

The Apostles' Creed



Welcome

to **OUR 65th VIRTUAL GSP class!**

Today we
talk about

the Apostles' Creed



What Is
The
Apostles'
Creed ?

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PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

Gracious Father,
we pray for thy holy Catholic Church.

Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace.

Where it is corrupt, purify it;
where it is in error, direct it;
where in any thing it is amiss, reform it.

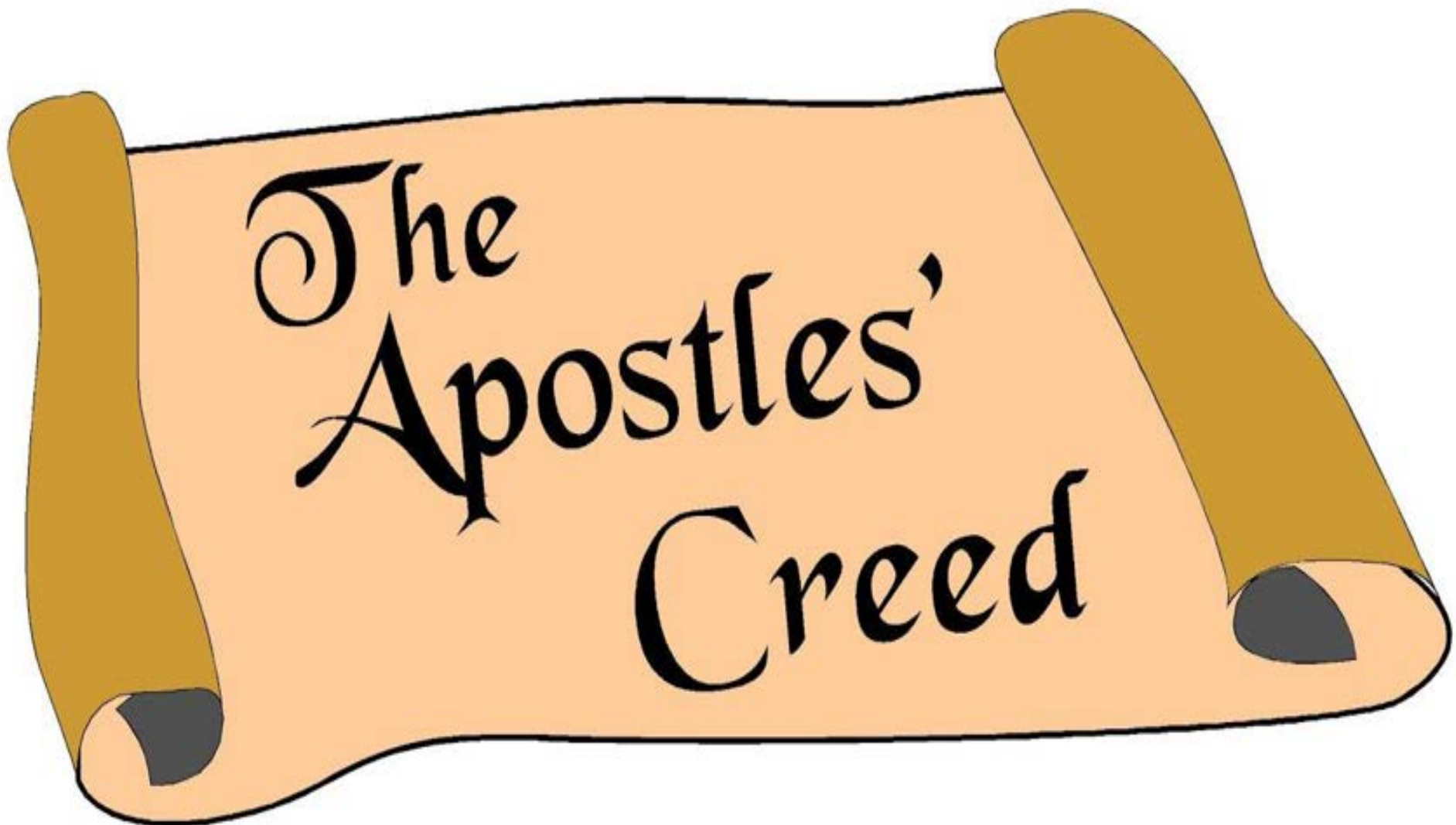
Where it is right, strengthen it;
where it is in want, provide for it;
where it is divided, reunite it;

for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior.

Amen.



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



The
Apostles'
Creed

WHAT IS THE APOSTLES' CREED?

The **Apostles' Creed** is the oldest creed in continuous use in the Church. It is not a complete summary of Christian doctrine but an expansion of the simple confession of faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit used since apostolic times in the rite of Holy Baptism. Every statement in the Creed is based on statements in the New Testament. The most contested line is “[Jesus] descended into hell.” The basis for this is 1 Peter 3:19, stating that Jesus “went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison.” This assumes a reference to hell and that Jesus went there between his death and his resurrection. A common confusion is found in the line that states, “I believe in . . . the holy catholic church.” In this creed the word *catholic* means “general, universal, concerning the whole” and does not refer exclusively to the Roman Catholic Church. To avoid the confusion some churches say “holy Christian church.”

It is shorter than the full Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed adopted in 381, but it is still explicitly Trinitarian in structure, with sections affirming belief in the Three Persons. It does not address some Christological issues defined in the Nicene Creed.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF CREEDS?

Christianity has an especially outspoken affinity for creeds. In the *Making of the Creeds* **Frances Young** (born 1939), Methodist minister and Birmingham professor, notes that “Christianity is the only major religion to set such store by creeds and doctrines.” While other religions have their sacred scriptures, prayers, religious practices, art forms, or codes of ethics, Christianity is unique in its high valuation of doctrinal truth. It places a strong emphasis on orthodoxy as opposed to heresy—that is, right belief or praise (*orthodoxa*) as opposed to “personal choice” (“heresy” coming from a Greek word for “choice” or “preference”).



WHAT DOES THE CATECHISM SAY ABOUT THE APOSTLES' CREED?

Q Where may we find what Christians believe about
. Christ?

A What Christians believe about Christ is found in the
. Scriptures and summed up in the creeds.

Q What are the creeds?
.

A The creeds are statements of our basic beliefs about God.

Q How many creeds does this Church use in its worship?
.

A This Church uses two creeds: The Apostles' Creed and the
. Nicene Creed.

Q
. What is the Apostles' Creed?

A The Apostles' Creed is the ancient creed of Baptism; it is
. used in the Church's daily worship to recall our
Baptismal Covenant.

WHAT DO THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION SAY ABOUT THE APOSTLES' CREED?

Articles of Religion

*As established by the Bishops, the Clergy, and the Laity
of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States
of America, in Convention, on the twelfth
day of September, in the Year of our Lord, 1801.*

VIII. Of the Creeds.

The Nicene Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.

[The Episcopal Church never specifically adopted these Articles as a doctrinal standard, nor did it ever require in any way subscription to the Articles.]

WHAT DOES THE 1928 BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER SAY IN THE OFFICES OF INSTRUCTION ABOUT THE APOSTLES' CREED?

Question.

What do you chiefly learn in these Articles of your Belief?

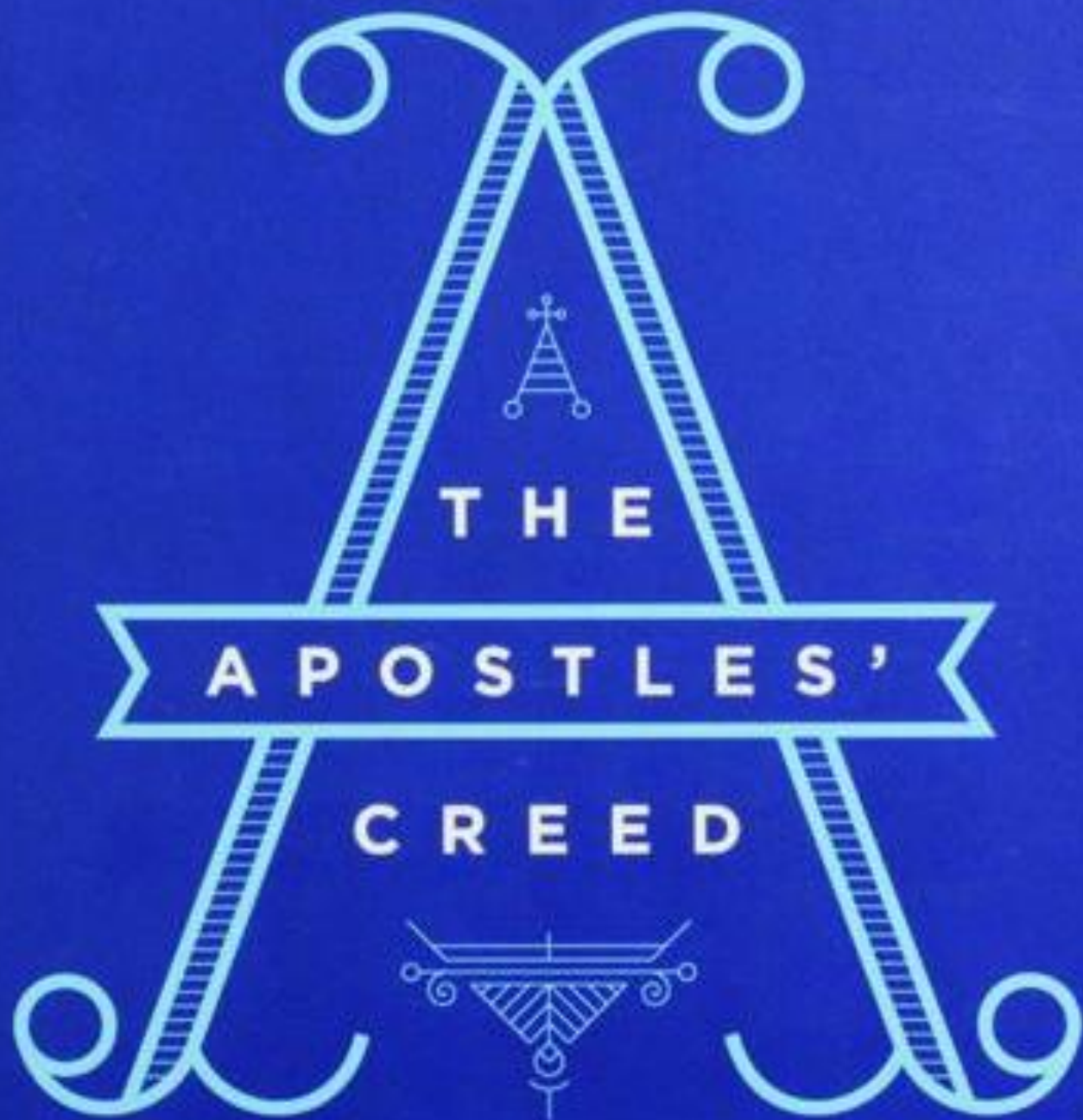
Answer.

First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world.

Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind.

Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the people of God.

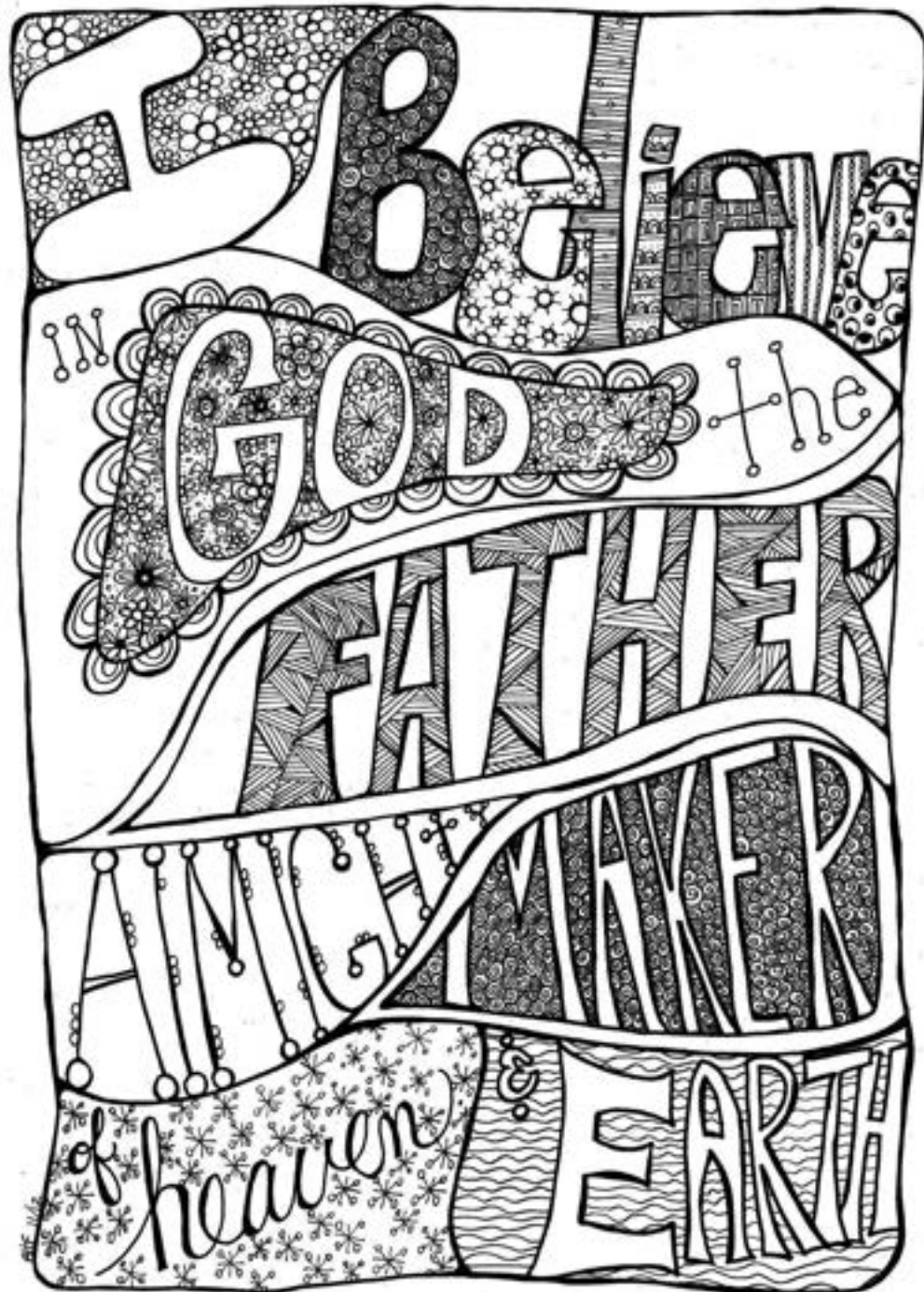
And this Holy Trinity, One God, I praise and magnify



THE

APOSTLES'

CREED



WHAT ARE THE PRESENT TEXTS OF THE APOSTLES' CREED?

RITE I

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand
of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come
to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

RITE II

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.

WHAT ARE THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH'S FOUNDATIONAL CREEDS?

Creeds are statements of basic beliefs about God. The term comes from the Latin *credo*, meaning “I believe and trust.”

The Episcopal Church has **two foundational creeds** that are used during worship: the **Apostles' Creed** used at Holy Baptism and daily worship and the Nicene Creed used at Holy Communion. These creeds help anchor the beliefs of people who might otherwise struggle with questions about God, the Church, and their own faith.

These two creeds were developed in the early centuries of the Church, have remained important throughout the history of the Church, and are regularly used in our worship today.

In reciting and affirming these creeds, Episcopalians join other Christians across the world and throughout the ages in affirming their faith in the one God who created, redeemed, and sanctifies humans.

HOW IS THE APOSTLES' CREED USED IN ANGLICAN SERVICES?

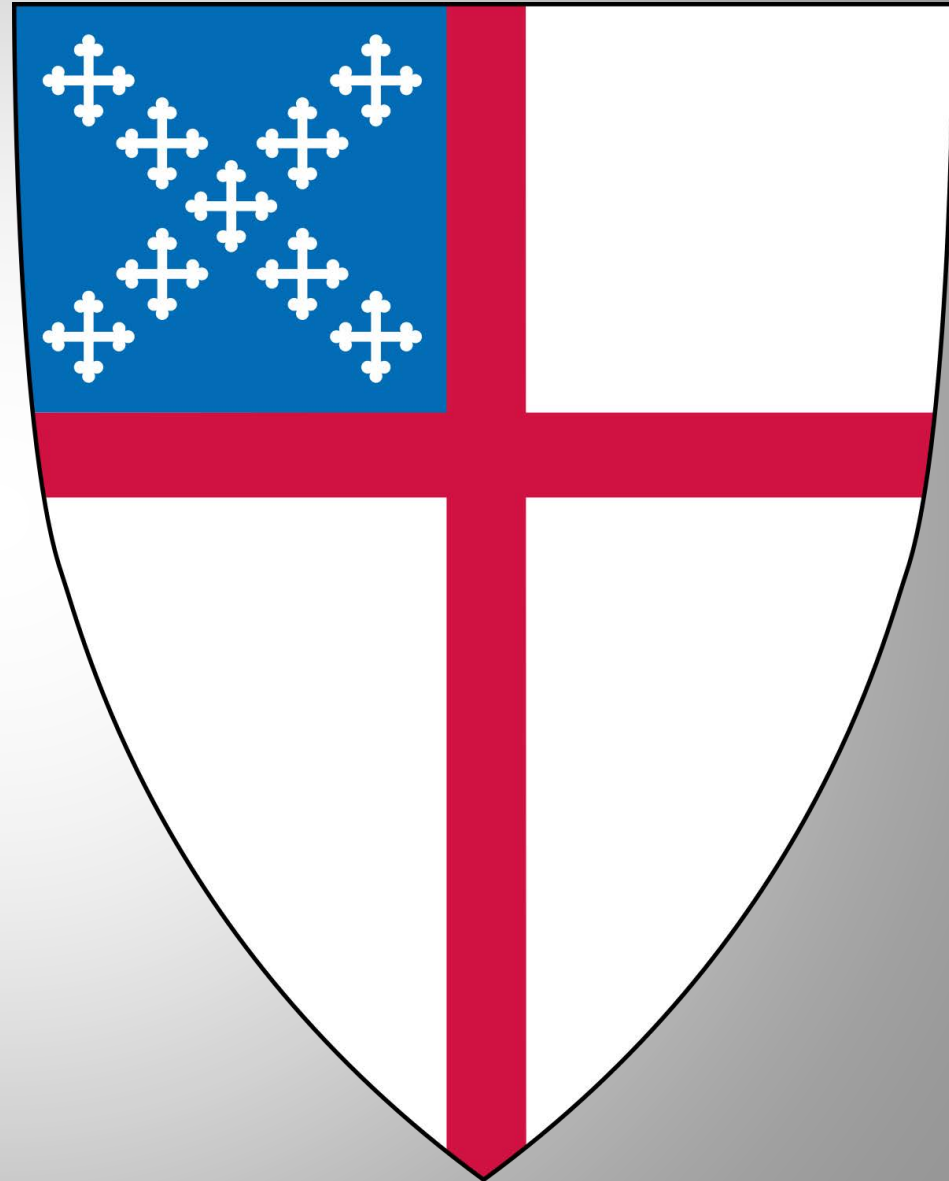
The **Apostles' Creed** is used in the Anglican Daily Offices of Matins (Morning Prayer) and Evening Prayer (Evensong). Archbishop Cranmer moved the recitation of the **Apostles' Creed** in the medieval offices to after the New Testament lesson in order to sum up the Church's formulated faith and belief as reflected in Biblical references. It is invoked after the recitation or singing of the Canticles, and is the only part of the services in which the congregation traditionally turns to face the Altar, if they are seated transversely in the area of a church or cathedral that provides seating for the clergy and church choir. It is an ancient custom to recite the creeds facing toward the East, or the Altar on the east wall. Another ancient custom is to bow at the name of Jesus as a symbol of our recognition of the Godhead and Lordship of Christ as authorized by Philippians 2:10:

so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth

HOW IS THE APOSTLES' CREED USED IN ANGLICAN SERVICES?

The Episcopal Church uses the **Apostles' Creed** as part of a Baptismal Covenant for those who are to receive the Rite of Holy Baptism. Candidates, sponsors, and congregation recite the Creed in the first person singular, each section of the Creed being an answer to the celebrant's question, "Do you believe in God the Father (God the Son, God the Holy Spirit)?"

The **Apostles' Creed** is also used in the Daily Offices. It may be used at a Marriage, at the Burial of the Dead, and at the Consecration of a Church.



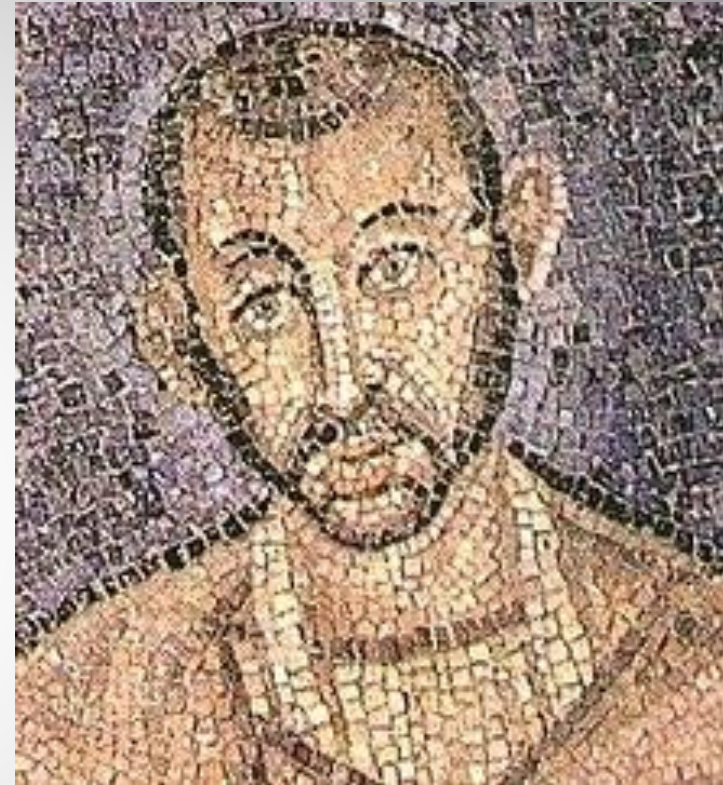
OH, THAT SERMON!

**ALL I CAN SAY IS THANK GOD FOR
THE CREED AFTERWARD**

WHAT DID AMBROSE, BISHOP OF MILAN, SAY ABOUT THE APOSTLES' CREED?

The tradition of assigning each article of the **Apostles' Creed** to one of the Apostles specifically can be traced to the 6th century. On the day of Pentecost, while still under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles composed our present Creed between them, each of them contributing one of the twelve articles. This story is foreshadowed still earlier in a sermon attributed to **Ambrose**, Bishop of Milan (c.339-c.397), which takes notice that the Creed was “pieced together by twelve separate workmen.” He argued:

This Creed is the spiritual seal, our heart's meditation and an ever-present guardian; it is, unquestionably, the treasure of our soul.



WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THE APOSTLES' CREED?

The **Apostles' Creed** is an ancient formula of Christian belief in three sections concerning God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This classic summary of basic Christian beliefs may be considered to be an authentic expression of the apostolic faith. It contains twelve articles, and is known as the **Baptismal creed** because catechumens were traditionally required to recite it before Holy Baptism. Candidates were baptized after their response of faith to each of the three questions concerning Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People who were preparing for Holy Baptism in the early centuries of the Christian Church learned a short summary of what Christians believe. One version became accepted as the **Apostles' Creed**, because it was thought to include the essential teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Jesus' earliest followers. It was into that faith of these Apostles that Christians were, and are, baptized.

WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THE APOSTLES' CREED?

What is now known as the **Apostles' Creed** developed from early interrogations of catechumens (persons receiving instructions in order to be baptized) by the bishop.

An example of such interrogations used in Rome before 200 has been preserved in the *Apostolic Tradition* of **Hippolytus of Rome** (c.170-c.235). The bishop would ask, "Dost thou believe in God the Father almighty?" and so forth through the major Christian beliefs. Stated affirmatively, these statements became a creed; such creeds were known as **Baptismal Creeds**.



WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THE APOSTLES' CREED?

Although its authorship is attributed to the Twelve Apostles, opinions vary concerning its origin. Its title dates from the late 4th century, and it may be based on a shorter form of the creed in use at Rome in the middle of the 2nd century.

Illumination
from a 13th-century
manuscript showing the
Apostles writing the Creed,
receiving inspiration
from the Holy Spirit



WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THE APOSTLES' CREED?

About the year 400 **Rufinus of Aquileia** (345–411) gave a detailed account of the composition of the Creed, professing to have received it from earlier ages. Although he does not explicitly assign each article to the authorship of a separate Apostle, he states that it was the joint work of all, and implies that the deliberation took place on the day of Pentecost.

Rufinus suggested:

So they [i.e., the Apostles] met together in one spot and, being filled with the Holy Spirit, compiled this brief token . . . each making the contribution he thought fit; and they decreed that it should be handed out as standard teaching to believers.

Moreover, he declared that “*they for many just reasons decided that this rule of faith should be called the Symbol,*” which Greek word he explained meant both *indicium*, meaning “a token or password” by which Christians might recognize each other, and *collatio*, meaning “an offering” made up of separate contributions.



WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THE APOSTLES' CREED?

Something like the present form of the **Apostles' Creed** probably originated as a Baptismal confession in the second half of 5th-century Southern Gaul (now France), developed from the Old Roman Symbol (the 4th-century Latin creed).

The **Old Roman Symbol** (Latin: *vetus symbolum romanum*), or **Old Roman Creed**, is an earlier and shorter version of the **Apostles' Creed**. It was based on the 2nd-century **Rule of Faith** and the interrogatory declaration of faith for those receiving Holy Baptism (3rd century or earlier).

The present form of the **Apostles' Creed** has been used in the Latin liturgical rites since the 8th century and, by extension, in the various modern branches of Western Christianity.

HOW IS THE APOSTLES' CREED A "SYMBOL"?

Another name for "creed" in early Christianity was "symbol," a word which literally meant something "thrown together," such as when each of the Twelve Apostles supposedly contributed one phrase of the Creed. The word *symbol* was used in the ancient world as a pact in a business transaction. It served to guarantee each person's loyalty to the terms of an agreement.

As a symbol, the creeds serve a binding or unifying function. Augustine says that it is called a symbol because "it is something by which Christians can recognize each other." Because of Christianity's concern for truth, Christians needed ways to distinguish genuine expressions of the faith from those that were not. Even today, amidst contentious divisions within the Church, the historic creeds are one of the few ways to differentiate orthodox Christianity from heresies or cults.

Thus, as a "symbol" of the faith, creeds serve a unifying function. They give us a way to remain in solidarity with Christians all over the world as well as with those who lived thousands of years before us.

HOW IS THE APOSTLES' CREED A "SYMBOL"?

The term *Symbolum Apostolicum* appears for the first time in a letter, probably written by **Bishop Ambrose**, from a **Council in Milan** in about 390 to **Siricius**, Bishop of Rome from 384 to 399:

Let them give credit to the Symbol of the Apostles, which the Roman Church has always kept and preserved undefiled.

The word *Symbolum* in this sense, standing alone, first occurred about the middle of the 3rd century in the correspondence of **Bishop Cyprian** (c.210-58) and **Bishop Firmilian** (died c.269), the latter in particular speaking of the Creed as the "Symbol of the Trinity" and recognizing it as an integral part of the rite of Holy Baptism.

Some say that the same use of the words can be traced as far back as **Tertullian** (155-220).

Still, in the first two centuries after Christ, though we often find mention of the Creed under other designations (e.g. *regula fidei*, *doctrina*, *traditio*), the name *symbolum* does not occur.

WHEN WAS THE PRESENT TEXT SOLIDIFIED?



As we have seen, the present text of the **Apostles' Creed** is similar to the Baptismal creed used in the church in Rome in the 3rd and 4th centuries. It came close to its final form in southwestern France in the late 6th or early 7th century.

The present text of the **Apostles' Creed** is first quoted in *De singulis libris canonicis scarapsus* of the monk and missionary **Pirmin** or **Pirminius** (c.670-753) written between 710 and 714.

WHEN DID THE APOSTLES' CREED REPLACE ALL OTHER BAPTISMAL CREEDS?

Over time, the **Apostles' Creed** replaced other Baptismal creeds and was acknowledged as the official profession of faith for the entire Catholic Church in the West during the tenure of **Innocent III**, Bishop of Rome from 1198 to 1216.



The End