

# The Deacon's Corner by Deacon Ron Desmarais

## *I Believe In One God ...*

Concluding my review of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the Roman Missal I would now like to address my final topic: the Creed. This one is fairly easy as the Creed remains essentially the same. There are a few word changes and a couple places where the sentence has been slightly modified to accommodate the word change. That said, I would like to address two significant changes that affect the Creed. The first change is the return to the original form "***I believe***" from our current form "***We believe***" instituted after Vatican II. The second is the change from "***one in being with the Father***" to "***consubstantial with the Father***", a little, tongue twister for all of us to struggle with.

The word Creed comes from the Latin CREDO (Cray - do) meaning "I believe". When the Creed was changed to reflect "***We***" after Vatican II it was an attempt to show our unity as a community of faith. However, the Creed is actually a ***personal*** profession of faith. Our unity (as a community) is shown when we recite it together, but it still remains a personal profession of faith.

### **What does the Creed mean to us?**

When you profess the Creed, commonly referred to as the Nicene Creed, you are expressing not only a summary of the Gospel message, but what it is that you believe. It is a personal statement about yourself because it draws a line in the sand as to who you are. By professing this Creed you are telling the world that you are not only a Christian, but a Catholic Christian and this is how you define yourself.

When you tell someone you are an American it is not just because of a place where you live, but what you profess makes you an American. As an American we have our own creed which comes from the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be

self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Just as the Declaration of Independence professes what we believe is our right to be governed by a government of our own choosing the Nicene Creed is a profession of what makes you a Catholic Christian.

The Declaration of Independence was drafted to justify our break from England, and to declare our right to self government. It was necessary because as colonies of England we were being denied these rights. The Nicene Creed was formulated to refute the Arian heresy, and later the Constantinople Creed to combat other heresies. The Nicene Creed soon became the primary means of professing one's faith at baptism. We do this today either during our own baptism or when we profess our faith as a sign of unity with those being baptized. It also became a part of the early churches Catechumenal process as well. That is why in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) there is the presentation of both the Our Father and the Nicene Creed to the Catechumens and those undergoing the Rite of Continuing Conversion (Those previously baptized).

### **Where did the Creed come from?**

We received the Creed from the council of Nicea (325 AD) to refute the heresy of Arianism. Arian was a priest from Alexandria, Egypt who taught that Christ was created by God, a special being, not God-Man. This heresy continued for over a hundred years in various forms. It was through the Creed that the Church professed what it meant to be

Catholic and why it became a declaration prior to Baptism.

At the council there were three hundred bishops gathered at Nicea from all around the [Roman] world. This was the first church council after the prosecutions that ended with Emperor Constantine recognizing the Catholic Church. It should be remembered that many of those present had, because of the recent persecutions, suffered and had faced threat of death for their faith. These were not wishy-washy men. It might also be remarked, that they were extremely sensitive to details of doctrine. As evidence of this, the second major concern of the Council of Nicea was to address the hotly debated question of what the proper day was to celebrate the resurrection. It was from this same council that the decision to celebrate the Mass on Sunday and not on the Jewish Sabbath was made.

The bishops at the Council of Nicea in order to combat the Arian Heresy professed Jesus as the eternal Son of God, equal to the Father, stating: *that he (Jesus) is "the only-begotten Son of God, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, **begotten not made**, (of the same substance - in Greek *homoousion* pronounced: homo-oo-see-un) with the Father..."* The Creed of the Council of Constantinople (AD 381) stated the same. It is this combined form of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed that we profess at all Sunday Masses and Solemnities.

These teachings are predicated on scripture, primarily from the introduction of John 1:1-3; "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.*" As well as from John 8:58 "Jesus said to them, '*Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.*'", and from Genesis 1:26 "Then God

said: '*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*'"

When these two ancient Creeds were translated into Latin, the term "*homoousion*" was rendered as "*consubstantialem*," in Latin. ("Con" is the Latin root word for *with*.) So Consubstantial is *with the substance of God*. Remember the language of the church in the first 300-500 years was Greek NOT Latin.

#### **Why were these Creeds important?**

Arianism wasn't the only heresy the Church was combating during this time period. There was Apollinarianism: that professed that Christ had a human body, a human sensitive soul, but a divine mind. The Macedonian heresy during the 4th-century denied the full personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit. According to this heresy, the Holy Spirit was created by the Son and was thus subordinate to the Father and the Son.

Our faith was not formulated in a vacuum, but in a pagan environment that tried to twist Christianity to fit their belief system. The Church through the Magisterium (the teaching handed down through the Bishops) has been responsible for not only passing on the Faith, but to defend it from those who would corrupt it for their own ends.

We as a church experienced this during the Middle Ages with the rise of Protestantism and it continues today. Not only must the Magisterium continue to clarify the Church's teachings in regards to Protestantism and Fundamentalism, but against the rise of the New Paganism. This is why it is important to know not only Scripture, but our history.

I have addressed two major aspects of the Nicene Creed that we will be reciting come Advent. I hope I have not only helped prepare you for some of the changes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, but clarified why the changes are taking place so you can understand the why behind the changes.