

## RCIA HO Class 20 The Creeds

The Catechism of the Catholic Church informs us that, from Her earliest days, the Catholic Church has expressed and handed on Her faith in the form of brief formulae designed to be easily learned and remembered by all. These brief syntheses of the faith are known as “Creeds” from the Latin *Credo* meaning “I believe”, or “symbols” from the Greek *symbolon* meaning “a summary”, or “profession of faith”. The Creeds are summaries of what we believe. The twelve articles of the Apostles’ Creed symbolize the fullness of the faith as handed on by the Twelve Apostles. The Apostles’ Creed is the ancient baptismal profession of faith of the Church of Rome. Those adults who request Baptism profess it before they receive the sacrament. In the case of infant baptism, the parents and godparents recite it on behalf of the baby. The Nicene Creed which we profess at Mass on Sundays and Solemnities is more detailed and explicit than the Apostles’ Creed (see CCC 186ff.). It was put together and agreed upon by the bishops gathered at the Council of Nicea (325 AD) to correct theological errors which developed from the less explicit Apostles’ Creed.

The Nicene Creed may be divided into four sections. The first section treats of God the Father, the Creator of all things visible and invisible.

The second section is the longest and expresses our basic beliefs in the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son made man, Jesus Christ. Mention is made of His eternal existence with the Father, His consubstantiality with the Father, His miraculous conception, His suffering, death, and resurrection, and His ascension into Heaven. We profess that He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

The third section of the Creed deals with the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

The fourth and final section states that we believe in the Church, baptism, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come (Heaven).

While the Apostles’ Creed is more ancient, the Nicene Creed is more complete. It is noteworthy that there is no Gregorian Chant setting of the Apostles’ Creed while there are three commonly used ancient musical settings of the Nicene Creed. This indicates that the Apostles’ Creed was never used in the Roman Liturgy, which is essentially a sung liturgy. Only very recently was the Apostles’ Creed admitted to liturgical use by the Roman Church. There is still no official musical setting of it.

1) Make sure you are memorizing the Creeds. The best way to do that is to practice a small section over and over in your mind until you have it, then add another section. If you do a little bit every day before you go to sleep, three good things will happen: a) you will fill your mind with thoughts of God as you go to sleep, b) you will memorize the Creeds, c) you will improve your overall brain power. "Slow and steady wins the race." Warning: if you wait until the last minute to try to cram the Creeds into your head, you will never succeed. If you haven't started already, start now.

2) Notice that the Apostles' Creed starts differently than the Nicene Creed. If you get started right, you are more likely to finish right. There are 12 articles (points) in the Apostles' Creed. If you memorize one new article each day, you'll be done in 12 days. The Nicene Creed is divided into four large sections: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the Church. The section on God the Son (Jesus) is the longest. Memorize the other three first, and the whole thing will not seem so impossible.

3) It will not help to simply read the words over and over. You will need to take one sentence at a time, say it aloud, say it to someone else, write it down, record it and listen to it. All these different methods will help you to remember. Don't give up. You are filling your mind with the Truth about God. What could be better than that?

4) Practice with your parents and catechists and classmates.

5) How many small articles does the Apostles' Creed have? Why do you think that is?

6) How many big sections does the Nicene Creed have? What does each section cover?

7) Which Creed is older?

8) Why was the Nicene Creed written when the Church already had the Apostles' Creed?