

The Creed

After the Homily, the next part of the Roman liturgy that is a crucial part of the Liturgy of the Word, is the singing, or saying more frequently in our day and time, of the Creed, the Nicene Creed. So, if you look at the Roman Missal and you turn to the Liturgy of the Word, you will find, after the Homily, it says this, in #18:

At the end of the homily, the Symbol or Profession of Faith or Creed, when prescribed, is either sung or said.”¹

Now, I know you know the Creed, I'm sure you do, but I just want to read it and highlight an element here. So, we say:

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...

This is important.

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 then in the Missal you see something...you see a red line here. This is what's called rubrics, because they're in the red-colored ink, right? Like a Ruby is a red gem. So the rubric says:

[At the words that follow, up to and including and became man, all bow.]

So, when we say:

¹ Roman Missal, *The Order of Mass*, no. 18.

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...

So when we say that:

by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man...

We are all to bow at that moment in the Creed. I'll come back to why in just a second. Then it continues:

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.

And a third, "I believe." Notice the Trinitarian element. "I believe in God... I believe in Jesus Christ..."

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.²

Alright, so that's the text of the Roman Missal; so many things we could say about the Creed. I want to just highlight a few here for you by way of introduction. First, notice it has three names. It's called the Symbol, the Profession of Faith, or the Creed. Where do those come from? Well, the Symbol is the ancient Greek name. It comes from the Greek word *symbolon*, which has several meanings. One of them is a kind of a summary, right? So the Creed is a summary of the Christian faith. It's a

² Roman Missal, *The Order of Mass*, nos. 18-19.

summary of the basic elements, the essential articles of faith that we profess, that we believe as Christians.

Profession of faith, that name comes from the fact that the Creed was often professed by believers when they were coming into the Church, like on the night of the Easter Vigil. What would mark your entry into the body, was not just the reception of the sacraments, but your public profession of faith in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Creed. So that name is from that kind of liturgical role of the Profession of Faith.

And then the name Creed is from the Latin, because the first word of the Creed in Latin is *Credo*...*Credo in unum Deum*, "I believe in one God," so on and so forth, "the Father almighty." So Creed is just an English word from the Latin meaning, "I believe," so that kind of emphasizes the personal expression of faith that the Creed represents. So all three of those names are pretty significant and they kind of give us a window into what the Creed is. It is a summary of the essential articles of faith professed by every Christian believer who has been initiated through the sacraments into the Church and expresses the personal faith, *Credo*, singular: "I believe", that is in union with the whole Church, "We believe", right, in this summary of the faith.

The other element I want to highlight for you here is that according to the Roman Missal, a lot of people don't know this, but the Creed can be said, and it is frequently said, like recited. But actually, if you look at the first description of the Creed in the Missal, is for it to be chanted. So the Creed can be sung. There's actually a chant form to the Creed given right here in the official Missal, that the Church does recommend singing the Creed, and not only saying the Creed, like many other parts of the Liturgy of the Word.

Finally, that when we are reciting the Creed, it's really crucial to note that every time we say it or sing it, when we get to the article about the Incarnation, "he became man," we are supposed to bow. So there's a gesture that accompanies that particular line of the Creed in the official Roman Missal. And note this, by the way, at an ordinary Sunday Mass, we bow at the line "and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man", but according to the General

Instruction, on the Solemnity of the Annunciation to Mary and on the Nativity of the Lord...In other words, at Christmas Mass, everyone kneels for that line, because those are the Masses where we're celebrating, in a solemn way, the mystery of the Incarnation.

Okay, so that's what we do in the liturgy. Where's this from in Scripture? Where's the Creed from in Scripture? And what about some of these gestures and customs? Where do they come from in the tradition of the Roman Church? Well, the story of the Creed in Scripture and Tradition is a long story. If you want to dig into it in a little more depth, let me recommend two sources. First, J.N.D. Kelly has a classic book called *Early Christian Creeds*, where he kind of goes through the whole history, the Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed, and how they develop and come into the liturgy as well. And then there's also a classic work called *The Mass of the Roman Rite* by Josef Jungmann, a German Jesuit scholar, and he has a section on the Creed that's extremely helpful in Volume One about how the Creed developed and made its way into the Roman Mass. I can't recommend them highly enough in terms of informing you about the history, because I don't have time to go into the details, but here's a little whirlwind tour of how the Creed came to us through Scripture and tradition.

First, there is of course no account of the Apostles Creed in the New Testament. But what we do find is already, at the time of the Apostles, summaries of the faith that are, in a sense, a kind of nucleus, a kind of beginnings of the development of a creedal formula. So, for example, in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, we find St. Paul give the beginnings of a creed to the church at Corinth when he writes these words:

*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, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*³

³ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

So notice here, Paul says “what I am telling you now, first of all, I received it. I didn’t make it up.” It wasn’t made up by Paul, “I received it.” And now I am handing it on to you. That is called tradition, passing it on. And this is what I received, “as of first importance...” In other words, these are the most important things. Nameley, “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, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.” So notice what we have here. Christ's death, burial, resurrection from the dead, in accordance with the scriptures. Which is precisely what we're going to talk about when we see the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed. Those are going to develop those articles of faith and expand them into a more Trinitarian formula that not only tells us the essentials of what to believe about the life, death and resurrection of Christ, but also by God the Father, about the Holy Spirit, about the Catholic Church, and about the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, so on and so forth.

So although we do not see a developed form of the creed in the New Testament, we do see the nucleus of the creed. So really, in order to understand the creed, you have to turn from Scripture to the tradition of the Church. And when we do that, as Kelly points out in his book, *Early Christian Creeds*, we will see, in the Roman Church in particular, two major expressions of the creed. First, there is the Apostles Creed, which is a shorter summary of faith that most Catholics are familiar with from saying the Rosary. So if you want to distinguish between the Apostles Creed and later creeds, you can remember that when I say the Rosary, the beginning of the Rosary, that's the Apostles Creed. It's sometimes summarized as twelve key articles of faith. It's associated with the early Apostles. There's a tradition linking the Apostles Creed to the Apostles gathering together after Pentecost and coming up with twelve articles of faith that were to be believed by everyone as they brought the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Now, that tradition, that ancient tradition, is something scholars are skeptical about, but what most scholars agree on is that the Apostles Creed was an early baptismal creed of the Roman Church.

So if you were in the church at Rome, say in the 2nd century AD, and you were going to be baptized at the Vigil for Easter, you would recite the Apostles Creed as your profession of faith, kind of an essential summary of the Articles of Faith to be inducted into the Church as a Christian, right? So sometimes the Apostles Creed

will actually be called the Roman Creed because it is tied to the Church at Rome in a particular way. And in fact to this day, if you actually look in the Missal, the longer form of the creed that we say at Mass, the Nicene Creed, is accompanied by an option. You can say the Roman Creed or the Apostles Creed as part of the liturgy, especially, for example, at, say, the Easter Vigil or something like that, because that's going to be a night where people are going to be baptized. The Church says:

especially during Lent and Easter time, the baptismal Symbol of the Roman Church, known as the Apostles' Creed, may be used.⁴

The shorter version of the Creed. This is the one, like I said, we usually use when we say the Rosary as Catholics, but sometimes we'll hear it at Mass. And whenever it is said at Mass, almost inevitably people get it wrong because they're not used to saying the Apostles Creed at Mass. The one they're used to is the longer form of the Creed, known as the Nicene Creed.

Now, what is the Nicene Creed? Well, if you look at the history of the Church, although the Apostles Creed, the shorter form, was said as part of the baptismal liturgy in the Roman Church, the Nicene Creed was an expansion of that Creed that was formulated at two church councils. The Council of Nicea in 325AD and then a later council known as the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD. So, although we tend to refer to this as the Nicene Creed, it's technical name is actually the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, because it's actually a fusion of the summaries of faith given at these two church councils in the 4th century AD. Now, whole books, I mean long books, have been written on the councils of Nicea and Constantinople. But for our purposes here, I just want to boil them down to one key point. Namely this, that these first two church councils were called by the bishops of the Church to deal with heresies, to deal with theological errors.

And the first one, the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, was called to deal with the heresy of a priest named Arius. A heresy known as Arianism. And the essence of the Arian heresy was a denial of the full divinity of the Son of God. So the Arians

⁴ Roman Missal, *The Order of Mass*, no. 19.

argued that the Son was actually a creature. He was created by God and he was not eternal in the same way that God is eternal. So you can actually hear the refutation of this in the Creed that we say at Mass whenever the Creed says that:

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ...God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father...

That's actually what the Council of Nicea was emphasizing. That he was begotten by the Father from all eternity, not created by the Father as a creature, because the Son shares the same eternal substance, the Divine Substance, as the Father, which doesn't have a beginning and doesn't have an end. That's what we mean by consubstantial with the Father. The Greek term was *homoousios*. It was a famous word that people used to fight in the streets about in terms of whether the Son was of a similar substance to the Father, or whether he was of the same substance of the Father. So these were technical theological debates that took place in the 4th century to refute a Christological heresy, a error about the person of Jesus Christ. You and I might take for granted that Christ was the eternal Son of God. That was not something taken for granted at the time of the Arian heresy, the Arian controversy. So the Council of Nicea refuted that by saying he was "begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father."

But the heretics couldn't leave well enough alone, and another heresy arose that wasn't dealing with the person of the Son, but with the person of the Spirit. This one is much less well-known. A lot of people have heard of the Arian heresy. Most people have not heard of the Pneumatomachians, or the Pneumatomachi. This was a heresy that in Greek literally means "fighters against the Spirit." So these were heretics who denied the divinity, not of the Son, but the divinity of the Spirit, the divinity of the Holy Spirit. And so the Council of Constantinople decreed that not only do we believe in the Holy Spirit, but that that Holy Spirit is:

the Lord, the giver of life...who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified.

In other words, the Holy Spirit isn't just a power. The Holy Spirit isn't some force that pervades the universe, like in Star Wars. The Holy Spirit is an eternal, divine

person. The Holy Spirit is the Lord, the same Lord spoken of in the Scriptures, the giver of life, who is worthy of divine worship.

So when we're saying the Creed, and we say at Mass "begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father," that's refuting the heresy of Arian. And when we say "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified," that's refuting the Pneumatomachians, who denied the divinity of the Spirit. So you can see here, and this is so crucial, I cannot overstate the importance of this, that the creeds bear witness to what is known as the development of doctrine. St. Paul gives a short version of the Creed with a few articles of faith, mostly around Jesus. The Apostles Creed expands and develops that to be Trinitarian in form, with articles of faith about God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But it just says very simple things. "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church," and it just moves on, doesn't define the Holy Spirit more. And then when you get to the Nicene Creed we have definitions of doctrine meant to refute specific errors of heresy, making clear and explicit the fullness of the divinity of the Son and the fullness of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. That's the role that the creeds played. They developed the doctrine of the Church regarding the Most Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Alright, so that's the 4th century AD. What happens in later tradition? Well, for a while the Creed was not part of the Mass. It was just a dogmatic declaration of a council that was meant to be confessed by people in order to test their orthodoxy, to make sure that they believed all of the teachings and doctrines and dogmas of the Church. But what happened was, this is interesting. In the 6th century it began to make its way into the Mass. Now, it's a fascinating story that...Josef Jungman tells the story in his book. But believe it or not, this is the case, the first person to introduce the Creed into the Mass was a heretic. It was a man named Timothy of Constantinople. He was the Patriarch of the Church of Constantinople, but he actually had a heretical view. He was a monophysite. I won't go into all the details of the Monophysite heresy, but he actually introduced the Creed into the liturgy as a way, scholar suggests, in order to kind of show that he was in fact orthodox, even though he was being accused of heresy. And from that action, the Creed began to spread to the liturgies of the Greek-speaking churches in the East. It became part of the Mass because the actually orthodox bishops didn't want to be upstaged by the

heretical bishop who tried to tout his orthodoxy and wanted to seem more orthodox than them by having the Creed his liturgy. So they begin add the Creed to their liturgies as well, and it spread throughout the church. So that, in the 6th century AD, it actually made its way over into the Western churches, in Latin, in places like Spain and Gaul. But not in Rome.

This is important. It's not yet in the Roman liturgy. So in the 6th century AD, there was a Synod in Spain called the Synod of Toledo, it was the third synod, where the bishops got together and explicitly decreed that the Profession of Faith would be part of the Latin liturgy in their territories. And this is what the synod said:

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* [that is how many were there at the council]—*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.*⁵

So notice what the bishops at this synod are saying. They're saying, "out of respect for the faith" and in order to strengthen the weakness of the faith of some of the faithful, we're going to recite the creed at the Mass according to the formula of the Council of Constantinople. We're going to put it before the Lord's Prayer, before Holy Communion, "so that purified by the witness of faith the hearts of the people might approach to receive the Body and Blood of Christ." So, what the bishops are basically saying here is it has two purposes. First, we want to strengthen people's faith. Second, we want to prepare them to receive the Eucharist well. And scholars have looked into this and speculated about this and suggest that one of the reasons that the Creed was added to the Mass in Spain and Gaul in this period, is because that heresy I had mentioned earlier, the heresy of Arianism, had not totally gone away. It had had risen up again, and was in fact infecting some of the minds of the

⁵ Synod of Toledo III (589 AD), Capitulum 2. In Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 4:185.

people in the Latin West. So in order to refute that heresy, it seemed good to these bishops to insert the Creed, that was designed to refute it, into the actual liturgy itself, both to strengthen their faith and to prepare them to receive the Holy Eucharist.

Alright, now that's the 6th century in Spain and France. But in Rome, the Creed is not being added to the liturgy. It's going to take a longer amount of time for it to make its way into the Roman liturgy. So in fact, by the 8th century AD there was some pressure from the churches in France for the Pope to add the Creed to the liturgy of Rome, because at the time it was still not being ordinarily said in the Roman liturgy. And the Pope at the time was a Pope named Pope Leo III and Leo III was very concerned about orthodoxy. He had a great love for the Creed. In fact, according to the *Book of the Roman Pontiffs*, it says this about Leo:

[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].”⁶

So he puts the Creed in both Greek and Latin, because it was originally in Greek and it later was translated into Latin, over the doorway to show the importance of the Creed, but he doesn't actually add it to the liturgy itself, right? That's going to take even more time. It's going to be really in the 11th century, we have Pope Benedict the VIII, who's going to finally officially add the Creed to the Roman liturgy. The emperor at the time, Henry II, put pressure on Pope Benedict VIII to add the Creed to the Roman liturgy, because the Creed had been being sung in the churches in Gaul and and in Spain for many centuries, and so when the emperor came from France to Rome and came to Mass, and they didn't do the Creed, he was alarmed by that. So he brought his concern to to the Vatican, to the Pope and the officials at the time, the Roman clergy, and it was actually said that the Roman clergy told him, well, we don't need to say the Creed in Rome, because Rome has never been infected by error. In other words, there's no heresy that can ever come

⁶ *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.

out of Rome or from the Pope. So unlike the other churches, whether it's in the East or in the West, where heresy, like Arianism or the Pneumatomachian heresy, has infected not only the minds of the faithful, and in some cases even bishops and patriarchs, that has never happened in Rome. So we don't need to say the Creed during the liturgy.

But eventually, Benedict VIII acquiesced to the Emperor's request, and it says this in an account of that exchange:

The symbol after the Gospel... the Romans, until these times, did not sing...

Notice, the ordinary form is to sing the Creed.

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.⁷

So by the 11th century, the Creed was not only being said throughout Europe, it was actually being said at the Papal Mass, at the Roman Mass, the liturgy of the Pope in Rome itself. And there it has remained, from the 11th century all the way up to our own day, as a key element of the Roman liturgy. Alright, so that's the story of how the Creed made its way into the Mass. It's a very interesting story. It starts with a heretic, begins in the East, makes it over to France and Spain, and then at the pressure from a secular emperor, a layperson, Henry II, the Pope, Pope Benedict VIII, finally adds it to the liturgy. And I want you to notice this, this is important, right? We can have a Pope, Leo III in the 9th century, refuse to add it to the Mass, and then another Pope, Pope Benedict VIII, can reverse that and say it will be placed into the Mass. In fact, Leo, I should be clear, Leo was very clear that it would be illicit to insert it into the Roman liturgy without his permission as Pope. But a later Pope can come around and do just that, right? Because the popes are the supreme legislators of the liturgy. They have power over the discipline of the liturgy of the Roman Church. So, one Pope can't bind another Pope to not have the Creed in the Mass, if that is the discipline he wishes to enact. That's the story of the Creed.

⁷ Berno of Reichenau, *De quibusdam rebus ad missae officium spectantibus* 2. Cf. J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 142:1060-61.

But one last element that I think is really fascinating, that I only recently discovered about the liturgy and the Creed...and it has to do with us bowing at the line in the Creed referring to the incarnation of Christ through the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and becoming man. Why do we bow at that point? Well, this is interesting. Most of the elements of the Mass are changes to the Mass that we've looked at here, are either through interventions of the Pope who will add things to the Roman liturgy, or take things out of the Roman liturgy or alter things in the Roman liturgy, or through saints and bishops, like St. Ambrose of Milan, who introduced the Responsorial Psalm in the West and then it spread to the Roman liturgy through his influence.

But in this instance with the Creed, there's one element very unique, because the primary influence that led to its addition to the Roman liturgy appears to be through the influence of a layman, not a Bishop, not a Pope, but through a king. In this case, the King St. Louis IX, who was the king of France in the 13th century. This is particularly special to me because the church I grew up in was under the patronage of St. Louis, St. Louis Catholic Church, and it was a reference to St. Louis IX. In this book called *The Sanctity of St. Louis*, it's a collection of two early biographies of St. Louis, and in it, it describes the fact that it was Louis who saw some religious, some monks in France, bowing at this line during the Creed, and he was so moved by it that he actually ordered that this gesture be added to the Roman liturgy as it was celebrated in his royal palace, and then also throughout the churches in his lands. And eventually through his influence, it made its way into the Roman liturgy. So let me just give you the quote here — it's very beautiful — from a biography of St. Louis IX by Geoffrey of Beaulieu. He was a Dominican who wrote a biography of the King, and this is what he said:

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.*⁸

So he loved the bow, but he wanted to take it even further. He wanted them to kneel. So that is in the biography of Louis IX. Well, what is fascinating about that is that that is going to make its way into the Roman liturgy in both forms. So, to this day, we bow at an ordinary Sunday Mass during this line in the Creed. Thank you, St. Louis IX. And on the Feast of the Annunciation or on Christmas, we genuflect, a more solemn expression of reverence for the mystery of the Incarnation. All right, so that's a little, or maybe a long history of the Creed and its entry into and role in the Mass.

Now, I said this story is over, but one last point I need to mention. I can't do this justice here, but I want to at least mention it briefly. There is a line in the Creed in the part on the confession about the Holy Spirit, that was actually added to the Creed by the Pope and then inserted into the liturgy. So when we say:

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son (Latin Filioque)]

Those three words in English, “and the Son”, in Latin are one word, *Filioque*. It means "and the Son." Originally that word, that expression, “and the Son,” was not in the Nicene Creed. For hundreds of years it was not in the Creed. It's not in the Greek form of the Creed to this day. But it was added in the West in the Latin form of the Creed, and eventually inserted into the official Roman liturgy by the Pope. There's a whole story about this. If you want to dig into it more depth, there's this book called *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* by A. Edward Siecinski, and he kind of catalogs the whole development of belief in the article of

⁸ 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...*’”

faith that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Father alone, but from the Father and the Son. And this difference between the Latin West and then the Greek Orthodox in the East is going to be a major cause of division, from the 11th century to our own day. 1054 is kind of the general date for what's called the Great Schism between the Orthodox East and the Catholic West.

We can't go into details on that here, but for our purposes I just want to highlight that the same Pope, Benedict VIII, who added the Creed, the Nicene Creed, to the Mass in the 11th century, also included in it that extra line, the *Filioque*; I believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This was a major cause of controversy between the Greek East and the Latin West from the 11th century to this day. It is a point of division. But it shows for us in the West the authority of the Pope over the liturgy, and not only manifests the development of doctrine, that the creeds can expand and change as the needs of the Church and as errors arise, but it also shows us that the Pope has the authority to add a line to the Creed and add it to the liturgy as the supreme legislator of the Roman liturgy in the West. So that's a little bit of history there on the Creed, but I just bring it up because sometimes people will say, well, does the Pope have the authority to change the Mass? We've already looked at that in other videos, but nowhere is that authority to change the Mass, and even to change the sacred words of the Creed, more evident than in the addition of the *Filioque* to the Roman liturgy by Pope Benedict VIII.

Okay, with all that in mind, let's back up and ask, okay, so that's the whole history of the Creed. Clearly the Creed is important, but what am I supposed to be doing at this point in the Mass? Why is this significant for me as a layperson, as part of the faithful, in reciting the Creed? And what should be happening, so to speak, interiorly at this moment in the Mass? I would answer that question in these ways. It might be helpful for you to think of the Creed as a kind of doorway, a kind of gateway, a transition. It is the beginning of a transition from the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In fact, in one of the Eastern liturgies, the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, at this point in the Liturgy the deacon will actually cry out, "the doors, the doors" ... "the gates, the gates", actually. And they're supposed to close the doors because the Creed is like the beginning of the mysterious part of the Mass.

So, I've mentioned in previous videos that there's the Mass of Catechumens and the Mass of the Faithful. In the ancient Church, it was only the faithful, the baptized, the initiated, who could actually recite the Creed in the liturgy. So, those who had not yet been baptized would leave after this point in the liturgy, then the gates would be closed, the doors would be closed — it's the same word in Greek — and then the Creed would be recited by the faithful. You see a vestige of this, actually, in the Mass today. In the Missal of Paul VI, people who are going through RCIA, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, will actually leave the church after the Homily and before the Creed, because this is the point at which the two parts of the liturgy would separate between the faithful and the catechumens. They're going to leave, because they will profess the Creed publicly for the first time on the night they're baptized, and not before. So it's a kind of gateway, so to speak, into the Mass of the Faithful from the Mass of the Catechumens.

The second aspect of what's happening at this point in the Mass is the symbolism of kneeling at the words "and became man", is really our way of honoring in the midst of the Creed, this Trinitarian profession of faith, the solemn moment of the Incarnation. So whenever we bow at that moment, it's just a way for us to remember the mystery of Christmas in a particular way. The great mystery that God became man, that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us?

And then finally, the third element I would say, is that the Creed isn't just a kind of rote summary recitation of propositions, you know, that we have to believe as Catholics. It is that. It is a summary of the Articles of Faith, but St. Robert Bellarmine, in the 17th century, in his commentary on the liturgy said:

*The Creed is rightly pronounced after the Gospel, because faith follows from hearing the word of God.*⁹

So, in other words, there's a kind of movement taking place. We've heard the Gospel. We've had a homily preached to us explaining the Gospel. And what is our response? Faith. "I believe in...God, the Father Almighty...I believe...in Jesus Christ...I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life." So the Creed is the

⁹ Robert Bellarmine, *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, Book, II, Chapter 16. (pp. 254-55).

response of faith to the word of God. And although we might think of the Creed as something dry, I think in fact that it's easy to think of it that way because it's so frequently recited in today's context, and not as frequently sung. There are some very beautiful chants for the singing of the Creed in the Roman Missal that are very beautiful, and to learn to sing it I think would elevate it and animate. But although it might seem somewhat dry, this is the heart of our faith. And St. Augustine, I'll leave you with his words, actually encourages the faithful in his day to make the recitation of the Creed something that's a central part of their spiritual life. So I'll end with this from St. Augustine on the importance of the Creed. Listen to what he says to some candidates for baptism, who are preparing to say the Creed for the first time in the liturgy:

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.

So pause here. Although the Creed wasn't part of Sunday liturgy at this part, it was part of the Easter Vigil. It was an essential part. And so he recognizes some of the catechumens haven't quite got the Creed down yet. So he's like, hey, you have a little time before Saturday to get it right, because you're going to recite it back to the congregation before you're baptized. He continues:

...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.¹⁰

A beautiful passage. That's from Augustine's sermons to some catechumens preparing for baptism. So in short, notice what he's saying here. Don't let the recitation of the Creed turn into something rote. Think of it as dressing the soul of your mind, just like you put on your clothes every day in the morning, put the Creed on. And don't just put it on, but offer it back to the Lord, offer it to God in thanksgiving for the faith that you have received from Jesus Christ and His Apostles.

¹⁰ 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.