

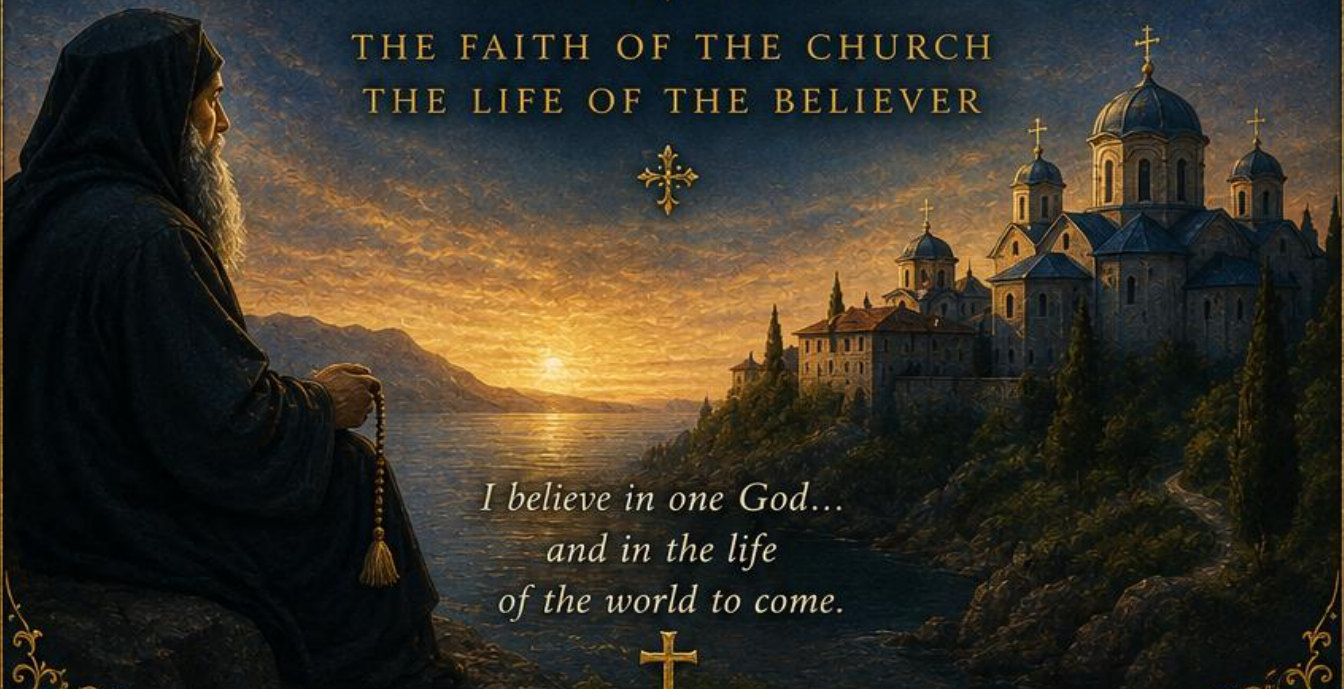
THE NICENE-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN
CREED EXPLAINED ARTICLE BY ARTICLE



THE
CREED

THE NICENE-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED
EXPLAINED ARTICLE BY ARTICLE

THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH
THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER



*I believe in one God...
and in the life
of the world to come.*

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

OPENING WORDS

This book has been written with the desire to share a personal contemplation of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Holy Creed. Over the centuries, countless saints, theologians and pastors have delved into these words that summarize the faith of the Church. The pages that follow do not intend to exhaust the richness of this inexhaustible treasure, but to offer a humble reflection born of prayer, pastoral ministry and love for the Holy Orthodox Church.

My greatest hope is that, as you go through each article of the Creed, the reader will discover that he is not only dealing with a doctrinal formulation, but with the manifestation of God's immense love for humanity. Every word of the Creed leads us to the mystery of salvation and invites us to enter into deeper communion with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

If these pages help, even if it is only with one heart, to love Christ more, to understand the apostolic faith better and to live it more faithfully, I will consider their purpose fulfilled.

Receive my pastoral blessing and prayer, trusting that our Lord Jesus Christ will enlighten your hearts and strengthen your faith.

To Him, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honor, all glory, and all adoration, now and ever, and forever and ever. Amen.



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Chapter I

"I believe in one God, Father"

The Confession of the Principle of the All Orthodox Faith

The whole Christian life begins with a confession. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed does not begin with a philosophical explanation or moral reflection, but with a profession of faith: **"I believe..."**. The Church does not say "we know" or "we imagine", but "I believe", because faith is man's free response to God's revelation. It is an adhesion of the heart, of the mind, and of the whole of existence to the truth revealed by the Lord himself.

The word **"I believe"** (Greek *Πιστεύω*, Church Slavonic *Вѣрую*) means much more than intellectually accepting a doctrine. In the language of the Holy Scriptures it implies absolute trust, obedience, fidelity and total surrender to God. To believe is to lean completely on Him, as a child abandons himself in the arms of his father.

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught that faith is the door of salvation:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (*Mark 16:16*).

The Creed is therefore not merely a doctrinal summary, but the very foundation on which the whole life of the Church rests.

"In one God"

The first truth proclaimed by the Church is the absolute unity of God.

From the Old Testament, the chosen people received this revelation:

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." (*Deuteronomy 6:4*).

The Church preserves this confession in its entirety. There is only one true God. There are not many gods, nor opposing divine forces, nor eternal principles of good and evil. All creation comes from a single Creator.

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This statement was especially important in the fourth century, when the world still retained numerous forms of paganism and different philosophical currents proposed multiple divinities or cosmic principles. The Holy Fathers reaffirmed that there is only one God, eternal, uncreated, infinite and immutable.

St. Basil the Great teaches:

"The divine nature is one, simple, indivisible, and incomprehensible."

St. Gregory the Theologian states:

"We do not worship three gods, but one God in three Persons."

Thus, the Creed begins by laying the foundation upon which it will later reveal the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

The unity of God does not contradict the Trinity

When we confess one God we are not denying the Son or the Holy Spirit.

The Church never taught that the Father is the only one who possesses divinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit possess one divine nature, one essence (*οὐσία*), one glory, one power, and one eternity.

The Father is no more God than the Son.

The Son is not inferior to the Father.

The Holy Spirit does not possess a distinct divinity.

There is only one divine essence fully shared by the three Persons.

This truth was defined by the First Ecumenical Council meeting at Nicaea in 325 and completed by the Second Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 381.

"Father"

After affirming divine unity, the Creed calls God **the Father**.

This name has two inseparable meanings.

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The Eternal Father of the Eternal Son

Before all creation, before time, before the ages, God is Father because he eternally begets the Son.

He did not become Father when he created the universe.

He did not begin to be Father when man appeared.

The Father is eternally Father because the Son eternally exists.

As St. Athanasius the Great teaches:

"There was never a time when the Father was without the Son."

The generation of the Son is an eternal mystery, incomprehensible to every created intelligence. It does not imply change, division or beginning. The Father eternally communicates the whole fullness of the divine nature to the Son.

That is why the Creed will later say:

"Begotten of the Father before all ages."

Thus the eternal generation of the Son is clearly distinguished from the creation of the universe.

The Son is begotten.

The world is created.

The Son participates fully in the divine nature.

Creation participates only by grace in God's gifts.

Father of those who receive adoption

God is also called Father with respect to men, although in a completely different way.

We are not children by nature as Christ is.

We are children by adoption.

St. Paul writes:

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"You have received the spirit of adoption, by which we cry, 'Abba, Father!'"
(*Romans 8:15*).

Through Baptism, man enters the family of God and receives the grace to call the Creator of the universe Father.

However, this sonship depends entirely on divine grace and never equals the eternal sonship of the Word.

Christ is Son by nature.

We are children by adoption.

This is an essential difference that the Church has always protected against all doctrinal confusion.

Divine Fatherhood and Providence

Calling God Father also manifests His provident love for all creation.

The Father sustains the universe with his power.

He governs all things with wisdom.

It allows trials for our salvation.

He leads history towards the fulfillment of his will.

Nothing escapes his providence.

Jesus Christ said:

"Look at the birds of the air... your heavenly Father feeds them." (*Matthew 6:26*).

And also:

"Even the hairs of your head are all numbered." (*Matthew 10:30*).

Divine providence does not eliminate human freedom, but guides all things with infinite wisdom towards the good of those who love God.

The Believer's Response

Confess:

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"I believe in one God, Father"

it does not consist only in repeating a few words during the Divine Liturgy.

It is recognizing that our whole existence comes from God.

It is to renounce all forms of idolatry.

It is to abandon absolute trust in wealth, power, science or one's own strength.

It is to put all hope in the heavenly Father alone.

The Christian who truly believes lives as a child of God.

Pray with confidence.

Accept trials patiently.

Give thanks in prosperity and adversity.

He forgives because he has been forgiven.

He loves because he has first been loved.

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Chapter II

"Almighty Father, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible"

The confession of the Creed goes on to reveal who it is in whom we believe. After proclaiming, "I believe in one God, Father," the Church adds three inseparable truths: God is **Almighty, Creator, and Provident**. These words are not mere honorific titles, but express the reality of God as He has revealed Himself to humanity.

The Christian does not believe in a god limited by time or space, nor in an impersonal force that blindly governs the universe. Believe in the almighty Father, whose wisdom, power, and love sustain all things.

"Father Almighty"

The Creed uses the Greek term Παντοκράτωρ (Pantokrator), which literally means "he who has power over all things," "the Sovereign of the universe," or "he who governs all." In Church Slavonic it is translated as Вседержитель (Vsederzhitel'), "He who sustains all things".

Divine omnipotence should not be understood as an arbitrary or capricious power. God does not act irrationally or contradictorily. His power is inseparably linked to His holiness, justice, wisdom, and love. For this reason, the Church teaches that God can accomplish all that corresponds to his divine nature; He never works evil, he never lies, and he never ceases to be who he is.

Sacred Scripture proclaims:

"I am Almighty God; walk before me and be perfect." (*Genesis 17:1*).

And the angel Gabriel announces to the Blessed Virgin:

"For with God nothing is impossible." (*Luke 1:37*).

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God's omnipotence does not mean that he destroys human freedom. He governs the universe with infinite wisdom, respecting the freedom he granted to his rational creatures and leading history towards the fulfillment of his salvific plan.

God, Creator of all things

The Creed immediately affirms that this omnipotent Father is the **Creator of heaven and earth**.

To create means to give existence to that which did not exist before. The Church teaches that God created the universe **out of nothing** (*ex nihilo*), not by using pre-existing matter or transforming an eternal substance. Before creation there was nothing but God, eternal, uncreated and perfect.

The first verse of Holy Scripture proclaims:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (*Genesis 1:1*).

With these words all idea of an eternal universe or independent of God is excluded. Everything that exists receives its being from the Creator and is continually dependent on Him.

St. Basil the Great, in his **Hexaemeron**, teaches that creation is the fruit of the divine free will. God did not create out of necessity, nor because He lacked something, but because of the superabundance of His goodness. Creation is a gift of divine love, destined to manifest the glory of the Creator.

"From heaven and earth"

The biblical expression "heaven and earth" designates the totality of the created universe. It does not refer only to the visible firmament and the ground we inhabit, but to everything that exists within the order of creation.

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Heaven manifests the immensity of the divine work; The earth reveals the richness and diversity of life. The psalmist sings:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament declares the work of his hands." (*Psalm 18 [19]:1*).

Each creature reflects, in its own way, the wisdom of the Creator. From the farthest galaxies to the smallest flower in the field, everything proclaims the greatness of God. The contemplation of creation leads the believer to adoration and thanksgiving.

Everything visible

The Church affirms that God created the visible world, that is, all material reality. The human body, animals, plants, seas, mountains and stars are the works of God's hands.

For this reason, the orthodox faith rejects any doctrine that regards matter as evil in itself. From the first centuries, the Church fought against Gnostic and Manichaean teachings, which despised the material world and attributed it to an inferior or evil principle.

The Book of Genesis repeats at the end of each creative day:

"And God saw that it was good."

And at the conclusion of all creation he declares:

"And God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good."
(*Genesis 1:31*).

The matter is not bad; it was created good. Sin does not belong to the nature of creation, but entered the world through man's disobedience.

This truth reaches its maximum confirmation in the Incarnation of the Word. The Son of God assumed a true body, sanctifying human nature and showing that matter can be an instrument of grace. For this reason, the

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Church venerates holy icons, uses the water of Baptism, the oil of Holy Unction, the bread and wine of the Divine Eucharist: material creation participates in the economy of salvation.

All the Invisible

In addition to the material world, God created the invisible world, composed of spiritual beings.

Holy angels are personal, intelligent, and incorporeal creatures. They do not exist from eternity, but were created by God to serve Him and fulfill His will.

Sacred Scripture says:

"¿Are they not all servant spirits, sent forth for service in behalf of those who will be heirs of salvation?" (*Hebrews 1:14*).

The tradition of the Church speaks of the nine angelic choirs: Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim. All ceaselessly glorify the Triune God, proclaiming:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." (*Isaiah 6:3*).

Some angels, however, abused their God-given freedom and rebelled against their Creator. This is how demons emerged. The Church teaches that these were not created evil; They were created good, but they fell out of pride and disobedience. They remain spiritual beings, deprived of communion with God and bent on diverting man from the path of salvation.

Divine Providence

Creation was not an isolated act that God abandoned after He performed it. The same God who created the universe continually sustains it with his

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power and governs it with infinite wisdom. This permanent action is called **Providence**.

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches:

"Behold the birds of the air, which do not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feeds them." (*Matthew 6:26*).

And also:

"Don't you sell two little birds for a quarter? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father." (*Matthew 10:29*).

Nothing escapes God's knowledge or care. His Providence does not suppress human freedom, but works mysteriously in history to lead all things to the good of those who love him (cf. Romans 8:28).

Even when the believer does not understand the meaning of certain trials, he knows that the heavenly Father never abandons his children. The very Cross of Christ, a scandal to the world, became by divine Providence an instrument of salvation for all humanity.

Creation and Man's Responsibility

If God is the Creator of all that exists, man is called to steward creation with wisdom and gratitude. He is not the absolute master of the world, but its custodian. Creation belongs to God and has been entrusted to man to cultivate and preserve.

Every selfish exploitation, every irresponsible destruction of nature, and every form of contempt for the work of creation contradict the vocation that the Creator entrusted to man.

The contemplation of the universe must lead the believer to humility. Faced with the immensity of creation, man discovers his smallness, but also

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the incomparable dignity he receives from having been created in the image and likeness of God.

Trust in the Father Almighty

Confessing that God is the Father Almighty strengthens the Christian's hope. No difficulty is greater than the power of God; no proof is outside his Providence. This does not mean that the believer is exempt from suffering, but that he can face it with the certainty that the Lord always remains faithful.

Divine omnipotence is not only manifested in the great wonders narrated in Scripture, but also in the silent action of grace, which transforms the heart of the sinner, sustains the martyrs in persecution and strengthens the faithful in daily trials.

God's true power is revealed in His love, which overcomes sin and death through Christ. For this reason, Christians do not fear the future, but place all their trust in the heavenly Father, knowing that "the Lord reigns" and that his will ultimately leads to the victory of the Kingdom.

By proclaiming: **"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible"**, the Church confesses that everything that exists proceeds from God's creative love and remains sustained by his Providence. Nothing is the result of chance nor does it exist independently of Him. The visible and invisible universes, angels and men, matter and spirit, find their origin and purpose in the one true God.

This confession invites the believer to live with humility, gratitude, and trust. Humility, because he has received everything from the Creator; gratitude, because creation is a gift of his goodness; and trust, because the Father Almighty wisely guides all things toward the fulfillment of His saving will. Thus the contemplation of the divine work leads the soul to

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glorify the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, to whom be honor and glory forever and ever. **Amen.**

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CHAPTER III

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten"

After proclaiming faith in the Almighty Father, Creator of heaven and earth, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed immediately turns our gaze to the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. The Church confesses:

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God."

These words constitute the very center of the Christian faith. The whole economy of salvation, from creation to the consummation of the ages, converges in the Person of Jesus Christ. He is the eternal Word of the Father, by whom all things were made (cf. John 1:3), the Savior of the world, the High Priest of the New Covenant, and the King whose Kingdom will have no end.

Christianity is not, above all, a philosophical system or a moral code. It is the revelation of God in the Person of his eternal Son. As the Apostle Paul teaches:

"For no one can lay any other foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (*1 Corinthians 3:11*).

For this reason, the Church has firmly defended the truth about Christ against any doctrine that seeks to diminish his divinity or alter the mystery of his Person. The Ecumenical Councils, guided by the Holy Spirit, did not introduce a new faith, but faithfully preserved the apostolic teaching.

"And in one Lord"

The Creed calls Jesus Christ Lord. In the Greek text the word Κύριος (Kyrios) appears, and in Church Slavonic Господь (Gospod'). This title does not express only respect or human authority; it has a profoundly divine significance.

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In the Old Testament, God's sacred name, revealed to Moses in the burning bush, was considered so holy that Jews avoided pronouncing it. In the Greek translation of the Septuagint, that Name was translated Kyrios, "Lord." When the Apostles call Jesus Christ Lord, they are confessing that He fully participates in the divine identity of the God of Israel.

St. Paul writes:

"For us, however, there is one God, the Father, from whom all things proceed and for whom we exist; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." (*1 Corinthians 8:6*).

Here the Apostle does not establish an opposition between the Father and the Son, but incorporates Jesus Christ into the confession of the one God. The Father and the Son partake of the same divine nature, though they are personally distinguished.

After the Resurrection, the Apostle St. Thomas, contemplating the glorified Lord, exclaimed:

"My Lord and my God!" (*John 20:28*).

Jesus Christ accepted this confession without correcting Thomas, because he is truly God. If he had been only a man or a lofty creature, he would have rejected such worship. Yet he receives it as befits the eternal Son of the Father.

Likewise, the Christological hymn of the Epistle to the Philippians proclaims:

"God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (*Philippians 2:9-11*).

This confession does not detract from the glory of the Father; on the contrary, it glorifies the Father, for to recognize the Son as Lord is to recognize the saving work of God.

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The Name of Jesus

The name Jesus comes from the Hebrew Yehoshua or its abbreviated form Yeshua, which means: "The Lord saves" or "God is salvation."

This name was not chosen by human will. It was revealed by God through the Archangel Gabriel before the birth of the Savior.

The Gospel according to St. Matthew narrates:

"You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."
(Matthew 1:21).

Thus the very name of the Savior manifests His mission. Jesus Christ came into the world to deliver man from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He did not come simply to offer lofty teachings or a moral example, but to reconcile man with God through his Incarnation, Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

The Holy Fathers emphasize that the name of Jesus is a source of consolation, strength and salvation for the faithful. St. John Chrysostom teaches that the invocation of the Name of the Lord strengthens the soul against temptations and constantly reminds us of the presence of Christ.

The hesychast tradition of the Orthodox Church has preserved this teaching through the Jesus Prayer:

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

This prayer, repeated with humility, attention and repentance, unites the believer's heart with Christ and disposes him to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. It is not a magic formula, but a faith-filled invocation, inspired by the Gospel and practiced by countless saints throughout the centuries.

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The Title of Christ

The word Christ is not a surname, but a title. It comes from the Greek Χριστός (Christós), which means "Anointed One". It corresponds to the Hebrew Messiah, awaited by Israel since ancient times.

In the Old Testament, kings, priests, and sometimes prophets were anointed with oil. The anointing was a visible sign of divine election and of the mission entrusted to him by God.

Jesus Christ unites in himself these three dignities:

As a prophet, he fully reveals the Father's will. He does not transmit a word received from another, but speaks with divine authority: "Truly, truly, I say to you..."

As High Priest, He offers Himself in sacrifice for the salvation of the world. Unlike the priests of the Old Covenant, he does not offer the blood of others, but his own Blood, shed "for the forgiveness of sins".

As King, he rules a Kingdom that is not of this world (cf. John 18:36), but which is already present in the Church and will reach its fullness at the consummation of the ages.

The messianic prophecies of the Old Testament find their fulfillment in Him. Isaiah announces the suffering Servant; Micah prophesies the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem; Zechariah describes the humble King's entry into Jerusalem; David sings in the Psalms the glory of the Lord's Anointed One. Everything converges in Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah.

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CHAPTER III

"The Son of God"

After proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the only Lord and the awaited Messiah, the Creed adds an expression of immense depth:

"The Son of God."

These words radically distinguish Jesus Christ from all men and all creatures. In the Holy Scriptures, some are called "children of God" by adoption, by grace, or by divine choice. Israel is called this name (Exodus 4:22), angels are called children of God in some Old Testament passages (Job 1:6), and Christians become children of God through baptism and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

However, when the Church calls Jesus Christ **the Son of God**, it does so in an absolutely unique sense. He is not the Son by adoption, but **by nature**. He is the eternal Son of the Father, who possesses from all eternity the same divine essence.

The prologue to the Gospel according to John proclaims this truth with admirable clarity:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (*John 1:1*).

The Evangelist does not say that the Word became God, nor that He was raised to divinity by any merit. He affirms that **he was God** from the beginning, before all creation, and before time itself.

He further adds:

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (*John 1:14*).

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The eternal Son assumed our human nature while remaining God. The Incarnation did not diminish his divinity; He only added to His Person human nature, perfect and complete.

The Father's revelation

Heavenly Father Himself bore witness of His Son during the mortal life of Jesus Christ.

At the Baptism of the Lord, heaven was opened and the voice of the Father was heard:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (*Matthew 3:17*).

The same statement was heard again during the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor:

"This is my beloved Son; listen to him." (*Matthew 17:5*).

It is not men who arbitrarily attribute to Jesus the title of Son of God. It is the Father himself who reveals this truth.

Therefore, when the Apostle Peter confessed:

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Our Lord answered:

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven." (*Matthew 16:16-17*).

Faith in Christ as the Son of God is a gift of the Father and a work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer.

"Only begotten"

The Creed goes on to say:

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"Only begotten".

This word translates the Greek term **Μονογενής (Monogenés)**, which means **Unique Begotten** or **Only Son**.

The Church uses this term to affirm that Christ alone possesses divine sonship by nature.

We are children of God by adoption.

Christ is Son by nature.

We receive grace.

Christ possesses the fullness of the divine nature from all eternity.

This difference should never be confused.

The Gospel of St. John proclaims:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son."
(John 3:16).

And also:

"No one has ever seen God; the Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made known to him." *(John 1:18).*

The word **Only Begotten** expresses the eternal and ineffable relationship between the Father and the Son. It does not describe an event that occurred in time, but an eternal reality, impossible to fully understand by created intelligence.

The Eternal Generation of the Son

Here the Church enters into one of the deepest mysteries of faith.

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The Father eternally begets the Son.

This generation should not imagine itself as it happens among human beings.

There is no before and after.

There is no growth.

There is no change.

There is no division.

There is no beginning.

The Father was never without the Son.

St. Athanasius the Great wrote:

"There was never a time when the Son did not exist."

This phrase sums up the entire doctrine of the First Ecumenical Council meeting at Nicaea in 325.

The Fathers gathered there rejected the teaching of the presbyter Arius, who asserted that the Son had been created before the world and was therefore not truly God.

Arius repeated:

"There was a time when the Son did not exist."

The Church responded firmly that such a doctrine destroys salvation.

If Christ were a creature, He could not communicate divine life.

If he were inferior to the Father, he could not fully reconcile man to God.

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If he were not true God, the worship that the Church offers him would be idolatry.

For this reason, the Council solemnly confessed that the Son is **begotten, not created**, and that he is **consubstantial** (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father.

The Witness of the Holy Fathers

St. Athanasius dedicated practically his entire life to defending this truth.

He taught that only God can save man.

If Christ were not God, Redemption would be impossible.

He wrote:

"The Word became man so that man might become a partaker of divine life."

St. Gregory the Theologian affirmed:

"What was not taken up was not healed."

Christ fully assumed our humanity because He fully possesses divinity.

St. Basil the Great taught:

"The Son possesses all that belongs to the Father, except to be Father."

With this phrase he admirably summarizes the Trinitarian doctrine: the Father and the Son possess the same divine essence, distinguished only by their personal relationships. The Father is unbegotten; the Son is eternally begotten by the Father.

Our Sonship and Christ's Sonship

Sacred Scripture calls believers children of God.

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St. John writes:

"Behold, what love the Father has given us, that we may be called children of God." (*1 John 3:1*).

However, this sonship is completely different from that of Christ.

Christ never became a Son.

It always was.

We become sons through baptismal grace.

Christ is Son by nature.

We are children by participation.

Christ eternally shares in the divine essence of the Father.

We participate in the divine life only by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, all our filial adoption depends on our union with Christ. It is only because the eternal Son became man that we can become adopted sons of the Father.

When the Church proclaims that Jesus Christ is "**the Only-begotten Son of God**", **she** affirms an eternal truth that constitutes the foundation of the whole Christian faith. He is not a lofty creature or a man raised by God to a higher dignity, but the eternal Word, born of the Father before all ages, equal to the Father in divinity, glory, and power. In him we contemplate the face of the Father and receive the grace of being made adopted children of God.

His sonship is unique and incommunicable; ours is an undeserved gift. That is why the whole Christian life consists in remaining united to the Son, so that, through him and in him, we can cry out with confidence: "**Abba, Father**" (Romans 8:15).

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CHAPTER III

"Begotten of the Father before all ages; Luz de Luz; true God from true God; begotten, not created; consubstantial with the Father"

These words represent one of the most sublime dogmatic definitions of the entire Christian faith. In them, the Church confesses with precision the eternal divinity of the Son and responds to the heresies that, from the first centuries, have sought to deny or diminish his divine nature.

The Nicene Creed was not written to satisfy theological curiosities, but to preserve intact the truth revealed by Christ and transmitted by the Apostles. The Church understood that any error about the Person of the Son would inevitably lead to an error about salvation itself.

"Begotten of the Father before all ages"

The generation of the Son is an eternal mystery. When the Creed affirms that the Son is begotten, it does not use this word in the human sense, for any comparison with natural generation is insufficient to express the divine mystery.

The generation of the Son is eternal, spiritual, perfect, and unchanging.

It did not happen at a certain time.

It had no beginning.

There will be no end.

It does not imply division of the divine essence.

The Father never existed without the Son.

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That is why the Creed adds:

"Before all ages."

The expression "centuries" does not only designate long periods of time. In the language of the Holy Fathers it means the whole temporal order and the whole of creation. Before time itself existed, the Son already existed eternally with the Father.

St. John the Evangelist expresses this truth with admirable simplicity:

"In the beginning was the Word."

It does not say, "It began to exist."

He says, "It was." The verb used by the Evangelist indicates a continuous and eternal existence.

St. Cyril of Alexandria writes:

"The Father was never deprived of His Word, just as light is never separated from His brightness."

Generation does not imply inferiority

The Arian heretics misinterpreted the word "begotten," supposing that that which is begotten must necessarily have a beginning.

The Church replied that this conclusion proceeds from unduly transferring human categories to the divine mystery.

Among men, the father exists before the son.

In God there is no "before" or "after".

The Father is eternally Father.

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The Son is eternally Son.

There was never a time when the Father was alone.

That is why St. Athanasius affirmed:

"Just as there is never light without brightness, there is no Father without Son."

This comparison was frequently used by the Fathers because it simultaneously expresses the distinction and inseparability between the two.

"Light of Light"

The Creed goes on to say, "Light of Light."

This brief expression has an immense richness.

Light is born from light without diminishing it. When one flame ignites another, the first one loses none of its intensity. In the same way—though infinitely beyond all material comparison—the Father eternally communicates to the Son all the fullness of the divinity without losing any of it.

Christ Himself declared:

"I am the Light of the world; He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12).

And St. John writes:

"God is light, and in Him there is no darkness." (1 John 1:5).

The Fathers saw in this expression an admirable way of teaching that the Son fully participates in the same luminous nature of the Father.

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No two different lights exist. There is one divine light that shines eternally in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

St. Gregory of Nyssa explains:

"As His radiance proceeds inseparably from the sun, so proceeds eternally the Son of the Father."

Of course, every comparison is imperfect, for the mystery of God infinitely surpasses any created image.

"True God of True God"

With these words, the Council of Nicaea wanted to exclude any possibility of interpreting the Son as a secondary or inferior god.

Christ is not like God.

It does not partially participate in divinity.

It does not have a distinct nature.

It is true God.

Just as the Father is true God, so the Son is true God.

St. John begins his Gospel by saying, "The Word was God."

He doesn't say, "God-like."

Nor does it say, "A god."

He states categorically: "It was God."

The Apostle St. Thomas also confessed after the Resurrection:

"My Lord and my God!"

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Jesus Christ did not reject this confession because it expressed the truth.

The Church, since apostolic times, has adored Christ as true God. The martyrs gave their lives for this truth. The Fathers fought for decades to preserve it. The Ecumenical Councils solemnly defined it. The importance of this statement

If Christ were not true God, the worship that the Church offers Him would be idolatry.

If Christ were only a lofty creature, Christian worship would be a violation of the First Commandment.

However, Christ is worshipped in numerous passages of the Gospel.

The Magi prostrate themselves before Him. The disciples worship him after calming the storm. Women worship him after the Resurrection. The Apostles adore him as they contemplate his Ascension. And the same book of Revelation presents all creation worshipping the Lamb along with the Father.

The Church never doubted that this worship belongs to God alone.

"Begotten, not created"

This phrase was added expressly to respond to Arius.

The Son is begotten.

Creatures are created.

There is an absolute difference between the two concepts. To create means to produce something out of nothing. To beget, in God, means to communicate eternally the same divine nature.

Creatures possess a nature distinct from that of the Creator.

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The Son possesses exactly the same nature as the Father.

Therefore it does not belong to the order of creation.

St. Athanasius insisted again and again:

"The Son does not belong to created things, but is the Creator of them."

St. Paul writes:

"For in him were created all things, things in heaven and things on earth, visible and invisible... Everything was created through Him and for Him." (Colossians 1:16).

He who creates all things cannot be part of creation.

"Consubstantial with the Father"

We come to the most important term of the Nicene Creed: **"Consubstantial with the Father."** Greek: Ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρὶ. This word was carefully chosen by the Council Fathers because it expressed the apostolic faith with absolute clarity.

"Homooúsios" means: Of the same essence. Of the same nature. Of the same being.

Not similar. Not similar. Not inferior. Not derivative. But of exactly the same divine essence.

All that belongs to the divine nature belongs equally to the Father and to the Son.

The Father is eternal. The Son is eternal.

The Father is omnipotent. The Son is omnipotent.

The Father is uncreated. The Son is uncreated.

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The Father is worthy of worship. The Son receives the same worship.

St. Basil the Great sums up this doctrine with admirable precision:

"All that belongs to the Father, except the property of being Father, belongs also to the Son."

The only difference between the two lies not in the essence, but in their personal relationships.

The Father is eternally Father.

The Son is eternally Son.

There are not two gods. There is only one God in three Persons.

In proclaiming that Jesus Christ is "begotten of the Father before all ages; Luz de Luz; true God from true God; begotten, not created; consubstantial with the Father", the Church guards the heart of the apostolic faith. These expressions are not philosophical speculations, but the precise formulation of the truth revealed by God and defended by the Holy Fathers against Arianism and other erroneous doctrines.

To confess this truth is to recognize that in Jesus Christ we contemplate the true God made man for our salvation. He eternally shares the same essence of the Father and, while remaining God, took on our human nature to reconcile us with the Father. For this reason, the Church worships him with the same honour and glory as the Father and the Holy Spirit, proclaiming with the angels and saints: "To him be glory, power and adoration forever and ever. Amen."

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CHAPTER IV

"By whom all things were made"

After confessing that the Son is "begotten of the Father before all ages; Luz de Luz; true God from true God; begotten, not created; consubstantial with the Father", the Creed adds:

"By whom all things were made."

These words show that the eternal Son is not a creature, but the Creator Himself. All that exists received being through the Word of God. The Church thus proclaims the Son's participation in the Father's creative work, not as an external instrument, but as the One who, being consubstantial with the Father, works inseparably with Him and with the Holy Spirit.

Creation does not belong to the Father alone, nor to the Son alone, nor to the Holy Spirit alone. All divine work towards the world is common to the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. However, Sacred Scripture attributes in a special way to the Word the role of mediator of creation, because everything was made by Him and for Him.

The Witness of the Gospel According to St. John

The main foundation of this doctrine is found in the prologue to the Gospel of St. John:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." (John 1:1, 3).

This text excludes any interpretation that reduces the Son to a creature. If all created things were made through the Word, then the Word does not belong to the order of created things. Otherwise, he would have to have created himself, which is absurd.

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St. John uses absolute language: "without Him nothing that was made was made." It leaves no room for exceptions. Angels, men, heavens, earth, time itself, and every creature visible and invisible owe their existence to the eternal Word.

The Holy Fathers saw in this passage a definitive refutation of Arianism. St. Athanasius argued that the Son cannot be reckoned among creatures, because He Himself is the Author of all creation.

The Testimony of St. Paul

The Apostle to the Nations develops this same truth in his Epistle to the Colossians:

"For in him were created all things, things in heaven and things on earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; everything was created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and all things in Him stand." (Colossians 1:16-17).

These words reveal several essential aspects of Christian doctrine.

In the first place, Christ exists before all things, not merely chronologically, but because he is eternal.

Second, everything was created through Him. The Word is the divine agent of creation.

Third, everything was created for Him. Christ is not only the origin of creation, but also its purpose. The whole of creation finds its ultimate meaning in the Son of God, to whom the Father's eternal plan is directed.

Finally, St. Paul affirms that all things subsist in Him. Creation not only received being through the Word, but remains sustained by His power. If God were to withdraw his creative and sustaining action, everything would return to nothingness.

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The Common Work of the Holy Trinity

Although the Creed attributes creation in a particular way to the Son, the Church teaches that all divine work towards the world is common to the three Persons.

- + The Father creates through the Son in the Holy Spirit.
- + The Son creates together with the Father and the Spirit.
- + The Holy Spirit perfects and gives life to creation.

This doctrine appears already in the first lines of Genesis:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... and the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:1-2).

And the psalmist proclaims:

"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all his host by the breath of his mouth." (Psalm 32 [33]:6).

The Holy Fathers recognized in this verse a reference to the Father, to the Word and to the Holy Spirit. Thus, from the beginning of biblical revelation, the Trinitarian action in creation is manifested.

The creative wisdom of the Word

The universe is not the result of chance or blind necessity. It has been created with order, beauty, and wisdom.

The book of Proverbs presents divine Wisdom by saying:

"The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way... when I established the heavens, there I was." (Proverbs 8:22-27, according to the patristic interpretation). The Fathers identified this Wisdom with the eternal Word, not because the text literally describes the generation of the Son, but

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because they saw in it a figure of Him by whom God ordained all things with measure, number, and weight.

St. Maximus the Confessor deepened this teaching by affirming that every creature possesses a logos, an interior reason or principle, which finds its origin and its fullness in the eternal Logos, Jesus Christ. In this way, the whole of creation is oriented towards him and reaches its true meaning in communion with the Incarnate Word.

Creation as a Manifestation of Divine Love

God did not create the universe out of necessity, for He lacked nothing. The Most Holy Trinity possesses in itself the fullness of life, love and glory.

Creation springs from divine goodness. It is a free act by which God wanted to communicate being to creatures called to participate in his life.

St. Basil the Great teaches that the world is like a school where man learns to know the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. Every creature, from the stars to the humblest flower of the field, silently proclaims the glory of God.

That is why the believer contemplates creation with reverence. He does not worship it, for God alone is worthy of worship, but he recognizes in it the imprint of his Creator.

Christ and the New Creation

The same Word by whom all things were made came into the world to restore creation fallen through sin.

Sin did not destroy the divine plan, but it introduced corruption and death into the world. The Son of God took on human nature to renew creation from within.

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St. Paul writes:

"Wherefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Christ's redemptive work is not just about forgiving individual sins. Its purpose is to restore all creation and lead it to the glory of the Kingdom of God.

For this reason, the Church sees the Resurrection of Christ as the beginning of the new creation, in which death has been conquered and humanity has been reconciled with God.

When the Church confesses that the Son is the One "by whom all things were made," she proclaims that Jesus Christ is the eternal Word, Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Nothing exists outside of His creative power, and nothing attains its true purpose except in Him. The whole of creation bears the imprint of the Logos and is called to participate in the glory that was fully manifested in the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection of the Son of God.

This truth invites the Christian to look at the world with the eyes of faith. The universe is not an accident or a meaningless reality, but the wise and loving work of God. Every creature reminds the believer that everything is from the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, and that all creation awaits its full restoration in Christ, "so that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

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CHAPTER V

"That for us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven"

After proclaiming the eternal divinity of the Word and his participation in the creation of the universe, the Creed leads us to the most extraordinary event in history: the Incarnation of the Son of God. He by whom the heavens and the earth were created voluntarily descended to save fallen humanity.

The Church confesses:

"For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven."

These words sum up God's immense love for man. The descent of the Son was not the consequence of necessity, but a free act of mercy. The eternal Word, always remaining in the bosom of the Father, wanted to take on our condition in order to restore in us the divine image obscured by sin.

St. John expresses this mystery in words that the Church never ceases to contemplate:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

The Incarnation is therefore the supreme manifestation of divine love.

"For us men"

These words possess immense depth. The Creed does not simply say that Christ descended into the world. He says, "For us men."

The whole work of Christ has a deeply personal character. He came for every human being called to fellowship with God.

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He did not come down to the angels. He did not descend to create a new universe. He descended to rescue the man.

Since the fall of Adam, mankind had been subjected to sin, corruption, and death. The image of God remained in man, but it had been profoundly obscured. Fellowship with God had been broken. Death reigned over all mankind.

St. Paul describes this tragedy by saying:

"Because all have sinned, they fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23).

And he adds:

"As through one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, so death passed into all men." (Romans 5:12).

Christ came precisely to restore what Adam had lost. God's Infinite Compassion

The Holy Fathers constantly insist that the Incarnation is born exclusively from divine love.

St. Isaac the Syrian writes:

"It was not justice that moved God to save man, but His infinite mercy."

God did not abandon man after the fall. From the very moment of sin, the preparation for salvation began.

- + The promises made to Abraham.
- + The election of Israel.
- + The Law given to Moses.
- + The Prophets.
- + The Psalms.

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Everything was preparing for the coming of the Messiah.

The history of salvation is the story of a God who continually seeks the lost man.

Already in Paradise, after sin, God calls: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9).

Not because he did not know where Adam was, but because he invited man to repentance.

The whole of biblical history can be seen as the divine response to that tragedy.

"For our salvation"

The Creed immediately adds, "And for our salvation."

What exactly does this salvation mean?

On many occasions, salvation is reduced only to the forgiveness of sins. The Orthodox Church teaches something much deeper.

Salvation means the complete restoration of man.

- + Deliverance from sin.
- + Victory over death.
- + Reconciliation with God.
- + Participation in the divine life.
- + Renewal of all creation.

The Greek word σωτηρία (soteria) means deliverance, healing, and restoration.

Christ came to heal human nature sick with sin.

St. Athanasius writes in his treatise On the Incarnation of the Word:

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"The Word assumed a body to destroy death and to renew man created in the image of God."

Salvation is not simply about avoiding punishment. It consists in restoring to man communion with God.

The Deification of Man

Here we find one of the most characteristic doctrines of orthodox theology.

St. Peter writes:

"That ye may become partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4).

The Fathers called this reality theosis, that is, deification. This does not mean that man becomes God by nature. The divine essence remains absolutely inaccessible. What man receives is participation in the divine life by grace.

St. Athanasius admirably sums up this doctrine:

"God became man so that man might become god by grace."

This phrase has been repeated for centuries throughout the Orthodox tradition.

Christ took on our humanity to communicate his life to us. The Incarnation has as its purpose our union with God.

"He came down from the heavens"

These words do not mean that the Son left heaven to move elsewhere.

- + God is infinite.
- + It is present everywhere.
- + The Word never left the bosom of the Father.

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St. John states:

"The Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father..."

Even during his earthly life he remains eternally united to the Father. The descent expresses the voluntary annihilation of the Son.

St. Paul writes:

"Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant."
(Philippians 2:6-7).

This "shedding" does not mean losing divinity. Christ never ceased to be God. What he did was to fully assume the human condition. He remained true God. He became a real man. Two natures. A single person.

- + No confusion.
- + No division.
- + No change.
- + No separation.

As the Holy Council of Chalcedon would later define.

Relegation as an act of humility

- + The fall began with pride. Salvation begins with humility.
- + Lucifer wanted to rise. Christ descended.
- + Adam wanted to become god without God. Christ, being God, took the form of a servant.

St. Ephrem the Syrian contemplates this mystery by saying:

"The Most High came down to lift up fallen man."

The whole life of Christ manifests this humility.

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- ❖ He is born in a manger.
- ❖ He lives in a humble family.
- ❖ He works with his hands.
- ❖ He washes the feet of his disciples.
- ❖ He dies on a cross.

And precisely because of this humility he destroys the pride of the devil.

The Incarnation inaugurates the new creation

When the Word enters the world, a new creation begins. The first began in Genesis. The second begins in Nazareth.

The first was accomplished by the creative Word. The second by that same Word made flesh.

That is why St. Paul calls Christ:

"The New Adam."

Where the first Adam failed, the second Adam overcomes.

Where death entered, now enters life.

Where sin reigned, grace abounds all the more.

The Church proclaims with deep gratitude that the eternal Son of God "for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven". These words reveal that all Christ's work is born of the Father's merciful love and the Son's free obedience. The descent of the Word is not a diminution of His glory, but the most perfect manifestation of it, for the true power of God is revealed in humility and in the love that seeks to save man.

By assuming our nature, the Son of God opened the way for man to once again participate in divine life. The Incarnation is not only the beginning of redemption, but also the foundation of the deification of the human being. In Christ, heaven descends to earth so that earth may be taken up to

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heaven. For this reason, the believer contemplates this mystery with wonder and joins his voice to that of the Church, glorifying the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever, and forever and ever. Amen.

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CHAPTER VI

"And he became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man"

After proclaiming that the eternal Son of God descended from heaven for our salvation, the Creed leads us to the central mystery of all human history:

"And he became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man."

These words constitute the heart of the Christian faith. The eternal Word, by whom the ages were created, took on our human nature without ceasing to be God. The Invisible became visible. The Infinite accepted the limits of our condition. The Impassive One accepted to suffer in the flesh. The Immortal wanted to experience death in order to destroy it from within.

The Incarnation is not simply one of the events of sacred history; it is the event that gives meaning to all creation. All that God had prepared since the fall of our first parents finds its fulfillment here.

St. John the Evangelist sums up this mystery with a phrase that has illuminated the Church's reflection for twenty centuries:

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us; and we saw his glory, glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14).

In these few words is contained the mystery of salvation.

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"And he became incarnate"

The Church does not simply say that the Son "came into the world." He says, "He became incarnate." The term comes from the Latin *incarnatus*, which translates the Greek *σαρκωθέντα*, "made flesh".

The expression means that the Son of God truly assumed human nature.

He did not take on a human appearance. He did not appear under a symbolic figure. He did not descend disguised as a man. He truly became a man. He assumed a real body. A true rational soul. A true human will. A true human intelligence. Everything that truly belongs to human nature was assumed by Christ, except sin.

As the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches:

"He was like his brethren in all things, except sin." (cf. Hebrews 4:15).

This statement was firmly defended by the Church against those who maintained that Christ had only taken an apparent body or that he lacked a human soul.

Against Docetism

As early as the first century there appeared those who taught that Christ did not possess a true body. This doctrine is known as docetism, from the Greek verb *dokein*, "to appear."

According to them, Christ only seemed to suffer. He seemed to walk. He seemed to eat. He seemed to be dying. Everything would have been an appearance.

The Church immediately rejected this teaching.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of the Apostles, wrote:

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"Christ was truly born, truly ate, drank truly, was truly persecuted, was truly crucified, and truly rose again."

If Christ had not assumed a real humanity, he would not have truly redeemed our nature either.

Salvation would be only an illusion.

That is why the Church constantly insists on the reality of the Incarnation.

The Holy Spirit in the Incarnation

The Creed states, "Of the Holy Spirit..."

The Incarnation was the work of the entire Holy Trinity. The Father sends the Son. The Son assumes human nature. The Holy Spirit miraculously works the virginal conception.

The Archangel Gabriel announced to the Blessed Virgin:

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Holy Being who will be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35).

The conception of Christ was not the fruit of human will. It was not the work of an earthly father. It was a supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Just as the Spirit of God moved over the waters at the beginning of the first creation (Genesis 1:2), now the same Spirit inaugurates the new creation in the purest womb of the Virgin Mary.

The Fathers here see a profound parallel between the creation of the world and the beginning of redemption.

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The free cooperation of the Virgin Mary

Although the Incarnation is the work of God, it does not take place without the free response of the Virgin. When the Archangel announces the mystery, Mary replies:

"Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38).

These words represent one of the most sublime acts of obedience in all of history.

- ❖ Eve's disobedience opened the way to sin.
- ❖ **Mary's obedience opens the way to salvation.**

St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes:

"The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience."

The Fathers often call the Blessed Virgin the New Eve.

Just as the first woman collaborated in the fall of the first Adam, the New Eve freely cooperates in the coming of the New Adam.

It is not a question of equality between Christ and Mary. All saving work belongs to Christ alone. But God wanted to count on the free cooperation of a creature to bring about the mystery of the Incarnation.

"From the Virgin Mary"

The Creed expressly mentions the Blessed Virgin. He does not do so simply to point out a historical fact. He does so because Mary occupies a unique place in the economy of salvation.

The eternal Son did not descend from heaven bringing with Him a body already formed. He received from Mary a true human nature. Her body was truly formed in her virginal womb.

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- ❖ He shared our humanity.
- ❖ Our meat.
- ❖ Our blood.
- ❖ Our condition.

St. Paul writes:

"When the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of woman."
(Galatians 4:4).

Christ's humanity did not descend from heaven. She was truly received from the Virgin. For this reason, the Church has never considered Mary as a mere passive instrument. She is truly the Mother of the Lord according to the flesh.

Mary's Perpetual Virginity

Since apostolic times the Church has confessed the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God.

- ❖ Virgin before childbirth.
- ❖ Virgin during childbirth.
- ❖ Virgin after childbirth.

This mystery does not diminish the true humanity of Christ. On the contrary, it shows that his birth is an entirely new work of God.

St. Ezekiel mysteriously prophesies:

"This door will remain closed; no one will enter through it, for the Lord God of Israel entered through it." (Ezekiel 44:2).

The Holy Fathers saw in this closed door a figure of the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God.

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St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Ambrose, St. John Chrysostom, and St. John Damascene unanimously teach this doctrine, which is part of the constant tradition of the Church.

The Blessed Virgin as Theotokos

One of the most revered titles in the Orthodox tradition is Theotokos, which means "Mother of God" or, more literally, "She Who Gave Birth to God." This title was solemnly confirmed by the Third Ecumenical Council held at Ephesus in 431.

The Church does not call Mary that way because the divinity has its origin in her. The Son is eternally begotten by the Father according to his divinity. However, the one who was born of Mary is one Person: the eternal Word made man. Therefore, whoever gave birth to Christ gave birth to the incarnate Son of God.

St. Cyril of Alexandria defended this truth against Nestorius, stating that denying Mary the title of Theotokos divided Christ into two distinct subjects. Divine motherhood does not exalt Mary above God, but protects the truth about the one Person of Jesus Christ: true God and true man.

The Church confesses that the eternal Word "became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary", proclaiming that salvation is not an idea, but a real event in history. The Son of God fully assumed our human nature through the work of the Holy Spirit and with the free cooperation of the Blessed Virgin. In Mary's purest womb, divinity and humanity were united forever in the one Person of the Son.

The Virgin Mary, by responding with faith and obedience, became God's chosen instrument for the Incarnation of the Word. That is why the Church honors her as Theotokos, not to turn her gaze away from Christ, but to confess more clearly who is the One who was born of her: the true God made true man for our salvation

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CHAPTER VI

«... And he became a man»

The Ineffable Mystery of the Incarnation

After affirming that the Word became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, the Creed concludes this part by saying:

"And he became a man."

This simple expression contains a mystery that surpasses all created intelligence. The eternal Son of God assumed not only a human body, but the whole human nature. He truly became one of us, remaining at the same time true God.

The Church views this event with reverence and adoration. No philosopher could have imagined it, no prophet could have fully comprehended it, and no man could have realized it. It is the free initiative of divine love.

St. Paul writes:

"Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh." (*1 Timothy 3:16*).

The Incarnation does not diminish the glory of God; it manifests the depth of his mercy. The same one who created man wanted to share his condition in order to lead him back to communion with the Father.

True God and True Man

The Church teaches that Jesus Christ is one Person in whom two complete natures subsist: the divine and the human.

He is not half God and half man, he is not a man inspired by God, he is not a prophet raised to divine dignity. He is true God and true man. Like God, he is eternal, uncreated, omnipotent, and consubstantial with the Father. As a man, he was born of the Virgin Mary, grew, worked, was hungry, thirsty, tired, cried, suffered and died.

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The Gospel bears witness to both realities.

- ❖ When He calms the storm with a single word, He manifests His divine power.
- ❖ When he sleeps in the boat, he manifests his true humanity.
- ❖ When he resurrects Lazarus, he reveals his authority over death.
- ❖ When he weeps at his friend's grave, he shows the authenticity of his human feelings.

There is no contradiction in these acts. Everything belongs to the one Person of the Incarnate Word, who acts according to one nature or another.

The Hypostatic Union

The Holy Fathers called this mystery a **hypostatic union**. The word **hypostasis** means "person" or "personal subsistence."

In Christ there are not two persons, one divine and the other human. There is only one Person: the eternal Son of God.

This one Person possesses two natures:

- ❖ the divine, eternal, and uncreated nature;
- ❖ human nature, assumed in the time of the Virgin Mary.

Both remain complete and perfect.

- ❖ They don't mix.
- ❖ They are not confused.
- ❖ They do not transform into one another.
- ❖ They do not separate.

They remain inseparably united in the one Person of the Word.

For this reason, the Fourth Ecumenical Council, meeting in Chalcedon in 451, proclaimed that Jesus Christ must be confessed:

"In two natures, without confusion, without change, without division and without separation."

These four expressions became the norm of all orthodox Christology.

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"No confusion and no change"

The divine and human natures do not blend together to form a third nature.

- ❖ Divinity does not absorb humanity.
- ❖ Humanity does not modify divinity.

After the Incarnation, Christ continues to be fully God and fully man.

St. John Damascene explains:

"Just as red-hot iron partakes of fire without ceasing to be iron, so the humanity of Christ remains true humanity by being inseparably united to the divinity."

Every human comparison is imperfect, but it helps to understand that union does not destroy the properties proper to each nature.

"No division and no separation"

Although natures remain distinct, they never act as if they belong to two different subjects.

The one who is born of Mary is the same one who created the universe.

The one who weeps over Jerusalem is the same one who upholds all things with his word.

Whoever dies on the Cross is the Lord of glory.

There are not two Christs.

There are not two children.

There are not two people.

There is only one Lord Jesus Christ.

That is why St. Cyril of Alexandria said:

"One is the Son, one is the Lord, one Christ."

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The importance of this doctrine

Some might think that these clarifications belong only to the discussions of the ancient councils.

However, the Fathers knew that our salvation depends on this truth.

If Christ were not true man, He would not have assumed our nature.

What is not assumed cannot be healed.

St. Gregory the Theologian expressed this truth with a famous phrase:

"What was not assumed was not redeemed."

Christ took on all human nature in order to restore it completely.

On the other hand, if Christ were not true God, his sacrifice would not have infinite value and could not definitively overcome sin or death.

Our salvation demands both realities.

The Redeemer had to be a true man to represent us.

He had to be true God to save us.

The Obedience of the New Adam

St. Paul draws a profound parallel between Adam and Christ.

The first Adam, by his disobedience, introduced sin and death.

The second Adam, Jesus Christ, by his perfect obedience, opened the way to life again.

The Apostle writes:

"For just as by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one man many will be made righteous." (*Romans 5:19*).

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Christ's whole life was perfect obedience to the Father.

- ❖ He obeyed in Nazareth.
- ❖ He obeyed during his public ministry.
- ❖ He obeyed in Gethsemane.
- ❖ He obeyed until Cruz's death.

His obedience was not an imposed obligation, but the perfect expression of filial love.

Christ Sanctifies Human Nature

By taking on our humanity, Christ sanctified all human nature.

- ❖ He sanctified the birth.
- ❖ He sanctified the work.
- ❖ He sanctified the family.
- ❖ He sanctified suffering.
- ❖ He sanctified death.

Nothing truly human was left out of the redemptive work.

That is why the Holy Fathers affirm that the Incarnation is already the beginning of our salvation.

The Cross and the Resurrection will bring that work to its fullness, but the restoration of humanity begins when the Word takes on our flesh.

Christ's Glorified Humanity

After the Resurrection and the Ascension, Christ did not abandon human nature.

He remains forever a true man.

His glorified humanity is seated at the right hand of the Father. This truth fills the believer with hope. Our nature has already entered into the glory of the Kingdom. Where Christ is, there is also the destiny to which we are called.

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As St. Paul says:

"Our citizenship is in heaven, from where we also await the Savior."
(Philippians 3:20).

The humanity of Christ is the guarantee of our future glorification.

The Believer's Response

The mystery of the Incarnation cannot be contemplated only as a doctrinal truth. It must transform our entire life.

If God became man out of love for us, how can we not respond with love?

If Christ assumed our nature, we must offer Him our whole existence.

Every act of obedience, humility and charity is a participation in the life of the Incarnate Word.

The Church continually revives this mystery in the Divine Liturgy. There we contemplate the same Christ who was born of the Virgin, died for us, rose again gloriously and is given to us in the holy Mysteries for our sanctification.

By confessing that the Son of God "**became man**", the Church proclaims the greatest mystery in the history of salvation. The eternal Word fully assumed our nature without ceasing to be God, uniting divinity and humanity forever in his one Person. This union, defined by the Holy Ecumenical Councils and safeguarded by the tradition of the Fathers, is the foundation of all Christian hope.

Thanks to the Incarnation, our nature has been restored, sanctified, and elevated. The New Adam won where the first fell; obedience replaced disobedience, life conquered death, and communion with God was once again opened to man. For this reason the Church worships the Word made flesh and sings with joy: "**Today the Virgin gives birth to him who is above all being, and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible**", proclaiming that the eternal God became truly man so that man, through grace, may come to share in divine life.

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CHAPTER VII

"And he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried"

After contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation, the Creed leads us to the central event in salvation history: the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church confesses:

"And he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried."

These words are much more than a historical memory. They are the proclamation of the redemptive sacrifice by which the Son of God destroyed the power of sin and death. The Cross, which for the ancient world was an instrument of ignominy reserved for criminals, was transformed by Christ into the Tree of Life. Where sin seemed to triumph, the victory of divine love was manifested.

St. Paul writes:

"We preach Christ crucified, a scoundrel to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles; but to those who are called, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

The Church has never separated the Cross from glory. The Crucified One is the same One who rose again on the third day and reigns eternally at the right hand of the Father. For this reason, Christians look at the Cross with veneration, not as a sign of defeat, but as the banner of Christ's victory over sin, the devil and death.

"And He Was Crucified for Us"

These words contain a deeply consoling truth. Christ did not die out of necessity. He did not die because his enemies were stronger than him. He did not die as a victim of an inevitable fate. **He died freely.**

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Our Lord declares in the Gospel:

"No one takes my life; I give it voluntarily. I have power to give it, and I have power to take it again." (John 10:18).

The whole Passion was an act of perfect obedience to the Father and of infinite love for humanity.

The Creed adds: "For us."

Every believer should hear these words as being addressed personally to him. Christ suffered for all mankind. He died for every man and every woman.

St. Paul expresses this truth with a deeply personal emotion:

"He loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20).

Christ's sacrifice has a universal scope. No human being is excluded from the possibility of participating in the fruits of his Redemption.

The Cross, a sign of divine love

From a purely human perspective, the Cross looks like a failure. Faith, however, discovers in it the supreme manifestation of God's love.

Our Lord Himself said:

"No one has greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13).

Christ went even further, for he gave his life not only for his friends, but also for his enemies.

St. Paul writes:

"God demonstrates his love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).

The Cross is the place where justice and mercy meet. Sin is not ignored or minimized, but it also does not have the final say. There is manifested the

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love that overcomes hatred, the forgiveness that overcomes violence and the obedience that overcomes Adam's disobedience.

The Obedience of the New Adam

The Holy Fathers contemplate the Passion of Christ in the light of the Genesis account. The first Adam disobeyed by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The New Adam obeys unto death on the tree of the Cross.

St. Paul teaches:

"He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:8).

Where the first Adam stretched out his hand to appropriate that which did not belong to him, Christ stretched out his hands on the Cross to embrace the whole world.

For this reason, many Fathers call the Cross the new Tree of Life.

St. Ephrem the Syrian writes that the fruit of the first tree introduced death, while the fruit of the new Tree grants eternal life.

"Under Pontius Pilate"

The Creed expressly mentions Pontius Pilate.

Why include the name of a Roman governor in a profession of faith?

The Church does this for several reasons.

In the first place, to affirm the historical character of the Passion. The death of Christ does not belong to the world of myths or legends. It happened at a particular time in history, under a well-known ruler.

The Christian faith is not based on abstract ideas, but on real events.

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Second, Pilate's name recalls that the Son of God agreed to be judged by a human tribunal. The Judge of the universe appeared as a defendant before his creatures. He who will come to judge the living and the dead humbly submitted to an unjust judgment.

Finally, Pilate symbolizes the weakness of the man who recognizes the innocence of Christ, but yields to the pressure of fear and convenience. His figure invites every Christian to examine whether he has ever preferred human security to truth.

"He suffered"

The Creed adds a brief but enormously important statement: "He suffered."

Christ's suffering was true, it was not an appearance, it was not an illusion, it was not a mere symbol.

The Son of God experienced in his human nature weariness, physical pain, anguish, and death.

The prophet Isaiah had announced:

"Despised and rejected among men, a man of sorrows, experienced in suffering." (Isaiah 53:3).

The Gospels soberly show the intensity of his Passion: the agony in Gethsemane, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the road to Golgotha and the Crucifixion.

However, the Church teaches that suffering belongs to human nature assumed by the Word. Divinity, by its very nature, remains impassive. The eternal Son himself, who is impassive according to his divinity, willed to suffer willingly according to his humanity. This precision, defended by the Holy Fathers, preserves both the reality of Christ's suffering and the immutability of the divine nature.

The Cross and the Victory Over Death

In the eyes of the world, Christ's death seemed the definitive triumph of evil, but precisely at that moment the defeat of the enemy began.

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St. John Chrysostom exclaims in his famous Easter Homily:

"Death was conquered by Death. Hades received a body and found God; he received earth and found heaven."

The Cross is not a defeat, but the beginning of victory. Christ freely enters death to destroy its power from within and open the way to the Resurrection.

"And he was buried"

Finally, the Creed states, "And he was buried."

Burial confirms the reality of Christ's death. It was not a fainting spell or an apparent death. The body of the Lord was placed in a new tomb by Joseph of Arimathea, while Nicodemus prepared the spices according to Jewish custom.

The Gospels emphasize this fact because the Resurrection can only be fully understood if the death was real.

Burial also has a deep spiritual significance. Christ descended to the extremity of the human condition. He took on not only our life and our suffering, but also the experience of death and the grave. No place was beyond the reach of his saving presence.

The Orthodox tradition sees the tomb of Christ not as the end of history, but as the threshold of victory. On Holy Saturday, while the Lord's body rests in the tomb, his human soul inseparably united to the Word descends into Hades to announce the victory and free the righteous who were waiting for the Redemption.

The Cross in the Life of the Christian

The contemplation of the Passion cannot be reduced to an intellectual exercise. The Lord Himself taught:

"If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23).

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The Christian's cross is not about seeking suffering for one's own sake, but about accepting with faith the trials permitted by God, fighting against sin and remaining faithful to the Gospel. Every renunciation for the love of Christ, every act of forgiveness, every work of mercy, and every perseverance in adversity participates in the mystery of the Cross.

As St. Isaac the Syrian teaches, the way of the Cross is inseparable from the way of the Resurrection. Suffering united to Christ never has the last word, because it always leads to life.

Confessing that Jesus Christ "was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried", the Church proclaims the mystery of love taken to the extreme. The eternal Son of God freely accepted the Passion in order to overcome sin, reconcile man with the Father, and destroy the power of death. His Cross, far from being a sign of defeat, became the Tree of Life, from which springs salvation for the whole world.

The burial of the Lord does not mark the end of his work, but the sacred silence that precedes the Easter dawn. In the tomb the victory already shines and will be manifested on the third day. For this reason, the Church venerates the Holy Cross with deep gratitude and sings: "Before Your Cross we prostrate ourselves, O Sovereign, and Your holy Resurrection we glorify", because she knows that the Passion and glory form a single mystery of salvation.

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CHAPTER VIII

"And he rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures"

After proclaiming the Passion, Death and Burial of the Lord, the Creed joyfully announces the event that forever transformed the history of the world:

"And he rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures."

These words are at the very heart of the Gospel. All apostolic preaching rests on this fact. If Christ had not risen, the Cross would have been only the death of a righteous man; but when he rose again, he showed that he was truly the Son of God and that he had definitively conquered sin, the devil and death.

St. Paul states with extraordinary clarity:

"If Christ is not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain." (1 Corinthians 15:14).

The Resurrection is not a symbol of the triumph of goodness or a metaphor for spiritual rebirth. It is a historical and supernatural event, in which the same body that was crucified and buried was glorified by the power of God.

The Church lives by this truth. Every Sunday is a small Easter, and the whole liturgical life revolves around the risen Christ. Without the Resurrection there would be no Church, no sacraments, no hope of eternal life.

"And he rose again"

The Creed does not say that Christ simply came back to life, as happened with Lazarus, the son of the widow of Nain or the daughter of Jairus.

They were returned to this mortal life and, as time went on, they died again.

Christ rose never to die.

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His humanity was transformed and glorified. He kept the same body that had been born of the Virgin Mary and nailed to the Cross, but now that body shared fully in the glory of the Resurrection.

The Gospel testifies to this continuity. The Lord shows the Apostles the wounds on his hands and side. He invites St. Thomas to touch them and eats in front of the disciples to show that it is not a spirit or an illusion.

However, that same glorified body is no longer subject to the limitations of our present condition. He enters with the doors closed, disappears from the sight of the disciples of Emmaus, and ascends gloriously into heaven.

The Resurrection inaugurates a new form of human existence, free from corruption and death.

Victory over death

Since the fall of Adam, death dominated all mankind, no man could escape his power, Kings and slaves, wise and ignorant, young and old. They all descended into the tomb.

But Christ freely entered the realm of death to destroy it from within.

St. John Chrysostom proclaims in his famous Easter Homily:

"Where, Death, is your sting? Where, Hades, is your victory? Christ is risen, and you have been cast down. Christ is risen, and the demons have fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns."

These words are sung every year during Holy Easter because they sum up the joy of the whole Church.

Death no longer has the last word.

The grave is no longer man's ultimate destiny.

Christ has opened the way to eternal life.

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"On the third day"

The Creed expressly states that the Resurrection occurred:

"On the third day."

This detail is not accidental, Our Lord had announced it repeatedly during his ministry:

"The Son of Man will be betrayed... they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again." (Matthew 17:22-23).

The third day also has a profound biblical significance.

The prophet Hosea had announced:

"It will give us life after two days; on the third day he will raise us up, and we will live before him." (Hosea 6:2).

Likewise, the prophet Jonah remained three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, foreshadowing Christ's descent into the tomb and his glorious Resurrection.

The Lord Himself interprets this sign by saying:

"Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12:40).

The Church sees in these events of the Old Testament prophetic figures of Christ's Passover.

"According to the Scriptures"

The Creed adds an expression of enormous importance:

"According to the Scriptures."

The Resurrection was not an isolated or unexpected event, it had been prepared and announced by God since ancient times.

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The Psalms contain numerous prophetic announcements.

David sings:

"You shall not forsake my soul in Hades, nor allow your Holy One to see corruption." (Psalm 15 [16]:10).

St. Peter quotes this text on the day of Pentecost and explains that David spoke prophetically of the Messiah.

Isaiah also announces to the suffering Servant that, after laying down his life, he will see the light and prolong his days (Isaiah 53:10-11).

The whole history of Israel finds its fullness in Christ's Passover.

What was hidden under figures and promises is fully manifested in the Resurrection of the Lord.

The Empty Tomb

One of the first testimonies of the Resurrection was the empty tomb.

The holy women went at dawn to anoint the body of the Lord, they found the stone rolled away. The angels announced to them:

"Why do you seek the living among the dead? It's not here; he is risen." (Luke 24:5-6).

The empty tomb, by itself, would not have been enough to ground the faith. But together with the many appearances of the Risen Lord and the unanimous witness of the Apostles, it constitutes a powerful proof of the Easter event.

The Church does not believe in the Resurrection because the tomb was empty; believe because the risen Lord manifested Himself to those who knew Him and lived with Him.

The apparitions of the Risen Lord

For forty days, Christ appeared repeatedly to his disciples.

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He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the Myrophora women, to Peter, to the disciples of Emmaus, to the Eleven assembled, to Saint Thomas, to more than five hundred brothers at the same time, as Saint Paul recalls. These apparitions were not subjective visions or inner experiences.

The disciples conversed with Him, listened to His voice, contemplated His wounds, shared the table with Him, received His teachings.

The transformation of the Apostles is one of the most eloquent testimonies of the Resurrection. Those men who had fled during the Passion then courageously announced the Risen Christ, enduring persecution, imprisonment and martyrdom.

The Resurrection and Our Salvation

The Resurrection does not belong to Christ alone. It also belongs to all who are united to Him.

St. Paul writes:

"Christ is risen from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Just as the first ears of grain announce the harvest, so the Resurrection of Christ announces the future resurrection of all men.

Baptism unites us to this mystery.

The Apostle teaches:

"We were buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, we also might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4).

Every Christian is called to live the new life of the Risen One from now on, abandoning sin and walking in the light of the Gospel.

Easter as the centre of the Church's life

No feast occupies such a high place in the Orthodox tradition as Holy Easter.

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The Fathers call it:

"The Feast of Feasts."

"The Solemnity of Solemnities."

The whole liturgical year leads to it, all sacramental life is born of it, all Christian hope is nourished by it. During Easter night, the Church proclaims again and again:

"Christ has risen from the dead, trampling death with death, and giving life to those who were in the graves!"

This hymn sums up the faith of the whole Church.

By confessing that Jesus Christ "rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures", the Church proclaims the definitive victory of the Son of God over death and corruption. The Resurrection is the divine seal upon all of Christ's redemptive work and the foundation of Christian hope. In the Risen Lord we contemplate not only the triumph of the promised Messiah, but also the glorious destiny to which all redeemed humanity is called.

Easter is not a memory of the past; it is a living reality that transforms the believer's existence. Every celebration of the Divine Liturgy announces the Resurrection, every Sunday recalls the day on which death was conquered, and every Christian is called to live as a child of light, already anticipating in this life the glory of the Kingdom to come. For this reason, the Church never ceases to proclaim with inexhaustible joy: "Christ is risen! He is truly risen!", for in this confession the eternal joy of the Gospel is summed up.

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CHAPTER IX

"And he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father"

After proclaiming the glorious Resurrection of the Lord, the Church confesses a new mystery of the economy of salvation:

"And he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father."

The Ascension of Christ does not constitute a separation from the Church, but the culmination of his redemptive work on earth and the beginning of a new form of his presence among us. The same Lord who descended from heaven for our salvation returns to the Father glorified, bringing with him the human nature that he assumed from the Blessed Virgin.

The Ascension does not mean that Christ left the world. He himself promised his disciples:

"Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20).

Their presence is no longer limited by the visible conditions of earthly life. He remains with his Church through the action of the Holy Spirit, in the preaching of the Gospel, in the Holy Mysteries and, in an eminent way, in the Divine Eucharist.

The Ascension, the culmination of the redemptive work

For forty days after His Resurrection, Christ instructed His disciples about the Kingdom of God, strengthened them in faith, explained the Scriptures to them, confirmed to them the truth of His Resurrection, prepared them for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Finally, on the Mount of Olives, he raised his hands to bless them, and as he blessed them, he was lifted up into heaven.

St. Luke narrates:

"And it came to pass, that he blessed them, and departed from them, and was taken up into heaven." (Luke 24:51).

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And in the book of Acts he adds:

"He was lifted up, and a cloud hid him from his eyes." (Acts 1:9).

The cloud should not be understood as a meteorological phenomenon. In Sacred Scripture, the cloud often symbolizes the glory and presence of God. The cloud covered Mount Sinai, filled the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple, and enveloped the Lord in the Transfiguration. The Ascension manifests that Christ enters visibly into the divine glory that belongs to Him from all eternity.

The Glorification of Human Nature

One of the most profound aspects of Ascension is that it is not only the eternal Word that ascends, but also the human nature that He assumed.

The Son of God never left heaven according to his divinity.

As God, who fills all things, cannot move from one place to another like creatures, what ascends is the glorified humanity of Christ, that nature that was born of the Virgin, that walked the roads of Galilee, that suffered on the Cross, that rose gloriously, that is now lifted above the heavens.

St. Leo the Great states:

"The Ascension of Christ is also our elevation; for where the glory of the Head has come, there is called the hope of the Body."

In Christ, humanity enters again into perfect communion with God.

That which was expelled from Paradise by sin is now ushered into heavenly glory.

"He is seated at the right hand of the Father"

The Creed goes on to say, "And he is seated at the right hand of the Father."

These words should not be understood in a material way.

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God the Father does not possess a body. There is no physical throne by which Christ sits. The expression comes from biblical language and means full participation in divine glory, authority, and power.

The Messianic Psalm proclaims:

"The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" (Psalm 109 [110]:1).

Our Lord Himself quotes this psalm to reveal His Messianic identity.

To sit at the right hand of the Father means that the Son, according to his glorified humanity, participates fully in divine kingship and lordship.

He does not receive a dignity that he did not possess before as God, the Word was always equal to the Father in glory and majesty.

What is now exalted is the humanity assumed by Him.

Christ, King of the Universe

The Ascension reveals that Jesus Christ reigns over all creation.

St. Paul writes:

"God highly exalted him and gave him the name which is above every name, so that every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth should bow to the name of Jesus." (Philippians 2:9-10).

This reign is not like that of the kings of this world, Christ does not rule by violence, He does not impose His authority by force, His Kingdom is the Kingdom of truth, love, justice and peace.

When Pilate asked him if he was king, Jesus answered:

"My Kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36).

He did not mean that his Kingdom was unreal, he wanted to teach that his origin and nature are divine.

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His authority does not depend on political power or arms, but on his victory over sin and death.

Christ, our High Priest

The Ascension also has a profound priestly significance.

The Epistle to the Hebrews presents Christ as the true and eternal High Priest.

The priests of the Old Testament entered the Holy of Holies once a year carrying the blood of animals.

Christ, on the other hand, entered the heavenly sanctuary offering his own Blood.

The sacred author writes:

"Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by human hands, a type of the true one, but into heaven itself, to present himself for us now before God." (Hebrews 9:24).

His sacrifice does not need to be repeated, it is unique, perfect, eternal.

Each Divine Liturgy does not add a new sacrifice, but sacramentally makes present the one sacrifice offered once and for all on Golgotha.

Christ Intercedes for Us

Seated at the right hand of the Father, Christ does not remain indifferent to the fate of humanity.

Scripture states:

"Always live to intercede for them." (Hebrews 7:25).

This intercession does not mean that the Father should be convinced to love us.

The Father Himself sent the Son out of love for the world.

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Christ's intercession expresses the eternal permanence of His redemptive work.

The glorified Lord continually presents to the Father humanity reconciled by his sacrifice.

Therefore, the Christian can approach God with confidence.

We have a Mediator who knows our weaknesses, because he fully shared our human condition, except sin.

The promise of his return

As the Apostles watched the Lord ascend, two angels said to them:

"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come just as you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11).

The Ascension already contains the promise of the Second Coming.

Christ did not definitively abandon his Church, he will return gloriously to consummate the Kingdom of God, therefore, the Ascension does not inspire sadness, but hope.

The Church lives looking to heaven, waiting with faith for the return of her Lord.

Ascension and the spiritual life

The Ascension reminds the Christian of his true homeland.

St. Paul exhorts:

"Seek the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." (Colossians 3:1).

This does not mean despising the created world, it means living in it without making it our ultimate goal, the Christian works, forms a family, serves society, fulfills his responsibilities, but knows that his definitive destiny is the Kingdom of God.

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Ascension orients all life towards eternity.

By confessing that Jesus Christ "ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father", the Church proclaims the definitive glorification of the Incarnate Word. He who came down for our sake has been exalted, bringing our human nature to heavenly glory. The Ascension shows that the Kingdom inaugurated by Christ endures forever and that the Lord Himself governs the universe with power, wisdom, and mercy.

Seated at the right hand of the Father, Christ continues to be our High Priest and Intercessor, sustaining his Church and leading her to the fullness of the Kingdom. His Ascension does not mark an absence, but a new and deeper presence, which becomes visible in the sacramental life and in the action of the Holy Spirit. As we await His glorious return, we lift our hearts to where He is, knowing that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20) and that where the Head is, there is called to come the glory of His Body, which is the Church.

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Chapter X

"And he shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom shall have no end."

The confession that Christ will return is one of the fundamental truths of the Orthodox faith. Every time we recite the Creed, we proclaim not only that the Lord came into the world, suffered, died, and rose again, but also that He will return. The history of salvation does not end with the Ascension, but moves towards the glorious day when the Son of God will appear again to consummate all things.

The Savior's first coming was marked by humility. He was born in a manger, lived as a servant, and accepted death on the Cross out of love for humanity. His second coming, on the other hand, will be in glory. He who was despised will be recognized as King of the universe. He who was judged by men will be the righteous Judge of all.

This hope runs through all of Scripture. The angels said to the Apostles on the Mount of Ascension:

"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come as you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

It is not merely a spiritual presence or a symbol. The Church confesses a real, visible and glorious coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He will come with glory

The Creed adds a decisive expression: "with glory."

At His first coming, the divine glory remained veiled under the human condition. Only in exceptional moments, such as the Transfiguration, did the splendor of his divinity shine. At the second coming there will be no more concealment. Christ will appear surrounded by angels, fully manifesting the glory that he eternally possesses with the Father.

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His glory will be a source of joy for those who have remained faithful, but also of fear for those who have rejected his mercy. It will not be a glory meant to impress, but the ultimate revelation of truth.

To judge the living and the dead

Judgment belongs to Christ because He knows the human heart perfectly. No thought, no work, no intention remains hidden from Him.

The judgment shall not be arbitrary. It will be absolutely just and, at the same time, inseparable from divine mercy. God does not desire the condemnation of the sinner, but his conversion; however, it respects the freedom of each person to the end.

The expression "the living and the dead" encompasses all mankind. Those who are alive when the Lord returns will be transformed, while all the dead will rise to meet Him.

The Orthodox tradition teaches that judgment will manifest what each one has done with the gift of grace. It is not only about external actions, but about the state of the heart. Love, faith, repentance, and fellowship with God will be fully revealed.

Christian vigilance

The announcement of the Second Coming is not intended to arouse curiosity about future dates or events. The Lord Himself said:

"Watch, for you do not know the day or the hour."

For this reason, the Church has never encouraged speculation about the moment of the end of the world. Each generation must live as if it could meet Christ today.

Vigilance means persevering in prayer, partaking of the Holy Mysteries, practicing charity, and fighting daily against sin. Those who live in this way await the coming of the Lord with hope, not with fear.

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His Kingdom Will Have No End

The Creed concludes this confession with a hopeful affirmation: "And his kingdom shall have no end."

All the kingdoms of this world are born and disappear. The most powerful empires end up being a memory of history. Only the Kingdom of Christ endures eternally.

This Kingdom began to manifest itself with the Incarnation, is present in the sacramental life of the Church and will reach its fullness when God is "all in all". Then death, sin, suffering, and all injustice will disappear once and for all.

The faithful do not simply wait for the end of the world; they await the beginning of renewed creation, where Christ will reign eternally together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

A life-changing hope

The second coming of Christ is not a threat to the believer, but a hope. Each Divine Liturgy directs the heart towards that definitive encounter. When the Church prays, "Waiting for the blessed hope and glorious coming of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ," she remembers that the whole Christian life is directed toward that moment.

Those who love Christ long for his return. Not because he despises this life, but because he knows that perfect communion with God is the destiny for which man was created.

The expectation of the Lord impels the Christian to live with sobriety, humility and mercy. Every act of love, every sincere prayer and every victory over sin prepares the soul for the encounter with the King who is coming.

Thus, the words of the Creed are not only a doctrinal profession; they are a permanent invitation to live in hope. The same Christ who came in humility will return in glory. The same One who died for us will call us to eternal life.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

And his Kingdom, which no force can destroy, will endure forever and ever.
Amen

The Signs of the Second Coming

Over the centuries, many have tried to calculate the timing of Christ's return. However, the Church has always rejected such attempts. The Lord clearly stated that no one knows the day or the hour, but only the Father. The signs announced in the Scriptures were not given to satisfy human curiosity, but to call the faithful to vigilance and repentance.

There will be wars, famines, earthquakes and persecutions. The love of many will grow cold and apostasy will increase. False Christs and false prophets will arise, capable even of deceiving the elect if possible. But these events should not fill the heart of the Christian with fear. They are a reminder that this world is fleeting and that the ultimate victory belongs to the Lord.

The Holy Fathers teach that the greatest sign of the end times will be the weakening of faith and spiritual life. When prayer becomes rare, when the gospel is replaced by the spirit of the world, and when man trusts more in himself than in God, mankind will have shown how deeply he needs the coming of the Savior.

The Antichrist

Sacred Scripture also announces the manifestation of the Antichrist, the man of iniquity, who will seek to take the place of Christ and seduce the nations.

The Orthodox tradition urges us to treat this issue with sobriety. We should not look for the Antichrist in every political or social event, for such an attitude easily leads to fear and confusion. The important thing is to recognize the spirit of the antichrist, who is already at work in the world every time the truth of Christ is denied, sin is glorified, or a humanity without God is sought to be built.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Christian does not overcome the Antichrist by speculation, but by remaining united to Christ in prayer, in the Holy Mysteries and in fidelity to the Tradition of the Church.

The Universal Resurrection

The Second Coming will be linked to the resurrection of all men.

Just as Christ was resurrected bodily, so will all human beings be resurrected. It will not be a purely spiritual existence. The whole man, soul and body, will appear before God.

Resurrected bodies will no longer be subject to corruption. The righteous will shine with the glory of God, while those who have definitively rejected grace will experience the terrible reality of having chosen an existence separate from Him.

The resurrection manifests the dignity of the human body. Christianity has never regarded the body as a prison of the soul, but as part of the divine creation destined to partake of eternal glory.

The Last Judgment

After the resurrection the Last Judgment will take place.

Orthodox icons depict this mystery with great theological depth. Christ appears seated on the throne of glory; the Most Holy Mother of God and the holy Prophet and Precursor John intercede for the world; the Apostles participate as witnesses of the Gospel, while the angels manifest divine justice.

On that day all masks will disappear. The hidden will be revealed. Every word, every thought, and every act will appear in the light of God.

However, the criterion of judgment will be love. The Gospel according to Matthew presents the Lord identifying himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned. Every work of mercy performed for Christ's sake will endure eternally.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

The New Heaven and Earth

After the judgment the fullness of the Kingdom will begin.

Creation, wounded by sin, will be renewed. As the Apostle teaches, all creation groans waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The heavenly Jerusalem will come down from heaven. God will dwell with men. There will be no more death, no crying, no sickness, no more pain. Everything will be transfigured by the divine presence.

The Holy Fathers describe this reality with prudence, for it surpasses all human comprehension. No language can fully express the joy of contemplating eternally the face of God.

The Monk's Wait

For the Orthodox monk, the Second Coming is not only a future event; it is a reality that guides each day.

Every night he goes to bed as if it were the last of his life. Every morning he gives thanks for having received a new day to repent. Jesus' prayer, repeated without ceasing, prepares the heart to recognize the voice of the Bridegroom when he arrives.

That is why the ancient monks said: "Keep death in mind and you will never sin". It was not an invitation to live in fear, but to live lucidly. He who remembers that he will stand before Christ seeks to make every thought, every word, and every action worthy of Him who will come in glory.

The words "And he shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom shall have no end" are a proclamation of hope. The story is not left to chance nor will it end in chaos. He has a Lord, a Judge and a King.

Every Divine Liturgy makes us look forward to that day. When the priest proclaims: "Waiting for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come", the whole Church turns her gaze to the eternal Kingdom.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Orthodox Christian does not wait for the end of the world with anxiety, but for the encounter with Christ. His whole life is a preparation to hear those words that constitute the greatest promise of the gospel:

"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

May that hope sustain our daily struggle, strengthen our repentance, and fill our hearts with joy, until the day we behold the Lord face to face and enter the kingdom that will have no end. Amen.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

Chapter XI

"And in the Holy Spirit, O Lord, the Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father; that with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified together; who spoke through the prophets"

After confessing faith in the Father and the Son, the Creed turns our gaze to the third Person of the Holy Trinity: the Holy Spirit. The Church does not present here a new or secondary doctrine, but the fullness of divine revelation. The Father creates through the Son and perfects all creation in the Holy Spirit. Where one Person of the Trinity acts, the other two also act, because the divinity is one, indivisible, and eternal.

From the earliest centuries, the Church firmly defended the divinity of the Holy Spirit against those who considered him a creature or a mere divine force. The Second Ecumenical Council, meeting at Constantinople in 381, completed the Creed with these words, solemnly proclaiming that the Holy Spirit is true God, equal to the Father and the Son in honor, glory, and majesty.

The Holy Spirit is Lord

The Creed begins by calling him "Lord."

In Holy Scripture, the title of Lord belongs to God alone. By confessing the Holy Spirit as Lord, the Church proclaims that He possesses the same divine nature as the Father and the Son. It is not a heavenly messenger, nor a created energy, nor a passing manifestation of God. He is a divine, eternal, uncreated Person.

Although invisible to the eyes of the body, the Holy Spirit is continually at work in creation and in the Church. He sanctifies, enlightens, strengthens and leads the faithful towards union with Christ.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Vivifier

The Creed immediately adds another title: "Life-giver."

From the beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit appears as the giver of life. The book of Genesis shows him moving over the waters before the formation of the world. It was He who breathed life into man created from the dust of the earth and who continues to sustain all creation by His power.

But the life that the Holy Spirit communicates is not only biological life. He grants spiritual life, renews the heart hardened by sin and makes man a new creature.

Every authentic conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. No one can truly return to God without his silent and powerful action.

That proceeds from the Father

These words occupy a central place in Orthodox theology.

The Lord Jesus Christ said:

"When the Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me."

The Church carefully preserves this teaching. The Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father, who is the only source of divinity. The Son is eternally begotten by the Father, while the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father. They are two different modes of origin that remain for us as an inaccessible mystery.

For this reason, the Orthodox Church has preserved intact the original text of the Creed without adding the expression Filioque ("and of the Son"), incorporated centuries later in the West. It is not simply a question of terminological difference, but of fidelity to the faith received from the Holy Fathers and confirmed by the Ecumenical Councils.

The Church does not intend to explain the mystery of God's intimate life, but to guard with humility what Christ revealed.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified together

Worship belongs to God alone.

By affirming that the Holy Spirit receives the same worship and glory as the Father and the Son, the Creed again proclaims his full divinity.

Every time the Church makes the sign of the Cross, she also glorifies the three divine Persons.

Every time the priest blesses the people saying:

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all," he confesses the eternal equality of the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

The entire Orthodox liturgy is permeated by this Trinitarian confession.

Who spoke for the prophets

Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the history of salvation.

It was He who inspired Moses, strengthened the judges, anointed kings, and spoke through the mouth of the prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and all the prophets announced the coming of the Messiah moved by the Spirit of God.

The Scriptures are not the fruit of human talent alone. The sacred authors wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, preserving their personality and style, but faithfully transmitting the divine word.

Therefore, when the Church listens to the reading of Sacred Scripture, she hears the voice of the same Spirit who continues to speak today to the hearts of the faithful.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

Chapter XII

"In one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church"

After confessing faith in the Holy Spirit, the Creed naturally leads us to the Church. This does not happen by chance. The Church exists because the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost and remains in her until the end of the age.

The Church is not an institution created by the will of men, nor a religious association born of a common ideal. It is the living Body of Christ, founded by the Lord, sanctified by the Holy Spirit and continually sustained by divine grace.

When we confess, "I believe in one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church," we are not simply expressing a religious affiliation. We proclaim a divine reality that transcends time and space, a communion in which heaven and earth are united in the praise of the Holy Trinity.

The Church is a

The unity of the Church is born of God himself.

Just as there is one Father, one Lord Jesus Christ, and one Holy Spirit, there is one Church. This unity does not depend on human agreements, cultural affinities or administrative structures. It is a gift from God.

Our Lord prayed before His Passion:

"May they all be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You."

The unity of the Church is manifested in the same faith, in the same Holy Mysteries, in the same apostolic succession and in the same life of holiness.

Though men may provoke divisions and schisms, the Body of Christ remains one and indivisible. The Church may be persecuted, reduced in number, or dispersed throughout the world, but it never ceases to be the only Church founded by the Savior.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

For the pre-revolutionary Russian Orthodox tradition, this unity is preserved through fidelity to the faith of the seven Ecumenical Councils, to the teachings of the Holy Fathers and to the liturgical life received from generation to generation.

The Church is holy

The holiness of the Church does not come from the moral perfection of its members.

Men are sinners and need to repent continually. However, the Church remains holy because her Head is Christ, because the Holy Spirit dwells in her and because sanctifying grace is constantly at work in her.

The whole life of the Church leads to sanctification.

The Holy Mysteries communicate divine grace.

Prayer purifies the heart.

Fasting strengthens the soul.

Almsgiving overcomes selfishness.

The Divine Liturgy anticipates the Kingdom of Heaven.

The holiness of the Church is manifested in a special way in the saints. They are living proof that the gospel can be fully realized. In every age, the Holy Spirit raises up men and women who reflect the light of Christ and show the true destiny of the human being: union with God.

The Church is Catholic

The word "Catholic" means "universal", "integral", "complete". It does not designate a particular denomination, but the fullness of faith.

The Church is Catholic because she preserves Christ's teaching in its entirety without adding or subtracting anything from the deposit received from the Apostles.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

It is also universal because it is called to gather in Christ men of every language, people and nation.

Wherever the Divine Liturgy is celebrated in accordance with the apostolic faith, the whole Church is present there. A small community gathered around its bishop participates fully in the same Church that has existed since Pentecost.

The universality of the Church does not depend on her size or her influence in the world, but on the fullness of grace she possesses.

The Church is apostolic

The Church remains built on the foundation of the Holy Apostles.

They received directly from Christ the mission of preaching the Gospel, celebrating the Holy Mysteries, and shepherding God's people.

This mission continues through apostolic succession. Bishops receive, by the laying on of hands, the same ministry handed down from the Apostles to the present day.

Apostolic succession does not consist solely in a historical continuity of ordinations. It must be inseparably linked to doctrinal fidelity. An unbroken line of consecrations would be worthless if it abandoned the apostolic faith.

That is why the Church guards the deposit received with such zeal, rejecting every innovation that alters the teaching handed down by Christ and confirmed by the Holy Fathers.

The Church as the Ark of Salvation

The Holy Fathers frequently compared the Church to Noah's Ark.

Just as the ark preserved life during the flood, so the Church leads men through the storms of the world to the eternal Kingdom.

Outside of it man can find seeds of truth, but only in the Church does the fullness of the means of salvation remain: the true faith, the Holy Mysteries and the life of grace.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

Yet the Church never ceases to pray for the whole world. His mission is to call all men to the knowledge of the truth and to lead them to Christ with patience, love, and mercy.

Loving the Church

It is not possible to truly love Christ while despising his Church.

She is our spiritual Mother. In it we are born through Baptism, we are nourished by the Eucharist, we are reconciled through Confession and we are accompanied until the last moment of our earthly life.

To love the Church means to remain faithful to her faith, to obey her teaching, to participate in her liturgical life and to humbly serve our brothers and sisters.

The Church continues to make a pilgrimage in this world amid persecutions and trials, but she will never be defeated. The Lord Himself promised:

"The gates of Hades shall not prevail against her."

With this certainty, the faithful go through the difficulties of history without losing hope, knowing that Christ remains forever in the midst of his Church and that the Holy Spirit guides her to the consummation of the ages.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

Chapter XIII

"I confess one Baptism for the remission of sins"

After proclaiming the faith in the Church, the Creed turns our attention to the gateway to the Christian life: Holy Baptism. It does not simply say "I believe in Baptism", but "I confess one Baptism", because Baptism is not an opinion or a symbol, but a divine mystery received from Christ and transmitted by the Holy Apostles.

Through Baptism, man dies to sin and is born to a new life in Christ. It is not an external transformation, but a true spiritual rebirth, brought about by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Himself declared to Nicodemus:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

These words constitute the foundation of the Church's baptismal doctrine. Baptism is not an initiation ceremony or a simple public manifestation of faith. It is the birth of the new man, the restoration of the sin-obscured image of God, and the beginning of a life lived in communion with Christ.

Instituted by the Lord

Before His Ascension, the Savior entrusted to the Apostles the mission of baptizing all nations:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Since then, the Church has never ceased to administer this Holy Mystery. Wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, Baptism opens the doors of the Church and makes the believer a member of the Body of Christ.

It is not the Church that invented Baptism; it is Christ who instituted it as an ordinary means of incorporation into his Kingdom.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

A single Baptism

The Creed clearly states: "one Baptism".

The Apostle teaches: "One Lord, one faith, one Baptism."

This Sacrament imprints a spiritual seal that cannot be repeated. Just as a person is born only once to natural life, so he is also born only once to supernatural life.

For this reason, the Church has never considered Baptism as a repeatable rite. Even when a Christian falls gravely into sin, he does not need a new Baptism, but a sincere repentance manifested in the Holy Mystery of Confession.

Immersion in the waters

Since apostolic times, the ordinary form of Baptism has been the threefold immersion in water, performed in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Immersion expresses the participation of the baptized in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

By descending into the waters, the old man is buried with Christ.

Coming out of them, a new creature is born illuminated by grace.

For this reason, the Orthodox tradition has carefully preserved immersion as the full form of Baptism, since it manifests with great clarity the symbolism and spiritual reality of the Sacrament.

For the remission of sins

Baptism grants forgiveness of all sins committed before receiving it. In the case of adults, all personal sins of which they have sincerely repented are forgiven.

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In children, Baptism frees them from the ancestral sin inherited from Adam and incorporates them from the beginning into the life of the Church.

However, Baptism does not eliminate human freedom or the possibility of sinning again. The evil inclination remains a spiritual battlefield, for the Christian to grow in humility, obedience, and love for God.

For this reason, the whole Christian life is a development of the grace received in Baptism.

Baptism and Illumination

The Holy Fathers called Baptism "Holy Illumination".

Those who are baptized receive the light of Christ and leave behind the darkness of sin.

In the ancient Church, the newly baptized wore a white robe for several days as a sign of the purity received. This garment symbolized the permanent call to keep baptismal grace intact through a life of prayer, repentance, and faithfulness.

Every Christian is called to keep that spiritual garment clean until the day he appears before the Lord.

Baptism, Chrismation and Eucharist

In the Orthodox tradition, Baptism does not appear in isolation.

Immediately after Baptism, the new Christian receives the Holy Mystery of Chrismation, through which he is sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

He then participates for the first time in the Divine Eucharist.

These three Mysteries form a single Christian initiation.

Just as the newborn needs nourishment to live, so too the newly baptized needs to be nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ in order to grow in spiritual life.

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Living Baptism Every Day

Baptism does not belong only to the past.

Every day the Christian is called to renew his baptismal promises, rejecting Satan, fighting passions and remaining united to Christ.

The whole spiritual life consists, in a certain way, in making the grace received in the baptismal font bear fruit.

Fasting, prayer, Confession, frequent communion, and works of mercy are not a substitute for Baptism; they are the natural development of the new life that began in him.

When we confess: "I confess one Baptism for the remission of sins" we proclaim that God freely offers man a new birth.

By water and the Spirit we are made adopted children of the Father, members of the Body of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit.

From that moment begins the path of sanctification, a path that lasts a lifetime and finds its fullness in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Baptism is not the end of conversion, but its beginning. It is the door through which we enter the Church, the source from which all sacramental life springs, and the foundation on which Christian life is built until the day when the Lord calls us to share in eternal glory.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

Chapter XIV

"I wait for the resurrection of the dead"

After confessing Baptism, the Creed turns our gaze to the definitive hope of the Christian: the universal resurrection.

The Orthodox faith does not end in death. Nor does he consider salvation as the liberation of the soul from a body considered a prison. God created man as a unity of soul and body, and both are called to share in the glory of the Kingdom.

That is why we firmly confess: "I look forward to the resurrection of the dead." We do not simply say that the soul will live after death, for this was already known to many ancient peoples. The novelty of the gospel is the proclamation that the whole man will be restored by the power of God, following the example of the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of our own resurrection. As the Apostle Paul proclaims:

"If Christ is not risen, your faith is vain."

But Christ is truly risen, and in Him death has been conquered forever.

Death Was Not Created by God

In the beginning, God created man for immortality. Death was not part of his design. He entered the world as a consequence of the sin of our first parents, separating the soul from the body and subjecting creation to corruption.

However, what sin brought into the world was transformed by Christ into a path to eternal life. By His Cross and His Resurrection, the Lord destroyed the dominion of death and opened the gates of Paradise to all men.

That is why the Church contemplates death seriously, but not with despair. For the believer, death is no longer the end of existence, but the passage to the life to come.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

What happens after death?

When a person dies, the soul is separated from the body and appears before God. The Church prays fervently for the dead, imploring divine mercy and the repose of their souls in the light of Christ's face.

The Orthodox tradition distinguishes between this intermediate state and the fullness that will come with the universal resurrection. The saints already enjoy God's closeness, while they await, together with all creation, the definitive restoration of all things.

For this reason, the Church never ceases to commemorate her deceased children. The Divine Liturgy, the panjidas and the particular prayers manifest our communion with those who have departed in the hope of the resurrection.

The resurrection of the body

At the end of time, when Christ returns in glory, all the dead will be resurrected.

No other body will rise than the one we had, but this same body, transformed and glorified by the power of God. Just as a seed sown in the ground sprouts into a plant full of life, so too will our body be clothed with incorruptibility.

The Apostle Paul teaches:

"It is sown in corruption; it rises in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; rise again in glory."

It will be a real body, but it will no longer be subject to sickness, suffering, or death. He will participate in the glory of the risen Christ.

The hope of Christians

The Christian does not fear the resurrection, but awaits it with joy.

Every Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, he liturgically anticipates that definitive victory. Every Easter celebration proclaims with force:

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"Christ rose from the dead, trampling death with death, and giving life to those who were in the tombs."

This hymn sums up all Christian hope.

The future resurrection will not be an isolated event, but the consummation of Christ's Passover, in which all creation will be renewed.

Preparation for the Resurrection

Waiting for the resurrection does not mean remaining passive. Every day prepares eternity. Each prayer strengthens the soul. Every act of love remains forever. Every sincere repentance purifies the heart.

The Holy Fathers teach that the present life is the time granted by God to acquire the Holy Spirit. Those who learn here to live in communion with God will already begin in this life that which will reach its fullness in the Kingdom.

That is why the Church continually exhorts spiritual vigilance. Death can come at any moment, but for those who live united to Christ, it does not represent a defeat, but the beginning of the encounter with the One whom they have loved throughout their lives.

The hope of the Church

When the Church accompanies a member of the faithful to his burial, she does not utter words of despair.

Pray that Christ will grant rest to the soul of the deceased and wait for the day when the Archangel's trumpet will sound, the tombs will be opened, and we will all stand before the Lord.

Christian cemeteries are places of waiting. In them rest the bodies of the faithful like seeds deposited in the earth, awaiting the morning of the resurrection.

For this reason, the Church respectfully surrounds the bodies of the deceased, incenses them, blesses them and accompanies them with hymns of hope, confessing that death does not have the last word.

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When we recite, "I hope for the resurrection of the dead," we proclaim a hope that transforms our entire existence.

We know that the body, sanctified by the Holy Mysteries and consecrated as a temple of the Holy Spirit, is destined to rise gloriously.

This certainty sustains the Christian in the midst of suffering, gives him strength in the face of death and impels him to live with his eyes fixed on the Kingdom of God. Thus, every time we behold a tomb, we are reminded of the Savior's words:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life; whoever believes in Me, even if he is dead, will live."

This is the hope of the Church. This is the victory of Christ. This is the faith that we confess until the last breath of our lives.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

Chapter XV

"And the life of the age to come. Amen."

With these last words, the Creed concludes the confession of the faith of the Church. After proclaiming the creation of the world, the Incarnation of the Son of God, his Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, the Second Coming, the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church, Baptism and the resurrection of the dead, the believer's gaze is finally turned to the goal of all history: the life of the age to come.

We do not expect only an endless existence. We look forward to a new life, fully transformed by God's presence. The eternity promised by Christ does not consist simply in time continuing indefinitely; it is a form of existence in which there will no longer be death, sin, corruption, or separation from the Creator.

The Kingdom of God, announced by the prophets, inaugurated by Christ and anticipated in the Divine Liturgy, will then reach its fullness. Everything we now contemplate as in a mirror will be seen face to face. Faith will give way to vision, hope to fulfillment, and spiritual combat to eternal rest.

The Coming Century

The Holy Scriptures distinguish between "this age" and "the age to come."

This century is marked by fragility, suffering and the struggle against sin. It is the time of repentance, faith and patience.

The age to come will be the time of the full manifestation of God's glory. There the righteous will live forever in communion with the Most Holy Trinity, united to the angels and to all the saints.

The Church has never described this reality as a place of leisure or inactivity. Eternal life is an incessant participation in divine life, an ever new contemplation of God's infinite beauty, an eternal growth in love and light.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Holy Fathers teach that, even in eternity, man will continue to deepen endlessly in the knowledge of God, because the Infinite can never be exhausted by a creature.

God's Vision

The greatest good of the Kingdom does not consist in the promised rewards, but in God Himself.

The Lord said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

This vision should not be understood in a material sense. God remains incomprehensible in his essence. However, the saints will eternally partake of His divine energies, being enlightened and transformed by His glory.

The Orthodox tradition calls this participation **theosis**, or deification. It does not mean that man becomes God by nature, but that he participates by grace in the divine life.

This has always been the purpose of the Incarnation. As St. Athanasius the Great taught: "God became man so that man might become god by grace."

The whole Christian life prepares man for this eternal communion.

The Divine Liturgy and the Future Kingdom

The Divine Liturgy is the most perfect image of the Kingdom of Heaven that we can experience in this life.

When the priest proclaims, "Blessed be the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit..."

the Church enters sacramentally into heavenly reality.

The altar represents the divine throne, the hymns join the singing of the angels, the faithful participate in advance of the eternal banquet through the Body and Blood of Christ.

For this reason the Holy Fathers called the Liturgy "heaven on earth".

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Each Eucharistic celebration strengthens our hope and reminds us that we are pilgrims, called to a homeland that does not belong to this world.

Living with your eyes fixed on eternity

The constant remembrance of the future life transforms the whole of Christian existence.

Those who wait for the Kingdom learn to value temporal things without becoming its slave, suffering takes on a new meaning, poverty can be lived in peace, persecution does not destroy hope, death loses its power.

The saints lived this way. Their joy did not depend on present circumstances, but on the certainty that Christ had prepared for them an eternal dwelling place.

That is why the Christian seeks to order his whole life towards the Kingdom of God. Every prayer is a step towards eternity, every act of mercy endures forever, every combat against the passions prepares the soul to contemplate the face of Christ.

The Meaning of "Amen"

The Creed ends with a single word: "Amen."

This Hebrew word means, "So it is," "It is true," "Let it be so."

It is not simply a formula for concluding a sentence. It is the seal of the whole faith of the Church.

With the "Amen", the believer makes the confession of the Creed his own. He declares that he accepts the apostolic faith in its entirety, that he wishes to live according to it and that he hopes to attain, through God's mercy, what he has just proclaimed.

Every time we pronounce this word, we renew our adherence to Christ and his Church.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

What is the Creed?

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is not just a summary of doctrines. It is the way of salvation expressed in a few lines inspired by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by the Holy Ecumenical Councils.

In it we learn who God is, who Christ is, who the Holy Spirit is, what the Church is, how we are saved, and what our eternal destiny is.

That is why the Church sings it in every Divine Liturgy before the Holy Sacrifice. Before approaching the Mystery of the Eucharist, let us publicly proclaim the faith that we have received from the Apostles and that we are called to transmit in its entirety to future generations.

May the Creed not only remain on our lips, but descend into our hearts. May it enlighten our thinking, strengthen our will, and transform our whole life.

And when the time comes to appear before the Lord, may we repeat in peace the last words of this holy confession:

"I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. Amen."

Then faith will give way to vision, hope to fulfillment, and love will remain forever in the Kingdom of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to whom be all glory, honor, and worship, now and ever, and forever and ever.

Amen.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

Chapter XVI

A monk's vision

The Creed is not studied alone; it is lived.

The monk does not recite the Creed as a formula learned by heart. Each article is an experience that becomes prayer, spiritual combat, and hope. Theology is born of worship and leads back to it.

I. It All Begins in God

The monk discovers that his whole life has only one origin: the heavenly Father.

He abandons the world not because he despises it, but because he seeks the only one necessary. He learns that all human security is transient and that God alone remains.

II. Christ, the center of all existence

The monastic life consists in following Christ.

Their poverty inspires voluntary poverty.

Their obedience inspires monastic obedience.

Their humility destroys pride.

His Cross becomes the way to the Resurrection.

III. The Holy Spirit, Master of Silence

The Holy Spirit teaches the monk what no book can communicate. In the silence of the cell he learns to listen to God's voice.

Jesus' prayer slowly purifies the heart until it becomes sensitive to grace.

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IV. The Church: My True Family

The monk can live alone, but never separated from the Church, each Divine Liturgy is the center of his existence, he loves the Holy Mysteries more than any possession, he obeys Tradition because he knows that in it the Holy Spirit speaks.

V. The Invisible Struggle

The Creed does not eliminate spiritual combat.

Each day the monk wages a battle against pride, anger, vanity, judgment of others, despair, and self-love.

He understands that the real enemy is not outside of him, but in his own heart.

VI. Repentance as a Way of Life

The monk never stops converting, the tears of repentance are not a sign of despair, but of the encounter with divine mercy.

Every fall can become a new beginning when humility exists.

VII. The Divine Liturgy Anticipates the Kingdom

At the altar the distance between heaven and earth disappears, the angels serve invisibly, the saints pray with the Church, Christ gives himself again as the food of eternal life, the monk learns that true life begins at the altar.

VIII. Death ceases to produce fear

Those who live daily remembering Christ do not fear the moment of leaving.

Death is the ultimate obedience, it is the step towards the encounter awaited throughout life, which is why the ancient monks repeated: "Keep the memory of death every day and you will live wisely."

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IX. Waiting for the Second Coming

The monk lives as if Christ could knock today, he does not calculate dates, he does not fear persecution, he does not look for extraordinary signs, he simply sees to it that the lamp of his soul remains lit.

X. True Wealth

At the end of life, nothing remains, titles do not remain, goods do not remain, fame does not remain, only faith, hope, love, mercy, humility, and the grace of God remain.

XI. The Last Thought

When the monk looks back on his whole life, he realizes that the entire Creed can be summed up in a single certainty: God first loved us.

It all began with that love, the whole history of salvation was born of that love, the whole spiritual life consists in responding to that love, and all eternity will be living in that love.

When the last hour arrives, the monk will no longer need many words, it will be enough to make the sign of the Cross slowly, look at the icon of Christ, and repeat in peace: "I believe, Lord. Increase my faith."

Then the Creed will cease to be a confession spoken with the lips and will become a reality contemplated face to face.

Because faith will give way to vision.

Hope for fulfillment.

And love will remain eternally in the Kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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About the Author



His Most Reverend Excellency +Basilio, born in Santiago de Chile, in a papist family, was baptized and educated in the faith by his grandparents.

His primary education was in American schools in Santiago, where he learned English, his secondary education was in a high school where he graduated and then entered university. He works as a solicitor in public companies for a while and realizes that this is not what God wants for him, so he begins to work in Computer Science, managing to climb positions and become Technology Manager at Marriott Chile, at the age of 29 he decides to seek the way of God and enters the monastic life in the Benedictine Monastery of Lliu-Lliu, after studying theology, he becomes disillusioned with the church because of what he has to live and see, he returns to work in Technology once again achieving management positions and decides to return to the path of faith and seeks to be accepted into the Holy Orthodox Church, receiving Holy Baptism with the name of Basil, he studies Orthodox Theology and is ordained as a deacon and later receives the monastic tonsure and priestly ordination, after several years he receives the Grand Scheme and is made Archimandrite.

On January 13, 2020, according to the ancient calendar, he was ordained Bishop of Santiago and all of Chile.

On February 13, 2025, he was enthroned as Metropolitan Archbishop of Santiago and all of Chile.

He currently lives in solitude in the Skete San Basilio of which he is Abbot in Curacavi, Metropolitan Region, Chile and dedicates his life to prayer, to show the beauty of the Holy Orthodox Church and to Spiritual Direction.