



Armada Films, France 3 Cinéma and Why Not Productions present

OF GODS & MEN

(DES HOMMES ET DES DIEUX)

A film by XAVIER BEAUVOIS

STORY

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 though the region. The army offers them 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.

The monks called the army "the brothers of the plain" and the terrorists "the brothers of the mountain". Far from naïve, they were aware they were walking a fine line between two sides with ambiguous positions.

Xavier Beauvois' film adopts the point of view of the monks and the rhythm of life in a Cistercian monastery.

MONASTIC LIFE

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

It employs traditional forms of monastic prayer. The "liturgy 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 rhythm of Cistercian life. The monks sing with one voice to enter into communion with the Breath of Life. In unison, they blend together as one in spiritual combat.

Cistercian monks prefer silence, which is the rule, during most of the day. But their life is also built around the teaching of the superior (abbot or prior) and group exchanges known as "chapters". All major decisions are made in the chapterhouse. Always voted on, they are prefaced 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 privileges manual labor and the fostering of relationships with neighbors through farming - vital during periods of insecurity and restriction.

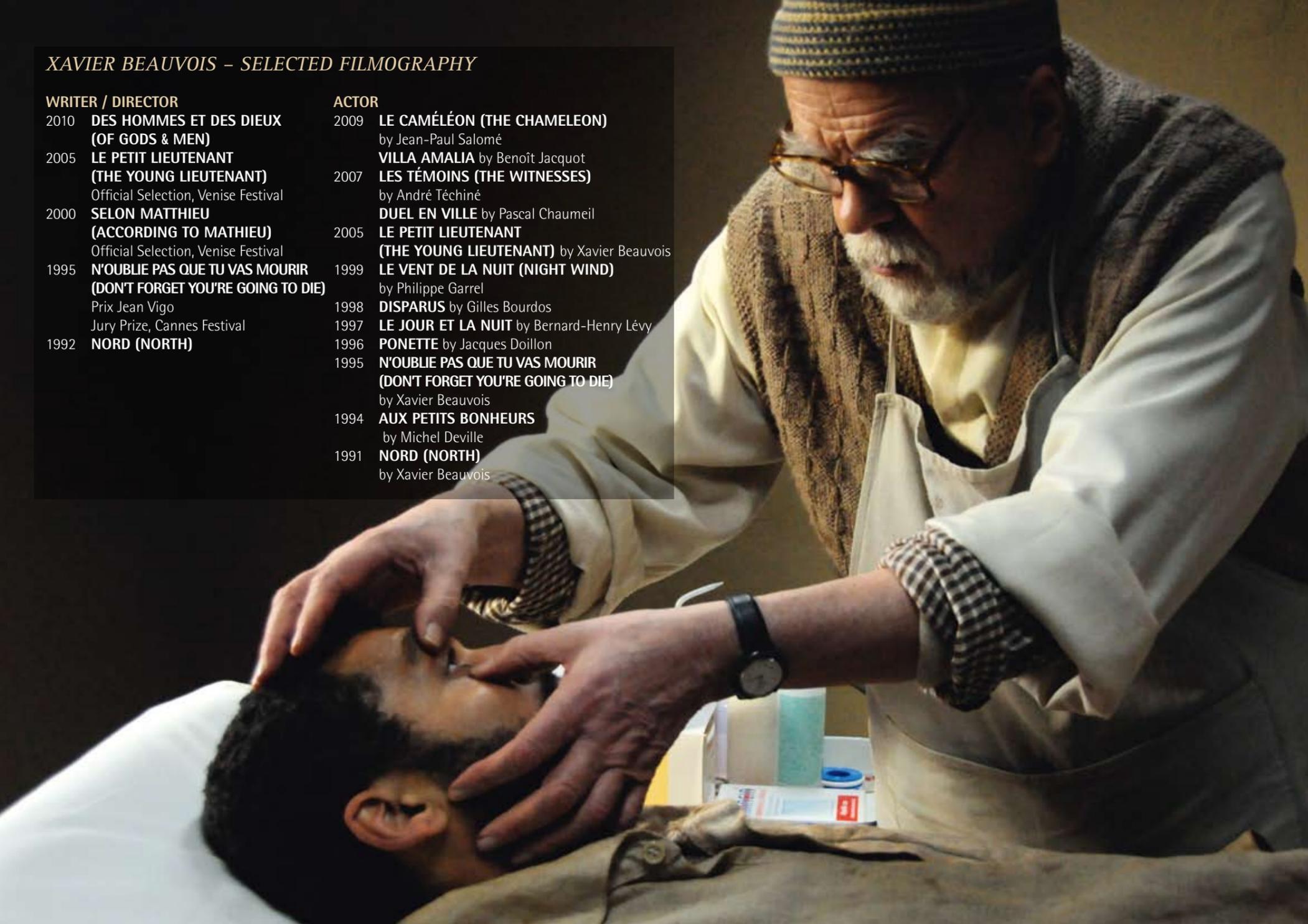
Monasteries are usually isolated from populated areas to favor a contemplative lifestyle amidst nature. Every Trappist monk sets aside one day a month to walk in nature and meditate alone.

Today the Cistercian Order of Strict Observance numbers 2,600 monks and 1,883 nuns, in 96 monasteries and 66 convents the world over.



XAVIER BEAUVOIS – SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

WRITER / DIRECTOR	ACTOR
2010 DES HOMMES ET DES DIEUX (OF GODS & MEN)	2009 LE CAMÉLÉON (THE CHAMELEON) by Jean-Paul Salomé
2005 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT (THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT) Official Selection, Venise Festival	VILLA AMALIA by Benoît Jacquot
2000 SELON MATHIEU (ACCORDING TO MATHIEU) Official Selection, Venise Festival	2007 LES TÉMOINS (THE WITNESSES) by André Téchiné
1995 N'OUBLIE PAS QUE TU VAS MOURIR (DON'T FORGET YOU'RE GOING TO DIE) Prix Jean Vigo Jury Prize, Cannes Festival	2005 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT (THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT) by Xavier Beauvois
1992 NORD (NORTH)	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
	1996 PONETTE by Jacques Doillon
	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
	1991 NORD (NORTH) by Xavier Beauvois



SOME IMPORTANT DATES

DECEMBER 26, 1991

The Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) wins the first round of legislative elections in Algeria.

JANUARY 11, 1992

A state of emergency is declared.

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 Ringiard (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.
Beginning of a policy of national reconciliation.

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" proposed 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, 2009

Declassification of certain French documents, after the former French Defense Attaché in Algiers affirms that the seven monks were the victims of a mistake made by the Algerian army.





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INTERNATIONAL PRESS

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CAST

Christian	Lambert WILSON
Luc	Michael LONSDALE
Christophe	Olivier RABOURDIN
Célestin	Philippe LAUDENBACH
Amédée	Jacques HERLIN
Jean-Pierre	Loïc PICHON
Michel	Xavier MALY
Paul	Jean-Marie FRIN
Nouredine	Abdelhafid METALSI
Rabbia	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+ –
Cinécinéma
Centre National de la Cinématographie et de l'Image Animée
In association with Cinéma 4 - Cofinova 6 - Soficinéma 6