

Lesson 5: The Creed (What We Believe)



If someone asked you the question, “As a Catholic, what do you believe?” How would you respond? A **Creed** is a summary of beliefs. Therefore, if some did ask you this question, the best answer would be to recite the creed since it is a summary of our faith.

There are two forms of the creed in the Catholic Church. The first is the Apostles Creed. This is the shorter of the two creeds. It is believed to be the creed developed and utilized by the 12 Apostles of Jesus Christ. Due to the emergence of **heresies** (*serious errors in the understanding of the faith*), parts of the creed needed to be expanded in order to spread the correct understanding of Christ and the Church. These additions and expansions were developed and approved through the following Church Councils: the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) and the Council of Constantinople (381 AD).

The major differences between the two creeds are that the Nicene Creed has:

1. An expanded section on the Divinity of Christ
2. The head bow (*during Mass*) for the Incarnation: “*and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man*”
3. An expansion on the Divinity of the Holy Spirit
4. The 4 Marks of the Church: **One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.**

Being “**One**” means that Catholics everywhere around the world profess one faith, worship in the same way (*Mass*), adhere to the same teachings (*regarding the creed, sacraments, and morals*), and are united under the authority of the Pope.

Christ sanctifies his Bride the Church and makes her “**Holy**” through the Holy Spirit. Through Christ and with him, the Church sanctifies (*makes holy*) her members, and we achieve holiness by the grace of God at work in the Church.

“**Catholic**” means “universal.” The universality of the Church includes all ages, all races and nationalities, from every time period. Moreover, all the good traits of every culture are reflected in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Being “**Apostolic**” means that the Church is founded on the Apostles; she faithfully guards the deposit of faith; and she is guided by Peter’s successor (*the Pope*).

By placing the two creeds side-by-side, it is easy to see the expanded material.

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.

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

The Apostles' Creed was originally a profession of faith required of converts to Christianity before they were baptized. As a formula of belief, it goes back in substance, if not in words, to the twelve Apostles. Following Christ's declaration that, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (*Mark 16:16*), the Apostles' Creed was the precondition for baptism. Only believers could be baptized. Even when children were baptized in the early Church, someone (*usually the child's parents*) had to profess the faith for them. What the Apostles' Creed tells us is what every Christian must accept on faith. There are three fundamental truths in the Apostles' Creed and they are as follows:

1. We believe that the world did not always exist, but was created by God who existed from all eternity.
2. We believe that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ, that he was born of the Virgin Mary, died on the Cross and rose from the dead, and that he will return on the last day to judge all.
3. We believe that Christ sent the Holy Spirit, who is the Soul of the Church which Christ founded, and that through the Church we receive all the graces we need to reach the eternal life for which we were made.

What needs to be emphasized is that belief in these revealed truths is the foundation of Christianity. We can hope only in what we know to be true. Faith provides us with the guarantee that our hope is not in vain. We can love only what we know to be good. Faith provides us with the vision that God is so good we should love Him with our whole heart and soul.

The main thing to keep in mind is that the foundation of Christianity is the faith; that this faith can be expressed in plain, ordinary language. The Apostle's Creed is the most ancient and widely used summary of what Christians are to believe.

The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed was originally formulated at the First Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church held in Nicaea in 325 AD and was later amplified, adopted and authorized as a true expression of the Faith at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381 AD. The Nicene Creed built upon the profession of faith in the Apostles' Creed, defending against many of the heresies (*errors of the faith*) of the time. The Nicene Creed was absolutely necessary at the time to ensure that the **lex credendi** (*the rule of faith = what the people believed*) would both reflect and reinforce the **lex orandi** (*the rule of prayer = how the people worshiped*).

FAITH

Faith is a gift of God that helps us believe in Him. We profess our faith in the Creed, celebrate it in the sacraments, live by it through our good conduct of loving God and our neighbor, and express it in prayer. Faith is a personal adherence of the whole person to God, who has revealed Himself to us through words and actions throughout history.

We need to practice our faith so it grows, so we can become confident in it. Faith is a beautiful gift from God that helps us believe in Him; however, it is our responsibility to nurture it and help it grow over time. We can practice our faith in thought, word, and action. We can turn to the Church and to Scripture for guidance as we practice and grow in our faith.

Fantastic
Adventure
In
Trusting
Him (*God*)

