



# The Creed

**Rev. Daniel Merz**

*(Editor's Note: This homily was written specifically for the solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King on November 21, 2010, since the Second Reading [Colossians 1:12–20] that day contains words that are in the Creed; however, the homily may be adapted for use at another time.)*

With the revised translation of *The Roman Missal*, it might be helpful to take a look at some changes in the translation of the Creed, especially in light of today's scripture readings. First, why do we even say the Creed during Mass? There are two main reasons. The Creed serves as the key for understanding the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments—like a condensed version of the Bible! This is why it comes at the end of the Liturgy of the Word. Any understanding of scripture—including that made during homilies—must be in agreement with the Creed. Secondly, it serves as a marker or guide for the Communion that will soon follow. The Creed is our communion in the faith that enables us to share in Communion in the Eucharist. It serves as key and summary of the Word, as well as introduction to, and criterion for, Communion.

One of the first changes in the revised translation of the Mass texts that the assembly will pray will be at the start of the Nicene Creed. Instead of stating, “We believe” as we start the Creed, members of the assembly will say, “I believe.” The first liturgical use of the Creed was at Baptisms, and still today, whenever we celebrate a Baptism, we profess the Creed. As a *representation* of our faith, the Creed is most appropriate to Baptism, which brings others *into* our faith. The words of the Creed give us the opportunity for *individual ownership*

of this faith. It's similar at Mass. Each of us must profess individual ownership of the common faith that is necessary for sharing Holy Communion as a Church: "I believe."

In the first part of the Creed, we profess God the Father as creator. He is "maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible." This is nearly a direct quote from today's reading from Colossians. God is the maker of what is visible, such as the earth and the stars and you and me; he is maker not only of "unseen things" (as the former translation has it) but also of "invisible" things, such as angels ("thrones or dominions or principalities or powers," as Colossians says, referring to the traditional choirs of angels). He is also maker of what is invisible, such as our immortal souls.

The main point of the second part of the Creed is our affirmation that Jesus Christ is both divine and human. The same man who became flesh, "incarnate of the Virgin Mary" (in other words, who received our human nature from her), and who suffered death on the cross, as today's Gospel proclaims—this man is also God from God and Light from Light. John's first letter tells us that God is light (1 John 1:5–7), so Jesus is divine light. Today's reading from Colossians says that the holy ones, the saints, dwell in this light. They dwell in the presence of this eternal light, in the presence of Jesus. Thus, we pray that our deceased loved ones may dwell forever in this light!

The most striking change in the Creed is the phrase that Jesus is, "consubstantial with the Father." We used to say "one in being with the Father," which is just as difficult to say! Consubstantial refers to the core substance of who Jesus is; this core substance is the same core substance of who God the Father is. This is the most important word in the Creed. It professes specifically that the divinity of Jesus and the divinity of the Father is one and the same, without saying that Jesus is the Father or vice versa (*kind of* like how ice and steam are both H<sub>2</sub>O without being the same thing). Colossians says that, in Jesus, "all the fullness was pleased to dwell," all the fullness of life and divinity. Consubstantial is an important word; it was fought over by theologians and bishops for centuries as they sought the best word to clarify this great truth about Jesus. It deserves our respect and attention.

The Creed goes on to profess faith in the Holy Spirit and the Church. The former translation stated, "we acknowledge one baptism," whereas, now it states, "I confess one baptism." Our job is not simply to acknowledge Baptism, but to confess our faith in its saving power. Similarly, we no longer "look for the resurrection of the dead" as though it were lost, but rather we "look forward" to it, as something that fills us with hope and expectation.

Today, let's be mindful of how this Creed opens up for us the correct understanding of the Bible, and just as importantly, how it calls us to communion in faith so that we can approach this altar to receive Holy Communion, the body and blood of our Lord, human and divine, consubstantial with the Father in his divinity, and consubstantial with you and me in his humanity.

