

## **Creed (Profession of Faith)**

- The word **CREED** comes from the Latin word *credo*, which means “I believe.”
- They are called “creeds” on account of what is usually their first word in Latin: *credo* (“I believe”).
- The creed is a short summary of the truths of the faith.
- The creed is also a rule of faith.
- Creeds have existed from very early in the Church and were developed to help clarify orthodox teaching and to help combat against heresies or “false gospels”.
- Galatians 1:6-9 – “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel – not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.”
- The Creed is a summary of salvation history.
- These formulae are called “professions of faith” since they summarize the faith that Christians profess.
- They are also called “symbols of faith.”

## ***New Testament (Sacred Scripture)***

- Creeds can be found in the New Testament in rudimentary form.
- Saint Paul tells the Romans that “thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed” (see Romans 6:17).
- “Standard” was used to determine whether the preaching and teaching being heard was an authentic expression of the deposit of faith that Jesus had left in the hands of the apostles.
- From the beginning, the apostolic Church expressed and handed on her faith in brief formulae for all.
- Romans 10:9 – “...because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 – “For I delivered 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, and that he appeared to Ce’phas, then to the Twelve.”

## ***Sacred Tradition***

- The creeds are an important written expression of Sacred Tradition.
- Early Christian theologians of the first two centuries wrote many works defending Christianity from several threats:
  - Persecution from the Roman Empire. Until the early A.D. 300s, Christianity was illegal and often Christians were viciously persecuted.
  - Heresies attacking basic Christian beliefs, especially the deity of Jesus Christ and the nature of God.

## ***Apostles Creed***

- One of the earliest statements of faith Christian leaders crafted to clarify basic Christian beliefs.
- According to Tradition, it is attributed to the twelve apostles.
- It emphasizes the true humanity – including the physical body – of Jesus, which was the belief the heretics of the time denied.

## ***Nicene Creed***

- Written by Church leaders in A.D. 325, and was later expanded somewhat.
- It was written to defend the Church's belief in Christ's full deity and to reject formally the teachings of Arius, a man who claimed that Jesus was a created, inferior deity.
- First Council of Nicaea [A.D. 325]
  - The Creed of Nicaea
- First Council of Constantinople [A.D. 381]
  - Response to the heresy of Arianism (denied the divinity of Christ)
  - Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (so-called) [A.D. 363/374]
- The creed professed at Mass every Sunday is the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed or simply the Nicene Creed.

## ***Athanasian Creed***

- Written about A.D. 400 and named after Athanasius, a great defender of the Trinity, says the three Persons are not three Gods, but only one.

## ***Chalcedonian Creed***

- Written in A.D. 451 by Church leaders to defend the faith against false teachings, says that Jesus is fully God and fully man.

### ***The Credo of the People of God***

- Pope Paul VI wrote a creed for modern times called *The Credo of the People of God* in 1968.

## **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

**228** "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD. . ." (*Dt* 6:4; *Mk* 12:29). "The supreme being must be unique, without equal. . . If God is not one, he is not God" (Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, 1, 3, 5: PL 2, 274).

**229** Faith in God leads us to turn to him alone as our first origin and our ultimate goal, and neither to prefer anything to him nor to substitute anything for him.

**230** Even when he reveals himself, God remains a mystery beyond words: "If you understood him, it would not be God" (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 52, 6, 16: PL 38, 360 and *Sermo* 117, 3, 5: PL 38, 663).

**231** The God of our faith has revealed himself as HE WHO IS; and he has made himself known as "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (*Ex* 34:6). God's very being is Truth and Love.

### ***Belief in the Triune God***

- The revealed truth of the Holy Trinity is at the very root of the Church's living faith as expressed in the Creed.
- The mystery of the Trinity in itself is inaccessible to the human mind and is the object of faith only because it was revealed by Jesus Christ, the divine Son of the eternal Father.
- Divine Person (*Hypostasis* in Greek) is the term used to describe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their real relation to and distinction from one another within the unity of the Blessed Trinity.
- Each of the three divine persons is God, the infinite divine being, one in being yet three Persons.
- God has revealed himself as the "One who is," as truth and love, as creator of all that is, as the author of divine revelation, and as the source of salvation.

## ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***

**261** The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life. God alone can make it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**262** The Incarnation of God's Son reveals that God is the eternal Father and that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, which means that, in the Father and with the Father the Son is one and the same God.

**263** The mission of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of the Son (*Jn* 14:26) and by the Son "from the Father" (*Jn* 15:26), reveals that, with them, the Spirit is one and the same God. "With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified" (Nicene Creed).

**264** "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as the first principle and, by the eternal gift of this to the Son, from the communion of both the Father and the Son" (St. Augustine, *De Trin.* 15, 26, 47: PL 42, 1095).

**265** By the grace of Baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", we are called to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, here on earth in the obscurity of faith, and after death in eternal light (cf. Paul VI, *CPG* § 9).

**266** "Now this is the Catholic faith: We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son's is another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal" (Athanasian Creed: DS 75; ND 16).

**267** Inseparable in what they are, the divine persons are also inseparable in what they do. But within the single divine operation each shows forth what is proper to him in the Trinity, especially in the divine missions of the Son's Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

## Summary

Throughout the past two thousand years of history, Christianity has been defined by a few basic truths. All who call themselves Christian have acknowledged these truths as fundamental to the faith. First is the belief in One God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. Before we can believe in anything else we must first believe in God. Secondly, the faith of all Christians depends on our belief in the Holy Trinity as the central mystery of Christianity. We believe that the One God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Three Persons sharing one divine nature. Thus the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, three Divine Persons really distinct and equal in all things, yet they are one and the same God, having one and the same divine nature and substance. The Trinity is a strict mystery because it could not be rationally conceived before the self-revelation of God, and cannot be rationally comprehended (fully understood) even since its revelation. Another basic tenet of Christianity is the belief that Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was born of the Virgin Mary and became man. He suffered and died on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven. He rose from the dead and He ascended into heaven. We also believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Furthermore, we believe in the mercy of God - that He will reward us for our good deeds. We also believe He is a God of Justice – that He will punish those who have sinned. Therefore in order to be saved we must have faith, we must obey the Commandments of God and of the Church He established, we must have an active prayer life (communicate with and listen to God), and we must put into practice what we have learned.