

Roman Missal, 3rd Edition

Going deeper into the text 2

CHANGES TO THE CREED

original. The Latin – and, indeed, Greek - liturgical text of the Creed has been consistently in the singular, even though the Creed as adopted at Nicea opened in the plural form. There is a theological reason for that change: the ‘We’ of the Council of Nicea was a group of individual Bishops; but the liturgical assembly does not speak as a collection of individuals, but as a single body, united in Christ. The ‘I’ of the Creed, then, is the ‘I’ of the Church – as St. Thomas Aquinas says, the Church proclaims the Creed as a single person, made one by faith. (*Summa Theologicae* IIa IIae 1,9) Paradoxically, therefore, although at first sight the ‘I Believe’ may appear to reinforce individualism, it is, in fact, an intensification of a communal expression of faith.

The word ‘Consubstantial’ was from the very onset of the Creed’s history a highly technical word, and most certainly was not part of everyday speech. Over the centuries it has remained exactly that: a specialist term that stands for a massively complex set of discourses that are not easily translated into an equivalent single word; the previous expression, ‘Of one being’ itself generated as many questions as it answered. The word ‘Consubstantial’ it has become part of our Christian tradition, and its return to the Creed is a reminder that the ‘I’ of the Creed extends not merely in space but also across time.

6. Pastoral Reflection

Q *Who are the people who have shaped my faith across my life?*
When do I rely upon the faith of others?

One of a series of resources produced by the Liturgy Office of the Bishops’ Conference to accompany the introduction of the 3rd edition of the *Roman Missal* © 2011 Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.

D001

www.missal.org.uk

**Liturgy
Office**
ENGLAND
& WALES



1. Overview of change

1973 Order of Mass	Latin Ordo Missae	2011 Order of Mass
We believe in one God.	Credo in unum Deum	I believe in one God
Begotten not made, of one being with the Father	Genitum, non factum, consubstantialem patri	Begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father.

2. Its place in the Mass

The Creed forms part of the Liturgy of Word on Sundays and Solemnities. Said after the homily, it is a communal response to the Mysteries of Salvation that have been proclaimed in the scriptures.

3. Scriptural Foundations & Resonances

One of the climaxes of the Gospels occurs at the point in which Jesus asks the disciples first of all who people say he is, and then who they believe him to be. (Mt 16:13-20, Mk 8:27-30, Lk 9:18-27) This question, together with Simon Peter's reply that Jesus is the Christ, sets the basic paradigm for all Creeds. All, fundamentally, respond to the question, 'Who do you say that I am?' In the baptismal ritual, and in the liturgical renewal of baptismal promises, it is the individual man, woman or child to whom that question is addressed and who responds. In the Sunday Eucharist, however, it is the assembly, indeed the whole Church, which responds with a single voice.

4. Historical Background

The English word, 'Creed' is derived from the Latin word, 'Credo,' meaning 'I believe.' The original place in which each Christian was required publicly to state what he or she believed was in the liturgy of baptism. However, the need to negotiate theological diversity in early Christianity rendered the clear concise statement of baptismal faith a useful marker of dividing lines between opposing groups and a measure of orthodoxy. The Creed that we say or sing at Mass today finds its origin in exactly those theological struggles; we usually speak of it as the

'Nicene' Creed, after the Council of Nicea (325 AD) at which the bulk of it was composed. However, it is more properly called the 'Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed' as it was only set in its definitive form at the council of Constantinople (381 AD), and indeed reflects the intense theological debate that took place during the period between those two Councils of the Church.

A quick glance at the Creed reveals that it does not the various core element of the professed faith in equal detail. Considerably greater attention is paid to the nature of the Son than to that of the other members of the Blessed Trinity. (16 lines of text, as opposed to the 4 devoted to both Father and Spirit.) This apparent imbalance reflects the focus of debate in the early Church, and the need to elaborate with clarity the orthodox understanding of how Christ is both divine and human, over against a shifting platform of heterodox interpretations of the same. The issue at stake here was the divinity of Christ: was he God in exactly the same way the Father was divine – or was he, in some way, a lesser divinity? Divine, perhaps, but in different way? The scriptures do not spell this out with the degree of clarity that later controversies required, and so in order to resolve the issue a new word, 'derived from Greek philosophy had to be introduced into the mainstream Christian vocabulary by the Council of Nicea. That word is 'Homoousios,' which is translated into Latin as 'Consubstantialem.' Through it the Council Fathers sought to affirm the full divinity of Christ: he and the Father are united at the very deepest level, which is at the level of being. Neither is more or less God than the other.

5. The Meaning of the Text Today

The change from the 1974 translation that will be most immediately noticed is the movement to the singular "I believe" from the plural 'We.' This change is further reinforced by the fact that whereas 'we believe' was stated a total of three times in the 1974 translation, now it only occurs at the start. In both regards the revised translation is closely following the Latin

