



The history of Christianity is not the history of a comfortable faith, but of a faith put to the test.

Every time a heresy tried to distort the face of Christ, the Church responded not with improvisation, but with prayer, study, suffering, and finally with **Councils**.

Where confusion arose, the Church **clarified**.

Where error appeared, the Church **defined**.

Where the faith was attacked, the Church **guarded the Deposit received from the Apostles**.

This article seeks to help you understand **why heresies did not destroy the Church**, but mysteriously **forced her to go deeper into the Truth**, and how those ancient debates directly illuminate the doctrinal and pastoral problems of today.

1. What is a heresy... and why does God allow it?

A **heresy** is not simply an innocent theological mistake. In the classical sense, it is:

The obstinate denial of a truth that must be believed with divine and Catholic faith.

That is to say, **it is not ignorance**, but **resistance to a known Truth**.

Saint Paul already warned:

“For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine; but following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, they will accumulate teachers and stop listening to the truth” (2 Tim 4:3).

God **does not will heresy**, but He **permits it** for a greater good:

□ to force the Church to **formulate precisely what she has always believed**.



Before heresy, many truths were lived; **afterwards**, they were defined.

2. What is a Council? Much more than a meeting

An **ecumenical council** is the highest expression of the Church's solemn Magisterium, where the bishops, in communion with the Pope, **define doctrines binding on all the faithful**.

They do not invent anything new.

They **defend, clarify, and specify** what was already contained in Revelation.

Jesus promised it:

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13).

3. The great heresies... and the Councils that overcame them

□ **ARIANISM** – *Is Jesus God... or a creature?*

Heresy: Arius claimed that the Son was neither eternal nor consubstantial with the Father.

Consequence: Christ would no longer be truly God.

□ **Council of Nicaea I (325)**

Key definition:

"Begotten, not made, consubstantial (homoousios) with the Father."



□ **Current impact:**

Every time Jesus is reduced to a “moral teacher,” a “spiritual leader,” or a “prophet,” Arianism **returns dressed in modern clothes**.

□ NESTORIANISM – *Is Mary the Mother of God?*

Heresy: Nestorius separated Christ into two persons, one divine and one human. Mary would be only the mother of the “man Jesus.”

□ **Council of Ephesus (431)**

Definition:

| Mary is **Theotokos**, Mother of God.

□ **Current impact:**

Whenever the “historical Jesus” is separated from the “Christ of faith,” **Nestorius speaks again**.

□ MONOPHYSITISM – *Does Christ have only one nature?*

Heresy: It denied Christ’s true humanity after the Incarnation.

□ **Council of Chalcedon (451)**

Magisterial definition:

| One single Person in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.

□ **Current impact:**

Every form of spiritualism that despises the body, sacrifice, and the Cross **draws from this root**.



□ PELAGIANISM – *Do we save ourselves?*

Heresy: It denied original sin and the necessity of grace.

□ Councils of Carthage (418) and Orange (529)

Definition:

| Grace is ***absolutely necessary*** for salvation.

□ Current impact:

Moralism without grace, the idea that “being a good person is enough,” is **recycled Pelagianism**.

□ DONATISM – *Do the sacraments depend on the holiness of the priest?*

Heresy: If the minister was sinful, the sacrament was invalid.

□ Councils of Arles and Carthage (4th-5th centuries)

Definition:

| The sacraments act ***ex opere operato***, by Christ, not by the minister.

□ Current impact:

Real scandals do not invalidate real grace. The Church is holy **even when her members are sinners**.



□ ICONOCLASM – *Are images idolatry?*

Heresy: Rejection of sacred images.

□ **Second Council of Nicaea (787)**

Definition:

| *Images are venerated, not adored.*

□ **Current impact:**

The symbolic and aesthetic emptying of churches **impoverishes the faith.**

□ PROTESTANTISM – *Faith without works? Bible without the Church?*

Multiple doctrinal errors:

- Sola Scriptura
- Sola Fide
- Denial of the sacraments

□ **Council of Trent (1545-1563)**

Definitions:

- Faith and works
- Biblical canon
- Sacraments
- The Mass as sacrifice

□ **Current impact:**

Much “Catholic” language today is **Protestant without realizing it.**

□ MODERNISM – *Faith adapted to the taste of the world*

Heresy: Truth changes with culture.



□ **First Vatican Council (1870)**

Definition:

| *Faith does not contradict reason, but **transcends it**.*

(Saint Pius X would later call it “the synthesis of all heresies”).

□ **Current impact:**

When doctrine is diluted to avoid discomfort, **modernism smiles**.

4. Practical guide: living today with conciliar faith (theological and pastoral)

□ 1. Love doctrine: it is an act of charity

Truth **does not oppress**, it liberates (Jn 8:32).

□ 2. Do not oppose “pastoral care” to “doctrine”

True pastoral care **flows from truth**, not from ambiguity.

□ 3. Learn to detect modern heresies

- Moral relativism
- A reduced Christology
- Sacraments reduced to symbols
- Grace without conversion

□ 4. Live in communion with the perennial Magisterium

Not every change is progress.

Not every novelty is authentic development.



□ 5. Pray for the Church

Councils were born **from crises**, not from comfort.

5. Conclusion: Truth always triumphs

Heresies pass.

Councils remain.

Errors shout.

Truth **waits... and finally prevails.**

As Saint Vincent of Lérins wrote:

*“In the Church there is progress, but without altering the faith;
development, but no transformation.”*

Today, as yesterday, **we do not need a new faith**, but **the faith of always, lived courageously today.**

Because when error multiplies,
clarity becomes an act of love.