

The Nicene Creed and Commentary

<p>God the Father</p>	
<p>I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,</p>	<p><i>I believe in one God . . . Almighty</i> There is one God, so we need not worry that “another God” will come and unseat God from his throne or compete for our affections. In the ancient world’s understanding of the divine, a god was never almighty, but was always battling for superior status with other gods. Our God really does have all of the power and is focused on his creation, rather than on fighting with other gods. We can call on God at any time.</p> <p><i>I believe in . . . the Father</i> When we profess that God is our Father, we acknowledge that he is the source of all life and that all of creation exists because of God. Jesus’ relationship with God was filial, a father-son relationship. In the Gospels Jesus calls God <i>Abba</i>, which, in his native language of Aramaic, means “Father.” (This is an intimate way to address God the Father, who is almighty.) Jesus actually invites us to call God “Father” ourselves! To say that God is our Father does not mean that God is literally male. “God is Spirit” (John 4:24).</p>
<p>maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.</p>	<p><i>maker of heaven and earth . . .</i> God the Father is the eternal source of all that exists. Because God created all that is, Catholics believe it is possible to encounter God’s presence in any and every situation (this is an aspect of holding a sacramental worldview), which means that there is never a situation that is too bleak or too dark for God to be found.</p> <p><i>all things visible and invisible</i> In addition, this statement makes it clear that everything God has created does not meet the criteria of “matter” to be seen or felt. There is a spiritual world where “real things happen,” even though they are unseen.</p>
<p>Jesus Christ, the Son</p>	
<p>I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,</p>	<p><i>Jesus</i> means “God saves.” <i>Christ</i> means “Anointed One.” In the ancient world, anointing with oil symbolized being chosen by God for some special mission or purpose.</p>



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the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.	Jesus Christ has a unique relationship with God the Father: he is the only, and the Eternal, Son of God. Jesus was begotten, or fathered, by the Father.
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,	Jesus and the Father relate to each other as a source of light relates to the light it shines.
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;	Because the Father “fathered” Jesus, Jesus was not made or created in such a way that he is a creature as humans and animals are.
through him all things were made.	Jesus was with the Father at the time of Creation and participated in it with the Father.
For us men and for our salvation	“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16).
he came down from heaven,	The <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)</i> states that God became incarnate for the following four reasons (see 457–460): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to save us by reconciling us with God • to share divine love with us • to show us how to be holy • to enable us to share in God’s divine nature Athanasius, a fourth-century saint, said that “the Son of God became man so that we might become God, ¹ ” or share in God’s divine life (460).
and by the Holy Spirit	Several New Testament passages may help us to understand that Jesus is truly God, who became flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not fathered by an earthly man.
was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,	As Saint Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (4:4).
and became man.	<i>Man</i> here refers to all men and women; otherwise it would say, “a man.” By assuming human nature, Jesus has shown us how to live in a way that reflects the fullness and beauty of God’s reign.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.	These events can be found in the Gospels.
He ascended into heaven	This event can be found at the end of the synoptic Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles.
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.	To sit at the right hand of the Father is to sit in the most honored seat.



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He will come again in glory	<p>“Before his Ascension Christ affirmed that the hour had not yet come for the glorious establishment of the messianic kingdom awaited by Israel² which, according to the prophets, was to bring all men the definitive order of justice, love, and peace³” (CCC, 672).</p> <p>“Before Christ’s second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers⁴” (CCC, 675).</p>
to judge the living and the dead	<p>Jesus announced the judgment of the Last Day in his preaching. As the Redeemer of the world, Jesus Christ is also “Lord of eternal life” (CCC, 679). Jesus has the full right to pass judgment on people’s hearts. People already judge themselves, however, by rejecting grace and the spirit of love.</p>
and his kingdom will have no end.	<p>Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God in his teachings and his parables. The Kingdom of God is eternal.</p>
God the Holy Spirit	
I believe in the Holy Spirit,	<p>In John’s Gospel, when Jesus knows that the hour of his Death is near, he promises his disciples that he will ask God to send them an advocate (in Greek, <i>paraclete</i>). An advocate is someone who is on our side, to help us, strengthen us, and empower us for holiness.</p> <p>Moreover, at Pentecost, he sends the Holy Spirit, now fully revealed, to be with his disciples forever—both those who were his earliest followers and we who are his followers today.</p>
the Lord, the giver of life,	<p>Because Jesus is no longer physically present here on earth, the Paraclete blesses and strengthens our efforts to live as Jesus did: bringing justice, peace, and truth to all those we meet.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit is not limited to a physical definition of life, but brings spiritual life and strength.</p>
who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,	<p>The Holy Spirit comes from the Father and Son, even though “he” is also fully God, and we worship the Holy Spirit as we do the Father and the Son.</p>
who has spoken through the prophets.	<p>The Holy Spirit worked in the hearts and minds of the prophets as he did through the early Christians and in our lives today. This statement makes a connection between the Holy Spirit’s presence in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.</p>



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Key Catholic Beliefs	
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.	<i>One</i> means that the Church is united, <i>holy</i> means it is sacred, <i>catholic</i> means it is universal, and <i>apostolic</i> means it is sent to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.
I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins	Baptism erases Original Sin and enables us to have the chance for eternal life. We can be baptized only once. A non-Catholic Christian who was baptized will not be rebaptized if he or she wants to enter the Catholic Church but will receive Confirmation and the Eucharist to fully join the Catholic community.
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead	Jesus' rising from the dead means that our physical death will not be the end but rather the beginning of life with God. We will also rise.
and the life of the world to come.	We believe that there is eternal life after this life on earth.
Amen.	<i>Amen</i> is the translation of a Hebrew word that means "so be it."

(The prayer text for the Nicene Creed is from the English translation of *The Roman Missal* c 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy in the Liturgy Corporation [ICEL] [Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011], page 522. All rights reserved. Used with permission of the ICEL.

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Endnotes Cited in Quotations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition*

1. St. Athanasius, *De inc.*, 54, 3; J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris 1857–1866) 25, 192B.
2. Cf. *Acts of the Apostles* 1:6–7.
3. Cf. *Isaiah* 11:1–9.
4. Cf. *Luke* 18:8; *Matthew* 24:12.

