

# from the MATTHEW 10-27 HouseTops

Contents

Serial No. 62 • Fall, 2004

**Gnosticism Sells Big**..... **Page 2**

The ancient heresies known as Gnosticism are very much in our midst, forming an integral part of the “culture of death” referred to frequently by the Holy Father. In this powerful critique, Gary Potter confronts one of its latest literary expressions: *The Da Vinci Code*.

**Catholic Wisdom** ..... **Page 28**

Bite-sized portions of pious food for thought.

**La Reconquistadora**..... **Page 29**

Brother André Marie illustrates how the Blessed Virgin exemplifies fortitude and the virtues associated with it, so necessary for today’s battle. The doctrine of Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Louis Marie de Montfort are wedded in this presentation of Marian virtue.

**In the Company of Ignatius**..... **Page 49**

In this article, Sister Mary Monica M.I.C.M., Tert., show us what made the founder of the Jesuits different, “like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.”

**Did You Know?** ..... **Page 61**

Catholic trivia that’s not so trivial.

**The House upon a Rock** ..... **Page 63**

A concise, yet thorough defense of the papacy. Jacob Michael puts the papal monarchy in the context of the Old Testament types and New Testament fulfillments of the Davidic Kingdom.

**Cover:** *The Virgin of the Rocks* by Leonardo da Vinci and assistants. This rendition of the painting is in the National Gallery, London. Design by M.I.C.M. Sisters. **Center:** *The Last Supper*, located in the Sistine Chapel, by the Florentine painter Cosimo Rosselli.

FROM THE HOUSETOPS is a Catholic quarterly journal published and distributed by *The Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary* at Saint Benedict Center. The effort is made possible only by the helpful support of subscribers and donors to our religious congregation. Subscription rate: \$15.00 annually (\$20.00 Canadian; \$25.00 other foreign). Three- and five-year subscription rates also available — call for details. For additional copies, a contribution of five dollars each is kindly requested. Please send subscriptions or tax deductible donations to:

Saint Benedict Center, 95 Martin Road, Richmond, New Hampshire 03470  
Telephone: (603) 239-6485

E-mail: [info@FromTheHousetops.com](mailto:info@FromTheHousetops.com)  
Web: [Catholicism.org](http://Catholicism.org) and [Store.Catholicism.org](http://Store.Catholicism.org)  
Copyright © 2004 by FROM THE HOUSETOPS PUBLICATIONS



# Gnosticism Sells Big

By Gary Potter

*The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown, has been *the* book-publishing phenomenon of recent years. By May, 2004, it had been at the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list for a year; something like seven million hardback copies had sold; it was being translated into more than forty foreign languages; and Columbia had bought the movie rights with Ron Howard reportedly slated to direct the picture.

Since the novel, even as a thriller-romance, is far from first-rate, numerous observers have been left scratching their heads as to why the thing could be so successful (not that very many truly first-rate books ever become best-sellers). If they knew it has been the subject of study in adult-education classes in *Novus Ordo* Catholic parishes all over the country, they might begin to understand. Gnosticism sells big among Christians. It always has. Its temptation is never far because temptation itself never is.

Gnosticism? Beyond its plot-line, such as it is, that is what *The Da Vinci Code* is about. Why are we going to pay attention to this less than first-rate novel about gnosticism here? For better or worse — usually for worse these days — the views and beliefs of readers and movie-goers are influenced by the stuff they read and movies they see. Folks who have not read a book in years, or maybe never have, have read this one. They are bound to see the movie when it comes out.

So? The life of the Faith has been seriously disrupted by past historical outbreaks of gnosticism. Inasmuch as right now that life is not exactly robust, it is desirable to pay attention to Brown's novel, not for its sake, but on account of what it represents. It may be unlikely that many who read *From the Husetops* would also read the novel, or believe its purported "facts" if they did. However, in view of the novel's extraordinary success, it is equally unlikely that an average *Husetops* reader knows no one who has not read the book, or will — read it and wondered if there could be anything to it. This wonder — the doubts about the teachings of the orthodox Faith sowed by the book — will endure even when the attention of the public has fixed itself on newer novelties. What is said here is meant to help our readers to be able, without having to read the book themselves, to know and even explain that what there is to it is wrong. That and to understand why the thing is as successful as it is. Certainly it panders to baser appetites, intellectual as well as others, but saying that does not say much in a day when a great deal else also does.

We shall begin our consideration with an historical survey of some of the