

Understanding the Mass

Part 13 in a series

The Creed (Latin: *Credo*, meaning “I believe”) – Our Profession of Faith

In the early years of the Church there were many erroneous teachings being put forth as Christian doctrines. These teachings were considered *heresy* and in the year 325 the church leaders came together for what is known as the Council of Nicea to address them. From this Council came what is now known as the Nicene Creed. This creed was further refined 56 years later in 381 in Constantinople and it stands to this day as the Creed of the Church. It is a summary of the whole of Salvation History. In this creed we express our common faith. If someone ever asks you what your Christian beliefs are you can confidently hand them a copy of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and say, “Here it is. This is a summary of my beliefs.”

The Creed begins in a very special way with the words, “I believe”. This in itself is a very strong statement. We are saying in no uncertain terms that we truly believe what we are about to state. It is for this reason that most, if not all of the time, I will turn to where the Creed is written out (in our case, in the front inside cover of the Hymnal/Missal) and literally read the Creed as opposed to reciting it from memory. Reading the Creed out loud forces me to truly think about what I am saying. This is not to say that reciting the Creed from memory is wrong. I am simply stating what works best for me. But whichever way you recite the Creed, I encourage you to do so with full consciousness of what you are saying. Remember, we are standing before God in His church giving this affirmation of what we believe!

Four different times in the Creed we state “I believe” and then follow this with a particular belief. The first time we state our belief in the one God, the Father Almighty. The second, we cite our belief in our Lord Jesus Christ. The third, the Holy Spirit and the fourth, the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. (Catholic, in this case meaning, “Universal”). By reciting the Creed we are not just merely stating our beliefs, we are *affirming* them. In other words, we firmly, emphatically, positively mean what we are saying. If this is the case, it only makes sense that we think about what we are saying.

Have you noticed that at one point in the Creed the priest and deacon will bow? This is done at the mention of the Incarnation (God taking on human flesh). “...and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” This is done to show respect for the mystery of God becoming one of us; becoming fully human and yet also remaining fully divine as well. Bowing as an act of reverence is not just for the priest and deacon. All present should bow at this time.

We conclude the Creed with a statement of our belief in Baptism for forgiveness of sins, our belief in the resurrection of the dead and eternal life in heaven.

While we don’t say the Creed at daily Masses, (mainly, just on Sundays and Solemnities) it’s not a bad idea to take a minute each day and read it. Doing so will help serve as a reminder of who we are and what we believe. It will help us to live the day confident that what we believe will bring us to everlasting life.