

# Incarnating THE KERYGMA

## THE GIFT OF FAITH

### Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, you sent the Holy Spirit that our faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on the power of God. Open our minds and hearts that we might be open to the Holy Spirit and deepen our faith in Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for our salvation, and come to know you better. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Scripture Reading *1 Corinthians 2:1-5, 10-12*

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminds the Christian community that the knowledge and wisdom of God comes from the Holy Spirit, who enables us to proclaim Jesus Christ's death and Resurrection. This knowledge did not come from human reason alone, but from God's revelation through the Spirit.

### What is Revelation?

- **Revelation** is the mystery of God's free self-communication in human history.
  - The Catholic faith is a revealed tradition, which means that we cannot come to know who God is without God freely choosing to reveal Himself to us.
  - While humans are introduced to God by reason and that we have innate desire for God, we still stand in need of being enlightened by God's revelation in order to know Him intimately (cf. CCC, §38).
  - God's self-communication is made through His Word (Jesus) and in the Holy Spirit, who remains present and active in the Church.
  - God has revealed Himself throughout **Salvation History**, which is the means that God redeemed humankind through:
    - The **history of Israel**,
    - The **person of Jesus Christ**,
    - The **gift of the Church** guided by the Holy Spirit.
  - The Church is entrusted with and is servant to the **deposit of faith**, which is the entire set of beliefs that the Church holds based on Salvation History that is contained in:
    - Sacred **Scripture**,
    - Sacred **Tradition**,
    - The **Magisterium** of the Church.

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### What is faith?

- **Faith** is the free and complete response of one's intellect and will to God's invitation into a loving and intimate relationship.
  - Faith itself is God's grace, which is God's free and gratuitous gift of His life and love in us. Faith requires the help of the Holy Spirit.
  - Faith is a personal, conscious, and free human decision to accept God's invitation. We do not lose our freedom or our reason when we respond to God in faith. Faith demonstrates the dignity of the human person.
  - Faith is necessary for salvation. The Lord himself affirms: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).
  - "**Theology** is faith seeking understanding" (St. Anselm of Canterbury). Faith, reason, and science do not contradict. Faith is consistent with reason, and reason is illumined by faith. The reason there can be no conflict between faith and science is that both seek and are devoted to the truth. Alleged contradictions are only apparent, not real.
  - We can lose our faith if it is not cultivated. St. Paul prays for Timothy, "May you fight a good fight by having faith and a good conscience. Some, by rejecting conscience, have made a shipwreck of their faith" (1 Timothy 1:18-19). "To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be 'working through charity,' abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church" (CCC, §162).
  - Faith is a foretaste of eternal life. "When we contemplate the blessings of faith even now, as if gazing at a reflection in a mirror, it is as if we already possessed the wonderful things which our faith assures us we shall one day enjoy" (St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 15,36).

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### What is the Creed?

- The **Creed** or "symbol of faith" is a prayer or profession of faith made up of statements of belief.
  - Faith is a personal, but not an isolated act, because the Church supports one another in our faith. Just as one does not give oneself life, so too does one not give oneself faith. Believing is an act of the Church. The Church's faith precedes, forms, supports, and nourishes personal faith.
  - We profess our faith in the Creed which allows people to express the faith of the Church, to hand it on, and to celebrate it as a community united.
  - The word "creed" comes from the Latin "credo," which means "I believe" or more literally, "I give my heart to."
  - "We do not believe in formulas, but in those realities they express, which faith allows us to touch" (CCC, §170). "This synthesis of faith was not made to accord with human opinions, but rather what was of the greatest importance was gathered from all the Scripture, to present the one teaching of the faith in its entirety" (St. Cyril of Jerusalem).
  - The faith of the Church is protected and guarded in the Creed which has been handed down from generation to generation and is universal throughout the world. St. Ambrose said, "This Creed is the spiritual seal, our heart's meditation and an ever-present guardian; it is, unquestionably, the treasure of our soul."
  - Creeds were formed from the baptismal promises by the early catechumens, but became the standard against **heresies** in the fourth century.
- The **Apostles' Creed** is ancient baptismal promises of the Roman Church from the second century.
  - The Apostles' Creed is the representative summary of the teachings of the Apostles.
  - This creed is still asked to those about to be baptized and is recited during the Rosary. It is also recited during Lent and Easter season to remind us of our baptismal promises.
- The **Nicene Creed** is the first and only universally accepted creed to all the great Churches of both East and West to this day.
  - The majority of the Creed was written in 325AD at the Council of Nicaea and was completed in 381AD at the Council of Constantinople.
  - It was composed to combat heresies (false teachings) of the fourth century and was a more detailed version of baptismal creeds in order to be more precise in the orthodox teaching of the Church.
  - The creed is recited at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days.

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### Discussion Questions for Learning

1. How do the three stages of salvation history in which God reveals Himself to us show the breadth and depth of God's revelation?
2. Why is important to maintain all three sources of authority that make up the deposit of faith?
3. What does it mean that the Church does "not believe in formulas, but in those realities they express"?

### Discussion Questions for Living

1. What qualities of faith do I most need to embrace in order to live the Christian life in this particular time?
2. How can the faith of the Christian community professed in the creed and lived out in the Church help me to grow in faith?

### Discussion Questions for Liturgy

1. How do the beliefs contained in the creed influence the way in which you communicate with God in prayer?
2. How are the beliefs contained in the creed celebrated in the Christian community when it gathers for worship?

### Discussion Questions for evangelization

1. How can I share the beliefs contained in the creed with others through my words and actions?

### Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we place our faith in you. Help us in our unbelief. Send your Holy Spirit to help us understand your ways and your path for each of us that we might be better followers of you and bring others to faith. We ask this in your most holy Name. Amen.