

THE GATES OF HEAVEN ARE LIGHTLY LOCKED - PART V
THE LITURGY OF THE WORD: PART II
THE HOMILY, THE CREED AND THE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

- I. The homily is meant to be an explanation of the readings, connecting them to the Mass.
- A. A homily is an explanation of any sacred text, whether from the Bible or from the liturgical texts. A sermon is a talk given in a church setting on a religious topic of any type. In any liturgical context, the homily is meant to connect the Scriptural readings to the occasion for the liturgy, most commonly the sacrament being administered.
 - B. The General Instructions recommend a homily for any Mass and require it for Sundays and holy days of obligation if the Mass is celebrated with a congregation. See General Instructions 66. The homily must be given by a priest or deacon; after communion there may be some remarks by a layman.
 - C. The Vatican II Council elevated that status of the homily saying, “By means of the homily the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded.” Sacrosanctum Concilium (1963) 52.
 - D. The 2004 Vatican instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum emphasized that the homily should always be centered on Jesus Christ and applied to lives of the faithful. The instructions said, “It is clear that all interpretations of Sacred Scripture are to be referred back to Christ Himself as the one upon whom the entire economy of salvation hinges, though this should be done in light of the specific context of the liturgical celebration. In the homily to be given, care is to be taken so that the light of Christ may shine upon life’s events.” Redemptionis Sacramentum 67.
- II. On Sundays and solemnities, after the Scriptural readings and the homily that expounds upon them, the members of the congregation, together and individually, affirm their faith given through the word of God by reciting the Nicene Creed.
- A. The term creed is taken from the Latin word “credere,” or “to believe.” The creeds of the Church express both the individual faith, and faith within the context of the Church. See Catechism 166-167.
 - B. From ancient times, the profession of faith through the recitation of a creed has been a prelude to baptism. See Act 8:37.
 - C. The Creed used at Mass is called the Nicene Creed because it was mostly developed at the Council of Nicene in 325. However, the final lines were added at the Council of Constantinople in 381, with an addition reference to the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son developing in the Middle Ages.
 - The Apostles Creed, which we use at such occasions as baptism and the rosary, was an earlier profession of faith, developed during the time of the Apostles. The Nicene Creed elaborated on it to emphasize the divinity of Jesus Christ and (then later at the Council of Constantinople) the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

D. The Latin text emphasizes faith as a relationship. For the Latin text begins with the words “Credo in unum Deum” which literally mean “I believe into one God.” Likewise, later phrases could be literally translated “I believe into one Lord, Jesus Christ,” “I believe into the Holy Spirit,” and “I believe into one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.”

1. Belief begins with the witness of others, but gradually leads to a more personal relationship as well, although still in the context of the community of faith. See, e.g., John 1:7, 12; 4:42. For The unity of Christianity is crucial to bringing the faith to the world. See John 17:20-21

2. Belief in this sense is a personal relationship with God that leads to our trust in Him. See Catechism 177. The Gospel according to John especially describes this growth in personal relationship, which leads to a greater faith. See the progress of the apostles in John 6:68-69 to 14:1, 11; 20:29; see also John 11:26-27. By contrast, being in Christ’s presence, but not believing has negative consequences. See John 6:64.

E. The Creed is basically in three parts, with the first part professing faith in God the Father and creation. The second and longest part professes faith in Jesus Christ as both the Second Person of the Trinity and as He became man to save us. And the third part professing faith in the Holy Spirit and the Church whom the Spirit guides. In calling for unity among Christians, St. Paul calls describes the common faith in Trinitarian terms, especially associating guidance of the Church and each person with the Spirit; faith and baptism with Jesus the Lord; and reigning power to God the Father. See Eph. 4:1-6. In his Trinitarian formulas, St. Paul consistently refers to the Father as God in general, and the Son as Lord or Christ Jesus. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22, 13:13; Col 1:3-8. Part of his purpose in using the terms God, Lord and Spirit was to distinguish between the persons of the Trinity.

III. The first part of the Creed describes our faith in God the Father Almighty. The ancient Jews came to belief in one God first, and then received the revelation of the Trinity. See, e.g., John 5:46, 14:1. And so we profess first a belief in one God. The Creed says, “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.”

A. The first aspect of our faith, in “God the Almighty” refers to the way in which God first reveals Himself to the patriarchs, before He reveals more to more to Moses. See Gen. 17:1, 35:11; Ex. 6:3. The name (El Shaddaih in Hebrew”) emphasizes the mystery of God. This name is used most often in the Book of Job, reflecting the mysterious judgment and providence of God. See, e.g., Job 5:17, 8:3-5; 22:3-26; 40:2. The next most common use is in the Book of Revelation, especially with reference to the worship given to God and the judgment of God, all of which ends in the peace of the heavenly Jerusalem. See Rev. 1:8, 4:8. 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 14; 19:15; 21:22.

B. The term “Almighty” is complemented by the personal reference to God as Father, which has two meanings: God is the eternal Father of the divine Son, and He is Father through His love for His people. See John 1:12, 14, 18, 8:34-38, 10:30. The two come

together in the fact that we receive God as our adoptive Father through union with the Son. See Rom. 8:14-17, 2 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 4:1-7; Eph. 1:3-8; 1 John 3:1.

- In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself as a Father to creation and to His people generally, and to the king specifically, but not so much specifically for each person. See, e.g., Duet. 32:6; Ps. 103:13; Is. 63:15-16, 64:7 ; Jer. 31:9, 20; Hos. 11:1-4; Mal. 1:6, 2:10. The New Testament would more reveal God as the loving Father to each of His faithful. See, e.g., Luke 15:11-32 (parable of the prodigal son.) But even now, we refer to “Our Father” together as a Church, rather than “my Father” as Jesus could rightfully do. Contrast Matt. 6:9 with John 10:29; see John 20:18.

C. The reference to God as “maker of heaven and earth” emphasized that God made all things and thus that all things are fundamentally good, although this earth is corrupted by sin. See Gen. 1: Romans 8:18-23. The phrase harkens back both to the beginning of the Bible and to the blessing that Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem, gave to Abraham. See Gen. 1:1; 14:19-20. Melchizedek, who represents a primordial priesthood, was a pre-figurement of Jesus as the final high priest. See Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 7:1-25. It was also part of one of the earliest prayers of the Church, which expressed God’s triumph over the enemies of His people. See Acts 4:24.

D. The reference to “all things the visible and the invisible” emphasizes that both the material realm and the spiritual realm are good and created by God, although part of both are in part fallen. It also recalls the hymn near that beginning of Colossians, which celebrates Jesus as the one through whom both the original creation and the new creation came about. See Col. 1:15-20. The letter to the Romans draws a contrast between the faithful who worship the true God and the pagans who turn from the creator to worship creatures. See Romans 1:20-23.

IV. The Creed then professes faith in Jesus Christ, God the Son. The creed first describes the Son in Himself. It then describes then His role in creation and salvation; and then finally it looks forward to His return again in glory. Again, the Creed says that we believe into a relationship with our one Lord, Jesus Christ.

A. The Creed first proclaims Jesus Christ is Lord. Part of the idea is that we should not pledge final obedience to any other power; the Lordship of Jesus set us free. See John 8:32, 36; Gal. 4:1-11; 5:1.

1. The word lord can be used in many different contexts. However, here the proclamation of Jesus as Lord refers to His divinity. The archangel Gabriel and John the Baptist proclaim that Jesus is the Lord in this way. Luke 2:11; John 1:23. In His humility, however, Jesus does not take that title to Himself until the Crucifixion is near, for at that point His lordship shows itself most perfectly in love. See Matt. 26:63-65; Mark 14:61-62; Luke 22:67-70; He does not show forth His power in full until He has also shown His love for us. Phil 2:6-11.

2. After the Resurrection, Jesus is recognized more easily as Lord, a term that St.

Paul uses often. See John 20:25, 28, 21:7, 21; Rom. 4:24, 6:23; 10:9, 1 Cor. 9:1, 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:14. In the letter to the Philippians, St. Paul says that at the end of human history all people and all of creation will declare that Jesus is Lord. See Phil 2:11. Part of the idea is that, while He is rightfully Lord by His participation in creation. Asking that the Lord Jesus come is part of the final prayer of the Bible. Rev. 22:20. We thus proclaim Jesus as Lord at the beginning of the creed as a first promise of that fulfillment.

B. The Creed then affirms the divine Sonship of Jesus, first identifying Him as the only-begotten Son, and then emphasizing six more times His divine nature.

1.. The prologue of John and the angel first identify Jesus as the Son of God, see Luke 1:35; John 1:18. And the Bible picks up on this title repeatedly.

- In the Old Testament, kings and the whole people of God were sometimes called sons of God by adoption, but here the Creed emphasizes Jesus as the “only” full Son of God. The prologue of John uses different words to describe the Sonship of the divine Word (hyios) and the adopted sonship of all who believe in Him (tekna). John 1:14-18; see also John 3:16-18.

- Describing Jesus as the only begotten son of God also harkens back to Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his “only son” Isaac, although in the case of God it is all the more poignant because Abraham did have a son outside of wedlock, Ishmael. See Gen.22:2; Heb. 11:17. The description of Jesus as the only Son of God is generally in the context of His saving mission, showing forth God’s love. See John 3:16-18; 1 John 4:9-5:1.

-Referring to Jesus as “born of the Father before all ages” indicates that time itself is a part of creation. That phrase also invokes Psalm 110, which describes the future king’s conquest of enemies and formation of a new and glorious people.

- To emphasize the point, the Creed also says that Jesus is God from God, rather than some lesser adopted son from God.

2. Describing Jesus as light from light refers to the fact that Jesus brings the light of glory, knowledge, grace, and joy to the people of God by showing forth the glory of God. See, e.g., John 1:4, 9. Light reflects the joy of the presence of God and delight in His creation and saving action. See, e.g., Is. 9:1-2, 60:1-4; Micah 7:9. Darkness, by contrast, reflects sin, distance from God, and death. See Ps. 88:7-13; Romans 13:12; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 6:10. By bringing God’s presence and salvation, Jesus is the light of the world. See Matt. 4:16, Luke 2:32; John 8:12, 9:5, 12:44-46. As a result for all eternity, all nations who are in God’s presence in heaven will be in the light of God provided through the Lamb of God. See Rev. 21:22-24.

3. The Creed says the Son is “true God from true God” in part to contrast the worship of the one true God with the worship of many false gods. See 1 Cor. 8:5.

4. The Creed then says again that Jesus was begotten, not made. The idea is that a person begets one of the same nature as himself. One makes something of a lower nature. A human begets another human, but makes a thing. God makes the heavens and the earth, and even human beings, see Gen. 1:1-3, Is. 29:16, but can beget only One of His own nature. 1 John does say that those who believe in Jesus are begotten “from God.” See 1 John 3:11, 5:1. However, even here 1 John still says that the Son is the “only begotten” of God. 1 John 4:11. The idea is that we are made by God in the first instance, but we have a partial share in God’s life through Christ.

4. The Creed then uses the philosophical term “consubstantial” to make it even clearer that Jesus is of the same substance (God) as the Father. A nature of substance is what one is; a person is who one is. In God thus three persons (who are different) share one nature as God.

5. The Creed then concludes this description of Jesus by saying all things were made through the Son. The idea is that the love between the Father and the Son, which is the Holy Spirit, is the basis for all of the creation. See John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 1:9; Col. 1:16-17. That is one meaning of saying that the Spirit hovered over creation at the beginning and that God created through His word. See Gen. 1:2. Thus, all of creation was made to glorify the Son.

C. The Creed then turns to Christ’s saving work through His Incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension.

1. The Creed describes the Son as coming down from heaven for our sake. Jesus said to Nicodemus that no one has gone up to heaven except He who came down from it; and by coming down from heaven He paves the way for us to return. See John 3:13-15. Thus, He brought to fulfillment the image of the glory of God descending upon His Temple, and Psalm 68 which describes God triumphantly descending from His throne in heaven to lead His people to victory over their enemies. See Ps. 68:19, Eph. 4:7-10.

2. The next phrase, “By the Holy Spirit, [He] was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man,” reflect the words of an angel to Joseph. See Matt. 1:20; see also Luke 1:35. The instructions say that the priest and the people are to bow at these words, except at the Feast of the Annunciation and at Christmas, when we genuflect at these words. The idea is both that the mystery of the Incarnation is central to our faith and that there is a connection between the Incarnation and Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist at every Mass. As Jesus became incarnate to dwell among us 2000 years ago, He comes upon us now in the appearance of bread and wine.

3. The Creed then says He was crucified “for our sake” and “under Pontius Pilate.”

- The first phrase emphasizes the fact that the crucifixion was not an accident but was willingly accepted by Christ to achieve our salvation. See John 10:17-18; Heb. 1:9, 9:11-15.

- But to emphasize human participation in the crucifixion, as well as to date it more precisely in time and space, the Creed also says that He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea from 26-36 A.D. See Acts 4:27-28.

4. The Creed emphasizes that He truly suffered, died, and was buried emphasizing His entrance into the fullness and depth of the human condition, showing the depth of His obedience to the Father and of His love for us. See John 10:17-18; Phil 2:8, Heb. 12:2.

5. The Creed then confirms faith in the Resurrection, as Jesus rose on the third day “in accordance with the Scriptures.” See 1 Cor. 15:1-11.

- Rising from the dead, He became the cause of the resurrection of all the dead. Without the Resurrection, the forces of death would be triumphant, and the faith would be in vain. See 1 Cor. 15:15-28; 1 Thess 4:14; Rev. 1:17-18. He not only brings about the resurrection of the dead, but “is the resurrection and the life.” John 11:25.

- The Creed says that the Resurrection is in accordance with the Scriptures. The Resurrection both fulfills the prophecies of Old Testament, see Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Zech. 12:10-13:1; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Luke 24:25-27, and is central in the theme of the New Testament.

6. The Creed then confirms faith in His ascension and enthronement “at the right hand of the Father.” The ascension, which is described in Mark, Luke, and Acts of the Apostles, is the triumphant entrance in His humanity into heaven, to reign over the Church from His divine throne, drawing all nations to Himself. See Mark 1:19; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-1; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1. From His throne in heaven, Jesus returns to earth in the Eucharist “the bread that comes down from heaven.” See John 6:50, 61-62. Psalm 110, which Jesus applied to Himself, refers to the king who will come as sitting at the right hand of God until all enemies are defeated. See Matt. 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20: 41-44. Now we invoke Jesus as Lord at the right hand of God and work with Him to conquer sin and death.

D. The Creed then affirms the faith that Jesus will return again in glory to judge the living and the dead and establish the kingdom without end.

1. The archangel Gabriel promised that Jesus would establish a kingdom without end. See Luke 1:32-33. In one sense the kingdom is here among us, in Christ’s

presence, and especially in the Church. See Matt. 3:2, 4:17; Luke 17:20-21. But the parable and discourses of the kingdom describe a final kingdom that Jesus will establish. See, e.g., Matt. 13:24-30, 16:24-28; 25:14-46; Luke 13:2-30.

2. The letters to the Thessalonians and the Book of Revelation, reflecting the Book of Daniel, also speak of Jesus' return in glory at the end of human history to judge the living and the dead, i.e., those who die before the return of Christ, and those who are still alive at that time. See 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 19:11-21; 20:11-15, 21:5-8; Dan. 7:9-14.

V. The last third of the creed recited at Mass begins by affirming our belief in and relationship with the Holy Spirit, the source of life and inspiration.

A. The Creed affirms the divinity of the Holy Spirit both by referring to Him as Lord and by saying that, with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit "is adored and glorified".

1. The Creed has already referred to the Son of God as "Lord" the term used in its fullest for God. While the term "lords" could be used simply in a lesser sense of people with authority, see, e.g., Judges 16:5-30, 1 Sam. 5:8-6:18; Dan. 5:1-23, the Bible uses the term "Lord" (Adonai in Hebrew and Kyrios in Greek) in a singular and unqualified senses only for God. See, e.g., Gen. 18:27, Duet. 10:17; Ps. 135:5, 136:3; Matt. 4:10; Mark 1:3. (Mark does, perhaps subtly indicating Jesus' divinity, describe a Syrophonecian woman referring to Jesus as "Lord," perhaps not recognizing the full meaning of her words. See Mark 7:28.) Although St. Paul usually uses the term "Lord" for Jesus, St. Paul see, e.g., Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 2:8, 12:3, he sometimes refers to God in General as Lord" See, e.g., 1 Cor. 4:4; 2 Cor. 10:17. And, on at least one occasion, St. Paul also refers to the Holy Spirit as "Lord." See 2 Cor. 3:17.

2. The Creed says that, with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is "adored and glorified."

- Adoration and glory are different aspects of the worship of God, which belongs to God alone. See Ex. 20:5, 34:14, Dan. 3:18, 95; Matt. 4:9-10; Rev. 14:7; Catechism 2626, 2639. In some ways they are different sides of the same coin, with adoration tended to reflect more the quiet and humble recognition of the greatness of God and glorifying God being more actively praising Him for His wondrous works. The Bible also consistently speaks of glorifying God by recognizing His saving power and the power of His word and acting upon this power. See, e.g., Ps. 29:1-2, 86:10-13; Is. 25:3; Luke 2:20, 5:25; 2 Thess. 1:10-12

3. The Bible indicates the divinity of the Holy Spirit both in Jesus' final commissioning, see Matt. 28:19, and in the Trinitarian teachings of St. Paul, see 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:13.

B. The Creed describes the Holy Spirit as the giver of life, both in the sense that the Spirit of God is the divine life that humanity was meant to share in and in the sense that

the Spirit restores life with God. See, e.g., Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 37:9-11; Rom. 8:9-11. And even now we live a life of faith and life with God because of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. See, e.g., John 3:5-8; 14:15-17, 26, 15:26-27, 16:4-11; 1 Cor. 12:3-11, Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22-25.

C. The Creed says that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

1. Originally, the Creed as developed by the Council of Constantinople said only that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. Pope Leo the Great (440-461) approved of the addition that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well, but it was not commonly used until Charlemagne's reign in the late eighth century. Eventually, with the Holy Father's approval it became universal by the West. The Eastern rites of the Catholic Church, although agreeing that that formulation is consistent with the faith, do not use it, generally describing the procession of the Holy Spirit as from the Father through the Son. The Orthodox churches, although they may agree that the addition can legitimately be made, dispute the Pope's ability to authorize it without an ecumenical (universal) council agreeing.

2. At the Last Supper, Jesus spoke of both Him and the Father sending the Holy Spirit. See John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7.

D. Affirming the divine inspiration of the Old Testament, the Creed affirms that the Holy Spirit has spoken through the prophets.

- We particularly attribute the inspiration of Sacred Scriptures to the Holy Spirit. See 2 Peter 1:20-21, Vatican II, Dei Verbum 1; Catechism 105. Affirming again that the Old Testament was inspired by God, the Creed specifically refers to the Holy Spirit as speaking through the prophets. The Bible especially associates the voice of prophesy with the Spirit of God. See, e.g., Num. 11:24-30; Is. 61:1-3; Ezek. 3:12-14; Micah 3:8; Hosea 10:7. The spirit was also associated with the divinely appointed king and with wisdom. See 1 Sam. 10:5-13; Is. 11:1-4; Wis. 1:4-7.

- There is a present element as well to the Spirit speaking through the prophets. For, although the Sacred Scriptures are completed, there are gifts given to Christians through the Spirit who unites them all. See 1 Cor. 12:4-11. Moses wished for a time in which the spirit of prophesy would come to all of the people; and Joel, and possibly Ezekiel, foresaw such a time. See Num. 11:29; Joel 3:1-3; Ezekiel 36:26-27, 37:14. At Pentecost, this time was fulfilled; and to this day, Christians are sent forth with the sacrament of Confirmation to bear prophetic witness of the truth of God before the world. See Rite of Confirmation, Renewal of Baptismal Promises; see also Acts 8:14; 10:45; 11:12, 24, 13:52.

VI. The Creed then affirms our belief in (or into) one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. These four “marks” of the Church focus on different aspects of God’s kingdom. See Catechism 811-870. In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul describes the church in these terms. See Eph. 2:11-22.

A. Although the Gospels only twice record Jesus as using the term “Church,” these references make clear that He intended to establish a Church. See Matt.16:18, 18:17. Saint Paul and the Book of Revelation in turn repeated refers to a general Church, as well as specific churches.

1. Thus, St. Paul also repeatedly spoke of the Church as the Body of Christ or the household of God, uniting all peoples together under Christ. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 4:1-16, 5:21-32; Col. 1:15-20; 1 Tim. 3:5, 15. The letter to the Ephesians and the Book of Revelation speak of the Church as the Bride of Christ. See Eph. 5:32; Rev. 19:7-8, 21:1-4.

2. The letters of St. Paul, as well as the Book of Revelation, also speak of specific churches in given areas that incorporate the universal church throughout time and space. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:13; Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18, 3:1, 7, 14. Some references in the New Testament epistles could be to either the Church universal or an individual church. See, e.g., James 5:14; 3 John 6, 10.

3. There is thus both one universal church and specific churches in every area throughout the world.

B. At the Last Supper, He prayed passionately at the last supper that His followers would be united as one. John 17:20-22; see also John 10:16. The Acts of the Apostles presents a unified Church and St. Paul picks up on this theme, emphasizing the importance of maintaining unity of faith, worship, and mutual charity. See Acts 2:42-46, 4:32-37, 9:31; Rom. 12:1-7; 1 Cor. 12:7-31; Gal. 1:8-9; Eph. 4:1-6; Col. 3:13-14.

C. The Church is holy in the fullest sense in heaven, where Jesus and Mary reign with all the saints, or the “holy ones.” See Rev. 5:8. Even on earth, her members are referred to in Scripture as “the holy ones.” Acts 9:13, 1 Cor. 6:1, 16:1; 1 Peter 2:9.. The idea is in part that, to the degree we are in Christ the head of the Church, we are without sin; however, because we are still dragged down with sin, our unity in Christ is incomplete. See 1 John 1:8-9, 3:9. The Bible tends to describe the Church herself as holy in the context of her being the mystical bride of Christ. Eph. 5:26-27; Rev. 21:2, 9-10.

D. The Church is “catholic,” a term that is derived from the Greek word for universal. She is universal both insofar as she has the full means of grace and insofar as she encompasses all cultures. The Acts of the Apostles emphasizes the Church as encompassing all peoples. See, e.g., Acts 2:5-12; 10:34-11:18, 15:6-21, 28:28. Likewise, the Book of Revelation describes Christ’s message to each of seven churches, representing individual churches throughout the world, but then concludes with the one Church coming to Jesus as His bride. Rev. 2-3, 21:1-21. St. Paul also emphasizes the

same Spirit working through all of the gifts given to the members of the one Body of Christ. See, e.g., Rom. 12:2-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; Eph. 4:7-16.

E. The Church is apostolic because she is built upon the foundation of the apostles, she continues their tradition and authority, and her members are sent forth into the world.

1. The letter to the Ephesians describes the Church as being built upon the foundation of the apostles. Eph. 2:20. Revelation picks up on this theme, saying that the names of the apostles are written on the foundations of the wall of the heavenly Jerusalem. See Rev. 21:13.

2. However, the office of “apostle” continued after the original twelve, along with St. Paul, through appointments and the laying on of hands. See Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor. 4:9-13, 9:5; Gal. 2:9. (Some other references to apostles are ambiguous. E.g., 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11.) Thus, the office of guiding and teaching was meant to continue after the original twelve and St. Paul had died. The term apostle as an office in the church would later be replaced with “episcopos” (literally meaning overseer) and then “bishop.” See Phil 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7.

3. The term “apostle” originally meant one who is sent forth, and the Church is also apostolic insofar as her members are sent forth to witness to the Gospel. See John 17:19-21; see also Romans 16:7; 1 Cor. 15:7; Rev. 28:20 (using the term “apostle” apparently more as a missionary or witness.)

VII. Continuing along the lines of the mission of the Church, the Creed ends with an affirmation of one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, in the resurrection of the dead and in life everlasting.

A. The language changes here because the relationship with God through the Church has already been established. Thus, the Creed says we “confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” These affirmations are to promises, rather than a person, and so we confess (and old word for declare) our belief in these promises.

B. The Creed affirms baptism as more than a mere symbol, but necessary for the forgiveness of sins. At Pentecost, Peter says, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.” Acts 2:38-41; see Matt. 28:20-2. Likewise, baptism is continually associated with salvation and entrance into the Church. See Acts 8:12-13, 38; 10:47-48; 16:33. St. Paul naturally associates baptism and union with Christ. See Rom.6:3, 1 Cor. 1:13-16; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12. Reaffirming the importance of baptism is particularly important at mass because, through baptism one gains the gift of faith and union with the Church, and is therefore, able to participate fully in the Mass.

C. The Nicene Creed affirms the resurrection of the dead. (The Apostles’ Creed has said resurrection of the body, in part to refute Gnosticism, which denied the goodness of material creation.) The saints are already in heaven by means of their soul, but they await

the resurrection of the body that will complete their glory and ability to be joined to those on earth. Thus, the Bible speaks of the dead currently interceding for the living and concerned about earthly affairs, see Matt. 27:51-53, Heb. 12:1; Rev. 6:10, 1 Macc. 15:11-16. But it also describes a future resurrection of the dead and “awakening” of the dead. 1 Cor. 15:18, 51; 1 Thess. 4:14; see also Rev. 20:4-6. Jesus speaks of the elect as being “like the angels” after the resurrection of the dead, see Matt. 22:30-31, Mark 12:23; Luke 20:35-36. Jesus’ own resurrection shows forth the glorified body, which is related to the current body, but also vastly greater. See Luke 20:36-43; John 20:11-29; 1 Cor. 14:20-28, 36-49; 1 Thess. 4:13-16. Through the Eucharist, we participate even now in the life that will be given at the resurrection of the dead. See John 6:54-58.

VIII. After the Creed, the Liturgy of the Word proceeds onto the prayers of the faithful, as it has from the first days of the Church. See St. Justin Martyr, Apologia 1:65-67.

A. The order of intercessions is meant to be: (1) for the needs of the Church; (2) for public authorities; (3) for those burdened by any kind of difficulty; and (4) for the local community. General Instructions to the Roman Missal 69; Catechism 1349; see Sacrosanctum Concilium 53. Because most Masses are offered for the deceased, we also often add an intercession for the dead. See 2 Macc. 12:42-46; see also 1 Cor. 15:29.

B St. Paul especially exhorts the faithful to pray together for the needs of others, especially for those in ecclesial or secular office. See Rom. 15:30-32; Eph. 6:18-20; Phil 4:6; Col. 4:2-4; 2 Thess. 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:1-2. See also James 5:15 (prayers for the sick.)

B. With the prayers of the faithful, the priest calls the people to prayers, the deacon (if there is one present) or lector is meant to offer the prayers, and the priest concludes by offering the prayers to God. The response is either: “Lord, hear our prayer” or “Lord, have mercy.” Both phrases frequently accompany prayers for help in times of trouble, expressing confidence that God will make His power known. See Ps. 27:7, 30:11; 51:3. See also Ex. 2:24; Ps.18:7.

- The prayers are connection with our worship of God and our commissioning at the end of Mass. For, as Jesus the Apostles and the prophets repeatedly say, prayers must be offered with a desire to do God’s will in order to be authentic and call upon God’s providence. See John 15:7, 1 John 4:6; Sir. 34:24-26; Is. 1:15.

D. Jesus’ own words indicate that prayers are more powerful when offered together and in His presence. See Matt; 18:19-20. And so at Mass we join together in our prayers with Jesus Christ leading up to petition for advancement for ourselves, the Church and all the world.