

## What Do Catholics Believe? (The *Nicene Creed*)

Have you ever been asked what it is that you believe as a Catholic? You can answer by reciting the *Nicene Creed*. But before examining the tenets of the *Nicene Creed*, let's look briefly at the "other creed," the *Apostles' Creed*.

### The *Apostles' Creed*

I believe in God the Father, Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.  
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,  
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church,  
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
The resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

Amen.

Throughout the Middle Ages, it was generally believed and accepted that the *Apostles' Creed* was composed jointly by the twelve Apostles in Jerusalem, with each of the twelve contributing one clause of the *Creed* before embarking on their respective missions. This legend dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Today, this is a point of argument and debate, especially within the ranks of the Protestant scholars. Nevertheless, many continue to think of this creed as apostolic in nature because its basic teachings are agreeable to the theological formulations of the Apostolic Age. The Catholic Church does not hold a position one way or the other on this subject; however, it does hold that all of the points of the *Apostles' Creed* are part of the Catholic Faith. Most of the western Christian faiths today profess the *Apostles' Creed* as their core tenants of faith of Christianity.

Over history, the *Apostles' Creed* functioned in many ways in the life of the Catholic Church:

- In the early Church, it was a confession of faith necessary for those to be baptized.
- Catechetical instruction was based on the major tenets of the *Creed*. This was necessary, because many of the new Christians were not able to read and write; this, almost poetic, *Creed* was easy to memorize and make part of everyday life.
- In time, the *Apostles' Creed* became a “rule of faith” to clearly separate the true faith from heretical deviations. The principle heresy that was challenging the Church at the time the *Creed* was written was Gnosticism, which denied that Jesus was truly man.
- By the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century the *Creed* had come to be accepted as a part of the official liturgy of the Church.
- Finally, it was used, along with the Lord's Prayer, by devout individuals as a part of their morning and evening devotions.

## **The Nicene Creed**

The *Nicene Creed* was originally formulated at the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church held in Nicea in AD 325 and was later amplified, adopted and authorized as a true expression of the Faith at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in AD 381.

The *Nicene Creed* built upon the profession of faith in the *Apostles' Creed*, defending against many of the heresies of the time - the primary and most prominent of which was Arianism. Arianism was a Christian heresy of the 4th century that denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ and was named for its author, Arius, a priest in Alexandria. Debate over his doctrine was a pressing matter for the Church for more than half a century. Arius sought to safeguard the absolute transcendence of God by teaching that God is unbegotten and without beginning. The Son, because He is begotten, cannot be God in the same sense as the Father is. Arius taught that the Son was created like all other creatures and exists by the will of the Father. (By the way, this position is also held by the Jehovah's Witnesses, who hail Arius as a great witness to the truth.) Although Arianism was the most troublesome heresy of the time, it was not the only one. The *Nicene Creed* was absolutely necessary at the time to ensure that the *lex credendi* (the rule of faith - what the people believed) would both reflect and reinforce the *lex orandi* (the rule of prayer - how the people worshiped).

One often overlooked, but nonetheless important, aspect of the *Nicene Creed* is that it was formulated **before** the Church made a determination of which books belonged in the New Testament. A list of the inspired books of the New Testament, as we have them in the Bible today, was first put together in the *39<sup>th</sup> Pastoral Letter* of Saint Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, in the year AD 367. He wanted this list of sacred books to be the "canon," or the list of sacred books of the New Testament; he listed the 27 books of the New Testament and declared that all are apostolic and canonical. St. Athanasius said, "In these alone is proclaimed the Good News of the teaching of true religion." This list was confirmed by the Councils of Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397). In the year AD 405, Pope Innocent I, responding to a question as to what formed the canon, provided this very same list in response. Finally, the Council of Trent, AD1545-1563, again promulgated the same list. Because the *Nicene Creed* was formulated to express the doctrines of the Christianity and to serve as a test of orthodox teaching, the *Nicene Creed* was, by nature, influential in compiling the New Testament. Look at this way... God chose the people who were bound by the *Nicene Creed* to select from the many writings which were circulating at the time to be apostolic and inspired by the Holy Spirit to be declared to be Sacred Scripture. Therefore, **one cannot disagree with the *Nicene Creed* without denying the New Testament and Christianity as a whole!**

Gradually the *Nicene Creed* came to be recognized as the proper profession of faith for candidates for the sacrament of Baptism. It is the profession of the Christian Faith common to the Catholic Church, to all the Eastern Churches separated from Rome, and to most of the Protestant denominations today.

# The Nicene Creed

## Pre 2010 version:

**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:  
**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 worshiped 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.

Current version:

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.

**"I believe in One God,** (Deuteronomy 6:4; St. Mark 12:29, 12:32; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6)  
**The Father Almighty** (Genesis 17:1-8; Exodus 6:3; St. Matthew 6:9; Ephesians 4:6; 2 Corinthians 6:18)  
**Maker of heaven and earth** (Genesis 1:1; Job 38:1-30)  
**And of all things visible and invisible** (Colossians 1:15-16; St. John 1:3; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 4:11)

### *We believe*

“We” is actually a poor translation of the original Greek text and the official Latin text. “I” is the correct translation. The *Nicene Creed* is more than an organizational belief; it’s a personal proclamation. (Don’t be surprised if in the future this is changed to “I”.)

What does it mean to believe in God? There are many levels of belief:

- Belief that makes no difference.  
An example would be: “I believe that there is a New York City.” Even though you may have never actually been to New York City, *it is simply a fact that must be accepted or rejected by the intellect.*
- Belief that makes some difference.  
A statement such as “I believe that exercise will make me feel better” fits. For the fact to have effect, it must be put into action, and only then does it have some impact upon one’s health and well-being.
- Belief that demands a response.  
“I believe that with God, all things are possible.” If I truly believe, it will change my **entire** outlook on life. This is the level of belief that is used in the opening of the *Nicene Creed*.

Does Satan believe God exists? Of course, he does. Satan, however, does not have the belief that demands the *right* response. He believes that there is a God, but he does not BELIEVE “IN” GOD. He trusts more in his own will, and distrusts God’s plan to eternal happiness.

## ***In one God***

The word “one” was an addition to the *Apostles’ Creed*. In the midst of a culture that worshiped many gods (water, love, war, etc.), Yahweh revealed Himself to Abraham and Moses as the one, true God. The *Shema* is the daily prayer of the Hebrew. It starts with “Hear O Israel, there is **one** God“

## ***The Father***

“Father” is the name that Jesus Himself used and gave to us for God. While the use of the word “Father” to refer to God may seem commonplace to the Christians of today, it was a unique concept in the early years of the Church. No other religion dares to bring God to such an intimate relationship to man that we may consider ourselves as His children. The Old Testament people did not even call out God’s name. We should not fail to grasp the significance, and uniqueness of this relationship that we, as Christians, profess to have with God.

**CCC 239** By calling God “Father,” the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. God’s parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, which emphasizes God’s immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard: no one is father as God is Father.

Some of the ways we can think of God being a “father” includes:

1. Father of the universe, for he created everything Father of humanity, for he created mankind
2. A loving and caring father that wants us to be with Him Father because He sustains us
3. Father because He makes us His children through Baptism

## ***The Almighty***

Being “all-mighty” implies not only that His might is greater than anything or anyone else. It also means that it’s *universal*, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything.

If He’s Almighty, is there anything that God can’t do? Can He lie or sin? No, God tells us that He cannot lie or sin; it is simply against His nature. By Almighty, we mean that there is no power great enough to undo what God does and there’s no power great enough to do what God does not want done.

**CCC 268** Of all the divine attributes, only God’s omnipotence is named in the Creed: to confess this power has great bearing on our lives. We believe that his might is universal, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything. God’s power is loving, for he is our Father, and mysterious, for only faith can discern it when it “is made perfect in weakness”.

### ***Maker of heaven and earth,***

The expression “heaven and earth” means all that exists, creation in its entirety. It also indicates the bond, deep within creation, that both unites heaven and earth and distinguishes the one from the other. The earth is the world of men, while heaven is God’s own place and the place of the spiritual creatures - the angels and saints who surround God.

Are evolution and creation conflicting beliefs? Complimentary beliefs? Mutually exclusive? Creationism is the belief that God created everything out of nothing using only His power. Over time, mankind has developed means of explaining phenomena in terms that he can understand. Many theories of Evolution are, in reality, based on error, but that does not preclude us from continuing to try to explain in our own, imperfect way some of the physical evidence of history. Creationism is a belief in an event that DID happen and in WHO the author was. Evolution is a human, and thus flawed, way to explain HOW it happened. As long as Evolution theories do not conflict with the belief that God created the universe with purpose and by design, the Church has no problem with the theories taught.

So, did Creation take 7 24-hour days? The Church does not teach *ex cathedra* on this issue. The answer to the question, though lies in how we should treat “days” in the Genesis account. At the time the Genesis account was authored (another topic unto itself), as is true today, there are several meanings to the word “day.” They include:

1. a 24 hour period (the most common use)
2. the 10-12 hours of daylight (as opposed to night) a generation (in my day . . .)
3. an era (in the day of the . . .)

Point being, we don’t know for sure. The thing you should take out of “day” is that there was a particular sequence and structure to creation. See the point paper *A Commentary on the Story of Creation* (Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 RSV). It is certain that the creation narrative in Genesis is not intended to be a scientific explanation of how the universe came into existence. It is intended to teach the profound truth, that God is the Author of creation. This vast, complex universe cannot be scientifically explained without such a supreme and divine being.

Scientists generally accept that, when the odds against something occurring on the cosmic scale reaches 10 to the 50<sup>th</sup> power (10 with 50 zeros after it), that occurrence is considered to be scientifically impossible. Many scientists estimate the odds against the chance of generating life through random interaction of matter, even given every benefit of the doubt, to be 10 to the 119,850<sup>th</sup> power (10 with 119,850 zeros after it). This strongly endorses the scientific conclusion that life was not random chance; there was a supreme creator.

### ***And all that is seen and unseen***

This text is not found in the *Apostles’ Creed*. Some of the early heresies believed in God’s split dominion - a good nature for the super-natural (that which is not seen) and an evil nature for the natural (that which is seen). By declaring all that is “seen and unseen,” both natures are covered.

**And in one Lord, Jesus Christ** (St. John 20:28; Acts 11:17, 16:31; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:5)  
**The Son of God, the Only-Begotten** (St. Matthew 3:17, 14:33, 16:16; St. John 1:14, 3:16)  
**Begotten of the Father before all ages** (Psalm 2:7; St. John 1:1-2)  
**Light of Light** (St. John 1:4, 1:9, 8:12; Psalm 27:1; St. Matthew 17:2, 5; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Hebrews 1:3; 1 John 1:5)  
**True God of True God** (St. John 1:1-2, 17:1-5; 1 John 5:20)  
**Begotten, not made** (St. John 1:1-2, 16:28, 1:18)  
**Of one essence with the Father** (St. John 10:30)  
**By Whom all things were made** (Hebrews 1:1-2, 10; St. John 1:3, 1:10; Colossians 1:16; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 11:36)

*We believe in one Lord,*

In Jesus' time, "lordship" meant absolute, undisputed ownership. The person called "lord" was an absolute, undisputed master. Throughout the New Testament, those who interacted with Jesus, but did not yet believe, addressed Him with titles of honor, like "teacher" or "rabbi." The titles of "Lord" and "Master" were reserved only for His disciples and apostles – those that truly believed. In John chapter 6, we learn that Judas turns on Jesus during the Bread of Life discourse:

“But there are some of you who do not believe.’ Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him.” (John 6:63-64)

The very next time in the Bible that Judas addresses Jesus is when he betrays Jesus with a kiss in Mark chapter 14:

“He (Judas) came and immediately went over to him (Jesus) and said, ‘Rabbi.’ And he kissed him.” (Mark 14:45).

By our profession of Jesus as “Lord,” like His disciples, we signify that He is undisputed master over our lives and is worthy of worship.

### *Jesus Christ,*

“Jesus” means “the Lord saves.” It was significant that Jesus was given a human name (“Joshua” also means “the Lord saves”) because it demonstrates His humanity. Jesus is fully human and fully God.

We’ve become accustomed calling the Son of Man by the name “Jesus Christ,” but in reality “Christ” is not a name, it’s a title, a job description. “Christ” means “anointed.” In the Old Testament, priests, prophets and kings were anointed with oil as a sign of being chosen by God. At His Baptism, Jesus was anointed, not by oil, but by the Holy Spirit which descends on Jesus like a dove.

### *the only Son of God,*

The “only Son of God” means that Jesus’ relationship to God is different than ours. Jesus is truly both Man and God. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, two special titles have been reserved for Jesus – “Son of Man” and “Son of God.”

### *God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father*

This phrase was added as a direct result of the Arian Heresy. When you hear “eternally begotten,” one might tend to think about the future of eternity, but eternity also projects backwards! Jesus, as God, has existed from before the beginning. As humans, who live in the realm of sequential time, this is a tough concept to understand. Arius’s battle cry was “The Logos is not eternal. God begat Him and before He was begotten, He did not exist.” Saint Athanasius’ reply was “The begetting of the Logos was not an event in time, but an eternal relationship.”

When developing the exact wording for the *Nicene Creed*, there was a spirited argument over which of two words to use. The term fought for at the Council by those who defended Jesus’ true divinity was *homoousion to Patri*, which in English is translated as “consubstantial with the Father” or “of the **same** substance as the Father” or “one in being with the Father.” The Greek word *homoousion* became the battle cry of the orthodox. The compromisers at the Council who supported Arius favored an ambiguous phrase, *homoiousion to Patri*, which can be translated as “a **similar** substance with the Father” or “a **like** substance with the Father.” Here’s a bit of trivia that few people know... The difference between the two phrases *homoousion to Patri* and *homoiousion to Patri* is the Greek letter “*iota*”. That’s where we get the phrase “refusing to add even one iota.”

*Through him all things were made*

This is a direct quote from John 1:3. Before the insertion of the phrase “one in Being with the Father,” this probably flowed a little better as “begotten, not made, through him all things were made.” Together, this means that the Son is not a created thing; rather, He is an agent through Whom all created things came into being.

**Who for us men and for our salvation** (1 Timothy 2:4-5; St. Matthew 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Colossians 1:13-14)

**Came down from heaven** (St. John 3:13, 3:31, 6:33-35, 38)

**And was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary** (St. Luke 1:34-39)

**And became man** (St. John 1:14; Hebrews 2:14)

**And He was crucified for us** (St. Mark 15:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24)

**under Pontius Pilate** (St. Mark 15:15)

**And suffered** (St. Mark 8:31; St. Matthew 27:50)

**And was buried** ( St. Luke 23:53; 1 Corinthians 15:4; St. Matthew 27:59-60)

*For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven*

Jesus’ sole purpose for becoming man was to forgive sin for the salvation of man. He did this through His once and complete sacrifice at Calvary on the cross. Prior to His sacrifice and ascension into Heaven, the gates of Heaven were closed.

Notice that reference to “men” in this phrase. Are women being excluded? Of course not. In the Greek and Latin, the word used includes both genders. That why we English-speaking say such things as “‘men’ in the Biblical sense.”

*by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man*

From the first formulations of the Christian faith, the Church has held that Jesus was conceived solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, also proclaiming the corporeal aspect of this event: Jesus was conceived “by the Holy Spirit **without human seed.**” The Church sees the virginal conception as the sign that it truly was the Son of God who came in a humanity like our own.

What was the greatest work of the Holy Spirit? Not Jesus’ Baptism and not raising Jesus from the dead. It was Jesus’ conception and birth. Why? Because it is this supreme grace, the grace of union, that is the source of every other grace. Through the Incarnation, the union of the human and divine that was divided by sin is reunited.

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

“For our sake” was added to the *Apostles’ Creed*. The emphasis here is that His sacrifice was totally for us and totally within His power to give.

Why pick on Pilate? Wasn’t it Herod the Great who tried to slay Jesus at birth, resulting in the slaughter of the innocents? Wasn’t Pilate under Herod’s jurisdiction and wasn’t it Herod and his soldiers who mocked Jesus at His trial? Wasn’t it the Pharisees who tried to trick Jesus at the trial? Wasn’t it the High Priest who handed Jesus to Pilate, charging Jesus with crimes against Caesar? And didn’t Pilate offer Barabbas to the people instead of Jesus, washing his hands of the decision? The answer is that it was Pilate’s decision that counted, as a representative of Caesar. And Symbolically, Pilate represents all of those (in times past and today) that contribute to the passion and death of Jesus through sin -- that means you and me!

Why was Jesus crucified and not put to death in some other way? Crucifixion was considered the worst possible death - not only from the fact that it was long and painful (death came as a result of suffocation), but also because the public humiliation was reserved for the worst of criminals. Regardless of the crime, Romans could not be crucified. For the Jews, it was even worse, as Jewish scripture read “Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse” (Deuteronomy 21:23).

**And He rose again on the third day** (St. Mark 9:31, 16:9; Acts 10:40; 1 Corinthians 15:4)

**According to the Scriptures** (St. Luke 24:1, 45-46; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

**And ascended into heaven** ( St. Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-10; St. Mark 16:19)

**And sits at the right hand of the Father** ( St. Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55; St. Luke 22:69)

*On the third day he rose again*

Jesus' resurrection is central to Catholic faith. Do you see anything significant with the two words "he rose"? When you or I go to heaven, won't we also rise? The answer is that it was under **His own power** that He rose. All creatures (humans) that have died and will die that are to enter heaven will rise, but by the power of God, not by his or her own power.

*in fulfillment of the Scriptures*

This wording came from 1 Corinthians 15:4. Jesus came to bring to fulfillment all the Old Testament scriptures which pointed to Him.

*he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father*

This phrase come directly from Mark 16:19 and John 20:17 and fulfills the Old Testament prophesy of Exodus 13:22 and Psalm 110:1.

Being seated at the Father's right hand signifies the inauguration of the Messiah's kingdom, the fulfillment of the prophet Daniel's vision concerning the Son of man: "To him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." After this event the apostles became witnesses of the "kingdom [that] will have no end."

**And He will come again with glory ( St. Matthew 24:27; St. Mark 13:26; St. John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:17)  
To judge the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; St. Matthew 16:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Peter 4:5)  
His Kingdom shall have no end (2 Peter 1:1; Hebrews 1:8)**

*He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead*

Before Christ's Second Coming, the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers (Luke 18:8 and Matthew 24:12). The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final trial. God's victory over the final unleashing of evil will be total and complete and will culminate in the Last Judgement.

Speaking of Christ's second coming, should Catholics believe in the "rapture"? In a single word, No. the rapture is an interpretation of Holy Scripture which is only about 130 years old. It is the idea that some believers will be snatched (raptured) up to Heaven at the second coming of Christ. Although Revelation 20:1-3, 7 makes reference to a thousand- year period when Satan will be bound, the concept of the "rapture" is based on a misinterpretation of Scripture.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, KJV)

Some Protestant denominations have very carefully worked out theories about what will happen at the end of time and/or at Christ's second coming. The second coming of Christ is what we Catholics refer to as the *parousia*; which is the Greek word for "presence" or "arrival." Depending upon which group one is talking with, the rapture will take place at the beginning of Jesus' thousand year (millennium) reign and they will reign with Him; while others hold that the rapture will take place at the end of the thousand-year reign and will be followed immediately by the end of the world and the general judgement. There are even some who hold that the "rapture" will take place during the thousand-year reign. This has been a cause of great division among the various fundamentalist groups but is of little interest to Catholics. As Catholics, we focus our attention on the condition of the individual soul at the time of death rather than speculating on the timing of Jesus' *parousia*, as recommended by St. Paul in the text that immediately follows verse 17 of Thessalonians:

"Therefore encourage each other with these words. Now, Brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." (1 Thessalonians 4:18-5:3, NIV)

We must concern ourselves with living as if every day and hour may be our last on earth; so that we may be prepared to meet the divine Judge and be deemed worthy of enjoying eternity with Him.

*and His kingdom will have no end*

If His kingdom will have no end, does it have a beginning? Trick question. Yes, for you and I it does... that's when we enter heaven. But for us, it will have no end. It's eternal.

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit** (St. John 14:26; Acts 1:8)

**The Lord and Giver of Life** (Acts 5:3-4; Genesis 1:2; St. John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6)

**Who proceeds from the Father** (John 15:26)

**Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified** (St. Matthew 3:16-17)

**Who spoke through the prophets** ( 1 Samuel 19:20; Ezekiel 11:5; 1 Peter 1:10-11; Ephesians 3:5)

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life*

Notice that both the Son and the Holy Spirit are called "Lord." This is an Old Testament term for God. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the 3 persons of the One God.

The Holy Spirit is a "giver of life" in two distinct ways:

1. Creation of man (Genesis 2:7)
2. New life through the forgiveness of sins (John 20:21-23)

***who proceeds from the Father and the Son.***

We're still talking about the Holy Spirit here. The original version of the *Nicene Creed* read "who proceeds from the Father" which is a quote from John 15:26. The phrase "and the Son" was later added by Pope Benedict VIII in the year AD 1024. So, why was it added? During the early Councils (Nicea and Constantinople included), the Church was struggling to clarify the Mystery of Christ, the Incarnate Word of God and thereby the Trinity. We believe in One God, divinely revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; all three persons of the Trinity being equal, distinct, sharing the same divine nature, and existing from and for all eternity. With this in mind, let's examine Sacred Scripture where we find the Holy Spirit referred to as the:

1. Spirit of the Son (Galatians 4:6)
2. Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9 and Philippians 1:19) Spirit of the Father (Matthew 1:20)
3. Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:11)

Together, these citations show the same relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Son and Father. The *Nicene Creed* did not invent the Trinity as some have claimed. As far back as Justin Martyr, who died in AD 157, we have authentic writings of Trinitarian beliefs of the Church.

This addition to the *Nicene Creed* (the addition of the Latin word *filioque*, which translates "and the Son") is cited as one of the official causes of the schism between the Western and Eastern Churches in 1054. The other issue was the primacy of the Pope. Interestingly enough, several of the early Eastern Church Fathers use language that suggests that if they had been asked, they would have agreed that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. For example:

1. St. Gregory the Wonderworker (c.265) in a creed he drafted wrote "One Holy Spirit, having substance of God and who is manifested through His Son"
2. St. Athanasius (c.360) wrote "We understand the special relationship of the Son to the Father, we also understand that the Spirit has this same relationship to the Son..."

So, the objection to the *Filioque* clause appears to be only for the purpose of denying Papal authority and not a differing belief on the role and nature of the Trinity.

*With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified*

Again, we're still talking about the Holy Spirit here. This phrase is further declaration of the Trinity, with the Holy Spirit being worthy of equal worship to the Father and Son.

*He has spoken through the Prophets*

This is an addition to the *Apostles' Creed*. It was the Holy Spirit that gave the prophets the grace and courage to speak the words of God. There were views at the time of the *Nicene Creed* that the Holy Spirit was not active in the world before the Pentecost.

**And I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church** (St. Matthew 16:18, 28:19; 1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 1:4, 2:19-22, 4:4, 5:27; Acts 1:8, 2:42; St. Mark 16:15; Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 10:17)

**I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins** (Ephesians 4:5; Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:12-13; Acts 22:16)

**I look for the resurrection of the dead** (St. John 11:24; 1 Corinthians 15:12-49; Romans 6:4-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)

**And the life of the world to come.** (St. Mark 10:29-30; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1)

**Amen.** (Psalm 106:48)

*We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.*

These are what are called the "Four Marks of the Church."

### ONE

Jesus established only one Church, not a collection of differing churches (Lutheran, Baptist, Anglican, and so on). The Bible says the Church is the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:23-32). Jesus can have but one spouse, and his spouse is the Catholic Church.

His Church also teaches just one set of doctrines, which must be the same as those taught by the apostles (Jude 3). This is the unity of belief to which Scripture calls us (Philippians 1:27, 2:2).

Although some Catholics dissent from officially taught doctrines, the Church's official teachers - the pope and the bishops united with him - have never changed any doctrine. Over the centuries, as doctrines are examined more fully, the Church comes to understand them more deeply (John 16:12- 13), but it never understands them to mean the opposite of what they once meant.

Being *one* is not a loose collection of parts, it's an organic whole. It has a head, voice, heart, hands and feet. The head is the Holy Father, who guides the Church with the mind of Christ. The voice is the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church. At the heart of the Church are the Sacraments, which nourish the body of the Church. The hands and feet are each of us, who reach out to the world and take with us the love of God. The bounds of unity are faith and love. Heresy violates faith; Schism violates love.

### **HOLY**

By His Grace, Jesus makes the Church holy, just as He is holy. The Church itself is holy because it is the source of holiness and is the guardian of the special means of grace Jesus established, the sacraments (cf. Ephesians 5:26).

Does this mean that all of the members of the Church are holy? No. The Church is not a home for saints; it is a hospital for sinners. Jesus said there would be both good and bad members in the Church (John 6:70), and not all the members would go to heaven (Matthew 7:21-23).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is Holy and He has called us to holiness in Him, through His Body. We are called into fellowship with Him through the community of believers, by the Sacraments, by the preaching of the Gospel message, by praying and being prayed for, and by forgiving and being forgiven.

### **CATHOLIC**

The term "catholic" means "universal."

The word "catholic" was first used in reference to the Church by St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch in the year AD 108. Around the year AD 175, Irenaeus of Lyons used this term in disputing with the Gnostics (who claimed that their teaching was the "real Gospel"). The Gnostics believed that Christ had two messages: The 1<sup>st</sup> (Exoteric Christianity) was the message preached to ordinary men who could only understand a very simple message; the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Esoteric Christianity) was told only to a chosen

few who had shown themselves worthy of the message. Irenaeus replied that Christians have never had a secret doctrine in the Gnostic sense. He argued that Christ had no secrets from the twelve, the twelve accepted Paul as one of themselves and that Paul and the twelve were under strict command to pass on all they had received.

The Church is “catholic” because the same full Gospel is preached everywhere. For over 2000 years, the Catholic Church has carried out this mission, preaching the good news that Christ died for all men and that he wants all of us to be members of his universal family (Galatians 3:28).

### **APOSTOLIC**

The Church Jesus founded is apostolic because He appointed the apostles to be the first leaders of the Church, and their successors were to be its future leaders. The apostles were the first bishops, and, since the first century, there has been an unbroken line of Catholic bishops faithfully handing on what the apostles taught the first Christians in Scripture and Sacred Tradition (2 Timothy 2:2).

#### ***We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins***

Our Lord tied the forgiveness of sins to faith and Baptism. “*He said to them, ‘Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.’*” (Mark 16:15-16) Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ. Baptism removes all sins, including Original Sin, and places an indelible mark on our soul, signifying that we are one of God’s family. As members of His family, we can always approach Him and ask his forgiveness.

#### ***We look for the resurrection of the dead,***

Belief in resurrection of the dead has been an essential element of the Christian faith from its beginnings. Jesus was the first to be raised, but such belief is rooted in the Old Testament. “... *the king of the world will raise us up to live again forever*” (2 Maccabees 7:9)

*and the life of the world to come*

The “world to come” for the just is heaven. It is our inheritance which we will share with our eldest brother, Jesus. Like any inheritance, **we cannot earn it**; it’s a free gift. **However**, just as with an offspring that proves that he or she is unworthy of an inheritance, it can be denied.

***Amen***

“Amen” is the oath of affirmation. According to the Book of Revelation, Jesus Himself is the Amen (Revelation 3:14). This is what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has to say about “amen.”

**CCC 1061** The Creed, like the last book of the Bible, ends with the Hebrew word amen. This word frequently concludes prayers in the New Testament. The Church likewise ends her prayers with “Amen.”

**CCC 1062** In Hebrew, amen comes from the same root as the word “believe.” This root expresses solidity, trustworthiness, faithfulness. And so we can understand why “Amen” may express both God’s faithfulness towards us and our trust in him.

**CCC 1063** In the book of the prophet Isaiah, we find the expression “God of truth” (literally “God of the Amen”), that is, the God who is faithful to his promises: “He who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth [amen].” Our Lord often used the word “Amen,” sometimes repeated, to emphasize the trustworthiness of his teaching, his authority founded on God’s truth.

**CCC 1064** Thus the Creed’s final “Amen” repeats and confirms its first words: “I believe.” To believe is to say “Amen” to God’s words, promises and commandments; to entrust oneself completely to him who is the “Amen” of infinite love and perfect faithfulness. The Christian’s everyday life will then be the “Amen” to the “I believe” of our baptismal profession of faith: