

August 2024

Dear Friend in Christ.

As we step into a new month filled with opportunities to pray and connect with God, there is one prayer that we should pray well! It's the prayer every Sunday at Mass we recite the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed. But quite often we tend to recite it so mechanically/mindlessly and to end it quickly. We tend to swallow the whole creed in one gulp, but to the framers of the Creed each word was a meal in itself. As formulated the Creed is a statement or list of beliefs central to our Christian faith.

As such, we should pay more attention to each statement when we recite it. Hope we will henceforth recite it more fervently.

As formulated the Apostles' Creed serves 4 main functions:

- **It is Confessional.** By saying "I believe", we commit ourselves to what the Creed says. Do we?
- **It is liturgical.** Recitation of the Creed is an act of worship. It is part of the liturgy of baptism. Do we have this in mind?
- **It is symbolic.** A symbol of faith is a summary of the principal truths of the faith and therefore serves as the first and fundamental point of reference for Catechesis. To note.
- **It is normative.** The Creed is a "rule of faith" in two senses. One, it defines the faith including what Christians believe and excluding what they do not. Two, it establishes boundaries for conduct. If we really believe that Jesus "will come to judge the living and the dead", we are likely to watch our behaviour. Do we?

Here are 3 commentaries to illustrate 3 parts of the Creed for better understanding.

1. Have we realised that the statement- **"We believe in One Lord, Jesus Christ"** the key to the statement is the word- "One". The Creed explains the term "Lord Jesus Christ" - there is only one of Him. The Creed makes clear the "one" Father shares the same nature as the "one" Son and the "one" spirit . It emphasises the unity of God.
2. When we say **"Incarnate of the Virgin Mary, He became Man, was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again"**. When we come to this point of the Creed we used to kneel briefly. The liturgy requires us to bow our heads. Why we do that? Primarily because of the stupendous nature of this mystery. The Creed is making twofold point:
 - The eternal Son took on temporal "flesh" that is, a mortal, physical nature.
 - In taking on this flesh He became a human being. The Creed also affirms that the second person was crucified, actually died, and was buried and actually did rise from the dead. The Resurrection is one of the earliest proclamations of Christ's divinity.
3. We recite this Creed too during Mass that we affirm that **"Jesus descended into hell"** following His crucifixion and death. But have we ever reflected what it

means. Is this literally the case, and does the Creed use the word 'hell' in the same way that we understand it today? Do we have these questions particularly- Did Jesus really descend into hell? According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church the explanation is Scripture calls the abode of the dead, to which the dead Christ went down, 'hell' - *Sheol* in Hebrew or *Hades* in Greek - because those who are there are deprived of the vision of God. Such is the case for all dead, whether evil or righteous, while they await the Redeemer which does not mean that their lot is identical, as Jesus shows through the parable of the poor man Lazarus who was received into "Abraham's bosom". It is precisely these lost souls, who awaited their Saviour in Abraham's bosom, who Christ the Lord delivered when He descended into hell. Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before Him. (CCC 633)

Actually, there is proof in the Acts 2:27- *"because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption"*. and 1 Peter 3:18-20 *"For Christ also suffered for once,Put death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit"*.

Finally, here are some key points to note:

When we begin by saying, I believe in.... followed by 8 mind-boggling statements these are:

- An all-powerful God created the universe.
- The God is three Persons whose Son became human through being born of a virgin.
- He was executed but rose to life again.
- There is Holy Spirit in a church.
- Human beings will rise after they die.
- They will live forever.

To point out that certain statements in the Creed happened in the past, others are ongoing now, and still others will happen in the future. By saying "I believe", we all place our weight in these statements in the expectation that each is true.

Indeed, the Creed commits us to a view of reality. This, it says, is the way things are. Now it is one thing to accept the historical statements as true and the present statements as valid. Next, we are stacking our entire destiny in what the Creed says about the future.

So, if the past and present statements are true, what do we make of the future ones? The Creed guides us into new grounds.

End with prayer & reflection on the Apostles' Creed & Glory Be.