

## **The Apostle Paul’s “Creed” (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C)**

### **1 Corinthians 15:1-11—Paul’s “Articles” of Faith**

<sup>1</sup> Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you *the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain.*

<sup>3</sup> *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. <sup>11</sup> Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. (1 Cor 12:12-30)*

1. **Gospel:** resurrection of Christ is an *essential* part of “the gospel” (1 Cor 15:1-2).
2. **Tradition:** I “delivered” or “handed over” (Greek *paradidōmi*) to you (1 Cor 15:3); same verb used for the noun “tradition” (Greek *paradosis*) (cf. 1 Cor 11:2)
3. **Summary:** an “early credal statement” consisting of four “‘articles’ or affirmations”:<sup>1</sup>
  - Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures
  - he was buried
  - *he was raised on the third day* in accordance with the scriptures
  - he appeared to Cephas, the twelve, five hundred brethren, James, and Paul (1 Cor 15:3-8)

### **The Living Tradition**

St. Cyril of Jerusalem: In learning and professing the faith, embrace and guard that only which is now delivered to you by the Church, and confirmed by all the Scriptures. For since not everyone has both the education and the leisure required to read and know the Scriptures, to prevent the soul from perishing from ignorance, *we sum up the whole doctrine of the faith in a few lines. This summary I wish you to commit to memory, word for word, and to repeat it among yourselves with all zeal, not writing it on paper, but engraving it by memory on the heart.* Only take care, in rehearsing it, that no catechumen chance to overhear what has been delivered to you. Keep it as a provision for the way throughout the whole course of your life... For the present, just listen and

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<sup>1</sup> Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 331.

memorize the creed as I recite it, and you will receive in due course the proof from Scripture for each of its propositions. *For not according to men's pleasure have the articles of faith been composed, but the most important points collected from the Scriptures make up one complete teaching of the faith.* And just as the mustard seed in a small grain contains in embryo many future branches, so also the creed embraces in a few words all the religious knowledge in both the Old and New Testaments. Take heed, therefore, brethren, and hold fast to the teachings which are now delivered to you [2 Thess 2:15], and 'write them on the tablet of your heart' [Prov 7:3]. (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 5.13 [trans. Leo P. McCauley, S.J.]).<sup>2</sup>

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C)**

1. What are the parallels between Paul's words and the Apostle's Creed? What role did these summaries of faith have in the early church? What role should the Creed play in the church today?

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### **For Further Reading**

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. Gerald Bray, ed. *1-2 Corinthians* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI; Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 1999).
3. George T. Montague, SM, *First Corinthians* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).

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<sup>2</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem* (2 vols.; trans. Leo P. McCauley, S.J.; Fathers of the Church 61; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1969), 1:146-47.