



Catechetical Series:

What Catholics Believe & Why

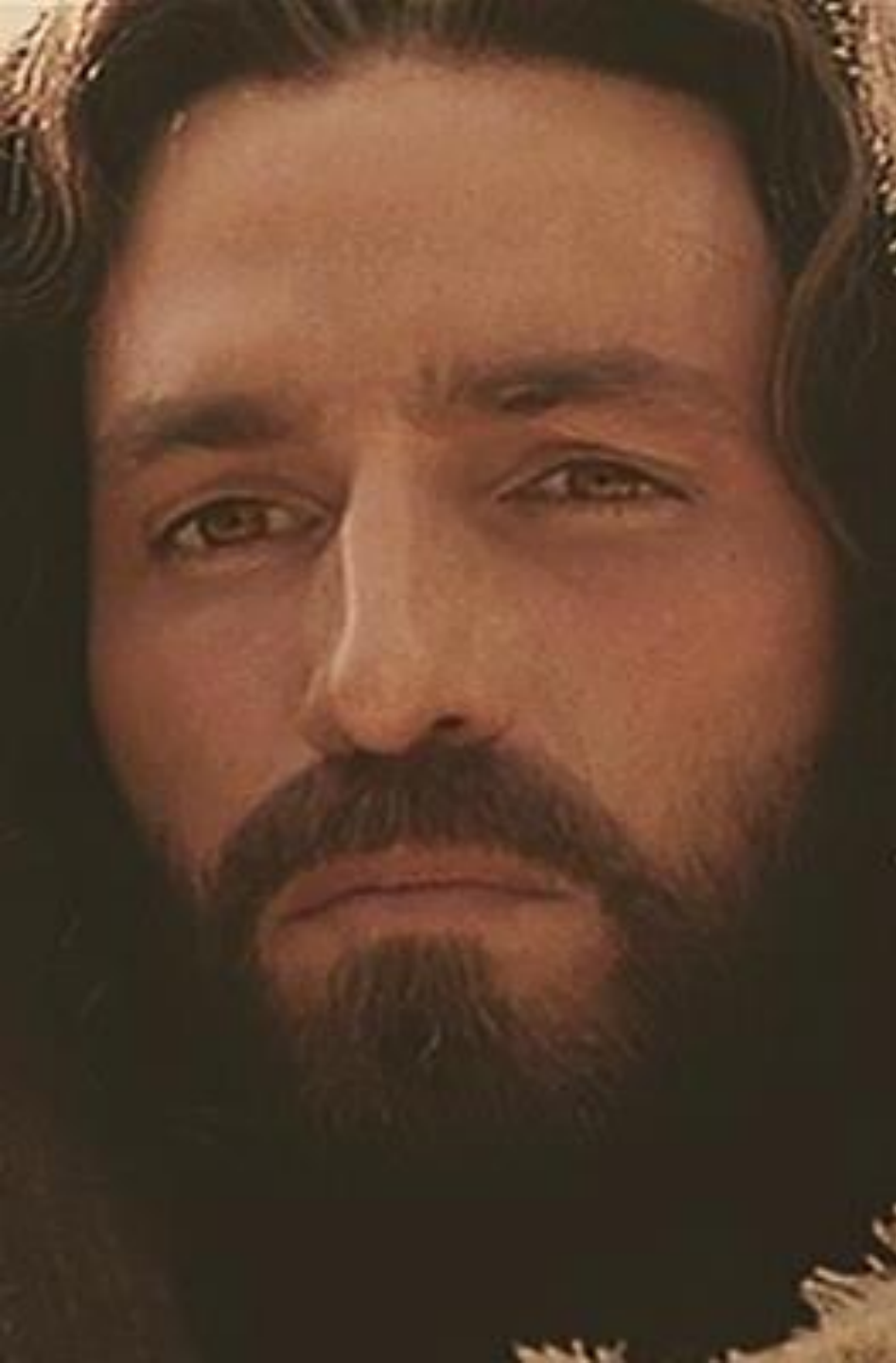
THE THREE GREAT ASSAULTS AGAINST THE SACRAMENTS

Behold The Truth

Discovering the What & Why of the Catholic Faith
beholdthetruth.com

Historical Attacks Against the Sacraments

- ❖ The Catholic Church has faced numerous heresies in her long history.
- ❖ Three of these heresies stand out as particularly destructive to the Church's sacramental system:
 - Albigensianism
 - Protestantism
 - Jansenism



The Word Became Flesh

- ❖ The Church's Sacraments are grounded in the truth of the Incarnation, that “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” John 1:14
- ❖ Christoph Cardinal Schönborn wrote: “Just as in Christ his humanity, his concrete human existence, was and is the ‘instrument of salvation,’ the living instrument of his divinity, so the sacraments are in a certain way the instruments of Christ, through which He, by means of human signs, bestows his own life upon us.” *Living the Catechism*, p. 136



The Invisible Made Visible

- ❖ The reality of the God-man has endowed the Church with a sacramental view of Creation: the understanding that the things in the physical world, which are visible, point to invisible, spiritual realities.
- ❖ Thus we believe that in the Sacraments mundane material objects, such as water, oil, bread and wine, are transfigured to convey divine grace.



Albigensianism

12th Century France

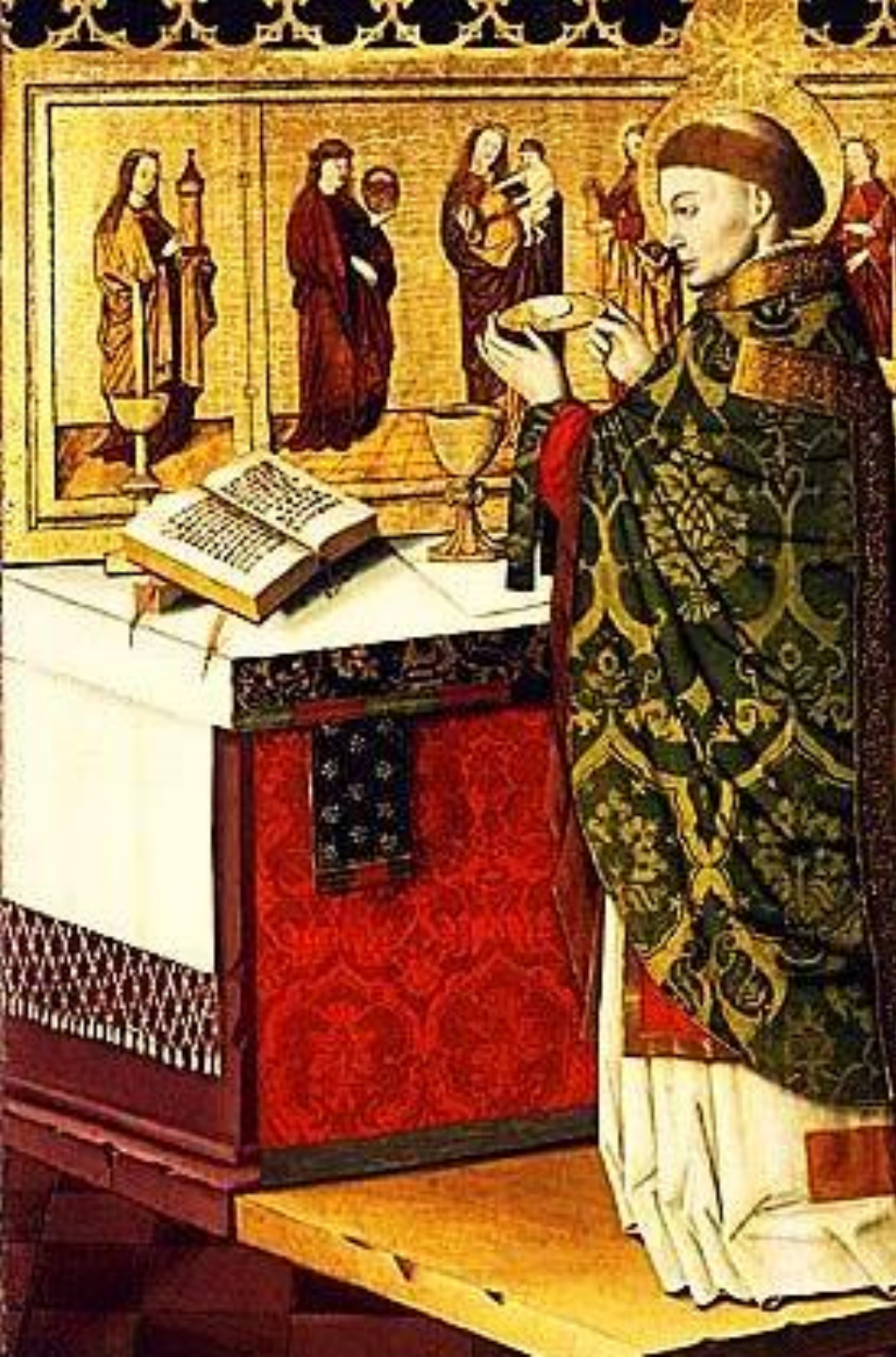
- ❖ Of the three main heresies that warred against the Church's sacramental life, it was Albigensianism (or Catharism), which strayed the farthest from the foundational tenets of Christianity.
- ❖ Albigensianism was a kind of revival of Gnostic thinking that maintained there were two gods: an evil god, who had created the natural world, and a good god who had created the spiritual world.



Albigensianism

12th Century France

- ❖ This dualistic thinking caused the Albigensians to condemn all things belonging to the material world, especially the human body, which they saw as a hindrance to the soul.
- ❖ The natural world for them was merely the entrapment of the soul; and bodily death a release.
- ❖ This drove them to condemn marriage and child-bearing, and to promote homosexuality, abortion, and suicide.



Albigensianism

12th Century France

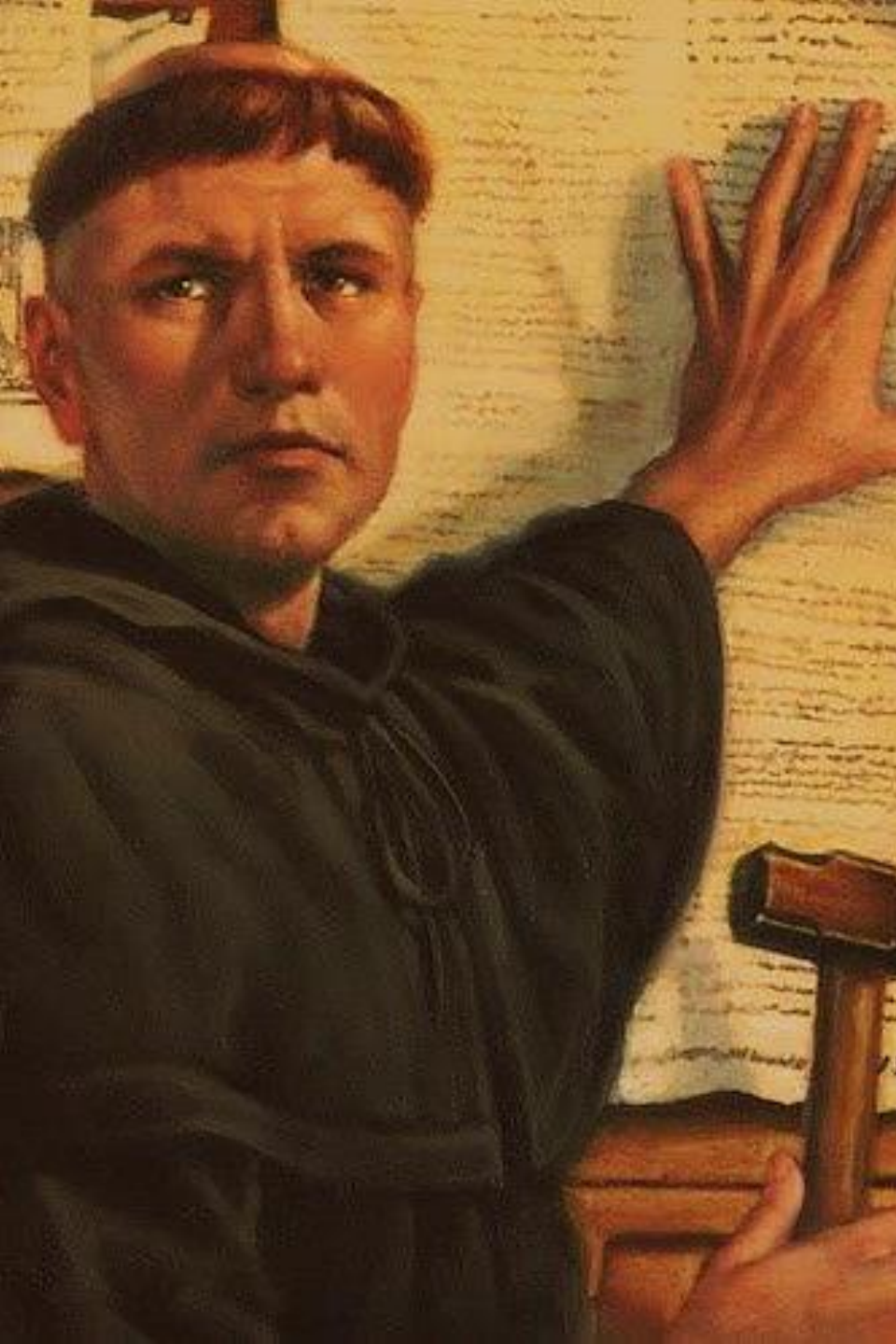
- ❖ The Albigensians were particularly opposed to the Church's Sacraments, which from their perspective seemed to exalt the body.
- ❖ Being true to the Gnostic impulse, they wholly rejected the humanity of Christ as well.
- ❖ Why after all would a liberated spiritual being choose to imprison Himself in the flesh?



Protestantism

16th Century Europe

- ❖ A prime motivating factor behind Protestantism's rejection of the Church's sacramental system was the fear the Sacraments were a Christianized form of magic built on human works.



Protestantism

16th Century Europe

- ❖ Martin Luther, an Augustinian friar, was unwilling to depart from the sacramental system entirely.
- ❖ He argued for the retention of Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confession.
Cf. The Augsburg Confession 9-11
- ❖ He addressed Protestant fears over the Sacraments by teaching sacramental grace was totally dependent upon the faith of the recipient.



Protestantism

16th Century Europe

- ❖ According to Catholic teaching, the Sacraments work *ex opere operato* or “from the work performed,” meaning they derive their power not from human effort, but from the work of Christ on the Cross.



Protestantism

16th Century Europe

- ❖ *Ex opere operantis* or “from the work of the doer” means the recipient must have the proper disposition (faith and a state of grace) to receive grace from the Sacraments.
- ❖ The Sacraments are not magical, for magic claims to work by its own power, glorifying itself, whereas the Sacraments work by the power of God, glorifying Him.



Protestantism

16th Century Europe

- ❖ Similar to Albigensianism, Protestantism also came to reject the visible nature of the Church, preferring instead to focus on the invisible communion of all believers.
- ❖ This puritanical strain also brought about the smashing of altars and beheading of statues.
- ❖ And it led to Protestantism's preference for the empty cross over the crucifix.



Jansenism

17th Century France

- ❖ Different from Albigensianism and Protestantism, what made the Jansenist movement particularly insidious was that it occurred within the walls of the Church, among devout Catholics.
- ❖ It bore ominous similarities to the theologies of Martin Luther and John Calvin in that it disparaged the idea of human cooperation with the grace of God in salvation.



Jansenism

17th Century France

- ❖ Jansenism departed from Protestantism, however, in its extreme, though, misguided reverence for the Sacraments and most especially the Holy Eucharist.
- ❖ In reaction to the moral laxity prevailing at the time, the Jansenists taught that most of the faithful were unfit to receive Holy Communion and ought to abstain indefinitely.

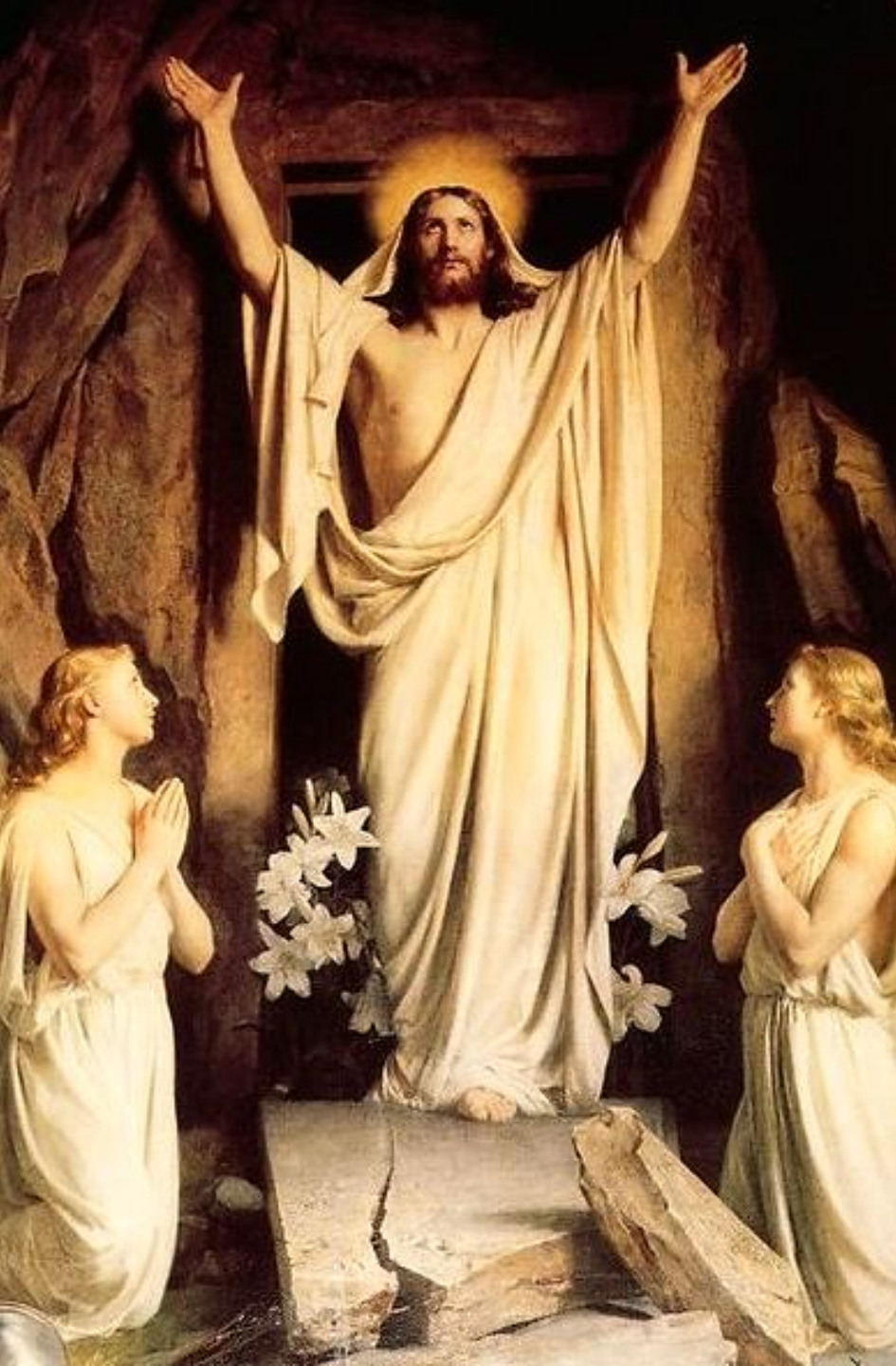


Jansenism

17th Century France

- ❖ “Like all advocates of the doctrine of the Elect,” wrote historian Warren H. Carroll, “Jansenists were always sure that they were a part of it, forgetting Christ’s scathing discourses against the Pharisees.”

A History of Christendom, vol. 4,
p. 598



The Hope of the Resurrection

- ❖ The glory of the Incarnation is extended through the Sacraments of Christ's Church.
- ❖ Combating the anti-materialistic spirit that has opposed the Sacraments throughout history has strengthened the Church in clinging ever more closely to the Easter mystery: the reality of Our Savior's bodily resurrection.



The Hope of the Resurrection

- ❖ Through the revelation of the Risen Christ, mirrored in the Sacraments of His Church, mankind rediscovers the dignity of the human person and the goodness of all Creation.



Catechetical Series:

What Catholics Believe & Why

Produced by

Behold The Truth

Discovering the What & Why of the Catholic Faith

visit us at

beholdthetruth.com