



What About . . .

The Apostles' Creed

What does it mean to confess the Christian faith?

There is nothing more sure or certain in this life than the word and promise of God. With the words of the Apostles' Creed, Christians through the ages have responded to God's Word to them. With the Psalmist we pray, "O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall confess your praise" (Ps. 51:15).

The word "creed" comes from the Latin word, "credo," which means, "I believe." To "confess" means to make a declaration of what one believes. When we confess the faith of the Christian church in the words of the Apostles' Creed, we are confessing our belief about who the Holy Trinity is, and what God has done for us. Each section, or article, of the Apostles' Creed speaks about the work of one of the persons of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each article of the Apostles' Creed is our opportunity to speak back to God, and to each other, the mighty deeds of the Holy Trinity by which He has created us, by which He has redeemed us, and by which He keeps us in the one true faith until life eternal. This is a very important dimension of our faith and worship of God.

What do we confess about God the Father?

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

*We all believe in one true God, maker of the earth and heaven. "Our Father," he would have us say; children's place to us has given. He has pledged always to feed us; body, soul, to keep, to nourish. Through all evil he will lead us, guards us well that we may flourish. He cares for us by day and night and governs all things by his might.**

That there is a god is a truth known to all human beings simply from the very existence of all things. This is called the natural knowledge of God. There is nothing very remarkable about believing that there is a god. Only a fool says, "there is no god" (Ps. 53:1). The real issue is not that people believe in no god, but that they are tempted to believe in a god who is not the one, true God. Or, that they are tempted to put in the place of the true God, "gods" of our culture, like money, success, popularity or pleasure.

The first article of the Apostles' Creed declares that Christians believe, teach and confess that the one, true god is none other than the One who has made the heavens and the earth, and everything in them. But more than that, He is our Father who provides and cares for us as a father cares for his beloved children.

We believe that He has made us and has given us all the good things we have in this life. This He has done purely out of the love He has for us as our Father. He not only gives us life, He also defends us, guards us, and protects us during this life, so that we will join Him in heaven for all eternity. There is nothing in us that makes us worthy of the good things God gives us. It is all from His love as a father. How glorious it is to know that the same God who created heaven and earth also created each one of us and cares for us personally.

What do we confess about God the Son?

"I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead."

We all believe in Christ, His Son, whom as Lord we are addressing, of equal Godhead, throne, and might, source of every grace and blessing. Born of Mary, virgin mother, by the power of the Spirit, made true man, our human brother through whom sonship we inherit; He, crucified for sinful men, through God's power rose to life again.

We are able to believe that God is our Father, because of what His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, came into this world to do: to live perfectly in our place, to suffer and die to pay for the sin of the world, and then to rise victorious over humanity's most ancient and most evil enemies: sin, death and the devil.

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God from all eternity, was born of the Virgin Mary, to offer up to the Father His precious body and blood for the forgive-

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ness of the sins of the world. Through this sacrifice, the Son of God won for us reconciliation and peace with God, a peace that had been shattered by sin, both the original sin common to all human beings and the sin that is unique to each of us.

At the Father's command, Christ came into this world to do all this for us so that we would be His very own by faith, serving Him and living for Him. Our hope is in the One who rose from the grave and now lives as our Savior for all eternity. How blessed we are to have been brought to the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and that in Him we have the full and free forgiveness of all of our sins and the promise of eternal life forever with Him in heaven.

What do we confess about the Holy Spirit?

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

We all confess the Holy Ghost, who grants comfort, grace, and power. He, with the Father and the Son, robes us for the triumph hour; keeps the Church, his own creation, in true unity of the spirit; here forgiveness and salvation come to us through Jesus' merit. The body risen, we then shall be in life with God eternally. Amen.

The Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, three persons, equal in majesty and together being of one essence, truly does love us as His own dear children. The Holy Spirit calls us into fellowship with the Trinity, by the powerful means of grace that God has given: the Word and Sacraments. With the Word and Sacraments, He keeps the entire church on earth in the one, true and saving faith.

As Luther explains in his Large Catechism, the Holy Spirit works in our life through the church because the church "is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches that Word, and by it He illumines and kindles hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it." In the church, the Spirit of God is daily pouring out the forgiveness of sins in rich measure so that on the last day we will rise from dead and join all believers in Christ in eternal life. Daily we want to thank and praise God the Holy Spirit for His work in our lives.

Why do we use creeds?

Some church bodies shy away from making formal statements of faith. The Lutheran Church is not hesitant to use the historic, universal (ecumenical) creeds. We use the Apostles'

Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed. These three ancient creeds are how we confess the one, true faith of the Christian church and they help us to identify with all believers in Christ throughout all ages.

The historic creeds are, as our church recently stated in convention, "the cherished possession of the entire church down through the ages and are not just the expression of any one individual. The church has maintained the confession of these creeds and has even suffered martyrdom rather than deny the faith confessed in them." Therefore, the use of the historic Christian creeds is a very important part of Lutheran worship services. Because we know that personal, individual statements of faith are oftentimes subject to imprecise and even erroneous confessions of the faith of the church, we discourage the use of informal statements of faith in the public worship of the church.

Creeds serve as a way to make sure that the church continues to believe what the Word of God teaches. The treasure of truth in the Word of God is what we wish to confess and to stand for as a church. It is based on these truths, as confessed in the Apostles' Creed, that the people of God are led to serve Him in both word and deed.

When we confess the Apostles' Creed, and the other historic creeds, we confess the faith of the Christian church. We do so with joy and confidence. With these words on our lips and in our hearts, we have the assurance that we are speaking back to God the truths He has first spoken to us. And thus, with confidence in the Lord's sure and certain Word, we say, "This is most certainly true."

— Dr. A. L. Barry
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* The italicized portions of this document are verses from the hymn by Martin Luther, "We All Believe in One True God," Hymn 213 in *Lutheran Worship* (CPH: 1982).