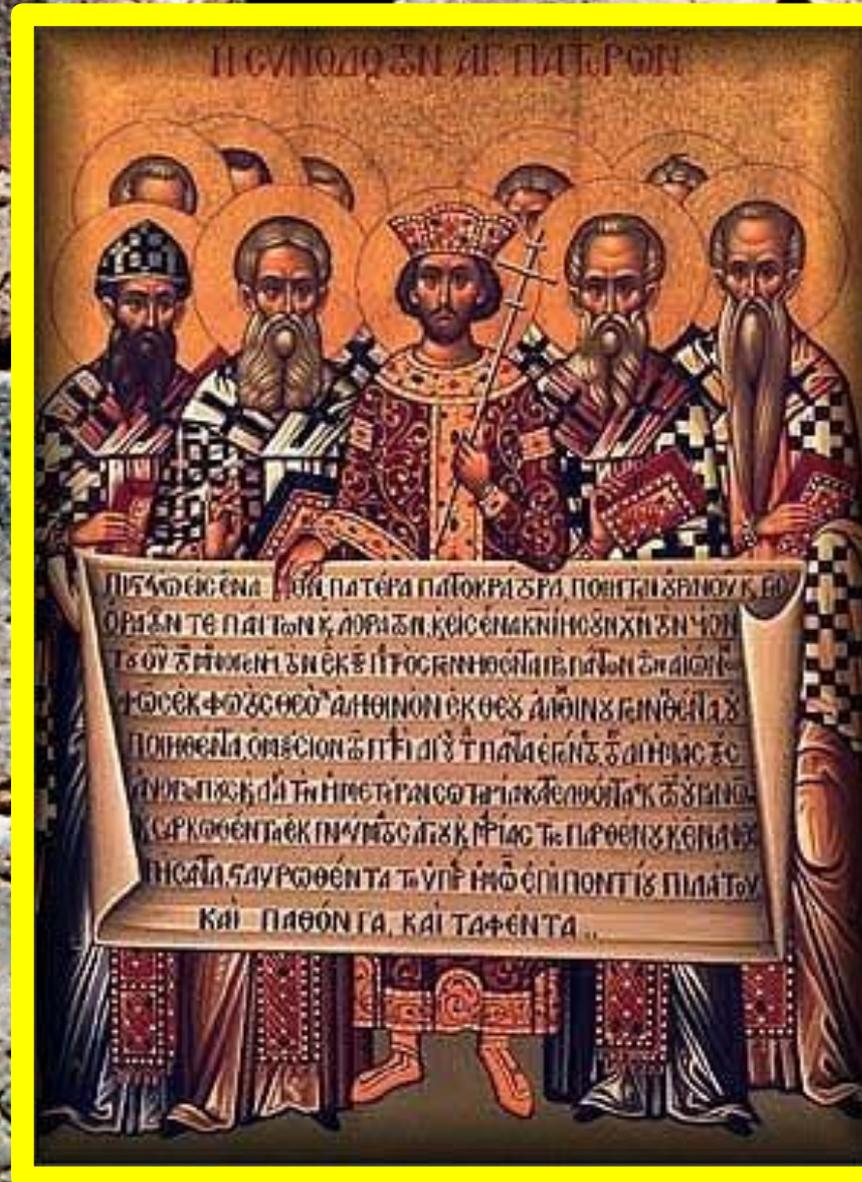


The NICENE CREED



Icon depicting the Church Fathers of the First Council of Nicaea holding the Nicene Creed

Background

The Nicene Creed is a most wonderful summary of our Christian Faith. It outlines the theological, dogmatic, and historical building blocks upon which our Faith is built. Sadly it has also been a major cause of division within the Church.

The formulation of the Nicene Creed began during the First Council of Nicea in 325AD. It was revised and expanded by the Bishops who attended the First Council of Constantinople in 381AD and it was here a final version was agreed upon.

The two main centres of the Church at this time were Rome in the West and Constantinople (*modern day Istanbul*) in the East. Sadly a split [schism] took place between these Churches in the 11th century. This was partly due to the "*filioque*" clause being added to Creed by the Western Church some time prior to this split taking place. More on this later.

Even so, to this day, the Nicene Creed, in its various forms, is revered and recited by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and a large number of the Protestant Churches.

Background, cont.

The aim of this presentation is to give an insight into the Nicene Creed, also called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, due to the fact it was formulated over the course of two Church Councils.

We will explore the Roman Catholic version of the Creed which includes the "*filioque*" clause.

You will notice from the icon at the start of this presentation that the the original creed was written in Greek. This was the language of the eastern Mediterranean where both of the Councils [Nicea + Constantinople] took place.

For the text of this presentation I have borrowed heavily, with permission, from a fine primer on the Creed written by David Bennett. This primer examines the Creed section by section.

David's work is located at - <http://www.ancient-future.net/nicene.html>. It forms part of a wonderful website - <http://www.ancient-future.net> which I would recommend to you .

Introduction

The Creed is very important in the RCIA process. The Creed is a wonderful framework around which the Period of the Catechumenate [Instruction] can be based.

During the Period of Purification and Enlightenment [Preparation] the Elect are presented with the Creed during the week after the first Scrutiny, preferably in the presence of the community i.e. in public.

After the homily a Deacon or other assisting minister says:

“Let the elect now come forward to receive the Creed from the Church.”

Before beginning the Creed the Celebrant addresses the Elect with these beautiful words: *“My dear friends, listen carefully to the words of that faith by which you will be justified. The words are few but the mysteries they contain are great. Receive them with a sincere heart and be faithful to them.”* [RCIA 147](#)

I Believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life

The Holy Spirit is also called "*Lord*". The Holy Spirit sustains our lives as Christians, illuminating us after the new birth. The original Creed of Nicaea simply ended with "*We believe in the Holy Spirit.*" The other additions were approved at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381. However, most scholars believe that the text of the full Creed dates prior to this Council, and that the Bishops simply gave their approval to a Creed already in use.



Who Proceeds from the Father and the Son

The Son is said to be “*begotten*”, while the Holy Spirit is said to “*proceed*”. Both words are used to say that the Son and Holy Spirit are in special relationships to the Father, yet also fully divine. The phrase “*and the Son*”, in Latin, **filioque**, is not in the original Creed, but is used in many Western Churches. The addition developed over time, probably as a tool against Arians in the Gothic lands. There are theological and historical justifications for the addition or exclusion of the **filioque** clause. Actually, despite current division on the matter, the issue has been pretty much theologically resolved.

The Roman Catholic Church acknowledges that the Father is the sole source within the Trinity, and admits that “*proceeds from the Father and the Son*” means “*proceeds from the Father through the Son*”. They also acknowledge that the procession through the Son is not metaphysical, but refers to a sending forth. Also, Eastern Catholics (those Eastern Churches in communion with Rome) do not say the **filioque**, and remain in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

The Eastern Orthodox Churches seem willing to allow the interpretation “*through the Son*”, because it does not destroy the monarchy of the Father within the Holy Trinity. However, the **filioque** remains a major division between Eastern and Western Christianity, mainly because the **filioque** was added to the Western version of the Nicene Creed without Eastern input. Hopefully it will be resolved in the near future, as the current environment is far less political than it was a thousand years ago.

Who With the Father and the Son he is Adored and Glorified

The Holy Spirit is God as are the Father and the Son, and as such is worthy of the worship due to the Father and Son. These additions at Constantinople in AD 381 were directed at various heresies, particularly those who denied the full divinity of the Holy Spirit. The names given to these heretics were Macedonians (named after a heretical bishop) or pneumatomachi ("*fighters against the Spirit*").



Who Has Spoken Through the Prophets

The Spirit inspired the prophets of old, and inspires the Church today. Through the Spirit the Prophets foretold the Jewish People about the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

2 Samuel 23:2

²The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.

Ezekiel 11:5

⁵Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say.....

An aerial, grayscale image of a city, likely Rome, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous buildings and streets. In the lower center, a large, oval-shaped stadium with a tiered seating area is prominent. The text is overlaid on the image in a yellow, outlined font.

The Roman Catholic
RCIA Resource Site:

<http://www.catechumen.org.uk>
email: catholic@catechumen.org.uk