



## THE APOSTLES' CREED

**I** believe in God the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.

**I** believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
and born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended into hell.  
The third day he rose from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of  
God the Father Almighty.  
From there he will come to judge  
the living and the dead.

**I** believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

# The Apostles' Creed

"Life everlasting. Amen."



## Apostles' Creed

The Church always believes as she prays. From the time of the apostles until the current age, the way the Church prays effects what she believes. Her prayer is most completely revealed within the liturgical life – the celebration of the Sacraments and other ritualistic actions. In the second century, the Church of Rome was using a baptismal formula, which had the catechumens (those to be baptized) declare their belief in the Triune God as well as the Church and the resurrection of the body via a series of questions. These questions, which find similarity to the baptismal rites of today, developed into the Apostles' Creed by the end of the seventh century.

Commentary is by Saint Thomas Aquinas. By universal consent, Thomas Aquinas is the preeminent spokesman of the Catholic tradition of reason and of divine revelation. He is one of the great teachers of the medieval Catholic Church, honored with the titles Doctor of the Church and Angelic Doctor.

### **“Life everlasting. Amen.”**

The end of all our desires, **eternal life**, is fittingly placed last among those things to be believed; and the Creed says: **“life everlasting. Amen.”** They wrote this to stand against those who believe that the soul perishes with the body. If this were indeed true, then the condition of man would be just the same as that of the beasts. This agrees with what the Psalmist says: “Man when he was in honor did not understand; he has been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them” [Ps 48:21]. The human soul, however, is in its immortality made like unto God, and in its sensuality alone is it like the brutes. He, then, who believes that the soul dies with the body withdraws it from this similarity to God and likens it to the brutes. Against such it is said: **“They knew not the secrets of God, nor hoped for the wages of justice, nor esteemed the honor of holy souls. For God created man incorruptible, and to the image of His own likeness He made him”** [Wis 2:22-23].

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### **Life everlasting**

We must first consider in this Article **what is everlasting life**. And in this we must know that in everlasting life man is united to God. God Himself is the reward and the end of all our labors: “I am your protector, and your reward exceeding great” [Gen 15:1]. This union with God consists, **firstly**, in a perfect vision: “We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face” [1 Cor 13:12]. **Secondly**, in a most fervent love; for the better one is known, the more perfectly is one loved: “The Lord said it, whose fire is in Sion, and His furnace in Jerusalem” [Is 31:9]. **Thirdly**, in the highest praise. “We shall see, we shall love, and we shall praise,” as says St. Augustine [*City of God* XX, 30]. “Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of praise” [Is 51:3].

Then, too, in **everlasting life is the full and perfect satisfying of every desire**; for there every blessed soul will have to overflowing what he hoped for and desired. The reason is that in this life no one can fulfill all his desires, nor can any created thing fully satisfy the craving of man. God only satisfies and infinitely exceeds man's desires; and, therefore, **perfect satiety is found in God alone**. As St. Augustine says: "You have made us for You, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You" [*Confessions* I, 1]. Because the blessed in the Fatherland will possess God perfectly, it is evident that their desires will be abundantly filled, and their glory will exceed their hopes. The Lord has said: "Enter into the joy of the Lord" [Mt 25:21]. And as St. Augustine says: "Complete joy will not enter into those who rejoice, but all those who rejoice will enter into joy." "I shall be satisfied when your glory shall appear" [Ps 16:15]. And again: "Who satisfies your desire with good things" [Ps 102:5].

**Whatever is delightful will be there in abundant fullness**. Thus, if pleasures are desired, there will be the highest and most perfect pleasure, for it derives from the highest good, namely, God: "Then shall you abound in delights in the Almighty" [Job 22:26]. "At the right hand are delights even to the end" [Ps 15:10]. Likewise, if honors are desired, there too will be all honor. Men wish particularly to be kings, if they be laymen; and to be bishops, if they be clerics. Both these honors will be there: "And has made us a kingdom and priests" [Rev 5:10]. "Behold how they are numbered among the children of God" [Wis 5:5]. If knowledge is desired, it will be there most perfectly, because we shall possess in the life everlasting knowledge of all the natures of things and all truth, and whatever we desire we shall know. And whatever we desire to possess, that we shall have, even life eternal: "Now, all good things come to me together with her" [Wis 7:11]. "To the just their desire shall be given" [Prov 10:24].

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Again, **most perfect security is there**. In this world there is no perfect security; for in so far as one has many things, and the higher one's position, the more one has to fear and the more one wants. But in the life everlasting there is no anxiety, no labor, no fear.

"And My people shall sit in the beauty of peace" [Is 32:10], and "shall enjoy abundance, without fear of evils" [Prov 1:33].

Finally, **in heaven there will be the happy society of all the blessed, and this society will be especially delightful**. Since each one will possess all good together with the blessed, and they will love one another as themselves, and they will rejoice in the others' good as their own. It will also happen that, as the pleasure and enjoyment of one increases, so will it be for all: "The dwelling in you is as it were of all rejoicing" [Ps 86:7 Vulgate].

## Lot of the wicked

The perfect will enjoy all this in the life everlasting, and much more that surpasses description. But **the wicked**, on the other hand, **will be in eternal death suffering pain and punishment as great as will be the happiness and glory of the good**. The punishment of the damned will be increased, **firstly**, by their separation from God and from all good. This is the pain of loss which corresponds to aversion, and is a greater punishment than that of sense: "And the unprofitable servant, cast out into the exterior darkness" [Mt 25:30]. The wicked in this life have interior darkness, namely sin; but then they shall also have exterior darkness.

**Secondly**, the damned shall suffer from remorse of conscience: "I will rebuke you, and set the charge before you" [Ps 49:21]. "Groaning for anguish of spirit" [Wis 5:3]. Nevertheless, their repentance and groaning will be of no avail, because it rises not from hatred of evil, but from fear and the enormity of their punishments.

**Thirdly**, there is the great pain of sense. It is the fire of hell which tortures the soul and the body; and this, as the Saints tell us, is the sharpest of all punishments. They shall be ever dying, and yet never die; **hence it is called eternal death**, for as dying is the bitterest of pains, such will be the lot of those in hell: "They are laid in the underworld like sheep; death shall feed upon them" [Ps 48:15].

**Fourthly**, there is the despair of their salvation. If some hope of delivery from their punishments would be given them, their punishment would be somewhat lessened; but since all hope is withdrawn from them, their sufferings are made most intense: "Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched. [Is 46:24].

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We thus see the difference between doing good and doing evil. **Good works lead to life, evil drags us to death**. For this reason, men ought frequently to recall these things to mind, since they will incite one to do good and withdraw one from evil. **Therefore, very significantly, at the end of the Creed is placed "life everlasting,"** so that it would be more and more deeply impressed on the memory. To this life everlasting may the Lord Jesus Christ, blessed God for ever, bring us! Amen.

Final Commentary