

20. The Creeds: The Nicene Creed & The Apostles' Creed

When we recite the Creed, we state that we believe in God the Father Almighty, in his Son, Jesus Christ, who died and rose again, and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life. We affirm that the Church—one, holy, catholic, and apostolic—is the body of Christ enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

Key terms:

Creed:	A creed is a profession of faith, giving one's assent to the divine truths, revealed by God, in Sacred Scripture, and the living Tradition of the Church.
Consubstantial:	From the Greek term <i>homoousios</i> meaning "the same substance".
Nicene Creed:	The Nicene Creed was first adopted in A.D. 325 at the Council of Nicea. The Roman Emperor Constantine had convened the Council of Nicea in an attempt to unify the Christian church with one doctrine, especially on the issues of the Trinity and the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ.
Apostles' Creed:	Written at least 150 years after the apostles, the Apostles' Creed is the oldest creed of the Christian church. Traditionally it is considered a record of what the apostles taught.
Proceeds:	To proceed means to 'come from' or 'be sent by'. "When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth." (Jn. 15) Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit, the "Counsellor."
Begotten:	The Son is not 'created' but shares in the self-same nature as the Father.
Incarnate:	Jesus was "given flesh". The Incarnation is the moment when God became man in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Son of Man:	It is a Messianic title, conveying a sense of divine royalty and messianic fulfilment.
Son of God:	Speaks not just of Jesus' relationship to the Father but to his unique nature shared with the Father.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

- The Apostles' Creed sometimes titled the Apostolic Creed or the Symbol of the Apostles, is a Christian creed or "symbol of faith"
- It is a faithful summary of the apostles' faith.
- It is the Creed of the Roman Church, the see of Peter the first of the apostles.
- This symbol of faith is first and foremost a baptismal creed.
- The Apostles' Creed is not a statement to be made that guarantees a person salvation if they recite it, it is a condensed theological system that reflects what is right for a follower of Jesus Christ to believe.

THE TWELVE ARTICLES OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

1. **I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.** (Deut. 6:4; Gen 1:1)
 - God, the Creator, is also 'Father'.
 2. **And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord.** (Jn. 3:16)
 - Jesus is the Christ, the 'Anointed One', the Messiah, the Only Son of God.
 3. **Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit.** (Lk. 1:26-38)
 - Jesus Christ was "begotten, not made". He shares the same nature with God.
 4. **Born of the Virgin Mary** (Lk. 1:26-38)
 - Jesus took on Human nature, God manifest in the flesh.
 5. **Suffered under Pontius Pilate** (Lk. 23:23-25)
 - By mentioning Pontius Pilate, we can situate the life of Jesus in time, He becomes part of our history.
 - The suffering of Jesus Christ reminds us that He took on all the elements of human nature, enduring the suffering of the body and heart to accompany us to the end.
 6. **Was crucified, died and was buried** (Lk. 23:23-25)
 - The Passion of Jesus as detailed in the Scriptures is an essential element of faith.
 - Jesus saved humanity through His sacrifice on the cross.
 7. **He descended into Hell** (1Pet. 3:18-20; 1Cor 15:3-5)
 - The triumphant descent of Christ into Hell brought the salvation of all who had died.
 8. **He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.** (Mk. 16:19; 2Tim 4:1)
 - This article addresses Jesus' Ascension to Heaven, the Second Coming and the Day of the Lord. Jesus prepares the Kingdom of God for believers.
 9. **I believe in the Holy Spirit** (Jn. 15:26)
 - Profess our faith in the third person of the Holy Trinity.
 10. **The Holy Catholic Church** (1Cor 12:12-13; Rev. 8:3-4)
 - We state our beliefs in the Church, the Universal Body of Christ.
 11. **The communion of Saints** (Rev. 8:3-4)
 - Humanity's relationship with God is accomplished through our relationship with each other and the communion of saints.
 12. **The resurrection of the body and life everlasting Amen.** (Jn. 6:35-40; 1Jn. 5:11-12)
 - We are called to eternal life where all will be resurrected in His flesh.
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THE NICENE CREED

- First adopted at the first council of Nicaea convened by Emperor Constantine in 325.
- A Bible-based summary of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- It reached its final form at the first council of Constantinople in 381 and is referred to as the Nicene Creed or the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.
- Purpose was to reject the *Arian* heresy which claimed:
 - Christ was not God the creator;
 - denied the full divinity of Christ;
 - there was a moment when "once he did not exist."

- The Creed established the divine nature of Jesus and his relationship to God the Father. He is:
 - equal to him in divinity,
 - equal in eternity,
 - equally omnipotent,
 - and equally the creator of all things.
- Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary and crucified by Pontius Pilate has always existed as the eternal Son of God. This is why he rightly sits on the throne of God and we worship him.

The creed has three parts (called three “articles”), because it is about the Trinity, the God in whose name we are baptised: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

It teaches three things about God:

- **Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God**
He is begotten from God the Father in eternity, before all the ages of time, as true God from true God.
- **The Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father**
Just as God the Father is never without his Son, so he is never without his Spirit. So the Spirit, too, is equally eternal and equally the one true God.
- **Jesus is fully human and fully God**
The creed confesses faith in the incarnation, when the eternal Son of God descended from heaven to become a human being.

Reciting the Creed is to say who God is – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and who Christ is: the only begotten son of the Father, God from God, who for our salvation became incarnate – fully human – was crucified, raised from the dead, and sits enthroned at the right hand of God the Father.

THE FATHER ALMIGHTY - Biblical Attributes of God

The Creed reminds us that God while being Father, is still God. He is “the Father Almighty.”

Omnipotence. God is all-powerful. God is eternal, and there is nothing impossible for him. (Jeremiah 32:17)

Omnipresence. God is all-present. Because God is sovereign and spirit, he literally sees everything at once and is everywhere at once. (Jeremiah 23:23, 1 Kings 1:27, and Psalm 139:1)

Omniscience. Because God is all-powerful and all-present, he is all-knowing. (Psalm 147:5, Proverbs 15:3, and Hebrews 4:13)

Sovereignty. God is truly all-mighty, and therefore he is in control. God cannot be thwarted precisely because he is God. (Proverbs 16:9, Exodus 4:11, Psalm 115:3)

Holiness. God is utterly perfect, utterly “other,” and utterly just. (Revelation 4:8)

EXPLORE!

- Explore with the candidates the correlation between the Creed and the Profession of Faith during the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism.
 - Do creeds, mission statements, and vows, have a role in how you live and relate to others? List what they are and how they impact your decisions.
 - What do you think the role of creeds, like the Apostles' creed, is in the church? Do they seem outdated or is there still relevance and purpose for them in the church today? Are there possible benefits? Are there risks?
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The Creeds — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do you think Christians have recited the words of this creed for centuries together in churches?
2. What is significant about the first word of the Apostles' Creed?
3. Why is it important for Christians to articulate and agree on what we believe?
4. Why is it important to believe in the fact that God is all-powerful and has authority over all things?
5. Why is it essential to salvation that Jesus is both fully God and fully man?
6. Why is it significant for the creed to emphasize the biblical account of Jesus' suffering, crucifixion, death, and burial as historical facts?

PRAYER

Psalm 78: 1-8

or

Gospel Reflection:	Third Sunday of Lent
Year A	Jn. 4:5-42
Year B	Jn. 2:13-25
Year C	Lk. 13:1-9

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

The Creeds: The Nicene Creed & The Apostles' Creed

Scripture The Nicene Creed

I believe in One God the Father almighty	Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29; Mark 12:32; Eph. 4:6; 1Cor 8:6 Is. 63:16; Is. 64:7; Mt. 6:9; Eph. 4:6; 2Cor 6:18; Gen 17:1; Is. 6:3
maker of heaven and earth of all things visible and invisible.	Gen. 1:1; Job 38:1-30; Rev. 4:11 Col. 1:15-16; Jn. 1:3; Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ The only begotten Son of God born of the Father before all ages Light of Light	Jn. 20:28; Acts 11:17; Acts 16:31; 1Cor 8:6; Eph 4:5 Mt. 3:17; Mt. 14:33; Mt. 16:16; Jn. 1:14; Jn. 3:16 Ps. 2:7; Jn. 1:1-2 Jn. 1:4; Jn. 1:9; Jn. 8:12; Ps. 26:1; Mt. 17:2; Mt. 17:5; 2Cor 4:6; Heb. 1:3; 1Jn. 1:5
true God for true God begotten not made consubstantial with the Father Through Him all things were made	Jn. 1:1-2; Jn. 17:1-5; 1Jn. 5:20 Jn. 1:1-2; Jn. 16:28; Jn. 1:18 Jn. 10:30 Heb. 1:1-2; Heb. 1:10; Jn. 1:3; Jn. 1:10; Col. 1:16; 1Cor 8:6; Rom 11:36
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.	1Tim 2:4-5; Mt. 1:21; 1Thess 5:9; Col 1:13-14 Jn. 3:13; Jn. 3:31; Jn. 6:33-35; Jn. 6:38 Lk. 1:34-35 Jn. 1:14; Heb. 2:14
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried,	Mk. 15:25; 1Cor 15:3; 1Pet 2:24; Mk/ 15:15 Mk. 8:31; Mt. 27:50; Lk. 23:53; 1Cor 15:4; Mt. 27:58-60
and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.	Mk. 9:31; Mk. 16:9; Acts 10:40; 1Cor 15:4 Lk. 24:45-46; Acts 17:2-3; 1Cor 15:3-4 Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:9-10; Mk. 16:19 Mk. 16:19; Acts 7:55; Lk. 22:69 Mt. 24:27; Mk. 13:26; Jn. 14:3; 1Thes 4:17 Acts 10:42; 2Tim 4:1; Mt. 16:27; 2Cor 5:10; 1Pet 4:5 2Pet 1:11; Heb. 1:8; Lk. 1:32-33
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.	2Cor 3:17; Jn. 14:26; Acts 1:8; Gen 1:2; Jn. 6:63; 2Cor 3:6 Jn. 15:26 Mt. 3:16-17; Mt. 28:19 1Sam 19:20; Ex.11:5; 1Pet 1:10-11; 2Pet 1:21; Eph 3:5
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.	Mt. 16:18; Mt. 28:19; 1Pet 2:5; 1Pet 2:9; Eph 1:4; Eph 2:19-22; Eph 4:4; Eph 5:27; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:42; Mk. 16:15; Rom 12:4-5;

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins	1Cor 10:17
	Eph. 4:5; Gal. 3:27; 1Cor 12:13; Col 2:12-13;
	Acts 22:16
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead	Jn. 11:24; 1Cor 15:12-49; Rom 6:4-5;
	1Thess 4:16
and the life of the world to come.	Mk. 10:29-30; Eph 2:6-7; 2Pet 3:13; Rev. 21:1
Amen.	Ps. 40:14; Ps. 71:19; Ps. 105:48; 1Tim 6:15-16;
	2Tim 4:18; Rev. 22:21

Catechism

- 185 “I believe” I pledge myself to what we believe
- 186 From the apostolic Church, the synthesis of faith was handed on in brief formulae or summaries.
- 187 Professions of faith are also called “symbols of faith” and are also called “creeds”
- 188 *Symbolon* means a gathering, collection or summary of the principal truths of the faith.
- 189 The first profession of faith is made at Baptism. The truths of faith are articulated in terms of their reference to the three persons of the Holy Trinity.
- 190 The Creed is divided into three parts:
- (i) the first divine Person and the work of creation;
- (ii) the second divine Person and the mystery of his redemption of men
- (iii) the third divine Person, the origin and source of our sanctification.
- 191 The three parts of the Creed are called articles.
- 192 Through the centuries, many professions of faith have been in response to the needs of different eras.
- 193 None of the creeds from the different stages in the Church's life can be considered superseded or irrelevant.
- 194 The Apostles' Creed is so called because it is considered to be a faithful summary of the apostles' faith. It is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome.
- 195 The authority of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan or Nicene Creed stems from the first two ecumenical Councils (in 325 and 381) and remains common to all the Churches of both East and West.
- 197 Praying the Creed is to enter into communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- 199-202 The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed begins with a confession of God's oneness which has its roots in the divine revelation of the old covenant.
- 512 The Creed speaks about the mysteries of the Incarnation and Paschal mystery.
- 815 The profession of one faith is a visible bond of communion.
- 1816 The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it and confidently bear witness to it and spread it.

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.