



Catechetical Series:

What Catholics Believe & Why

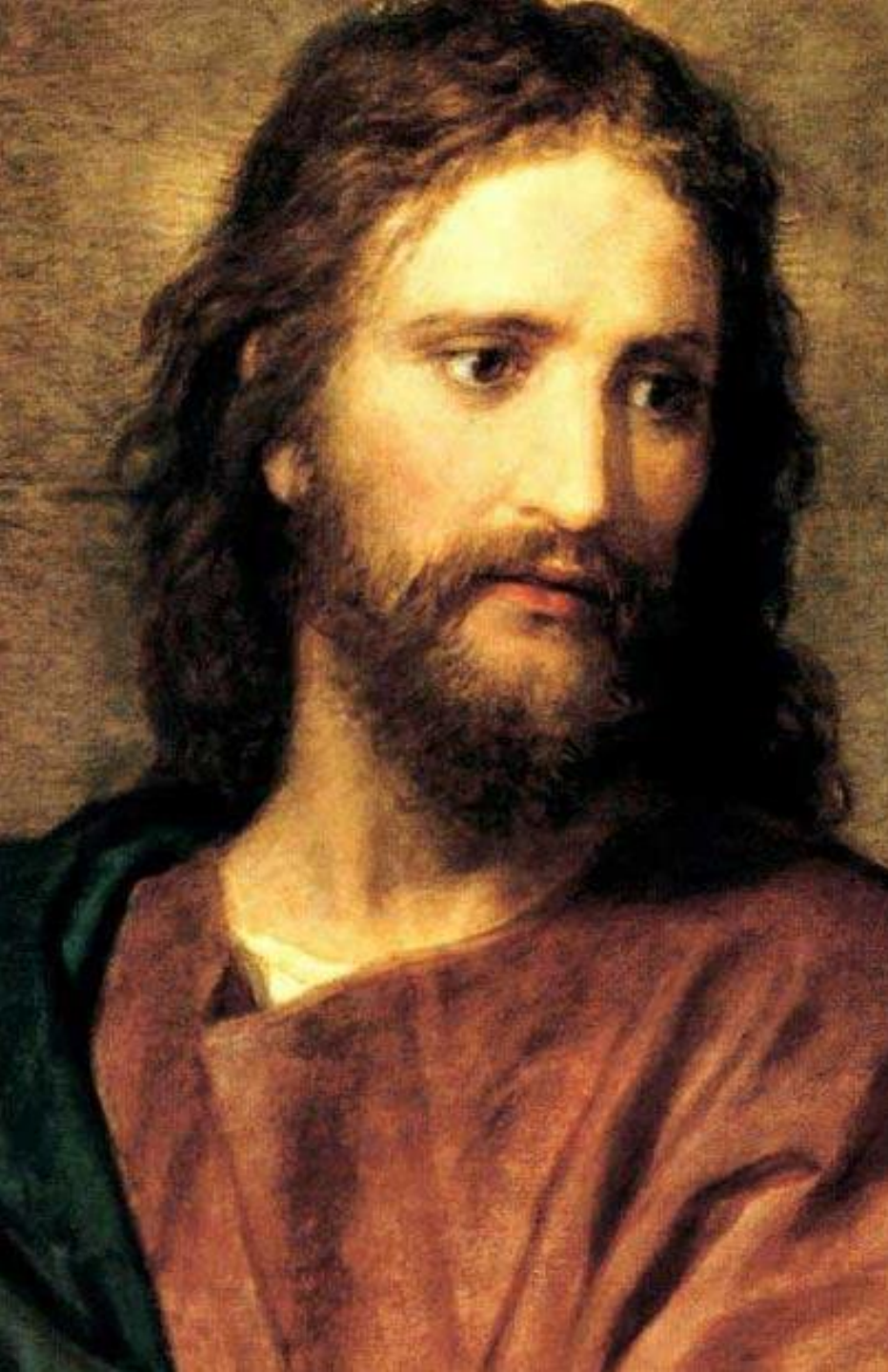
HOW CATHOLIC TEACHINGS LEAD US TO JESUS CHRIST

Behold The Truth

Discovering the What & Why of the Catholic Faith
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“He who hears you hears me, and
he who rejects you rejects me, and
he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

Gospel According to Saint Luke 10:16



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ We come to know Jesus through the Church's teachings.
- ❖ They define for us who He is, and who He is not.
- ❖ Everything the Church officially teaches and does in her liturgical practices serves to bring us closer to Christ.

When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to his disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Gospel According to Saint John 19:26-27



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ The Church's teachings about Mary lead us to Jesus Christ.
- ❖ For many non-Catholic Christians, the Church's teachings about Mary seem like obstacles to knowing Christ.
- ❖ In reality, though, the exact opposite is true.



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ Mary in her person, being at once Virgin and Mother, confirms who Jesus is in direct way.
- ❖ Her virginity (that He did not have an earthly father) verifies His divinity; her maternity (that He had a mother) verifies His humanity.



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ Fundamentalist Christians often berate Catholics for calling Mary the Mother of God.
- ❖ Yet they fail to realize this title by design says more to us about Jesus than about Mary.
- ❖ The Church officially sanctioned its use, in fact, at the Council of Ephesus in 431 as a means of defending the truth of the Incarnation against the teachings of Nestorius, who denied the Babe born to Mary was truly God.

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Gospel According to Saint John 20:21-23



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ Like all the sacraments, Confession is a deeply personal encounter with Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Opponents of the Church will object to Catholics confessing their sins to a priest, to a mere human being.
- ❖ They will rightly argue God alone can forgive sins.
- ❖ Properly understood, though, it is not the priest who forgives our sins in Confession.
- ❖ It is Jesus Christ, working through the *instrument* of the priest, who forgives our sins in Confession.



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ In the sacraments, we encounter the Lord through our bodily senses.
- ❖ God comes to us in the sacraments with respect to how He made us.
- ❖ He heals the whole person—strengthening our soul through the body and bodily things.



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ In Confession, we experience the Lord's mercy through speech and hearing.
- ❖ To confess our sins to Christ's representative, and hear back in a human voice, "Your sins are forgiven; go in peace," helps to alleviate our sense of guilt and heal our soul.
- ❖ Jesus gave us the sacrament of Confession so that we could fully live in His peace, knowing for certain our sins have been forgiven.

“And I tell you, you are Peter,
and on this rock I will build my church, and
the powers of death shall not prevail against it.
I will give you the keys of the kingdom of
heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be
bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on
earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Gospel According to Saint Matthew 16:18-19



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ The Papacy also helps to bring us closer to Jesus in various ways.
- ❖ The Catholic bishops are the successors to the Apostles; and the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is the successor to Saint Peter.
- ❖ The title “Pope,” from the Greek, *Papa*, means “Father.”
- ❖ Fundamentalists routinely condemn the Catholic practice of calling bishops and priests “Father,” citing Jesus’ command: “Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.” Matt. 23:9



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ The Lord, however, is speaking here in hyperbole to underscore the fact that all life and wisdom come to us, not from human beings, but from God.
- ❖ As a matter of fact, the pious practice of calling bishops and priests “Father” started with the Apostles themselves.
- ❖ Saint Paul, for instance, writes, “For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” 1 Cor. 4:15; cf. 1 Thess. 2:11



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ Jesus willed that the Apostles and their successors serve as living images of God the Father to continually remind His followers of Him.
- ❖ Hearing constantly in the Church the name “Father” helps us to become acclimated to the idea of the Blessed Trinity and the truth of our sonship or daughtership in Christ.
- ❖ Jesus also gave us the Pope to serve as His visible representative or *vicar* on earth.
- ❖ As such, the Pope provides an important source of unity for the people of God.

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”

Gospel According to Saint John 6:53-55



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ Of course, there is no greater way to come closer to Jesus and enter into a relationship with Him than the Holy Eucharist, or the Blessed Sacrament as It is called.
- ❖ This is because the Eucharist *is* Jesus Christ Himself—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—under the appearances of bread and wine.



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ Jesus gave us the Eucharist at the Last Supper, which was a Passover meal.
- ❖ The Passover meal is a sacred meal commemorating the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt.
- ❖ God asked the people to slaughter a male lamb without blemish and to paint their doorways with its blood.
- ❖ The homes bearing the blood of the lamb would be “passed over” by the angel of death.
- ❖ They were also asked to roast and eat the flesh of the lamb.



The Teachings of the Church: Revealing Jesus Christ

- ❖ The Passover meal was a symbolic way for the people to become one with that saving sacrifice, taking the lamb's spotlessness upon themselves.
- ❖ We eat the flesh of the true Passover Lamb at Mass.
- ❖ This is no longer merely a symbolic eating, but a *sacramental* eating—a *Holy Communion*—by which we are truly united, body and soul, with Our Savior Jesus Christ!
- ❖ How would it be possible to have a closer, more personal relationship with Him than this?



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