

# The Creed

**What “We Believe”  
and Why We Believe It**

# Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of 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.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

# Creeds

None of the creeds from the different stages in the Church's life can be considered superseded or irrelevant.

Among all the creeds, two occupy a special place in the Church's life:

The Apostles' Creed

The Nicene Creed

# Old Testament Professions of Faith

**As thanksgiving for the harvest Israelites were commanded to recite:**

**“My father was a wandering Aramean who went down to Egypt with a small household and lived there as an alien. But there he became a nation great, strong and numerous. When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing hard labor upon us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and he heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression. He brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders; and bringing us into this country, he gave us this land flowing with milk and honey. Therefore, I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have given me.” (Deuteronomy 26:5-10)**

# Old Testament Professions of Faith

**Profession of monotheism:**

**“Hear (Shema), O Israel! Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone.**

**Therefore, you shall love Yahweh, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.” (Deut. 6:4-5)**

# New Testament Professions of Faith

## *In discernment of spirits:*

- *1 Corinthians 12:3* “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.”
- *1 John 4:2-3* “...every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God...”

# New Testament Professions of Faith

## *Baptismal formulas:*

- **Acts 8:37** “And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may [be baptized].’ And [the Eunuch] said in reply, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’”
- **Matthew 28:19** “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

# New Testament Professions of Faith

## *Kerygma (early preaching):*

- *1 Corinthians 15:3-5* “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve...”

# Kerygma

- Jesus' death
- Jesus' resurrection
- In fulfillment of scripture
- For the forgiveness of sins
- Apostles are witnesses

# Kerygma

	<b>Death</b>	<b>Resurrection</b>	<b>Fulfillment of Scripture</b>	<b>Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins</b>	<b>Apostles as Witnesses</b>
1 Cor 15:1-11	v.3 "Christ died..."	v.4 "he was raised on the third day"	v.3 & 4 "in accordance with scriptures"	v.3 "...for our sins"	v.5 "he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve... to more than 500 ...and to me"
Luke 24:44-48	v.46 "The Messiah would suffer..."	v.46 "rise from the dead on the third day"	v.44 "everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled"	v.47 "Repentance for the forgiveness of sins"	v.48 "You are witnesses of these things"
Acts 2:14-39	v.23 "delivered up... you killed... crucify him..."	v.24 "God raised him up" v.32 "God raised this Jesus"	v.16-21 Joel 3 v.25-28 Ps 16 v.34-35 Ps 110	v.38 "Repent and be baptized...for the forgiveness of your sins..."	v.32 "of this we are all witnesses"
Acts 3:15-26	v.15 "The author of life you put to death"	v.15 "but God raised him from the dead"	v.18 "God has brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through	v.19 "Repent...that your sins may be wiped away"	v.15 "of this we are witnesses"

Acts 2:14-39	v.23 "delivered up... you killed... crucify him..."	v.24 "God raised him up" v.32 "God raised this Jesus"	v.16-21 Joel 3 v.25-28 Ps 16 v.34-35 Ps 110	v.38 "Repent and be baptized...for the forgiveness of your sins..."	v.32 "of this we are all witnesses"
Acts 3:15-26	v.15 "The author of life you put to death"	v.15 "but God raised him from the dead"	v.18 "God has brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets"	v.19 "Repent...that your sins may be wiped away"	v.15 "of this we are witnesses"
Acts 5:29-32	v.30 "you had him killed by hanging him on a tree"	v.30 "The God of our ancestors raised Jesus"	v.30 ("The God of our ancestors" infers fulfillment)	v.31 "repentance and forgiveness of sins"	v.32 "We are witnesses of these things"
Acts 10:34-43	v.39 "They put him to death by hanging him on a tree"	v.40 "This man God raised on the third day"	v.43 "all the prophets bear witness"	v.43 "everyone who believes will receive forgiveness of sins"	v.39 "us, the witnesses...who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead"
Acts 13:26-41	v.28 "they asked Pilate to have him put to death"	v.30 "but God raised him from the dead"	v.29 "accomplished all that was written about him"	v.38 "the forgiveness of sins"	v.31 "These are his witnesses before the people"

The "Fish"



# Ichthus as Acronym

I	=	I ησους	(Jesus)
ch	=	X ριστος	(Christ)
th	=	Θ ηου	(God's)
u	=	υ ιου	(Son)
s	=	σ ωτηρ	(Savior)

## Justin Martyr (c. AD 160 )

Those who are convinced and believe what we say and teach is the truth, and pledge themselves to be able to live accordingly, are taught in prayer and fasting to ask God to forgive their past sins, while we pray and fast with them. Then we lead them to a place where there is water, and they are regenerated in the same manner in which we ourselves were regenerated.

## Justin Martyr (c. AD 160 )

In the name of God, the Father and Lord of all, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, they receive the washing with water... Furthermore, the illuminated one is also baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who predicted through the Prophets everything concerning Jesus.

**(c. AD 120-200)**

**Irenaeus of Lyons**, wrote against the *Gnostics* in *Adversus Haereses*. His main Gnostic opponents were Marcion of Pontus and Valentinus. The original title of the book was *The Detection and Overthrow of the Pretended False Gnosis*. His “rule of faith” against which he measured all teachings was:

“The Church, although spread everywhere as far as the boundaries of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples faith in one single God, the Father Almighty, who has made heaven and earth and the seas and all that is in them; and in one Christ Jesus the Son of God, who was incarnate for our salvation; and in one Holy Spirit, who through the prophets announced the dispensation, the advent and virginal birth, and passion and resurrection from the dead, and bodily ascension into heaven of the well-beloved Christ Jesus our Lord, and his second coming, when he shall appear in heaven at the right hand of the Father to restore all things and raise up all flesh and all humanity.” (III,iv:2)

# Hippolytus (c. AD 200)

Catechumenate interrogatory form:

And when he who is to be baptized goes down into the water, let him who baptizes lay hands on him saying:

“Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?”

And he who is to be baptized shall say:  
“I believe.”

Let him then baptize him at once, having his hand laid upon his head.

# Hippolytus (c. AD 200)

Catechumenate interrogatory form:

And after this let him say:

“Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, who was crucified in the days of Pontius Pilate, and died, and rose the third day living from the dead, and ascended to the heavens, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?”

# Hippolytus (c. AD 200)

Catechumenate interrogatory form:

And when he says, “I believe”

Let him baptize him a second time.

And let him say:

“Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Church, and the resurrection of the flesh?”

And he who is being baptized shall say:

“I believe.”

And so let him baptize him a third time.

## Third Century

**Tertullian and St. Cyprian**, both from Northern Africa, wrote against the “monarchians,” (especially Sabellius), that is, those who claimed that God is not Trinitarian, but one person and one substance. Tertullian was the first to give us the definition that God is one nature existing in three persons, and that Jesus is one person with both divine and human natures.

The monarchians were modalists. That means that they believed that God is one person who sometimes manifests himself in different roles, forms, or modes. They were called *patripassionists* because they taught that God the Father died on the cross in the form of Jesus.

## Fourth Century

**Arius**, a priest from Alexandria, Egypt, taught that Jesus was not divine, but not really human either. He supported his arguments with scripture passages such as:

(John 14:28) "...I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I."

(Mark 13:32) "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

(Matthew 27:46) "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

**St Athanasius**, bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, argued for Jesus' divine nature. He supported this with texts like:

(John 1:1, 14, 18) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh...the only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him."

(John 10:30-31) "The Father and I are one." The Jews again picked up rocks to stone him.

(John 20:27-29) Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God!"

**The Council of Nicea** was called in **325 AD** by Emperor Constantine to settle the issue (among other things). It concluded with a creed of orthodox beliefs, including Jesus' full divinity ("One in being with the Father" *homoousios*) and a formal condemnation of Arius and his doctrine.

After the Council, **the semi-Arians**, from the *homoiousian* (meaning "of a like substance") party, argued against the divinity of the Holy Spirit. They were called "*pneumatomachoi*" or **Spirit-haters**.

**The Cappadocian Fathers: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Gregory of Nazianzus**, argued for the full divinity of the Holy Spirit.

**The Council of Constantinople (381)** insisted that the Holy Spirit is the "Lord, the giver of life..." and "With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified..."

# First Council of Nicea - AD 325

## Condemnation of Arius:

“First of all the affair of the impiety and lawlessness of Arius and his followers was discussed in the presence of the most pious emperor Constantine. It was unanimously agreed that anathemas should be pronounced against his impious opinion and his blasphemous terms and expressions which he has blasphemously applied to the Son of God,

# First Council of Nicea - AD 325

Condemnation of Arius:

saying

- "he is from things that are not", and
- "before he was begotten he was not", and
- "there once was when he was not",

saying too that

- by his own power the Son of God is capable of evil and goodness,
- and calling him a creature and a work.

# First Council of Nicea - AD 325

Condemnation of Arius:

Against all this the holy synod pronounced anathemas, and did not allow this impious and abandoned opinion and these blasphemous words even to be heard.”

Apostles' Creed	Nicea	Constantinople
I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.	We believe in one God the Father almighty, maker of all things both seen and unseen.	We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.
<p>I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.</p> <p>He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.</p> <p>He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. <i>He descended to the dead.</i> On the third day he rose again.</p> <p>He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.</p>	<p>And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God,  the only Son of the Father,  <i>that is from the substance of the Father,</i>  God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, one in Being (<i>homoousion</i>) with the Father, through whom all things were made, <i>both those in heaven and those in earth;</i>  for us men and for our salvation he came down <i>and became incarnate,</i>  became man,  suffered and  rose up on the third day,  went up into the heavens,  is coming to judge the living and the dead.</p>	<p>We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  <i>eternally begotten of the Father,</i>  God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father.  Through him all things were made.</p> <p>For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.  For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried.</p> <p>On the third day he rose again <i>in fulfillment of the Scriptures;</i> 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, <i>and his kingdom will have no end.</i></p>

# First Council of Constantinople (381)

<p>I believe in the Holy Spirit,</p> <p>the holy catholic Church, <i>the communion of saints,</i></p> <p>the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.</p>	<p>And in the Holy Spirit.</p>	<p>We believe in the Holy Spirit, <i>the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father <b>and the Son.</b></i> <i>With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.</i> We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. <i>We acknowledge one baptism</i> for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.</p>
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## Later Use of the Creed

*“The old creeds were creeds for catechumens, the new creed was a creed for bishops.”*

- C.H. Turner

“In the sixth century the creed came to be recited in the eucharistic liturgy...the practice of reciting the creed in the Latin Mass began in Spain. Charlemagne extended the practice through the Frankish empire at the end of the eighth century as a defense against adoptionism (another form of the Arian heresy), but it was another two centuries before the practice was introduced in Rome, and then only to placate the emperor, Henry II (1002-1024).”

- Marthaler, p.10-11

# “We Believe”

The creed was originally composed in Greek, the first word being *pisteuomen*, or “We believe.”

*Pisteuomen* is translated into Latin as *Credo*, from which we get our word “creed.”

These words incorporate the meaning of several Hebrew words that suggest trust and confidence in *a person* who is trustworthy and dependable.

# “We Believe”

When they were translated into the English word “believe,” it was in the High Middle Ages when “believe” meant “to hold dear” or “prefer” or “love.”

As the word “faith” came into use in the 1300’s, it replaced “belief” as a noun, and “to believe” remained in use as the verb form.

# “We Believe”

Until recently, “I believe” meant “to make a commitment” or to “give your heart” to a person.

For many today, “I believe” simply means “I don’t deny something to be true.”

Through use, the “I believe” of one being baptized became the “We believe” of the Eucharistic community.

# “To Believe”

Augustine defined three kinds of belief:

1. *Crederere Deo*: “to believe on God’s authority”
2. *Crederere Deum*: “to believe that God exists”
3. *Crederere in Deum*: “to believe in God”

For Augustine, only the last one was true “faith.”

For Aquinas, all three were a single act of faith.

# “To Believe”

“The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” - Psalm 14:1

“You believe that God is one. You do well. Even the demons believe that and tremble.” - James 2:19

# “To Believe”

“Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse...”

- Romans 1:20

# “To Believe”

Pope John Paul II, General Audience, April  
14, 1999

“...it is *bearing witness to the real face of God* that gives the most convincing response to atheism. This obviously does not exclude, but rather demands a correct presentation of the rational reasons that lead to the recognition of God.”

# Believing *in* God...

*It means coming to know God's greatness and majesty: "Behold, God is great, and we know him not." Therefore, we must "serve God first." (CCC #223)*

*It means living in thanksgiving: if God is the only One, everything we are and have comes from him: "What have you that you did not receive?" "What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me?" (CCC #224)*

# Believing *in* God...

*It means knowing the unity and true dignity of all men: Everyone is made in the image and likeness of God. (CCC #225)*

*It means making good use of created things: faith in God, the only One, leads us to use everything that is not God only insofar as it brings us closer to him, and to detach ourselves from it insofar as it turns us away from him. (CCC #226)*

# Believing *in* God...

It means trusting God in every circumstance, even in adversity. A prayer of St. Teresa of Jesus wonderfully expresses this trust:

“Let nothing trouble you / Let nothing  
frighten you  
Everything passes / God never changes  
Patience / Obtains all  
Whoever has God / Wants for nothing  
God alone is enough.” (CCC #227)

# The Creed