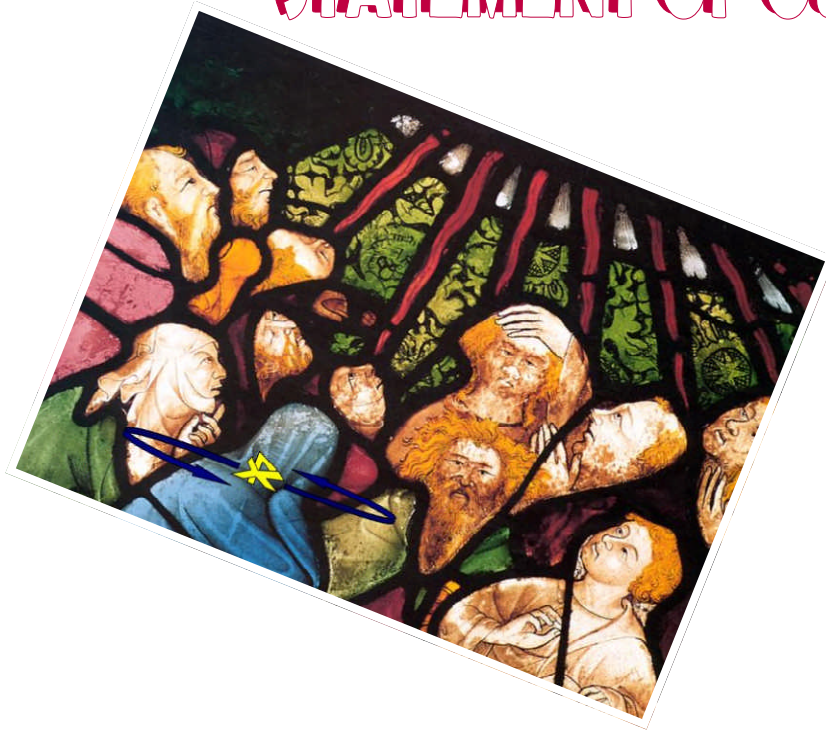


UNPACKING THE EMMAUS SERIES

**THE CREED:
STATEMENT OF OUR FAITH**



*Written by John Thornhill SM
Designed and produced by Patrick Lim*

THE EMMAUS SERIES



Questions Catholics ask on their journey of Faith

THE CREED: STATEMENT OF OUR FAITH

SESSION 1

Introductory reading

Letter of Paul to the Romans (10:8-10)

What does faith say then? *The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart*, that is the word of faith, the faith that we preach, that if you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and if you believe with your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. It is by believing with your heart that you are justified, and by making the declaration with your lips that you are saved. ◇

Questions opening up the topic

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15 – sharing reactions to the following questions:

Questions

- ◆ If you were asked what truths you believe as a Christian, how would you frame your answer?
- ◆ We recite the Creed together each Sunday, and on the Church's greatest solemnities; but for many Catholics the words probably seem strange and uninspiring. What is your experience?

Viewing of DVD

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Chapter 1:
Introducing the Creed
- ◆ Chapter 2:
The First Article
- ◆ Chapter 3:
The Second Article

Sharing of reactions to the presentation

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15 – sharing immediate reactions to the presentation:

Question

- ◆ What has struck you as enlightening, inspiring, or even puzzling?

A reading related to the theme

Introduction to Christianity

by Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI)

An excerpt on the origin of the Creed

The basic form of our profession of faith took shape during the course of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, in connection with the ceremony of baptism. As far as its place of origin is concerned, the (widely accepted formulary then in use) comes from the city of Rome, but its internal origin lies in worship; more precisely, in the conferring of baptism. This again found its origin in the words of the Risen Christ in Matthew 28:19: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'. In accordance with this injunction, these questions are put to the person to be baptised: 'Do you believe in God the Father Almighty? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God ...? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?' The person being baptised replies to each of these questions with the word, 'Credo' – I believe – and then each time is immersed in the water. Thus the oldest form of the confession of faith takes the shape of a threefold dialogue, of question and answer, and is, moreover, embedded in the ceremony of baptism.

Probably, in the course of time, the originally quite simple threefold formula ... was expanded in the middle section – that is, the question about belief in Christ. Here, after all, the decisively Christian element was involved, and it was felt necessary to give in the framework of this question a brief summary of what Christ means for the Christian. Similarly, the third question, the profession of faith in the Holy Spirit, was developed as a profession of faith in the present and future life of the Christian. ◇

Final reflective sharing

This final sharing of personal responses to the questions given below is the most important phase of the session, and should be entered into generously, in the spirit of the Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15.

It may begin with a brief period of silent reflection, which is followed by two stages:

- 1. An informal Buzz Session in which each participant is able to express their response to each question – questions should be discussed separately.*
- 2. The sharing is brought to a conclusion, with each participant expressing, in a few words, what is their personal response to each question – in view of all that has been discussed in the session.*

Questions

- ◆ Can an understanding of the Creed, as a summary of the story of the Scriptures, help you to make the Creed a moment of faith and worship each Sunday?
- ◆ Are there other things that struck you in this session, that you would like to share?

THE CREED: STATEMENT OF OUR FAITH

SESSION 2

Introductory reading

Gospel of John (*chapter 14*)

The words of the Saviour to his disciples, concerning the life of the Trinity.

To have seen me is to have seen the Father,
so how can you say, 'Let us see the Father'?

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself:

it is the Father living in me, who is doing this work.

You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me ...

Whatever you ask for in my name I will do,
so that the Father may be glorified in the Son ...

I shall ask the Father,
and he will give you another Advocate
to be with you for ever,
that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive
since it neither sees nor knows him;
but you know him because he is with you, he is in you.
I will not leave you orphans;
I will come back to you.
In a short time the world will no longer see me,
because I live and you will live.
On that day you will understand that I am in the Father
and you in me and I in you. ◇

Questions opening up the topic

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp.14-15 – sharing reactions to the following questions:

Questions

- ◆ In your journey of faith have you been sufficiently helped to find an appreciation of the mystery of the Trinity?

- ◆ It is said that the Western Church needs to develop a more lively faith in the Holy Spirit. In this time of renewal have you found a greater awareness of the importance of the Spirit in our lives?

Viewing of DVD

- ◆ Chapter 4:
The Third Article
- ◆ Chapter 5:
The Mystery of the Trinity

Sharing of reactions to the presentation

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp.14-15 – sharing immediate reactions to the presentation:

Question

- ◆ What has struck you as enlightening, inspiring, or even puzzling?

A reading related to the theme

An alternative reading is provided on pages 22-33

Against the Heresies

An excerpt from the treatise of St Irenaeus (2nd century Bishop of Lyons)

Although the Church is spread throughout the world to the ends of the earth, the faith which it professes is the faith that it received from the apostles.

It believes in one God the Father almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who preached through the prophets the plans of God, the coming of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ, his birth from the Virgin, his passion, his resurrection from the dead and his bodily ascension into heaven, his coming from heaven in the glory of the Father to recapitulate all things and to raise all human flesh ...

Despite its spread throughout the world, the Church carefully preserves the faith it has accepted and which we have outlined - as though it lived in one house only. The Church believes these truths as if it had but one soul and one heart; it preaches them as though it had but one mouth. For, although there are many different languages in the world, the strength of the tradition is one and the same.

The Church established in Germany believes exactly the same and hands on exactly the same as do the Spanish and Celtic Churches, and the ones in the East, those in Egypt and Libya and Jerusalem, the centre of the world. As the sun, which is God's creature, is the same throughout the whole world, so the preaching of the truth shines in all places and enlightens all men who wish to come to the knowledge of the truth. ◇

Alternative reading

Against the Heresies

An excerpt from the treatise of St Irenaeus (2nd century bishop of Lyon) - He writes of the absolutely gratuitous love of the God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Our Lord, the Word of God, first of all gathered servants for God but later on he made them free, as he said to the disciples: No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. If you once set about loving God, his friendship will bring you immortality.

It was not because God needed us that he first formed Adam; he was simply looking for recipients who might receive his benefits ... Even before any created being whatsoever existed, the Word was in the Father and gave glory to him, and the Word himself was glorified by the Father as he himself said: Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with you before the world was made.

When he told us to follow him, it was not that he needed our service but that he wanted to bestow salvation upon us. To follow the Saviour is to share in salvation – just as to follow the light is to be helped by the light. Those who are in the light, do not themselves cause the light but rather they are lit up by it. They do not help the light but they are helped by the light.

Similarly, our service of God does not mean that we provide him with anything, for he does not need our submission to him. He gives life beyond death and eternal glory to those who follow and serve him. He does this for his servants because they serve him, but he receives nothing in return. He is rich in everything, he is perfect, he needs nothing from us.

The reason why God seeks our service is that - good and merciful as he is - he wishes to bestow blessings on those who persevere in his service. God stands in no need of anyone else, but we stand completely in need of God. ◇

Final reflective sharing

This final sharing of personal responses to the questions given below is the most important phase of the session, and should be entered into generously, in the spirit of the Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp.14-15.

It may begin with a brief period of silent reflection, which is followed by two stages:

- 1. An informal Buzz Session in which each participant is able to express their response to each question – questions should be discussed separately.*
- 2. The sharing is brought to a conclusion, with each participant expressing, in a few words, what is their personal response to each question – in view of all that has been discussed in the session.*

Questions

- ◆ Recalling the question we discussed at the beginning of the first session – how would you reply if asked what truths you believe in as a Christian – how would you now answer that question?
- ◆ What is the principal thing you take away from our discussion of the Creed?

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

From the time of the apostles, the Creed has been part of the Church's shared life – declaring acceptance of the astounding claims of Christian faith. Of course, the Creed has evolved – from the simple formula, "Jesus is Lord", to the more elaborate statements of the very ancient Creed we call "The Apostles' Creed", and the Nicene Creed used in the Sunday liturgy (4th century).

The Creed should be more than a statement of orthodox faith dutifully repeated each week. It should be the prayer with which we conclude the Scripture readings of the liturgy of the Word. Everything depends upon what the opening words mean to us, "We believe in God". In common usage, the words, "I believe", often expresses uncertainty and hesitation. In our credal declaration, they should express a commitment that shapes our lives as persons. As St Augustine pointed out to his people, the words, "We believe in God", mean more than "We believe that there is a God", or "We accept all that God has revealed". Like the words, "I believe in my friend", our declaration should mean that we rejoice to own the God upon whom we can rely - no matter what.

The Creed soon came to have a sequence of three articles, referring to the three Persons of the divine Trinity. This sequence, we should notice, also gives the Creed a narrative form: creation is the work of the Father; the re-creation of a lost world is the work of the Son, and redeemed humanity's journey towards the final Kingdom of God is the work of the Holy Spirit. As we conclude our readings from the Word of God with the credal declaration, we should recognize that the Creed's succinct narrative summarizes the great story in the Scriptures, of how the designs of God for God's people have unfolded.

In the First Article, we proclaim the heart of the Good News of the faith. The eternal Father is not only the all-powerful Creator, but also our loving and merciful Father. The Second Article declares the faith of the Church in the eternal Son, "one in being with the Father", who through his Incarnation became one of us and gave expression in our midst to the ways of his Father. For Christian faith, God is revealed in events within our human history - events that came to an astounding climax in the death and resurrection of the Saviour. The Third Article proclaims our faith in the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Father and the Son, through whose outpouring the Church lives and makes its way towards the final Kingdom – welcoming all peoples and cultures, bringing healing and reconciliation, already owning the seeds of final resurrection and eternal life.

The final part of the talk concerns the mystery of the Trinity – a truth only known through God's revelation and beyond the complete understanding of any creature. It should not surprise us that in immeasurable divine greatness there is an overflowing superabundance. The God of old Israel's faith is the one whom Jesus called, "Father". Already in the Old Testament, the Father's self-expression took the form of "Word" and "Spirit". In Jesus, it is revealed that these self-expressions have been so complete that all that the Father is as God is also theirs. They possess with the Father one and the same divine greatness, life and freedom – the

realization of what to us is an impossible ideal. They are not three Gods but three who are distinct from one another, while each is one with the divine greatness – “Three Persons, in one Nature”. ◇

Published by
THE EMMAUS SERIES
Copyright © 2006 John Thornhill SM & Patrick Lim