

The Third Secret: A Novel

By Steve Berry

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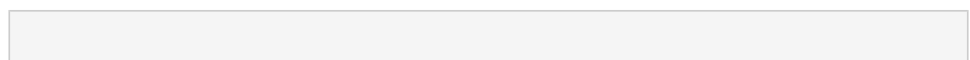
Explosive in both its pace and its revelations, *The Third Secret* is a remarkable international thriller. Bestselling author Steve Berry tackles some of the most controversial ideas of our time in a breakneck journey through the history of the Church and the future of religion.

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 Valendra, the Vatican's Secretary of State. Valendra 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 Valendra 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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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

For Steve Berry, it's a fortuitous coincidence that his third novel, a Vatican-centered conspiracy thriller titled *The Third Secret*, was published in the immediate aftermath of Pope Benedict XVI's anointment in Rome. While this exuberantly contrived yarn would likely have drawn an audience at any time, it benefits from coming before readers just after they've been primed with news reports about papal succession, the relative influence and legacy of pontiffs, and the increasing tug-of-war between Roman Catholic progressives and conservative traditionalists.

Set in the near future, *Secret* introduces Jakob Volkner--Pope Clement XV--a German "caretaker pope" who, nearing the age of 80, was elected as John Paul II's successor. But three years into his papacy, the thoughtful Clement has begun to quietly express skepticism about papal infallibility and the Church's restrictive dogma, and to make odd requests of his longtime secretary, Monsignor Colin Michener, an Irish-born but American-reared priest whose vows of celibacy have been tested--and found wanting. Clement has also made repeated visits to a guarded sanctum within the Vatican archives, where sacred and historic documents are stored. And he's dispatched Michener to Romania to locate an elderly cleric who, in the 1950s, translated three cryptic prophecies, purportedly offered by the Virgin Mary in 1917 to a trio of children in Fatima, Portugal. Those secrets have since been fully disclosed to the world. Or have they? That's the question facing Michener in the wake of Clement's shocking suicide, as he pursues a twisted trail of clues, crimes, and religious forecasts from Rome to Bosnia to Germany, accompanied by his former lover, journalist Katerina Lew. But making any additional secrets known to the world will put Michener in confrontation with doctrinal reactionaries, led by Cardinal Alberto Valendrea, the Vatican's Italian secretary of state, who's determined to follow Clement as the Vicar of Christ--even if that requires inventing a few new sins and flouting a 900-year-old prediction of doom for the next pope.

Attorney-author Berry, praised previously for *The Amber Room* and *The Romanov Prophecy*, enriches *The Third Secret* with glimpses behind the locked doors of a papal selection process and knowledge of centuries-old Catholic prognostications that, while employed judiciously in these pages, nonetheless suggest a prodigious amount of research. He's less successful with his casting. Valendrea is a wincingly unnuanced scoundrel, and Ms. Lew achieves scarce definition beyond being a raven-tressed temptress to powerful prelates. Thankfully, Berry does better by Michener, who finds himself at a crossroads, carrying on in Clement's name even as he searches for confirmation that his own life of devotion and service has been meaningful. Although the secrets "revealed" in this tale seem more controversial than plausible, and a potentially intriguing subplot about the excommunication of a maverick priest ends up as a throwaway device, *The Third Secret* builds to a conclusion that is as suspenseful and stunning as it is inevitable. Have faith. --J. Kingston Pierce

From Publishers Weekly

Visions of the Virgin Mary, secret documents and politicking in the highest echelons of the Catholic Church—Berry (*The Amber Room*) combines combustible elements in this well-researched thriller. In 1917, the Virgin Mary revealed herself to three children in Fatima, Portugal, disclosing three secrets to the eldest, Lucia, who shared the first two secrets soon after their revelation but left the last to be disclosed upon her death. This third secret was released to Pope John XXIII in 1960 and made public by Pope John Paul II in 2000... or was it? The novel's stolid protagonist—Msgr. Colin Michener, longtime secretary to Clement XV, the novel's near-future successor to John Paul II—has reason to doubt the accuracy of the public version of the secret. Beleaguered by radically dogmatic cardinals and bishops, the embattled Clement XV also appears

distressed by recent knowledge of secret documents regarding the Fatima messages. Before his inexplicable suicide, Clement sends Michener to Romania in search of a Father Tibor, who translated the third secret for Pope John XXIII and may hold the key to its mystery. Also on the case, if a step behind, is the ambitious and traditionalist Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Valendrea, with an eye on the papal throne. *Da Vinci Code* fans hungry for more may want a taste of this. *Agent, Pam Ahearn. 10-city author tour. (June)*
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From [Booklist](#)

Berry, fresh off his success with *The Romanov Prophecy* (2004), turns to secrets of the Catholic Church. Set primarily in present-day Vatican City (with a dramatic side trip to Medjugorje), the story has as its hero Father Colin Michener, favored aide to Clement XV, a caretaker pope. Waiting impatiently for Clement's job is Cardinal Alberto Valendrea, a traditionalist who, like Clement, knows there is an explosive secret about the Fatima prophecies that is yet to be disclosed. Conspiracies and plots abound as Valendrea's hunger for the papacy and his fanatical desire to suppress the secret lead to murder. All the while, Michener must try to figure out what God wants of him--and then decide if he's able to do it. Berry handles his thriller tradecraft skillfully, his descriptions are stellar, and of special interest, he offers a vivid re-creation of the majestic conclave, in which the College of Cardinals elects a new pope. Characterizations, however, are not quite as strong; Michener's former girlfriend is particularly ill-defined. But the story is its own reward. The contents of the explosive prophecy prove suitably shocking, if unlikely, and the surprising ending keeps the tension intense until the last pages. Readers won't be disappointed. *Ilene Cooper*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joseph Williams:

Precisely why? Because this *The Third Secret: A Novel* is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap this but latter it will zap you with the secret that inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who write the book in such awesome way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book have such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to hesitate having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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