

TRINITY SUNDAY:

June 4, 2023

Today I would like to take you back to the fourth century. The Church, Rome, Greece were all in a different world than what we live in today. In 313 the Edict of Milan allowed the public acceptance of Christians. Then the interior disagreements of the Christian community came to the fore. Do you think polarization in the church is new in today's Church? If you lived back then in Rome or Constantinople, the hubs of the ancient world, you would hear arguing and even fights in the streets. I am for Arius! I am for Athanasius!

In order to promote harmony and peace among Christians, Emperor Constantine called what we know as the First Ecumenical Council held in the city of Nicaea, now part of Turkey, in 325. The Council tackled the disputed questions that some Christians asked. Is Christ really God or a prime creature of God? Is the Holy Spirit God? Now there was already a creed, called the Apostles Creed, which we will proclaim in a few minutes. But the Nicæan Creed was to be more detailed and elaborate. It was further edited in the Council of Constantinople in 381. It has remained the basic creed of all Christians, Catholic and Protestants alike, for 1700 years.

This is what we proclaim in the Nicæan Creed:

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

God the Creator. That is clear enough.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.

Then there is a further elaboration of this Lord becoming human, suffering, dying and rising from the dead. There is nothing said about his life, his ministry, his teachings, his relationship with us. Unfortunately this has led to an over-emphasis on Christ being God and not understood as a fellow human.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who has spoken through the prophets.

All of this was to clarify arguments about the nature of the Godhead. It was enunciated in Greek patterns of thought. One God but three; three what? "Subsistent relations" is what the creed actually said. It was translated into Latin as "person" which has only led to confusion.

The Creed is a skeleton of our faith. There is no flesh and blood to it. It has its place in clarifying basic beliefs but doesn't really help our faith.

A few years ago the Masai tribe in Africa attempted a new creed. It goes this way:

We believe in the one High God, who out of love created the beautiful world and everything good in it. He created humans and wanted them to be happy in the world. God loves the world and every nation and tribe on the earth. We have known this High God in darkness, and now we know him in the light. God promised in the book of his word, the Bible, that he would save the world and all the nations and tribes.

We believe that God made good his promise by sending his son, Jesus Christ, a human in the flesh, a Jew by tribe, born poor in a little village, who left his home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and humans, showing that the meaning of religion is love. He was rejected by his people, tortured and nailed hands and feet to a cross, and died. He lay buried in the grave, but the hyenas did not touch him, and on the third day, he rose from the grave. He ascended to the skies. He is the Lord.

We believe that all our sins are forgiven through him. All who have faith in him must be sorry for their sins, be baptized in the Holy Spirit of God, live the rules of love and share the bread together in love, to announce the good news to others until Jesus comes again. We are waiting for him. He is alive. He lives. This we believe. Amen.

This Creed has a little more flesh to it and is a step in the right direction. It is, however, very weak on the Holy Spirit.

Let me tell you what I believe about the Holy Trinity. We should start with the Holy Spirit, not the Father. The Holy Spirit is God, imminent in us, an energy, a life, a breath that touches and moves us.

If we are alert to this Spirit, then we are led to the Son who we find is our brother, our teacher, our food in the Eucharist, our friend, and also our God. And, we are led to the Creator God whom Jesus called Abba.

Beyond any creeds, our God is a great Mystery. No images can really tell us who or what this God is. Our God fills the cosmos including every speck that the Webb Telescope can uncover. God is still creating. God is still calling us to be one with this mystery. God is unapproachable light and unconditional love. We have tried to make God in our image and tried to control God by our wants.

God has made us in God's image. We are relational as God is. We are one with all that is as God is. The more we are alert to who this God really is, the more deeply will we know ourselves and the meaning of our lives. God is present in the natural world and our openness to creation is our openness to God.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. Amen

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