

The Creed

Roman Missal (2011)—Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 AD)

I believe in one God, the Father almighty (Latin Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotem), 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, [At the words that follow, up to and including and became man, all bow.] 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 (Latin Filioque)], 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. (Roman Missal, *The Order of Mass*, nos. 18-19)*

Scripture

St. Paul and the Earliest “Creed”

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures... (1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

Tradition

The Apostles’ Creed (Shorter)

1. 12 Articles: associated with the 12 apostles
2. Baptismal Creed: of the early Roman church
3. Catechumens: recite it for Easter Vigil
4. Rosary: customarily said before the Rosary

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 A.D.)

1. Longer Creed: said during the Mass
2. Explicitly directed against 4th Century Heresies
3. Ecumenical Councils: based on teaching of Councils

Council of Nicaea (325AD)
Against Arius: taught that the Son was “created” by God

Council of Constantinople (381 AD)
Against Pneumatomachi: “fighters against the Spirit”; denied divinity of HS

Nicene Creed: “begotten, not made,
consubstantial with the Father”

Constantinople: HS = “Lord and Giver of
Life, who is worshiped”

The Creed Said by the People (6th century)

Synod of Toledo III: Out of respect for the holy faith and to strengthen the weak understanding of the faithful, ...this holy synod has determined that throughout the churches of Spain, Gaul, and Gallaecia, *the creed of the Council of Constantinople is—according to the formula of the Eastern Churches, that is, of the 150 bishops—to be recited so that before the Lord’s Prayer it is said aloud by the people so that purified by the witness of faith the hearts of the people might approach to receive the Body and Blood of Christ.*¹

Pope Leo III and the Latin and Greek Creeds (8th Century)

Liber Pontificalis: [I]n his love for and as a safeguard for the orthodox faith he [Leo III] provided 2 silver shields, each inscribed with the Creed, one in Greek, the other in Latin, placed right and left over the entrance to the body [=the doorway].”²

Benedict VIII Adds the Creed with *Filioque* to the Roman Mass (1014 AD)

Benedict VIII: *The symbol after the Gospel... the Romans, until these times, did not sing... But the lord emperor [Henry II] no sooner ceased than the consent of all persuaded the apostolic lord Benedict [VIII] to sing it at the public mass.*³

St. Louis IX and Genuflection During the Creed (13th Century)

Geoffrey of Beaulieu, O.P.: He [King Louis] saw among certain religious the use of a certain pious practice; that is, when during the singing of the Mass, “I believe in one God,” is recited, “and He was made man,” the choir would bow down deeply and humbly. *He liked this practice immensely, so he had it implemented and maintained; not only in his own chapel for his own use, but also in many other churches, so that at that line the choir would not only bow but devoutly genuflect.*⁴

¹ Synod of Toledo III (589 AD), Capitulum 2. In Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 4:185.

² *Liber Pontificalis* 98.84. In *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis)* (2nd ed.; trans. Raymond Davis; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 216.

³ Berno of Reichenau, *De quibusdam rebus ad missae officium spectantibus* 2. Cf. J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 142:1060-61.

⁴ Geoffrey of Beaulieu, *Life of Louis, King of the Franks*, 36. In M. Cecelia Gaposchkin and Sean L. Field, eds., *The Sanctity of Saint Louis by Geoffrey of Beaulieu and William of Chartres* (trans. Larry F. Field; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014), 113. Cf. King, *The Liturgy of the Roman Church*, 267: “The custom of kneeling at the *Incarnatus* in the Creed... was introduced at the behest of St. Louis IX, king of France (1215-70).” Also Monti, *A Sense of the Sacred*, 44: “In late medieval editions of the Sarum Missal, the rubrics for the Creed direct the choir to bow toward the altar during the words ‘and was made incarnate by the Holy Spirit...’”

Mystagogy

The Creed as the “Doorway” the Eucharist

Liturgy of St John Chrysostom:

Deacon: “*The doors, the doors!* (Greek *tas thyras, tas thyras*). With wisdom let us attend.”

People: “I believe in one God, Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth...”⁵

The Symbolism of Kneeling at the Words “And Became Man” (13th Century)

William Durand: When we say in that place: “*And became man,*” we must genuflect, because we adore Christ for becoming man for us and being crucified for us.⁶

The Creed as a Response of Faith (16th Century)

St. Robert Bellarmine: *The Creed is rightly pronounced after the Gospel, because faith follows from hearing the word of God.*⁷

The Daily Creed: “Dress Your Soul” Each Day (5th Century)

St. Augustine: *You have already received back the creed [symbolon] which summarizes all that we believe. [...] As to those of you who failed to do well when reciting back the creed, you still have time to learn it by heart because on Saturday, in the presence of all who will be listening, you will recite it back, namely on the Saturday when you will be baptized. ...On Saturday when by God’s goodness we keep vigil, you will repeat back the creed, not the Lord’s Prayer. For unless you know creed well, you do not hear it said every day by the people in church. So once you have learned it, say it each day so that you do not forget it; say it when you rise, when you prepare for sleep; return the creed, return it to the Lord... Repetition is a good thing, to prevent forgetfulness creeping in. Don’t say, “I said it yesterday, I said it today, I say it every day, I know it well and truly by heart.” Call your faith to mind, look at yourself; treat your creed as your own personal mirror. Observe yourself there, if you believe all the things you confess to believing, and rejoice every day in your faith. Let these be your riches let them be in a kind of way the everyday clothes of your mind. Don’t you dress, when you get up? In the same sort of way, dress your soul by calling your creed to mind... When we come to that place where we are going to reign, there will be no need for us to say the creed. We shall see God, God himself will be our vision; the vision of God will be the reward of this faith.*⁸

⁵ In *The Divine Liturgy of Our Father Among the Saints, John Chrysostom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 28-29.

⁶ William Durand, *Rationale of the Divine Offices*, IV.25.10. in Durand, *Rationale IV*, 220.

⁷ Robert Bellarmine, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, Book, II, Chapter 16. (pp. 254-55).

⁸ Augustine, *Sermons* 58.1, 12-13. In Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 3:59-60; the last lines of this translation are from Saint Augustine, *Sermons III (51-94)* (trans. Edmund Hill, O.P.; The Works of Saint Augustine III/3; Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1991), 124-25.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. When was the Creed introduced into the Mass? Why did it take so long for it to be added to the Roman Liturgy?

2. How is the Creed a “doorway” into the Liturgy of the Eucharist?

For Further Reading

Jungmann, Joseph, S.J. *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*. 2 Volumes. Translated by Francis A. Brunner, C.S.S.R. Reprint. Notre Dame, Ind.: Christian Classics, 2012.