

Journey of Faith



In Short:



- The Creed is rooted in the early Church.
- The Creed summarizes major principles of faith.
- The Creed unifies us as a Church.

The Creed

The word **creed** comes from a word that means “I believe.” The Church’s need for an established set of truths developed in the first centuries after Christ when Christians began asking difficult questions about the nature of God. People needed answers to questions not addressed in the New Testament record of Jesus’ teachings. These questions might be similar to those you have about God today.

- How can one God be three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
- How can Jesus be both God and human?
- What is God’s kingdom like?

The Nicene Creed was the Church’s first attempt to establish a set of beliefs for all Christians.

Just as any organization has written purposes, goals, and requirements to help members understand what the organization is all about, the Church needs an official statement of beliefs for its members—our Creed.

Think of one club, team, or organization to which you presently belong.



- *What is the purpose of this group?*
- *What beliefs help all its members work toward a common goal?*

Let’s take a closer look at the beliefs of the Catholic Church.

I believe in one God, the Father almighty...

We live in a technical, scientific world where nearly everything can be fully explained or proven. This is what makes faith so difficult. We make the decision to believe in something that can’t be easily explained or proven. Because we’re human, we think about God in human terms. Unfortunately, this sometimes limits God to our own experience. But God is so much more. Perhaps the most difficult step of the faith journey is being OK with not completely understanding the nature of God because it goes so far beyond human experience.

Even the prophets of the Old Testament were limited to describing God in human terms. But there’s still a lot we can learn about God from our humanity. After all, we were created in God’s image and likeness, and God did become man.

Read Isaiah 49:15–16.



- *What is the prophet attempting to tell us about God?*

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God...

The best way to understand God is to carefully study the words and actions of Jesus. Jesus is God in human form. The more we learn about Jesus, the better we understand God. The New Testament gives us important information about the person Jesus.

Refer to John 13:3–17.

- *What does this passage tell us about Jesus and therefore about God?*



Begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father...

Here we are faced with the mystery of the Trinity. The word **begotten** means that Jesus and God are of the same nature. **Consubstantial** means Jesus is one in being with the Father. Human beings can only make things that are separate from themselves. This statement expresses the Catholic belief that Jesus is God, “true God from true God.”

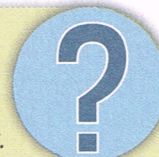
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven...

God loves us so much that God came to dwell among all human beings (which is what is meant by “men”) in the person Jesus. Through Jesus, we know God and are shown the way to eternal life with God.

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

Through the Holy Spirit, Mary became pregnant—a true miracle. Jesus was given a human body and made flesh but is both fully God and fully human. As he grew, Jesus experienced all the joys, sorrows, difficulties, and even doubts that are a part of human life.

- *Reflect on what you’ve read so far. In your own words, explain what it means for Jesus to be consubstantial with the Father and incarnate of Mary.*



For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate...

Jesus’ perfect love was a threat to the sinful side of human nature. Evil often lashes out against goodness. Jesus died a terrible death because of humankind’s sinfulness.

And rose again on the third day...

The resurrection of Jesus is central to our Catholic faith. Jesus is the Light of the World. We celebrate his triumph over darkness at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night and on Easter, the greatest celebration of the Church year.

Following the resurrection, Jesus’ human body became a glorified body—one not subject to normal physical limitations and death. Some of his closest friends did not recognize him—until his actions revealed who he was.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

The ascension does not mean that Jesus is far away from us in a distant heaven. Quite the opposite is true. Being at the right hand of God means that Jesus fully shares God’s desires for creation and is with all his people at all times as Savior and Lord. Jesus speaks to us in the Bible, touches us in the sacraments and in the love we share with one another, and is with us when we gather in his name.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

Christ alone is our final judge. His kingdom is a family of love that unites the saints of heaven with God’s people here on earth. Our Church calls this the communion of saints. Heaven is not limited by time or space.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life...

The Catholic Church holds that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and is the perfect love eternally coming from the Father and the Son. We find the Holy Spirit in all that is good, true, and honorable in creation and in ourselves. The Spirit is the sacred power that influences us to act in kindness and love.

The following is the Profession of Faith that Catholics make nearly every Sunday at Mass (sometimes the Apostles' Creed is used). It is also called the Nicene Creed because it was adopted as the true belief of the early Church by a council of bishops meeting in the city of Nicaea in the year 325. Carefully read the following:

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.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

Here, the word **catholic** means "universal" or "whole." This acknowledges Christ's desire that all his followers be united in him. The term **apostolic** means that the Church's authority and teachings are rooted in the apostles, whom Jesus commissioned to preach. We, too, are apostles of Christ, sent to bring his light to the world.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins...

At baptism, we become full members of Christ's Church. Baptism removes the power that sin had over us, strengthens us with grace, and fills us with the Holy Spirit.

I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Eternal life with God in heaven brings us knowledge and love that cannot be fully experienced here on earth or fully expressed in words we could understand.

The Catholic Church also acknowledges the reality of hell, a state of eternal separation from God that some people choose. The Church believes that for those who will die with imperfections that keep them from being one with God, God's loving mercy and his forgiveness allow for a temporary state of purification called purgatory. After death, those who die in God's grace and friendship find God's loving mercy and forgiveness in this temporary state of purification. Purgatory may be described as an experience of God's healing following death that allows us to enter into perfect union with God.

- *Reflect on what you've read so far. If baptism removes the power sin has over us, why do we need purgatory?*



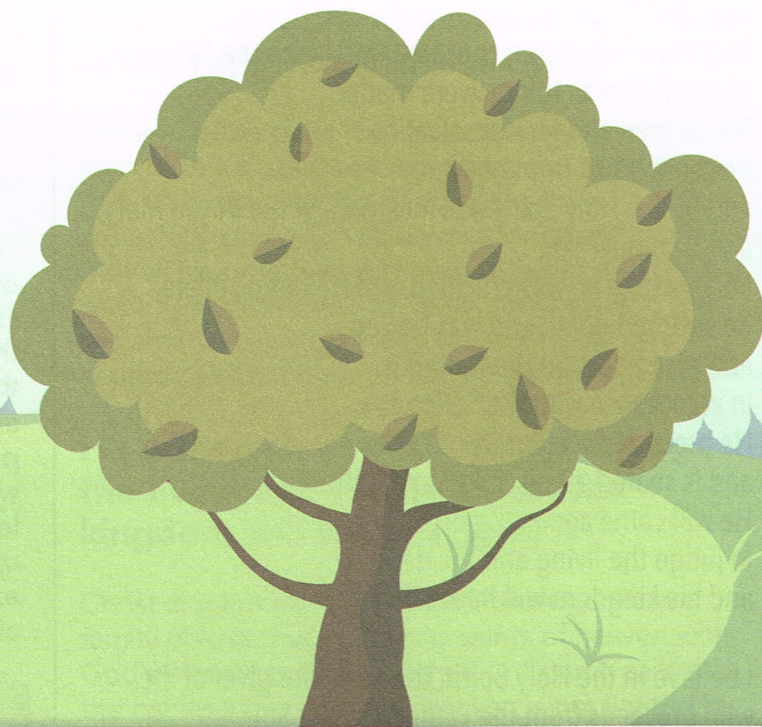
Amen.

This means, "So be it." In other words, "Let this all come to pass." When we end the Creed with "Amen," we affirm that everything we've professed is true.

As a class or with a partner, pick two to three sections of the Nicene Creed that you find confusing and summarize them in your own words. Share your summaries with the class.



Why is it important for all Catholics to profess and believe the same thing? Describe another example of when it's important for all members of a group to share common beliefs.



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