

CREED

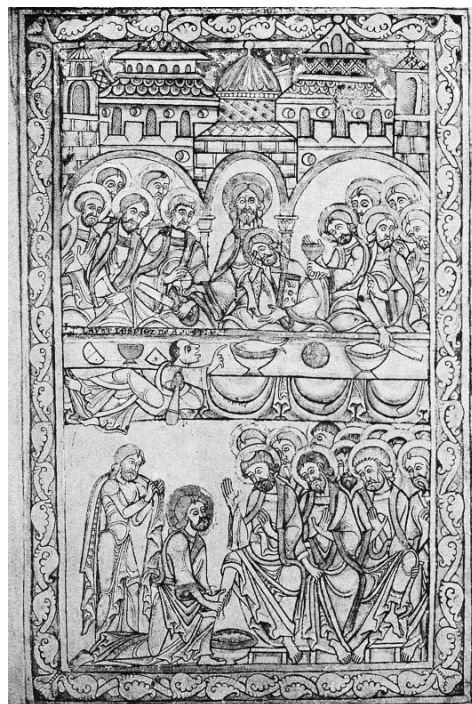
Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. ~ John 20:29

THE WORD CREED comes from the Latin word *cre-do*, which means “I believe.” “I believe” are the first two words of the creed, which is a short summary of the truths of the faith. The creed is also a rule of faith. St. 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*” (Rom 6:17). This verse is evidence that, even very early in the Church, already a standard or rule of teaching existed.

This 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. It was not long before this deposit of faith was expressed in a collection of short formulaic expressions called a creed so that the faith could be easily committed to memory and passed on orally to the next generation.

Creeds then 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” (see Gal 1:6-9). The creed is not meant to replace knowledge of the Gospel but serves as an authentic expression of it in summary form. “Just as the mustard seed contains a great number of branches in a tiny grain, so too this summary of faith encompassed in a few words the whole knowledge of the true religion contained in the Old and New Testaments”¹ (CCC 186).

A creed serves the Church as a standard for belief. It helps her preserve the truth. The earliest creed we have is the Apostles’ Creed, which, according to Tradition, is attributed to the twelve apostles. The creed professed at Mass every Sunday is called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed or simply the Nicene



Last Supper and Washing of the Apostles’ feet, 12th century illuminated manuscript, Psalter of St. Swithun’s Priory, Winchester, England

Creed; it dates back to the 4th century. Creeds are still being developed today. Pope Paul VI wrote a creed for modern times called *The Credo of the People of God* in 1968.

To say the creed puts the Christian into communion, both with God and with all Christians who profess him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the almighty,
maker of Heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, one in Being
with the Father.

Through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation

he came down from Heaven:

(All bow during these two lines:)

By the power of the Holy Spirit
he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered, died, and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in fulfillment of 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.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

(CCC 185-197)

¹ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catech. Illum. 5,12 from J.P. Migne, ed., Patrologia Graeca 33, 521-524 (Paris, 1857-1866)