

Profession of Faith (Nicene Creed or Apostles' Creed)

During the Profession of Faith the congregation responds to the word of God proclaimed in the readings taken from Sacred Scripture and explained in the Homily. The people call to mind the great mysteries of the faith by reciting the basis of that faith in a formula approved for liturgical use before the Eucharist is celebrated. The Creed is sung or recited by the priest together with the people, with everyone standing. At the words, "by the power of the Holy Spirit...became man", all make a profound bow, but during Masses at the Solemnities of the Annunciation and of the Nativity of the Lord the congregation genuflects.

In early Christian times, the Profession of Faith was primarily associated with Baptism. The candidates who went down to the water were required to confess personal beliefs by responding to a series of questions dealing with the three persons of the Trinity. After each question and answer the person was immersed. As the catechumenate was developed, the candidates finished their preparation for the Sacraments by memorizing a creedal formula and reciting it to the Bishop prior to the Baptismal celebration. Such is the distant origin of what is known as the Apostles' Creed. The date of its present text is not earlier than the sixth century.

The Creed that we profess at Mass, however, is the Nicene Creed, a summary of the faith expressed at three early Church Councils: Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Chalcedon (451). In 1014 Pope Benedict VII included it in the Roman Mass for all Sundays and feasts mentioned in the Creed. In following centuries it was extended to other festive occasions.