

Tridentine Community News

January 11, 2026 – Holy Family

Heresy According to Catholic Doctrine: An Historical Overview Part 1 of 2

By James Murphy

In traditional Catholic doctrine, a heresy is the obstinate post-baptismal denial or doubt of a truth that must be believed with divine and Catholic faith. From the apostolic age onward, the Catholic Church has been compelled to define revealed truth by condemning error. Heresies arise when baptized persons obstinately deny or doubt doctrines divinely revealed and infallibly proposed by the Church. What follows is a chronological survey of major heresies, demonstrating how doctrinal clarity has been sharpened through opposition to error.

1. Gnosticism (1st – 2nd Century)

Claimed salvation through secret knowledge and denied the goodness of matter, undermining the reality of the Incarnation.

2. Docetism (1st – 2nd Century)

Held that Christ only appeared to possess a human body, denying the true reality of His flesh and suffering.

3. Modalism / Sabellianism (3rd Century)

Denied the real distinction of Persons in the Trinity, asserting Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were merely modes of manifestation.

4. Arianism (4th Century)

Taught that the Son was a created being and not consubstantial with the Father.

5. Pneumatomachianism (4th Century)

Denied the divinity of the Holy Ghost, reducing Him to a creature.

6. Apollinarianism (4th Century)

Asserted that Christ lacked a human rational soul, compromising His full humanity.

7. Nestorianism (5th Century)

Divided Christ into two persons and denied Mary's title as Theotokos, Mother of God.



8. Pelagianism (5th Century)

Denied original sin and taught that man could achieve salvation without divine grace.

9. Semi-Pelagianism (5th – 6th Century)

Held that the initial act of faith originates in human will rather than prevenient grace.

10. Monophysitism (5th Century)

Claimed Christ possessed only one nature after the Incarnation, denying the permanence of His humanity.

11. Monothelitism (7th Century)

Asserted that Christ had only one will, contradicting His full human and divine natures.

12. Iconoclasm (8th – 9th Century)

Rejected the veneration of holy images, denying the implications of the Incarnation.

13. Berengarianism (11th Century)

Denied the substantial change in the Eucharist, rejecting the doctrine of the Real Presence.

14. Catharism / Albigensianism (12th – 13th Century)

Revived dualistic errors, rejecting the sacraments, marriage, and the goodness of the material order.

15. Waldensianism (12th Century)

Rejected ecclesiastical authority and promoted unauthorized preaching.

16. Protestantism (16th Century)

Denied papal authority, Apostolic Tradition, the sacrificial nature of the Mass, and the full sacramental economy.

17. Anabaptism (16th Century)

Rejected infant baptism and denied the objective efficacy of the sacraments.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Tue. 01/13 7:00 PM: High Mass at St. Benedict/Holy Name of Mary, Windsor (Baptism of Our Lord)