



## Fr. Daniel's Corner

### Mass Moment: Part 16

#### THE PROFESSION OF FAITH: CREED (*CREDO*)

After the homily the Profession of Faith is usually said on Sundays and Solemnities. The Creed is a way of giving accent to the Word of God proclaimed in the readings and explained in the homily. It is indeed a summary of the faith of the Church; a measuring stick against wrong doctrine/heresy. It is biblical because it goes through the history of salvation from Genesis to Revelation, espousing the Christian belief in Creation, Fall, Virginal Conception of the Incarnate Word, Redemption, and the Trinity. We are confessing a faith that many died for. The Creed stands at the center of the Liturgy and fundamentally declares: I believe what we are celebrating here. I believe what we have just heard proclaimed in the readings and the homily. I believe in God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe what God has done for me and that it is possible for me to be saved, sanctified, and share in God's glory. I, standing here, declare that I believe these things which we declare and celebrate.

However, the history of the Nicene Creed is a bit complex. The basic outline of the Creed as we know it today was given at the Council of Nicaea (325 AD). This does not exactly coincide with our present *Credo*. The text we have today was formally approved by the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD with one exception: the word, "filioque" which was added by the Council of Toledo in 589. The Eastern Church never accepted the insertion of this word). Until this time there were slightly different versions in existence. With the approval of Chalcedon, the one version that we have today gained wide acceptance and use. Hence the Creed at Mass is a summary of faith expressed by the Councils of Nicaea (325) and of Constantinople (381) as ratified by the Council of Chalcedon (451).

Originally, the use of the Creed was associated primarily with baptismal liturgies. At first it was in the form of threefold questions to the adults to be baptized (Catechumens). The three parts of this profession were called articles, and each was more or less expanded, to state in summary form, the essential ingredients of what is believed about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and their relationship to each other. The baptismal origins of the Creed are important reminders to us that Baptism, and the faith into which we were plunged at Baptism, are the only doors through which we can enter into the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which is about to begin. The Creed is also used at Confirmation, and in some Religious Orders the recitation of the Creed is required when taking the final vows. When a priest is installed as pastor of a parish, when a bishop is consecrated or when a cardinal is created, the Creed is said in a personal profession of faith.

The Creed is recited by the priest and the people together and it is encouraged to be sung. Unfortunately, very often this is no longer the case. In the ideal liturgy, I think it is helpful to imagine the words of the Creed sung by the assembly to a solemn, noble, joyful musical setting. There are ancient melodies for the Creed that have been sung for centuries. In singing that same song we would feel the thrill of knowing that ours is the same faith as Christians from all the previous generations, expressed with these same words for nearly two thousand years. At the words: "By the power of the Holy Spirit, etc" all bow. On the Feasts of the Annunciation and Christmas all genuflect. Despite this rather clear directive, this is not often done in the average parish. Once again, it is good to appreciate that the mystery of the incarnation is so wonderful that we, in reverence are to bow. Until the recent past, a genuflection was always called for, now a bow is the directive. Nevertheless, we are to indicate by our posture our awe of the mystery.

Finally, notice the basic structure of the Creed: We believe in One God:

1. The Father Almighty
2. In Jesus Christ
3. In the Holy Spirit
4. The Church

This structure shows figuratively how the Church undergirds the teaching about the Trinity. The Church is an object of faith! It is through the Church that the faith is given and hence she is the foundation of and the safe guarder of the faith.

*And that is your Mass Moment for the week.*