

Transitioning to the new Roman Missal

Part 6 in a series (Prepared for St. James Cathedral, Seattle by Corinna Laughlin)

October 16, 2011

THE CREED

**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,**

*At the words that follow up to and including
and became man, all bow.*

**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.**

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Though it ends with "Amen," the Creed is not so much a prayer as a statement of faith. In the early Church, the Profession of Faith was part of the baptismal rite, and the candidate was questioned about faith in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the water was poured. It was relatively late--the 11th century--when the Creed was incorporated into the Sunday Mass in Rome.

Today, there are two options for the Creed – the short Apostles' Creed, familiar as one of the prayers of the rosary, and the Nicene Creed (more accurately, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, because it took shape not only at the Council of Nicaea in 325 but at the Council of Constantinople in 381, and continued to be discussed at Chalcedon in 451 and Toledo in 589). The Creed is recited by the entire assembly as part of the Liturgy of the Word. Lawrence Johnson suggests that it also forms a kind of bridge between Word and Eucharist: "it is a response not only to doctrinal propositions but also to the person of Christ present in the word. At the same time the profession links the Liturgies of the Word and Eucharist as the congregation recalls the mysteries of faith which will again be proclaimed in the Eucharistic Prayer. The people accept God's word before they move on to the celebration of the Eucharist, which itself is a profession of faith." (The Mystery of Faith, p. 48).

The Creed falls into four sections. The first states what we believe about God the Father; the second and longest part speaks of God the Son; the third speaks of God the Holy Spirit; and the fourth is about the Church and our participation in the life of Christ.

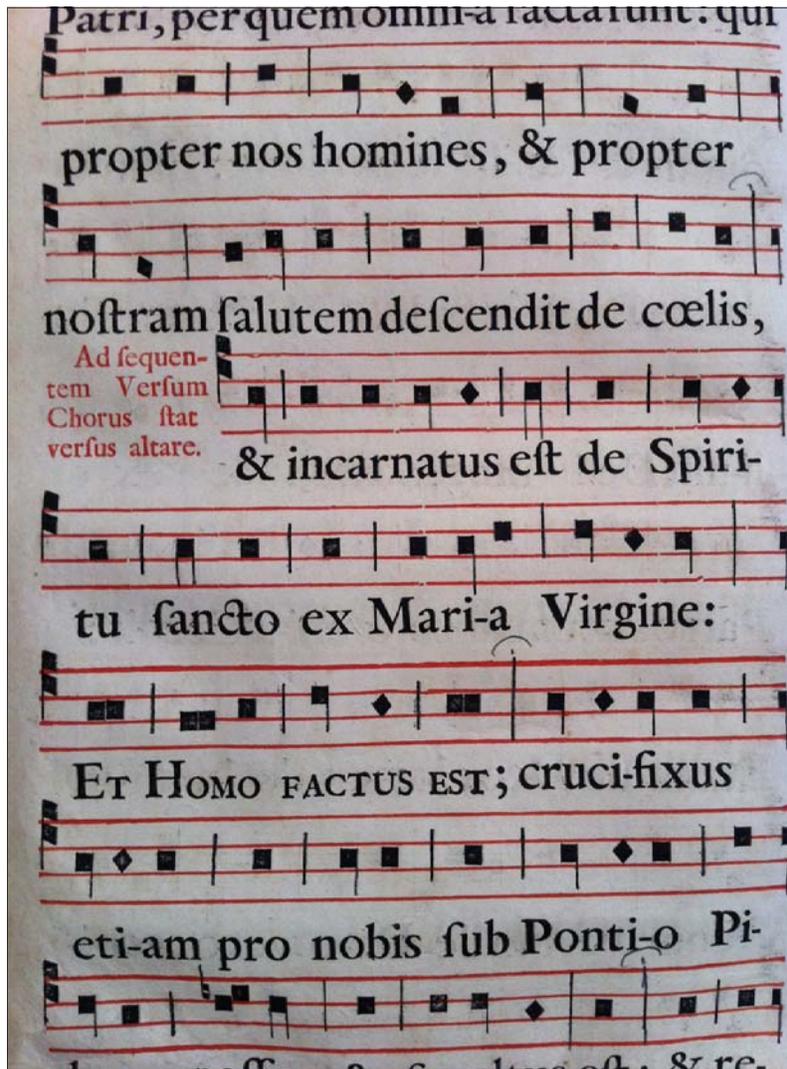
One of the most noticeable changes in the entire text comes with the first word. We move from "we believe" to "I believe." Surprisingly enough, both forms are quite accurate translations! "The Church emphasizes the 'I' and the 'we' of faith by using two professions of faith in her liturgies: the Apostles' Creed, the Creed that begins with 'I believe' (Credo), and the Great Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople, which in its original form starts with the words 'We believe' (Credimus)" (YouCat 24; cf. Catechism 26). The Greek original of the Nicene Creed begins with "we." But in the Roman liturgy, the Latin version begins "I believe." The translators of the 1974 Sacramentary wanted to take the Church back to the original form of the Creed, and to emphasize the communal nature of this profession of the faith we share as a Church. The new translation adheres to the Latin, and so we will now say "I believe." But even as we say "I believe," we join in a corporate expression of faith, prayed aloud together, as one body in Christ.

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The first part of the Creed is about God the Father. And what do we believe about the first Person of the Trinity? That God is one and all-powerful. That God created everything; heavens and earth, all we can see, and all we cannot see. Another change in translation can be noted here: "seen and unseen" has become "visible and invisible," to echo the Latin "visibilium omnium et invisibilium."

The second section of the Creed, which focuses on Christ, is the longest, because it was in the midst of the Arian heresy that the Council of Nicaea was called, and this Creed was written. The Arians argued that Christ was God's first creation, at the beginning of time. If this were true, then clearly the three persons of the Trinity could not be equal. To counter this false teaching, the Council Fathers used the Greek term *homoousios* to describe Christ. It is difficult to translate, but basically means of one and the same being or substance. In Latin, this word was translated *consubstantialis*, and our translation now uses the word "consubstantial." In essence, the translators chose *not* to translate this unique word, in keeping with the new guidelines for liturgical translation on which this third edition of the Roman Missal is based: "Whenever a particular Latin term has a rich meaning that is difficult to render into a modern language (such as the words *munus*, *famulus*, *consubstantialis*, *propitius*, etc.) various solutions may be employed in the translations, whether the term be translated by a single vernacular word or by several, or by the coining of a new word, or perhaps by the adaptation or transcription of the same term" (*Liturgiam Authenticam*, 53). In the case of the word "consubstantial," the translators of the Roman Missal chose to use a unique word to reflect a unique reality.

This whole section of the Creed, one might argue, amplifies what we mean when we say that Christ is



The invention of the printing press changed the way liturgical books were prepared. The art of the illumination gave way to the clean and uncluttered look of the printing press. This page from a Missal is printed in large type, and was probably intended for use in a monastic setting, when several monks would chant together from the same book.

"consubstantial with the Father." He is what God is: "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God." Fully God, Christ is also fully human, and the Creed carefully situates Christ in historical time—he was "crucified under Pontius Pilate." It also emphasizes that Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One, promised to Israel—he rose "in accordance with the Scriptures."

The third part of the Creed speaks of God the Holy Spirit, who is one with the Father and the Son, who is both "Lord" and "the giver of life." The phrase "and the Son" in the line "who proceeds from the Father and the Son" was added at the Council of Toledo in 589, to express more clearly the belief of the Church in the West that the Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son (in the East, many Churches do not accept this theology).

The last part of the Creed emphasizes the present and future, our place in the saving mystery we profess. We believe in "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church." We believe that baptism, conferred once, takes away sins. We believe in the resurrection of the dead (St. Paul said, "if the dead are not raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins"). And we believe in "the life of the world to come," eternal life in heaven.

In the words of the baptismal rite, "This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord."