismiss each of these events as self-delusions or hoaxes, the Church has plenty of reasons to take them seriously - not least of them being that the Church officially believes in the power of miracles.

Long-time Vatican reporter, journalist and author John Thavis ("The Vatican Diaries") turns his insightful eye and brilliant pen to these issues with "The Vatican Prophecies: Investigating Supernatural Signs, Apparitions and Miracles in the Modern Age." His exploration is fast-moving but in-depth - the writing is a master class of direct storytelling, grounded in truth and with a storyteller's eye for detail. Balanced and thorough, Thavis takes the reader on explorations of some of the key 'miracles' of the modern age that simultaneously trouble and give hope to Christians everywhere. But given the fact that the Vatican is the most wealthy, most powerful and most influential Christian organization in the world, its "seal of approval" for any miracle is by far the most important. Thavis explores such thorny issues as the Shroud of Turin, miraculous healings, and the repeated visions of Mary in Medjugorje, Bosnia, examining the complex issues of faith, science, and the Church's desire to be taken seriously in an increasingly technological/scientific world.

"The Vatican Prophecies" is no rant or screed - Thavis writes with balance, explaining the facts as they are and allowing the reader to draw his or her own conclusions. The visions of Medjugorje, for example, are examined both through the tales of the visionaries as well as the complex political history of the area - not to mention several other episodes across the world where people have claimed to have seen or spoken with Mary. The Shroud of Turin gets a thorough investigation, from its murky history to its recent debunking to its current renaissance after the debunking was questioned.

Through it all, the Church explores these issues with reserve consistent with a two-thousand year old organization. It was refreshing to read of the Church's candid statement that it prefers many of these miracles to fade from view rather than become popular sensations. While you may not be surprised at the ability of people to cash in on these phenomenae, I greatly enjoyed exploring how seriously the Church takes these events and how sensitive the Church is to both its role in our modern world while recognizing, at the same time, that sometimes it is hard to explain why someone is cured of cancer unless you accept the miraculous.

Recommended.

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## P. Es says

Nefariously titled for sales, does well at drawing you in (truly eye opening on the depth and nature of scientific engagement of the Church from the advent of sciency science to today, as well as Medjugorje , "seers", possession,etc), as authored by a long time Vaticanista. Like many books I give 4 stars, has 10 things

to say but leads you through 9. Brilliant ending with Guy Consolmagno, now head of the Vatican Observatory (tell me \*that\* wasn't a conspiracy).

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### **Allisonlcarter says**

The introduction is boring. Why are introductions always so boring? I almost peaced out of the book then, but glad I stuck with it. A smart look at how the Vatican deals with a host of supernatural phenomenon that strikes a good balance between skepticism and being obstinate. The book is at its best when it's delving into less-known incidents -- a whole chapter on the Shroud of Turin didn't add much for people who know the basics of its history.

Also learned what the Vatican's stance on aliens is, so that's good to know.

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### **Libby says**

Like a lot of other readers, I'm fascinated with the arcane, murky operations of The Vatican. I don't buy into world domination conspiracies, but I know that the Holy See often prefers to keep a restrained and dignified silence about matters which might become embarrassing. But the business of religion is the miraculous and the inscrutable, so how does the oldest continuously operating bureaucracy on earth cope with the task of unscrewing the inscrutable in the Age of Science? How does the Church differentiate between the apparitions at Fatima and the sweet old lady who hears messages from Jesus through her hearing aid? What does the Bishop of Rome consider when canonizing a saint? What is a holy relic and why are they venerated? How does the modern church view Exorcism? To me, those are very tricky questions, but John Thavis offers us some very interesting answers. He covers topics from The Shroud of Turin to Damian of Molokai with wit and insider information. He has had years of experience covering the Vatican beat and offers us glimpses into the world of Vatican archivists, exorcists and astronomers. This book is cram-jammed with really cool information. Even after eight years of Catholic education and a lifetime of devouring books about religion, I found that Thavis supplied new insights about his topics to me. I confess, I snickered when reading about the relic trade---I mean come on---Baby Jesus' foreskin? But I was genuinely moved and impressed with the faith and devotion of those touched by the miraculous cures attributed to the various saints and the persistence with which the Holy See investigates them. This one kept me glued to the pages and I think you will enjoy it,too.

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### **Steve Wiggins says**

What a relief to have a rational journalist allow for the unknown! The Roman Catholic Church has always had its secrets, but it is not naive. Proving miracles is more difficult than most people would think, especially for those who are known as religious. This book is a great balancing act between the canny and uncanny. See more thought on it here: Sects and Violence in the Ancient World.

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### **Rob says**

This is an interesting book that deals with the Catholic Church and their views on Saints, Miracles and other

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religious phenomenon. Like his other book Thavis does not toe the party line. He takes an even handed take on the various phenomenon.

The most interesting part of the book to me was the final chapter on Revelations and the end of days. I had no idea that Pope Francis was seen by some as the anti-Pope and to others as the sign of the impending end of days. I also learned that the Vatican, despite their condemnation of Galileo, has a powerful observatory in Arizona and studies the out solar system and beyond.

Overall, I would suggest this book to anyone who wants to read more about the mystical factors involved in the Church. However, it does illuminate portions of the mythos of the Church for all Catholics.

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## Caroline says

The title of this book smacks of some kind of sensationalist *DaVinci Code/Exorcist* mash-up, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Written by a 30-year veteran of Vatican journalism, this is a fascinating, balanced and considered look behind-the-scenes at how the Vatican deals with the supernatural in this modern age, where images of the Madonna on a piece of toast sell on eBay and every saint and would-be saint has their own Facebook page. The scale of the bureaucracy and the amount of paperwork and documentation involved, even when dealing with something as holy and spiritual as canonization, for example, is both comforting and somehow disappointing. It makes something supposedly holy incredibly mundane.

Obviously supernatural events are the very foundation of Christianity, and miracles are to be found on every page of the Bible. And yet the Vatican's burden of proof is surprisingly high for an institution based entirely on faith. In fact, it seems highly ironic in many cases that simple pure faith is the very last thing the Vatican bureaucracy will rely on when dealing with the supernatural. Demonic possession and exorcism, saints and miracles, visions and apparitions, holy relics and the End of Days, the Vatican casts a surprisingly cool and appraising eye on all. And yet all of this was once the very bread and butter of the Church back in the day - but it seems the modern age and the modern Church has no place for such inexplicable occurrences. Indeed, when such occurrences are brought to the attention of the Vatican authorities, it seems the general desire is for them to just go away again. For not just *a* church but *the* Church, the Vatican seems frequently far more concerned with the political and theological ramifications of supernatural events, rather than what they might signify spiritually. Again, it seems ironic that the Church's instinctive reaction here is *not* to believe.

I don't argue with this approach - I too feel that every possible scientific explanation must be explored before we can chalk something up to causes beyond our ken. If medical science and the laws of nature cannot explain something, then to the Church it is a miracle. To me, as a non-believer, it is just a result of something we cannot yet understand or explain. Penicillin would have been a miracle 500 years ago. Clarke's Third Law says any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic (or miracles). Just because we don't understand or can't explain now doesn't mean it's a miracle. However, it is surprising (and perhaps hypocritical) that an institution founded on the very concept of believing in something you cannot see or explain would choose to take this approach when dealing with the supernatural. The Church does not want to deal with popular sensations, and yet what was Christ, if not a popular sensation in his time?

One wonders if the Vatican applied its current standards and burden of proof to the Messiah back in the day, would he pass the test? Or would the Vatican choose to hedge its bets, equivocate, and avoid seeming ridiculous in the cold light of reason and enlightenment? If the Second Coming came, would he too be assigned a case number in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and then quietly forgotten?

### **Katie Plunkett says**

I was most interested in the exorcism issue in the modern day Catholic Church (also I'm interested in the old day exorcism procedures too which this book touched on a bit!) so I did only read the foreword and the chapter dedicated to exorcism, skimming the rest. This book was very factual, and an immersive read. Author is an expert on Catholic issues. It was either the author or a source in his book that mentioned being in the Vatican archives, wow, I can only dream that must be an amazing experience!

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### **John says**

Excellent and thorough review and investigations. Style is engaging. Couldn't put it down. Author remains consistently objective.

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### **Justin Glover says**

#### **A captivating book from beginning to end.**

I couldn't put this book down. Paranormal claims of all types are covered in a way that displays the science, theology, and politics that goes into the process of validating these events or rejecting the. My only complaint and the cause for the four star rating was that each chapter and ultimately the ending of the book presented no real conclusions or closings. It was like climbing a mountain of information and falling off a cliff towards the summit. Overall, great read for those interested in the topic at hand.

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### **Christian Engler says**

With journalistic competence and a novelist's flare for telling a good story, John Thavis journeys to territories afar to investigate claims of the supernatural. While some of the mysteries he investigates are truly astonishing, others have a more levelheaded and earthbound reason for why they appear miraculous. The six chapters are appropriately titled 1) A Piece of Holiness (about relics and the incorruptible 2) Mother of God? (about the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary) 3) The Sacred Image (about the Shroud of Turin) 4) Full of the Devil (about the demonic and exorcisms) 5) The Miracle Trail (the medical miracles and the canonization process) and 6) Prophecies: End Times, and Alien Saviors (that just speaks for itself). In all the aforementioned chapters, Thavis culls from an abundance of source material. Offering up a surplus of examples ranging from the work of Nazzareno Gabrielli and of the wax work on the face of Saint Bernadette Soubirous of Lourdes, to the liquifying blood of Saint Januarius's in Naples all the way down to the medical miracles of Saint Dominic of Molokai and Saint Marguerite d'Youville. The interviews with the doctors, scientist and recipients of the miraculous healings made for compelling reading. There is an abundance of jam packed information that Thavis incorporates into his book. He addresses the Church's opinions, her skepticism, the ridiculously high costs of the canonization process and so much more. Above all else, this was an objective work of nonfiction reported from the mindset of someone neither zealously for or against the Church. He lets the facts speak for themselves and steps away from interpreting them. For die hard followers of anything Vatican oriented, what John Thavis conveys in his book may be nothing new, but for

the neophyte Vatican watchers, this was a consuming read.

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