



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

"The Communion of Saints,
the Forgiveness of Sins."



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.

“The Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of Sins.”

As in our natural body the operation of one member works for the good of the entire body, so also is it with a spiritual body, such as is the Church. Because all the faithful are one body, the good of one member is communicated to another: “And every one members, one of another” [Rm 12:5]. So, among the points of faith which the Apostles have handed down is that there is a common sharing of good in the Church. This is expressed in the words, “the Communion of Saints”. Among the various members of the Church, the principal member is Christ, because He is the Head: “He made Him head over all the Church, which is His body” [Eph 1:22]. Christ communicates His good, just as the power of the head is communicated to all the members.

This communication takes place through **the Sacraments of the Church** in which operate **the merits of the passion of Christ**, which in turn operates for **the conferring of grace unto the remission of sins. These Sacraments of the Church are seven in number.**

“**Baptism.**”—The first is Baptism which is **a certain spiritual regeneration**. Just as there can be no physical life unless man is first born in the flesh, so spiritual life or grace cannot be had unless man is spiritually reborn. This rebirth is effected through Baptism: “Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” [Jn 3:5]. It must be known that, just as a man can be born but once, so only once is he baptized. Hence, the holy Fathers put into the Nicene Creed: “**I confess one baptism.**” The power of Baptism consists in this, **that it cleanses from all sins as regards both their guilt and their punishment. For this reason no penance is imposed** on those who are baptized, no matter to what extent they had been sinners. Moreover, if they should die immediately after Baptism, they would

without delay go to heaven. Another result is that, although only priests “ex officio” may baptize, yet any one may baptize in case of necessity, provided that the proper form of Baptism is used. This is: **“I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”** This Sacrament receives **its power from the passion of Christ.** “All we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in His death” [Rm 6:3]. Accordingly there is a threefold immersion in water after the three days in which Christ was in the sepulcher.

“Confirmation.”—The second Sacrament is Confirmation. Just as they who are physically born need certain powers to act, **so those who are reborn spiritually must have the strength of the Holy Spirit** which is imparted to them in this Sacrament. In order that they might become strong, the Apostles received the Holy Spirit after the Ascension of Christ: “Stay you in the city till you be endowed with power from on high” [Lk 24:49]. This power is given in the Sacrament of Confirmation. They, therefore, who have the care of children should be very careful to see that they be confirmed, because great grace is conferred in Confirmation. **He who is confirmed will, when he dies, enjoy greater glory than one not confirmed, because greater grace will be his.**

“Holy Eucharist.”—**The Eucharist is the third Sacrament.** In the physical life, after man is born and acquires powers, he needs food to sustain and strengthen him. Likewise in the spiritual life, after being fortified, he has need of spiritual food; **this is the Body of Christ:** “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you” [Jn 6:54]. According to the prescribed law of the Church, therefore, every Christian must at least **once a year receive the Body of Christ,** and in a worthy manner and with a clean conscience: “For he who eats and drinks unworthily [that is, by being conscious of un-confessed mortal sin on his soul, or with no intent to abstain from it] eats and drinks judgment to himself” [1 Cor 11:29].

“Penance.”—**The fourth Sacrament is Penance.** In the physical life, one who is sick and does not have recourse to medicine, dies; **so in the spiritual order, one becomes ill because of sin.** Thus, medicine is necessary for recovery of health; and this is the grace which is conferred in the Sacrament of Penance: “Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases” [Ps 102:3]. Three things must be present in the Sacrament of Penance: **contrition,** which is sorrow for sin together with a resolution not to sin again; **confession of sins,** as far as possible entire; and **satisfaction which is accomplished by good works.**

“Extreme Unction.”—Extreme Unction is the fifth Sacrament. In this life there are many things which prevent one from a perfect purification from one’s sins. But **since no one can enter into eternal life until he is well cleansed, there is need of another Sacrament which will purify man of his sins, and both free him from sickness and prepare him for entry into the heavenly kingdom.** This is the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. That this Sacrament does not always restore health to the body is due to this, that perhaps to live is not to the advantage of the soul’s salvation. “Is any man sick amongst you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man. And the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him” [James 5:14-15]. **It is now clear that the fullness of life is had from these five Sacraments.**

“Holy Orders.”—It is necessary that these **Sacraments be administered by chosen ministers.** Therefore, **the Sacrament of Orders is necessary,** by whose powers these Sacraments are dispensed. Nor need one note the life of such ministers, if here and there one fail in his office, but remember the virtue of Christ through whose merits the Sacraments have their efficacy, and in whose Name the ministers are but dispensers: “Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God” [1 Cor 4:1]. This then is the sixth Sacrament, namely, Orders.

“Matrimony.”—The seventh Sacrament is Matrimony, and in it men, if they live uprightly, are saved; and thereby they are enabled to live without mortal sin. Sometimes the partners in marriage fall into venial sin, when their concupiscence does not extend beyond the rights of matrimony; but if they do go beyond such rights, they sin mortally.

By these seven Sacraments we receive the remission of sins, and so in the Creed there follows immediately: **“the forgiveness of sins.” The power was given to the Apostles to forgive sins.** We must believe that the ministers of the Church receive this power from the Apostles; and the Apostles received it from Christ; and thus the priests have the power of binding and loosing. Moreover, we believe that there is the full power of forgiving sins in the Church, although it operates from the highest to the lowest, i.e., from the Pope down through the prelates.

We must also know that not only the efficacy of the Passion of Christ is communicated to us, **but also the merits of His life;** and, moreover, **all the good that all the Saints have done** is communicated to all who are in the state of grace, because all are one: “I am a partaker of all those who fear You” [Ps 118:63]. Therefore, he who lives in charity participates in all the good that is done in the entire world; but more specially does he benefit for whom some good work is done; since one man certainly can satisfy for another. Thus, through this communion we receive two benefits. **One** is that the merits of Christ are communicated to all; **the other is** that the good of one is communicated to another. Those who are excommunicated, however, because they are cut off from the Church, forfeit their part of all the good that is done, and this is a far greater loss than being bereft of all material things.

There is a danger lest the devil impede this spiritual help in order to tempt one; and when one is thus cut off, the devil can easily overcome him. Thus it was in the primitive Church that, when one was excommunicated, the devil even physically attacked him.

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