OF GODS & MEN
(DES HOMMES ET DES DIEUX)
A film by XAVIER BEAUVOIS
A monastery perched in the mountains of North Africa in the 1990s. Eight French, Christian monks live in harmony with their Muslim brothers. When a crew of foreign workers is massacred by an Islamic fundamentalist group, fear sweeps through the region. The army offers protection, but the monks refuse. Should they leave? Despite the growing menace in their midst, they slowly realize that they have no choice but to stay... come what may.

This film is loosely based on the life of the Cistercian monks of Tibhirine in Algeria, from 1993 until their kidnapping in 1996.

**Preamble**

In 1996, the kidnapping and murder of the seven French monks of Tibhirine was one of the culminating points of the violence and atrocities in Algeria resulting from the confrontation between the government and extremist terrorist groups that wanted to overthrow it. The disappearance of the monks – caught in a vice between both sides – had a great and long-lasting effect on governments, religious communities and international public opinion. The identity of the murderers and the exact circumstances of the monks’ deaths remain a mystery to this day.

The case was taken up by a French court in 2003. Certain documents were recently declassified. In the upcoming months, new revelations may finally bring the truth to light.

**About the film**

OF GODS & MEN by Xavier Beauvois is loosely based on the Tibhirine tragedy. It explores the last few months in the life of this small community of Christian monks in a “Muslim land”. The film is more interested in capturing the spirit of the events and what was at stake in the community than in recounting the exact details of an historical reality.

The story begins several weeks before the terrorists issued an ultimatum ordering all foreigners to leave the country. An armed terrorist group even broke into the monastery on Christmas Eve.

The monks’ dilemma, dormant until that point, is now clear: stay or leave? The decision must be made as a group. But for them, the choice of going or staying, despite the threats, is laden with consequences. When they refuse military protection, the government asks them to return to France. Each monk will make his decision by assessing the human, political and religious stakes and by plumbing the depths of his soul and conscience. This dramatic tension accompanies the practical and mystical daily life of the community: their deep ties to the villagers and the spirit of peace and charity with which they try to counter the violence eating away at the country.

OF GODS & MEN bears witness to the reality of the monks’ commitment and the strength of the message of peace they wish to share by staying among their Muslim brothers: the possibility of a fraternal and spiritual common ground between Christianity and Islam.

Xavier Beauvois’ film adopts the point of view of the monks and the rhythm of life in Tibhirine monastery.

**Monastic life**

Cistercian-Trappist life takes as its source the Bible, the Rule of Saint Benedict (written in 7th century) and the writings of the fathers of monasticism.

It employs traditional forms of monastic prayer. The “Breviary of the hours” is group prayer largely based on the Psalms and performed in a chapel, seven times a day, song forms an essential part of the prayer and of the rhythms of Cistercian life. The monks are also one of the communities to consider the Adrianate with the Brethren of Life. In any case, they likened together as one in spite of differences.

Monastic prayer is mental silence, which is the rule, during most of the day. But their life is also built around the teaching of the monastic life of a spiritual and group companions known as “couples”. All major decisions are made in the chapterhouse. Almost always, they are preceded by one-to-one discussions in the superior’s office.

The Cistercian-Trappists have no apostolic mission of evangelization and refrain from all proselytism. The Rule of Saint Benedict calls upon monks to practice hospitality and sharing, especially with the poor and foreigners and those who are suffering. It prohibits manual labor and the fostering of relationships with neighbors, through farming - vital during periods of insecurity and famine. Monastic life is almost totally isolated from populated areas to favor a contemplative lifestyle amidst nature. Every Trappist monk, who make one day a month to walk in nature and meditate alone.

Today, the Cistercian Order of Strict Observance numbers 2,600 monks and 1,883 nuns, in 96 monasteries and 66 convents around the world.
XAVIER BEAUVIS – SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

ACTOR
2009 LE CAMÉLÉON (THE CHAMELEON) by Jean-Paul Salomé
2007 LES ÉVÉNEMENTS (THE WITNESSES) by André Téchiné
2005 DUEL EN VILLE by Pascal Chaumeil
2003 LES TÉMOINS (THE WITNESSES) by Benoît Jacquot
2002 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT (THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT) by Xavier Beauvois
1999 LE VENT DE LA NUIT (NIGHT WIND) by Philippe Garrel
1998 DISPARUS by Gilles Bourdos
1997 LE JOUR ET LA NUIT by Bernard-Henry Lévy
1995 N'OUBLIE PAS QUE TU VAS Mourir (DON'T FORGET YOU'RE GOING TO DIE) by Xavier Beauvois
1994 AUX PETITS BONHEURS by Michel Deville
1993 NORD (NORTH) by Jacques Doillon

WRITER / DIRECTOR
2010 DES HOMMES ET DES DIEUX (OF GODS & MENS)
2010 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT (THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT)
Official Selection, Venice Festival
2005 SELON MATTIEU (ACCORDING TO MATHIEU) Official Selection, Venice Festival
1999 NOUBLE PIS DE KI EX MISSIR (DON'T FORGET YOU'RE GOING TO DIE)
Official Selection, Venice Festival
1997 NorD (NORTH)
Official Selection, Venice Festival

SOME IMPORTANT DATES
DECEMBER 26, 1991 The Front islamique du Salut (FIS) wins the first round of legislative elections in Algeria.

JANUARY 14, 1992 President Mohamed Boudiaf is assassinated.

OCTOBER 30, 1993 The Groupe Islamiste Armée (GIA) issues an ultimatum ordering all foreigners to leave the country.

MARCH 26, 1996 An armed group kidnaps the seven monks of Tibhirine: the prior Christian de Chergé (59), fathers Christophe Lebreton (45), Celestin Ringeard (62), Bruno Lemarchand (66), brothers Luc Dochier (82), Paul Favre-Miville (57) and Michel Fleury (52).

APRIL 18, 1996 The GIA claims responsibility for the kidnapping.

MAY 21 and 23, 1996 The GIA announces the murder of the seven monks after negotiations between the French and Algerian governments yield nothing.

MAY 30, 1996 The heads of the seven monks are found on a road near Médéa.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1997 The massacre of the villagers of Bentalha revives suspicions about the role of the military in kidnappings and murders in Algeria.

1998 ONWARDS Decrease in violence and instability in Algeria.

DECEMBER 9, 2003 A judicial review in France is requested by the family of one of the monks and an abbot of the Cistercian order, questioning the truth of the official version given by the Algerian government.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2005 A referendum endorses the charter of “national reconciliation” approved by President Bouteflika, granting conditional amnesty to members of armed groups in the 1990s and outlawing any debate on that period of Algerian history.

NOVEMBER 20, 2003 Declassification of certain French documents, after the former French Defense Attaché in Algeria affirms that the seven monks were the victims of a massacre by the Algerian army.

BEGINNING OF A POLICY OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION.
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Christian Lambert WILSON
Luc Michael LONSDALE
Christophe Olivier RABOURDIN
Amédée Jacques HERLIN
Jean-Pierre Loic PICHON
Michel Xavier MALY
Paul Jean-Marie FRIN
Nouradine Abdelhafid METALSI
Rahiba Sabrina OUAZANI
Omar Abdallah MOUNDY
Bruno Olivier PERRIER
Ali Fayattia Farid LARBI
Terrorist Adel BENCHERIF

CREW
Directed by Xavier BEAUVois
Screenplay Etienne COMAR
Xavier BEAUVois
DP Caroline CHAMPETIER
Production designer Michel BARTHELEMY
Sound Jean-Jacques FERRAN
Eric BONNARD
Editor Marie-Julie MAILLE
First assistant director Guillaume BONNIER
Monastic consultant Henry QUINSON
Continuity Agathe GRAU
Costume designer Marielle ROBAUT
Production managers Thibault MATTEI
Khaled HAFFAD
Line producers Martine CASSINELLI
Frantz RICHARD

A Why Not Productions – Armada Films – France 3 Cinéma coproduction
With the participation of France Télévisions - Canal+ - Cinémage
Centre National de la Cinématographie et de l’Image Animée
In association with Cinémage 4 - Cofinova 6 - Soficinéma 6

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