

A Word about the Creeds of the Christian Church

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The creeds of the Christian faith tradition have provided comfort, encouragement, challenge, and inspiration to countless Christian sojourners through the centuries. More than high-sounding theological declarations, more significant than momentary utterances of allegiance, the various creeds of the Church continue to serve as founts of wisdom and insight into the perplexities of human life and its ultimate meaning. Christians may find in the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed, for example, great resources for their own edification and education when faced with death. Pastors, educators, and lay leaders alike can ponder the creeds fully — in the pulpit, at times of communal worship, or within the sacred confines of private devotional prayer — and find clarifying mysteries and divine comforts in them.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again 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 Nicene Creed

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:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from 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, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one, holy, catholic, 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.

A Simple Exercise

One of the earliest creeds of the Christian Church, in any of its manifestations, was the simple belief statement, "Jesus is Lord." Worship leaders may choose to offer this simple affirmation of faith as a focus during times of prayer. Or, for another example, pastors and liturgists might offer this simple creed as the ultimate expression of faith for both those who will soon encounter death as a real physical experience and those who will remain to endure grief and pain after the death of their loved one. Here are some instructive questions to ask during a time of prayer about the issues of death and dying:

- How is the simple affirmation of belief "Jesus is Lord" applicable in the situation of a loved one who is dying?
- How is Jesus Lord over our deaths and our grieving?
- How is Jesus Lord over the preparations we make in anticipations of our own dyings?