

Lesson 10 Pew Book - The Nicene Creed

Action

After the homily the priest goes back to his chair. He may choose to either sit for a short time so that everyone can reflect after the homily or he might immediately stand and begin the first words of the Creed, which is said on all Sundays and solemnities. At the words, “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man,” everyone bows except on Christmas and the Feast of the Annunciation, when we all kneel at these words.

History

The Nicene Creed is a very ancient statement of our beliefs. It is the product of the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople which were held in the fourth century. In it the early Fathers of the Church captured the essential truths of our faith. The recitation of the Creed at Mass began in Spain around the end of the sixth century and in Germany and surrounding countries from about the seventh century. Therefore, we Catholics have been proclaiming this act of faith together at Mass for well over a thousand years.

The Nicene Creed is sometimes confused with the Apostle’s Creed, since both are very similar. The Apostle’s creed is often associated with the Rite of Baptism since it is always included when one is baptized. The Nicene Creed, is more often associated with the Mass. The priest can choose to use either the Nicene or Apostles’ Creed at Masses with children. During Lent and during the Easter season the priest, at his option, may choose to use the Apostles Creed more frequently.

What we can do to better participate at Mass

As we recite the ancient words of the Creed we should try to think about what it is telling us. God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, has become

man for you and me: to save us from the slavery to sin and give us eternal life with Him forever. This is a great mystery and one that profoundly affects us both now and forever.

In recognition of this the Church asks us to bow at the words: and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. The bow at these words should be a profound bow, that is one that begins from the waist.

Bowing is an honor that we pay to the mystery of Christ who entered into human history by taking on human flesh and blood and truly becoming one of us. When we say, “Amen” at the end of the Creed we are saying that we believe the truths that are taught in the Creed.