

# **The Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our  
Lord.**

**He was conceived by the power of the  
Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was  
crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven, and is seated at  
the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again 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.**

In our daily devotions, after offering to our Heavenly Father the prayer taught to us by His Divine Son, and after having saluted her who is "*full of grace*," we are counseled to make a declaration of our faith, to express in words what we believe to be God's revelation to man. Each of us in early childhood learned a compendium of our

Catholic faith, a formula which contains the most important truths of our Church's doctrine. This is known as the Apostles' Creed.

It is called a "*Creed*" from its first word - in Latin, "*Credo*," I believe. Why do we call it the "*Apostles' Creed*"? Because throughout the Middle Ages there was a widespread belief that the Apostles composed it on the day of Pentecost. An ancient legend, dating back to the sixth century and perhaps further, tells us that when the Apostles were assembled at Jerusalem and had just received the Holy Ghost in the form of tongues of fire, each of them, inspired by the Spirit of God, contributed one of the articles of the Creed. According to the story, when the Holy Spirit had filled the souls of the Apostles with knowledge and zeal, St. Peter arose and cried out, "*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.*" St. Andrew continued, "*And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.*" St. James added, "*Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,*" etc. And so on for the others.

Bear in mind, however, that all this is a legend, of uncertain origin and of very slight probability. There is no allusion to it in the Scriptural account of the events of Pentecost, and the whole story is probably the product of the vivid imagination of some Oriental or Latin romancer [i.e. someone who writes a fictitiously embellished account or explanation]. Spiritual writers of those early days, like some of later times, were prone to enrich their pages with details

that would have been wonderful if they had been true.

**A Profession of Faith.** The Apostles' Creed is, very likely, an amplified form of the "profession of faith" required in the early centuries from converts. In Apostolic times, as at the present day, those who desired Baptism were obliged to make a statement of their belief; and it is probable that the Creed was brought to its present form gradually, being developed from the declaration exacted from those converted to the faith. [*Baltimore Catechism* on the Apostle's Creed.]

[CCC "194 The Apostles' Creed is so called because it is rightly considered to be a faithful summary of the apostles' faith. It is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome. Its great authority arises from this fact: it is "the Creed of the Roman Church, the See of Peter the first of the apostles, to which he brought the common faith" See the Creeds in the Catechism.]

The Creed is supposed to be a summary of Christian dogmas. Why is it only a partial summary? Why does it not contain all the articles of Catholic belief? [We need to realize that the full understanding of God's revelation has been an ongoing process under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle's Creed comes from very early in Church History, perhaps the first century. By the fourth century, much more of that revelation had been digested and become better understood resulting in the Nicene Creed that we now use at mass. Even this

articulation of the faith is an incomplete summary of all that we believe. For a more complete statement see Pope Paul VI Credo of the People of God. In addition, Father Sullivan asserts that in the early centuries of Catholicity, the faith in its entirety was not taught to converts until after they had been received into the Church. The knowledge of the "*Divine Mysteries*," that is, the nature of the Mass and the adoration of the living presence of our Lord in the Eucharist, was not imparted to them until after Baptism. When they learned the Creed, they learned only what the Church wished to teach them; and therefore the things which they were not to know were not included in it.

Printed with ecclesiastical approval.

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