



NICENO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED



"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it... And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." John 1:1-5, 14 (NABRE)

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Introduction to the Nicene Creed

The **Nicene Creed** is one of the most important statements of faith in Christianity. It was developed at two key councils: the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) and the Council of Constantinople (381 AD). The Creed was written to clarify Christian beliefs and to combat certain misunderstandings and heresies, especially Arianism, which denied that Jesus was truly God. These councils brought bishops from all over the Christian world together to ensure that the true faith, handed down from the Apostles, was clearly understood and preserved. This Creed remains central to Catholic, Orthodox, and many Protestant traditions and is recited during the Mass to profess the faith.

The Creed is structured to reflect belief in the Holy Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—and serves as a summary of the core elements of Christian faith. It also affirms key events in Jesus' life and their significance for our salvation.

"I believe in one God"

The first part of the Creed begins by affirming our belief in **one God**. This emphasizes that Christianity, like Judaism and Islam, is a monotheistic religion—meaning we believe in only one God. This belief stems from the ancient Jewish teaching found in the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4): "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

In this context, the Creed begins with "I believe" to reflect the personal nature of faith, but also unites us with the whole Church in professing a common belief. Though this is an individual statement, we make it together with the universal Church.

"The Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible"

God is described here as "**Almighty**", which means that He is all-powerful. He is the creator of everything: the visible world (like the earth, stars, animals, and humans) and the invisible world (like angels and spiritual beings). This echoes the Bible's creation story in Genesis 1: "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*" It reaffirms that God is the ultimate source of all things, seen and unseen.

"I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages"

Here we declare our belief in **Jesus Christ** as the "**Lord**", meaning that He has authority over all things. The title "Lord" was used for God in the Old Testament, which shows that Jesus is also divine.

Jesus is called the "**Only Begotten Son of God**", meaning He is not like a created being but shares the same divine nature as God the Father. The term "*begotten*" indicates that Jesus is not a creation of the Father, but rather comes from the Father's essence. This points to the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son—Jesus was not created but was "born" or "begotten" from the Father in eternity, before time even began.

"God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father"

This section of the Creed reaffirms that **Jesus is fully divine**. The phrases "*God from God*" and "*Light from Light*" emphasize that Jesus shares in the same divine nature as the Father. This directly counters the Arian heresy, which taught that Jesus was a created being and not truly God.

The word "**consubstantial**" (from the Greek word *homoousios*) means that the Father and the Son share the same substance or essence. This means that they are fully united in their divinity, though distinct persons within the Trinity.

"Through Him all things were made"

This teaches us that **Jesus, the Word of God**, was involved in the creation of the world. As the Gospel of John tells us: "*All things came to be through Him, and without Him nothing came to be*" (John 1:3). This reveals that the Son was not only present at creation but was the agent through which all things were made. Everything, both visible and invisible, was created through Him.

"For us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven"

This expresses the purpose of the Incarnation: **Jesus came down from heaven to save us**. The Creed emphasizes that God entered into human history in the person of Jesus Christ specifically to bring about our salvation. This highlights the extraordinary love of God, who did not abandon us in our sin but sent His Son to rescue us.

"And by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man"

This is a key teaching of Christianity: **Jesus became truly human**. By the power of the **Holy Spirit**, Jesus was conceived in the womb of the **Virgin Mary**, taking on a real human nature. This means that Jesus was fully divine and fully human. This is known as the doctrine of the Incarnation, which is essential to our faith because it teaches that God truly entered into our human condition.

"For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, He suffered death and was buried"

The Creed recounts the historical fact of **Jesus' crucifixion and death**. By mentioning **Pontius Pilate**, the Roman governor who sentenced Jesus to death, the Creed places this event firmly in history. Jesus' suffering and death were real; He endured the agony of the cross to atone for our sins. His death is the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation.

"And rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures"

After Jesus died, He was buried, but on the **third day**, He rose from the dead. This is the heart of the Christian faith—the **Resurrection**. Jesus did not simply come back to life as before (as Lazarus did), but was raised to a new, glorified life. His resurrection is the fulfillment of the Scriptures and gives us hope for our own resurrection.

"He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father"

After His resurrection, Jesus **ascended into heaven**, where He now reigns with the Father. This does not mean that He is distant from us. Rather, from His place in heaven, He continues to guide

and intercede for us. Being "**seated at the right hand**" of the Father signifies Jesus' authority and power in the divine plan of salvation.

"He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end"

The Creed looks forward to the **Second Coming of Christ**, when Jesus will return in glory to **judge all people**—both those who are alive and those who have died. This reminds us that Jesus is not only our Savior but also the judge of all humanity. His **kingdom**, unlike earthly kingdoms, will last forever. This affirms our hope in eternal life.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son"

We also believe in the **Holy Spirit**, the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is fully God, just like the Father and the Son. The Spirit is called the "**giver of life**" because He is active in creation, sustains the Church, and gives us the grace to live as Christians. The phrase "**who proceeds from the Father and the Son**" (filioque) expresses the Spirit's relationship within the Trinity. This phrase caused disagreement between Eastern and Western Christianity, but it is meant to show that the Spirit is fully united with the Father and the Son.

"Who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets"

The Holy Spirit, being fully God, is worthy of the same worship and adoration as the Father and the Son. The Spirit has been active throughout salvation history, **inspiring the prophets** of the Old Testament and continuing to guide the Church today.

"I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church"

We profess belief in the **Church**, which is:

- **One:** United in faith, under the leadership of Christ.
- **Holy:** Made holy by Christ, even though its members are sinners.
- **Catholic:** Universal, meaning the Church is for all people, in all places, at all times.
- **Apostolic:** Founded on the teachings and witness of the **Apostles**, and continued through **Apostolic Succession**—the unbroken line of bishops from the time of the Apostles to today.

"I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins"

We believe that **baptism** is the sacrament through which we are cleansed of our sins and born into new life in Christ. This baptism is a one-time sacrament that washes away both original sin and personal sins.

"And I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come"

The Creed concludes with our hope for the future. We believe that, at the end of time, **the dead will rise** and be given new, glorified bodies, just as Jesus was raised. We look forward to **eternal life** in the **world to come**, where we will be united with God forever.

Sources

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