

The New Translation of the Holy Mass: The Creed, Part I

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Our look at the new translation of the Order of Mass continues with the Nicene Creed, which is a profession, or "symbol," of the truths of the Christian faith. This Creed was originally adopted at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. and then updated at the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D., during times in which clarifying right doctrine was especially important for the Church. It is therefore also referred to as the "Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed." (The "*Filioque*" clause, by which the Catholic Church affirms that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father *and the Son*," was recognized later.)

The Nicene Creed is used at all Masses on Sundays and Solemnities (although the older, shorter Apostles' Creed will also be an option with the new Missal), and it may be recited or even sung, just as the Latin text was chanted.

The following is the complete new English text of the Nicene Creed, 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

The first major change is difficult to miss: the Creed will now say "I believe" instead of "We believe." Other language groups have been using "I believe" in the vernacular, because it is a straightforward translation of the ancient Latin text, which begins with "*Credo in unum Deum*" ("I believe in one God"). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers a reflection on this phrase: "Whoever says 'I believe' says 'I pledge myself to what we believe'" (no. 185). It is a recurring opportunity to reaffirm one's personal faith, just as when individuals respond, "I do," if there is a renewal of baptismal promises during Mass.

The next change is the line, "all things visible and invisible," which is currently "seen and unseen." The Latin "*visibílium*" and "*invisibílium*" convey a more specific demarcation between the bodily and the spiritual realms. For instance, a child playing hide-and-seek may be unseen yet is still considered visible, whereas one's guardian angel is indeed invisible by nature.

In addition, the new Creed translation recovers Christ's title, "Only Begotten Son" ("*Fili Unigenite*"), which we also saw in the revised Gloria. To say the Son is "born of the Father before all ages" is a very 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.

This observation leads us to a major wording change: from "one in being" to "consubstantial with the Father." "Consubstantial" ("*consubstantiálem*" in the Latin text) is an unusual word that will require some catechesis, but it 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.

Although it carries the same basic meaning as "one in being," the more precise use of "consubstantial" is an acknowledgement of how the Greek equivalent of the word was so important for safeguarding orthodoxy in the Early Church. In the Fourth Century, the description "*homoousios*" ("same substance") was affirmed over "*homoiousios*" ("like substance"). The reality of who Christ is thus hinged upon a single letter!

Next week, we shall examine the remainder of the Creed.

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