

Catechism on the Liturgy: VI, 13

The priest is required to preach on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and it is something he ought to do for certain other occasions. But in the Gregorian Rite it is not done every day. It is essential in a parish, since St. Paul said "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10.14) But practically speaking it cannot be done every day. The basic rule for preaching is one hour preparation for each minute of preaching. The parish priest does not have the time then, to compose a three minute sermon for each day. There are canned sermons which one can buy of course, "homily helps" and "homily hints" a plenty. But if the priest avails himself of these, then he will cut himself off from one of the primary sources of his own growth and sanctification, which is the hard work of preparing a sermon.

It is even harder to preach the sermon, since no matter how hard the preacher prepares and delivers, there are always those in the flock who turn away from their pastor, and who will not even look at him. But this is part of the cross of being a priest, since the servant is not greater than the Master, and when our Lord tried to preach to the crowds, or to Pharisees or Sadducees or even His own hand-picked followers, He was not listened to with any devotion. They listened for ways to catch Him in an error if they listened at all.

The Nicene Creed follows the Gospel (and the sermon if there is one), which represents the public ministry of Christ. All the sick healed and the dead raised and sinners forgiven, makes the Enemy furious, and he seeks to lash out against the Messiah. But he cannot do so now, since Christ is raised gloriously to His throne in heaven. The word of the humble workman of Nazareth has transformed the world; it has abolished

slavery, exalted poverty, consoled sorrow, consecrated sacrifice. So the Enemy tries to attack the Body of Christ here on earth, by attacking through the spread of false doctrine. The Church responds by boldly by saying out loud the Creed, or singing it triumphally, since Christ has conquered the Prince of this world.

There are a number of creeds written for the Church. The oldest is the Apostles Creed, which is used in the Sacrament of Baptism. The Athanasian Creed is used in conjunction with the Minor Orders on the way to priesthood, and also on certain days in the Divine Office. The Nicene Creed is used for the Mass; it seems it was inserted into the Mass by the order of Charlemagne at his imperial chapel. As the universal Church saw the wisdom of this, it became standard throughout the entire Gregorian Rite. While the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds are better and fuller explanations of the Creed, there is but one Creed and one belief.

Not all Masses have the Creed; but when it is recited it is for three reasons: 1) On those days or feasts whose historical foundation or dogmatic subject is contained in the Symbol; in other words one of the mysteries expressly mentioned in the feast or at least acknowledged as therein included. 2) Because the Creed designates doctrine, so it is recited on the feasts of the principal teachers of doctrine who are the apostles. 3) To enhance the exterior splendor of the feast, according to what the Popes or councils of an age which extol.

The Creed is like a response to the Gospel. *Credo* means "I believe". Christ has proclaimed the truth, all the faithful say they believe it with the Creed.

In Latin the Creed is called a *Symbolum*

Fidei (sign of faith) from the Greek *sun-bolos*, “ a sign of recognition.” The Creed was used in ancient times as a kind of password of the Christian army, and those seeking admission to the Mass would have to be able to recite it.

After he intones the Creed, the priest looks up to heaven and with his arms invokes the angels to assist in the proclamation of the Faith. All bow while genuflecting (a kind of lowering of ourselves) to adore the Savior at the words "*et homo factus est*," since He lowered Himself in order to become man. Those particular words (*and He became man*) are written in large block letters on the altar card, to remind the priest that he is to say them more slowly than the rest of the Creed, because of their importance. This is reflected too in the great musical compositions of the Creed, beginning with Chant, which slow down at the words. That same style of writing on the altar cards is found for the words of consecration, and in the Last Gospel, "*et verbum caro factum est*."

The priest's hands are joined before his breast, which corresponds to humble homage and abandonment of oneself to the absolute truth and veracity of God, and with perfect submission of will and understanding to the infinite majesty of God.

At the end of the Creed the priest and faithful make the Sign of the Cross when the words "and the life of the world to come" are sung. Here the Sign acts as a shield against the adversaries of the Faith, and at the same time we are reminded that the only way to arrive safely at that life of the world to come is by the royal road of the Cross. The way of suffering leads to the home of imperishable joys.

When the Creed is finished, the celebrant kisses the altar and turns to greet the faithful. As the altar represents Christ,

and as the greeting is to send the Holy Ghost to the congregation, the kiss thus represents the Holy Ghost coming from the Father and the Son, just as we proclaim in the Creed.

Imagine our life without the Faith. What a sad, dark picture we are without light from a higher world! The Faith brings to man consolation, instruction, warning, confidence, fortitude and self-denial on his journey through life; it inspires him with courage and hope in death; it accompanies him beyond the tomb to blissful immortality. It is to man a heavenly, brilliant star which serves as an unfailing guide on this dangerous passage to his true home. It is to him like an angel, who supports him in his arms, a strong defense and refuge in every danger.

The Mass of the Catechumens ends at this point. A deacon would call on all the unbaptized or heretics, or the excommunicated to withdraw from the temple. Anyone could come and pray and be instructed, and thus actively participate in the Mass. But only the baptized could actually participate and offer sacrifice.