

THEOLOGIA PRIMA

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#15 I BELIEVE

Every Sunday, and on major solemnities of the Church, we profess our faith. The *GIRM* states, “the purpose of the Creed is that the . . . people may respond to the word of God proclaimed in the readings . . . and explained in the homily and that they may also call to mind and confess the great mysteries of the faith” (67). When we begin using the revised texts for the Mass, we will notice several changes to the Creed. The changes presented in the Creed will take some time to get familiar with.

What is a Creed?

A creed is a statement of belief. There are many Christian creeds that developed over the centuries (e.g. Athanasian), but today, the Catholic Church uses the Nicene Creed (Council of Nicaea 325) and the Apostles’ Creed (not from apostolic times) during the celebration of Eucharist.

When did the Creed enter the Eucharistic liturgy?

The Creed has its roots in the baptismal liturgies of the early Church, not Mass. During the golden age of the catechumenate (4th-6th cents.), those preparing for baptism had to learn and memorize the Creed and then profess it before baptism. Ask your RCIA coordinator about this tradition. This is one reason the Creed begins in the first person singular (*credo*). Here’s a short timeline of when the Creed entered the Eucharistic liturgy:

- Sixth Century – Spain and Constantinople
- Seventh-Eighth Centuries – France and Germany
- 1014 – Rome (from there it spread to the rest of the West)

The Missalette (Mass guide) we use in our parish says we are supposed to bow during certain words of the Creed. Is this true?

Yes, this is true. At the words *and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man*, all make a profound bow; but on the solemnities of the Nativity and the Annunciation, all genuflect (*GIRM* 137). In doing this we use our bodies to honor God who took on flesh to share in our humanity.



Figure 1 The Annunciation by Henry Ossawa Tanner

What are some of the changes I will notice in the revised text for the Creed?

We cannot go through each of the changes or the reasons for the changes in this short article, but I can give a taste of some of the new language. In the new translation you will notice that the community will only say, “*I believe*” once during the entire Creed. Currently, we say, “*We believe*” three times. You will also hear phrases like:

- Of all things visible and invisible
- Born of the Father before all ages
- Consubstantial (having the same substance)
- I look forward to the resurrection

Obviously, there is still a lot to learn about the Creed and its changes. Stay tuned to your parish for more catechesis on these changes. Next time we will discuss the General Intercessions.