

The Third Edition of the Roman Missal

Nicene Creed

Some of the most significant changes to the people's parts in the Order of Mass are found in the Profession of Faith (the Nicene Creed). Changes to this text fall into two categories: preservation of the syntax of the original text and preservation of expressions of faith, which contain Catholic doctrine. When Catholics profess the Creed, or Profession of Faith, during Mass, the first change in the translation will be immediately apparent. We have been beginning the Creed with the words, "We believe . . ." With the new text, we will profess, "**I believe** . . ." Many may wonder why this change has been made.

While the profession of faith is a communal liturgical act, each individual in the liturgical assembly professes his or her own faith, which is joined to the profession of the whole assembly. In its original form, as approved by the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in the year 381, the Nicene Creed (or Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, to be precise) begins "We believe." The Council Fathers were establishing a rule of faith, a criterion that helps us interpret Sacred Scripture correctly and to preach and theologize correctly; it was a bulwark against many of the heresies of the day. It was not written to be recited during the Mass. An abbreviated version of the Creed was, however, used for Baptisms. Before being plunged into the water, the catechumen would be presented the Creed in question and answer form. The response to each question was "I believe."

Thus, the initial use of the Creed in the liturgy was in the context of Baptism, employing the words, "I believe." It wasn't until the year 1014 that Rome began to use the Creed within the Mass on a regular basis. This broader liturgical use of the Creed followed the form used in Baptism, and thus the opening word, *Credo* (meaning "I believe"), was employed. In the centuries since then, additional reasons for using "I," instead of "we," have been put forth. Saint Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* IIa IIae 1, 9) says that the Church proclaims the Creed as a single person, made one by faith. Whereas the original baptismal context calls us to take personal responsibility for our faith by the use of the singular "I," Saint Thomas complements this idea by observing that the singular "I" also demonstrates the united, corporate nature of the Church. Each of us singly also speaks as the one body of Christ in crying out, "I believe." In professing the faith, we acquire, in the words of Saint Paul, "the mind of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 2:16, NRSV) and speak as his one body.

There are two additional reasons for this change to the form of the Creed. First, every other major liturgical language either already uses the singular "I" or soon will. This change will unite English-speaking Catholics more closely to the rest of the Catholic world. Secondly, the Latin text of the Creed in *The Roman Missal* uses *Credo* ("I believe") rather than *Credimus* ("We believe").

Some of the prayers of the Mass employ the first person plural, for example, the Gloria ("we praise you . . . we give you thanks. . ." [emphasis added]); the prayer at the Preparation of the Gifts: "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands . . . for our good . . ." (emphasis added); the Preface Dialogue: "Lift up your hearts. / We lift them up to the Lord" (emphasis added); the Our Father; and the Lamb of God: "have mercy on us" (emphasis added). Also, a number of prayers use the first person singular, for example, the *Confiteor*: "I confess to almighty God," and the response to the Invitation to Communion: "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you . . ." (emphasis added) — and now the Creed.

When we confess our sins and when we confess our faith, the Church wants us to use the "I." When we otherwise say or sing prayers of praise or mercy, it is "we." In a beautiful way, when a Catholic prays the Mass, we are both one and many: many parts, one body; many grains, one loaf; many minds, united in one faith, in the one mind of Christ.

The new Creed translation also recovers Christ's title, "**Only Begotten Son**" ("*Fili Unigenite*"), which we see in the revised *Gloria*. To say the Son is "born of the Father before all ages" is a profound theological truth, for the Son is not "born" in the human sense of beginning one's life, but eternally proceeds from the Father while being always fully God. Therefore, we profess that Jesus Christ is "begotten, not made."

Following this comes a major wording change: from "one in being" to "**consubstantial with the Father**." "Consubstantial" is an unusual word that is a crucial early theological term, asserting that the Son is of the "same substance" with the Father — meaning He equally shares the Father's divinity as a Person of the Holy Trinity.

The previous translation "one in Being" is not as precise. "Being" commonly refers to all that is, which would include the appearance or form of a thing, and in relation to the holy Trinity, could mistakenly include *Personhood*. God the Son is not the same *Person* as God the Father, but they do share the same *inner* being, or the same *substance*. In translating the Creed it is important to be as precise as possible, and the Church believes strongly that the term "consubstantial" is a better choice in naming the Great Mystery that is the relationship of Jesus Christ to God the Father and to us, his adopted sons and daughters.

There is another important change in the middle of the Creed: **“and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.”** The current wording of “born of the Virgin Mary, and became man” can easily be misinterpreted to mean that Christ did not actually become man until the time He was born. Of course, the reality is that the Son of God took on human nature from the moment of His conception in the Blessed Virgin Mary’s womb, at the Annunciation. By using the term, “incarnate,” the new translation leaves no ambiguity.

One of the remaining minor changes in the new Creed translation is **“I look forward to the resurrection of the dead,”** by which one expresses a sincere desire, rather than simply “looking for” the resurrection. The Latin *“exspecto”* conveys a sense of anxious waiting and expectation!

Current Version

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.

Updated Version

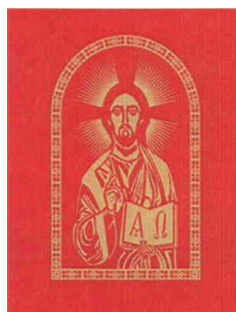
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God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, **consubstantial** with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, **and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate** of 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.

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