



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

"I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church."



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.

“I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church.”

We see that in a man there are one soul and one body; and of his body there are many members. So also the Catholic Church is one body and has different members. The soul which animates this body is the Holy Spirit. Hence, after confessing our faith in the Holy Spirit, we are bid to believe in the Holy Catholic Church. Thus, in the Symbol it is said, **“the Holy Catholic Church.”**

It must be known that **“church” is the same as assembly**. So, the Holy Church is the same as **the assembly of the faithful**, and every Christian is a member of this Church, of which it is written: “Draw near to Me, you unlearned; and gather yourselves together into the house of discipline” [Sir 51:31].

The Church has four essential conditions, in that she is one, holy, catholic, and strong and firm.

One

Of the **first**, it must be known that **the Church is one**. Although various heretics have founded various sects, they do not belong to the Church, since they are but so many divisions. Of her it is said: “One is My dove; My perfect one is but one” [Sg 6:8]. The **unity of the Church arises from three sources:**

(1) the unity of faith. All Christians who are of the body of the Church believe the same doctrine. “I beseech you... that you all speak the same thing and that there be no schisms among you” [1 Cor 1:10]. And: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” [Eph 4:5];

(2) the unity of hope. All are strengthened in one hope of arriving at eternal life. Hence, the Apostle says: “One body and one Spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling” [Eph 4:4];

(3) the unity of charity. All are joined together in the love of God, and to each other in mutual love: “And the glory which You hast given Me, I have given them; that they may be one, as We also are one” [Jn 17:22]. It is clear that this is a true love when the members are solicitous for one another and sympathetic towards each other: “We should in every way grow up in Him who is the head, Christ. From whom the whole body, being joined and fit together, by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and builds itself up in charity” [Eph 4:15-16]. This is because each one ought to make use of the grace God grants him, and be of service to his neighbor. **No one ought to be indifferent to the Church, or allow himself to be cut off and expelled from it; for there is but one Church in which men are saved, just as outside of the ark of Noah no one could be saved.**

Holy

Concerning the second mark, **holiness**, it must be known that there is indeed another assembly, but it consists of the wicked: “I hate the assembly of the wicked” [Ps 25:5]. But such a one is evil; the Church of Christ, however, is holy: “For the temple of God is holy, which you are” [1 Cor 3:17]. Hence, it is said: “the Holy Church.”

The faithful of this Church are made holy because of four things: **(1)** Just as a church is cleansed materially when it is consecrated, so also the faithful are washed in **the blood of Christ**: “Jesus Christ... who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood” [Rev 1:5]. And: “That He might sanctify the people by his blood, he suffered outside the gate” [Hb 13:12]. **(2)** Just as there is the anointing of the church, so also **the faithful are anointed with a spiritual unction in order to be sanctified**. Otherwise they would not be Christians, for Christ is the same as Anointed. **This anointing is the grace of the Holy Spirit**: “He who confirms us with you in Christ and who has anointed us, is God” [2 Cor 1:21]. And: “You are sanctified... in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” [1 Cor 6:11]. **(3) The faithful are made holy because of the Trinity who dwells in the Church**; for wherever God dwells, that place is holy. “The place where you stand is holy” [Joshua 5:16]. And: “Holiness befits your house, O Lord” [Ps 92:5]. **(4) Lastly, the faithful are sanctified because God is invoked in the Church**: “But You, Lord, are among us, and your name is called upon by us; forsake us not” [Jer 14:9]. Let us, therefore, beware, seeing that we are thus sanctified, lest by sin we defile our soul which is the temple of God: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? But if any man violates the temple of God, him shall God destroy” [1 Cor 3:16-17].

Catholic

The Church is Catholic, that is, universal. Firstly, it is universal in place, because it is worldwide. This is contrary to the error of the Donatists. For the Church is a congregation of the faithful; and since the faithful are in every part of the world, so also is the Church: “Your faith is spoken of in the whole world” [Rm 1:8]. And also: “Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature” [Mk 16:15]. Long ago, indeed, God was known only in Judea; now, however, He is known throughout the entire world. The Church **has three parts: one is on earth, one is in heaven, and one is in purgatory. Secondly, the Church is universal in regard to all the conditions of mankind;** for no exceptions are made, neither master nor servant, neither man nor woman: “Neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female” [Gal 3:28]. **Thirdly, it is universal in time.** Some have said that the Church will exist only up to a certain time. But this is false, for the Church began to exist in the time of Abel and will endure up to the end of the world: “Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world” [Mt 28:20]. Moreover, even after the end of the world, it will continue to exist in heaven.

Apostolic

The Church is firm. A house is said **to be firm if it has a solid foundation. The principal foundation of the Church is Christ:** “For other foundation no men can lay but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus” [1 Cor 3:11]. **The secondary foundation, however, is the Apostles and their teaching.** Therefore, the Church is firm. It is said in the Apocalypse that the city has “twelve foundations,” and therein were “written the names of the twelve Apostles” [Rev 21:14]. From this **the Church is called Apostolic.** Likewise, **to indicate this firmness of the Church St. Peter is called the crowning head.**

The **firmness of a house is evident if, when it is violently struck, it does not fall.** The Church similarly **can never be destroyed, neither by persecution nor by error.** Indeed, the Church grew during the persecutions, and both those who persecuted her and those against whom she threatened completely failed: “And whoever falls upon this stone, shall be broken; but on whomever it falls, it shall grind him to powder” [Mt 21:44]. As regards errors, indeed, **the more errors arise, the more surely truth is made to appear:** “Men corrupt in mind, reprobate in faith; but they shall proceed no further” [2 Tim 3:8].

Nor shall the Church be destroyed by the temptations of the demons. For she is like a tower towards which all flee who war against the devil: “The name of the Lord is a strong tower” [Prov 18:10]. The devil, therefore, is chiefly intent on destroying the Church, but he will not succeed, for the Lord has said: “The gates of the underworld shall not prevail against it” [Mt 16:18].

This is as if He said: “They shall make war against you, but they shall not overcome you.” **And thus it is that only the Church of Peter (to whom it was given to evangelize Italy when the disciples were sent to preach) was always firm in faith.** On the contrary, **in other parts of the world there is either no faith at all or faith mixed with many errors. The Church of Peter flourishes in faith and is free from error.** This, however, is not to be wondered at, for the Lord has said to Peter: “But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not; and thou, being once converted, confirm your brethren” [Lk 22:32].

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