

Dear Friends,

This is my April column on the Mass. Last month I began reflecting on the Creed or Profession of Faith. This follows the homily every Sunday of the year. The idea is that having been nourished by the Word of God, all who are present unite in professing our common faith.

In the Roman Missal, there are two Professions of Faith from which to choose: the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Apostles' Creed is the older of the two and probably finds its roots in the second century. It very simply expresses the focus on God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit which formed the essential catechesis given to those seeking baptism. Because of this, the Missal recommends that the Apostles' Creed be used especially during the Lent and Easter Seasons. These liturgical seasons focus on baptism with some adults and their older children here at Saint Margaret preparing for Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, and with all of us who are already baptized and members of the Church being invited to renew our baptismal promises at the Masses on Easter Sunday. This baptismal focus is why we are currently reciting the Apostles' Creed at Mass.

On most Sundays of the year, we recite the Nicene Creed as our Profession of Faith. This Creed was developed in the fourth century. The Church was facing some challenges to our belief especially about the divinity and humanity of Christ. In response to this, the bishops of the Church clarified our faith at the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) and from the work of these two ecumenical councils, a lengthier and more theologically detailed Creed emerged. This is usually named the Nicene Creed from its origin with the Council of Nicaea.

Here are some thoughts on just a few of the phrases in this Nicene Creed.

“I believe.” The Creed is the faith of the universal Church. However, each of us professes it as our personal faith and that is why we say “*I*” and not “*We*.”

“The only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.” The idea is that Jesus, as Son, dwelled with the Father before the creation of the world and before time began. His birth in time was intentional and was always part of the divine plan.

“Consubstantial with the Father.” This word “*consubstantial*” is very foreign to us, a word we never use in any other place. This word is basically an English transliteration of the fourth-century Latin word. It means that Jesus has the same substance as the Father. He is divine. He is God.

“Incarnate.” This is another word we don’t use very often. It expresses our belief that the Son of God has become flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit.

“I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” Here the word “*confess*” does not refer to the admission of sin. Instead, it means that we profess our belief in baptism as the means of forgiveness and salvation.

“I look forward to the resurrection.” This is a confident proclamation at the end of the Nicene Creed of our belief in God and in the hope and promises given by Jesus Christ.

I hope these few reflections will help to enhance our appreciation of the Creed and its spiritual richness.

Father Mike