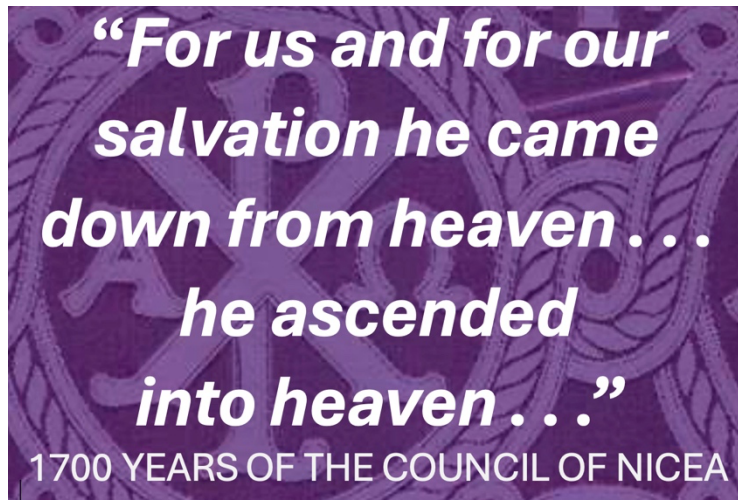


Week 4 – The Nicene Creed



Wednesday 26 March to Tuesday 1 April 2025

During Lent may we try to pray the Nicene Creed every day.

Hymn (Track 1)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-XBSluQD68&list=PL39YlvN9EfJ05wfONq0XoZfixKSD4_W7y&index=5

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty!
early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy! – merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!
John Bacchus Dykes, Reginald Heber – Public Domain*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Trisagion

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy on us.**

Opening Prayer

Holy God, faithful and unchanging:
during this season of Lent,
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
that we may truly worship you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

*Father . . . Jesus . . . Spirit we love You,
we worship and adore You:
glorify Your name in all the earth.
Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,
glorify Your name in all the earth.*

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Scripture Reading

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
6 who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
8 he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
9 Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Silence may be kept.

Reflection

***“For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.***

***For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.***

***On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven***

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

***He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.”***

The second half of section two of the Nicene Creed focuses on the four historical events in Jesus' earthly life – his incarnation (earthly birth), death, resurrection and ascension. Each event is dealt with in a single sentence.

The four sentences say everything while leaving almost everything out. They do not mention the thousands of people whom Jesus met, the convoy of sick people brought from the neighbourhood to be placed before him, the possessed who were freed, the sinners forgiven, the lepers cured, the thief who was promised paradise.

No apostle is named in any of the four sentences, only Mary who brought Jesus to birth, and Pontius Pilate who ordered his death. All the parables and miracles, even the Sermon on the Mount, are left out. The Creed implies much but says very little, however, that little embraces everything – it says all we need to know.

The first sentence begins, *“For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven.”* The heart of the Nicene Creed, and the heart of our faith, is salvation. Salvation means deliverance, healing and rescue. It relates to the past (what Jesus has done), the present (what the Holy Spirit is doing) and the future (what the Father will do). The Creed gives no explanation of ‘how,’ it simply states that Jesus is *“our salvation.”*

The sentence goes on to say, *“was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.”* The word “incarnate” means *‘to take on flesh.’* This time there is just a little more of the ‘how.’ Jesus, the incarnate Son, was born of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit. The Creed expresses the belief that the Father of her son at his birth in time is the same as the one whose Son is from all eternity.

The last phrase of the first sentences simply says, *“and was made man.”* The word *“man”* refers to Jesus becoming truly human. In Jesus, God comes down to earth, lives among us, and shares in our humanity.

In our Scripture Reading, (which is part of an early Christian hymn), we hear how Jesus *“emptied himself”* to be one with us, and in his humanity, he submits to the will of the Holy Spirit and the will of the Father. In his one person there are two natures – God and humanity. One writer has expressed it in these words, *“In him, life and death, heaven and earth, humanity and God are united.”*

The start of the second sentence goes straight to Jesus' death, *“For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.”* There is no mention of his ministry. This is important and theologically right. Jesus' death, and all that surrounds it, is what ultimately matters. It is his death that concludes his whole earthly ministry.

A large proportion of all the Gospels focuses on Jesus' death and the lead up to it. It is not until his death and rising again that his words and actions make sense.

Jesus not only came down from heaven for our sake, but also, for our sake he died. His death is at the heart of our faith, and his burial proved his death.

Pontius Pilate is mentioned in the Creed not because the Church regards him as saintly, but because it follows the tradition of dating an event by what ruler was in place at the time. By naming Pilate, the Creed grounds Jesus' life in factual history.

The third sentence begins, *"On the third day he rose again"* For our sake Jesus died; for our sake he rose again. The Creed includes the resurrection as an historical fact. This matters. It was the fact that the disciples had met the risen Jesus that transformed them. It showed Jesus' power over death.

The event was not just an historical fact, it was *"in accordance with the Scriptures."* This refers to the events being the fulfilment of what the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) had been saying through the prophets. (At the time of the Nicene Creed the Church had not yet agreed the 'official list' or 'canon' of the books of the Bible).

The third sentence goes on to say, that, *"he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father."* In the Creed, the ascension is given equal weight to the cross and resurrection. Jesus came from eternity and returned to eternity. The ascension reinforces Jesus' divine nature, his pre-existence at the Father's right hand and his ongoing role and significance as Lord. Jesus is restored to his place in the eternal realm, but he retains his humanity, as well as divinity, as part of his being. Seated at the right of the Father, he is one with the Father, interceding for us.

The fourth and final sentence proclaims, *"He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, . . ."* The Council of Nicaea felt this was an important enough element of faith to include it. Judgement is part of Christianity's answer to the problem of sin and evil. The Creed says nothing about hell, nothing about eternal punishment. As judge, Jesus is not distant or uncaring, because he knows what it means to be human.

The final sentence ends, *"and his kingdom will have no end."* In Christian thought, Jesus will return to bring an end to history as we know it and his perfect rule will begin and go on for the rest of eternity.

The second section of the Nicene Creed reminds us that Jesus – the one who lived, died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven – is also the Christ, of one Being with the Father. This Christ is timeless and limitless. He has lived and loved on earth, and his work on earth continues through his Church, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Contemplation / Discussion

What does Jesus save us from? What does Jesus save us for?

What do you think of Mary and of her role in salvation?

How do you feel about Pontius Pilate being immortalized in the Creed?

Why the cross?

Could God have achieved salvation for us in another way?

Why is the fact that Jesus died important?

Nicene Creed (Track 3)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0RhSjQXQGw>

If the audio version is not used, the creed is said by omitting the words in brackets.

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
(by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary,)
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven**

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

(We believe in one Holy Spirit,)

the Lord, the giver of life,

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

(We believe in one holy universal and apostolic Church.)

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.**

Amen.

(We believe in a Triune God, the Father, and the Son, Holy Spirit, Three in One. Amen).

Litany

Lord God, Holy Mystery,
you have shown your great love toward us
by sending your Son into the world to be a light where there is darkness.
We thank you, Lord, because you have rescued us from darkness
by your redeeming action and have made us welcome in your kingdom.
Hear us, gracious Lord and God.

Lord God, Jesus Christ,
you did not consider equality with God something to cling to,
but emptied yourself, taking the form of a humble servant.
You became obedient to God to the point of death on a cross.
Your love compels us to live for you through compassion for others.
Hear us, gracious Lord and God.

Lord God, Holy Spirit,
you descended upon Jesus, anointing him to bring good news to the poor,
to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free those who are oppressed;
and to proclaim the time of the Lord's favour.
Hear us, gracious Lord and God.

From all doubt
From all self-righteousness,
From every form of neglect,
From ingratitude and selfishness,
From lukewarmness,
From all indifference to the life you lived for us:
Deliver us, gracious Lord and God.

By your human yet divine presence,
By your willing obedience,
By your humility, meekness, and patience,
By your faithfulness in your earthly calling,
By your fasting and temptation,
By your perfect life before God and humanity:
Bless and comfort us, gracious Lord and God.

By your sacred wounds and precious blood,
By your innocent suffering and dying,
By your rest in the grave,
By your glorious resurrection and ascension:
Bless us and save us Christ Jesus, our Redeemer.

Special prayers and intercessions may be offered here.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Closing Prayer

Lord our God,
glorifying your Son Jesus,
you have freed us from death.
Through his resurrection,
awaken our slumbering hearts,
enlighten all who seek you
and make the morning star shine upon us,
Jesus Christ, the Living One,
who is Lord for ever and ever.
Amen.

Doxology (Track 4)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpBieJ9fE_c

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

Thomas Ken – Public Domain

The Grace

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore.
Amen.**

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