

Breaking Open the Nicene Creed

Year of the Eucharist and St. Joseph 2021

I. Brief History of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed

- The Nicene Creed is from the Council of Nicaea, the first Ecumenical Council, in 325, which was called to deal with the heresy of Arianism.
- It was expanded at the Council of Constantinople in the year 381 or 382, particularly focusing on the section about the Holy Spirit.
- Various versions of this Creed are followed by the Eastern Rite Churches and many of the Protestant denominations, although it is explained in different ways by different Churches and denominations.

II. God the Father

- *I believe in one God the Father almighty,*
 - God is one, see the Shema prayer (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).
 - God reveals Himself to us as Father because from all eternity God is Fathering a Divine Son. Father comes before Creator because God begins to create in time, but He is always Fathering the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - God the Father is the source of God the Son, and the Holy Spirit, from all eternity. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are only distinguished by their relationship to one another within the Godhead.
- *maker of heaven and earth,*
 - God created everything that exists, in the heavens and on the earth.
 - Genesis 1:1-2:3
 - God alone is the source of creation.
 - He created through His Word, so Creation is rational or ordered.
 - Creation is seen as bringing order from chaos.
 - God both created the space, day and night, and land and sea, and filled them with the sun, moon, stars, birds, fish, animals, and plants.
- *of all things visible and invisible.*
 - Visible refers to the created world that we see, but God also created the invisible world that we can't see, the angels.

III. God the Son

- *I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.*
 - Jesus Christ is identified as the one and only begotten Son of God. see John 1:1-14
- *born of the Father before all ages,*
 - not made in time, but born before all ages, meaning the Jesus did not begin to exist in time. He has a source in God the Father, but He does not have a beginning.
- *God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,*
 - three ways of saying the same thing.
- *begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;*
 - we, as creatures, are made by God, just like we might make a sculpture.
 - Jesus, as the Son of God, is begotten, or Fathered, as a child is begotten. A sculpture may share a resemblance with the subject, but a child shares the same nature, or substance, as the parents.
 - Consubstantial means of the same substance, or sharing the same nature.
- *through Him all things were made*
 - see John 1:3
- *For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,*
 - Jesus' purpose for coming down was to save us.

- *and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.*
 - incarnate means to become flesh, but we also understand that Jesus was truly human, with a human mind and soul.
 - see Luke 1:35

IV. The Paschal Mystery

- *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.*
 - Jesus, because He was truly man and truly incarnate, was able to truly die on the Cross. He didn't just seem to die. As proof He was truly buried.
 - He also really rose on the third day, and all of this is in accordance with the Old Testament.
- *He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*
 - see Mark 16:16-20 and Acts 7:55
- *He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.*
 - In the first coming Jesus came in secret and concealed His glory, but in the second coming He will come in glory to judge the living and the dead and establish the everlasting kingdom.
 - see Matthew 25:31-46

V. God the Holy Spirit

- *I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,*
 - Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is also Lord.
 - “Giver of Life” is a reference to Genesis, when God breathed life into Adam and Eve, breath, or *ruah*, can also mean Spirit. see Genesis 2:7.
- *who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
 - The Holy Spirit proceeds principally from the Father, but the Father shares everything with the Son, even the procession of the Holy Spirit.
 - see John 14:16, then John 16:7, then John 16:15. The Father sends the Holy Spirit, and the Son sends the Holy Spirit, because everything that belongs to the Father also belongs to the Son.
- *who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,*
 - He is coequal with the Father and the Son.
- *who has spoken through the prophets.*
 - The Holy Spirit is only explicitly revealed in the New Testament, but He was always speaking to us through the prophets, who often spoke of the “Spirit of God.”

VI. Truths of the Faith

- *I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.*
 - The four marks of the Church.
 - One and holy because Christ is one and holy, and the Church is the body of Christ.
 - Catholic means universal, and the Church has a universal truth that applies to all people and a universal mission to bring that truth to all people.
 - The Church was founded on the apostles.
- *I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins*
 - see Ephesians 4:3-6.
- *and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead*
 - Just as Christ ascended bodily from heaven, so we will be resurrected in the body.
- *and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

Next: The Altar in the Bible on June 17 at 6:30 PM.