

The New Translation of the Holy Mass: The Creed, Part I
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Last week, we reviewed the origins of the Creed, and began looking at the changes in the new translation, such as “I believe,” and “consubstantial.” Now, we will look at a few additional elements of this ancient profession of faith.

Once again, the newly translated Nicene Creed is fully reproduced below, with changes in bold:

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

In looking at the Creed as a whole, we recognize a definite structure: the first section speaks of God the Father, the second focuses on the Son, the third on the Holy Spirit, and the fourth on the Church. The portion on God the Son is by far the longest, for as we have seen previously, the need to affirm right doctrine about Jesus Christ was of utmost importance in the Early Church.

Let us turn to the phrase that stands alone in the middle of the Creed: “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” Our current translation reads, “by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” This simple change from “born” to “incarnate” is perhaps the most important amendment in the new text of the Creed, because it more accurately conveys the truth of the Incarnation – when the Son of God took flesh.

The current wording can easily be interpreted to mean that Christ did not actually become man until the moment 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. The Lord’s birth in Bethlehem is certainly a profound, public epiphany; but Mary’s “yes” to the Archangel Gabriel in Nazareth is understood as the moment when the Son first “came down from heaven” to dwell among us. In using the term, “incarnate,” the new translation leaves no ambiguity.

The significance of this line is also underscored by the fact that the faithful are supposed to make a “profound bow” (that is, a bow of the body from the waist) while reciting it, as an expression of reverence towards the great mystery of the Incarnation. This gesture is not something new with the coming translation – we all should be doing it even now whenever the Creed is recited, though many are unaware of this.

Although it is not a change, there is an interesting significance to the subsequent mention of Pontius Pilate in the Creed. It functions to affirm and profess the authenticity of the events surrounding Christ’s Passion by situating them within a definite historical context – when Pilate was Roman governor of Judea.

There are a handful of remaining minor changes in the new Creed translation. Describing the Resurrection as being “in accordance with the Scriptures” speaks inclusively of the New Testament, in addition to “fulfillment” of Old Testament prophecy surrounding Christ’s rising. Towards the end, “I *confess* one baptism” carries more conviction than “acknowledge.”

And by saying, “I *look forward* to the resurrection of the dead,” one expresses a sincere desire, rather than simply “looking for” the resurrection. The Latin “*expecto*” conveys a sense of anxious waiting and expectation!

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