

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact . . . God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

(Acts 2:32 and 36b)

The letters in the New Testament written by Christian leaders also demonstrate the beliefs they were spreading:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

(The missionary Paul writing to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15:3–6)

The word 'church' (ecclesia in Greek) did not mean a building. It was the word used for all the people who were followers of Jesus. The movement grew fast and spread rapidly through the Roman Empire. It became so popular among non-Jews (Gentiles) that they soon outnumbered the Jewish Christians. Many slaves became Christians too.

Statements of belief are called creeds, from the Latin word 'Credo' which means 'I believe'. The creeds were carefully worded because they were intended to stop mistaken ideas called 'heresies' from developing. Many heresies were trying to answer questions that still puzzle Christians today, such as 'How can Jesus be both God and man?' The creeds do not seek to answer all the questions. They simply list the beliefs that were passed down from the time of the Apostles.

There is a legend that the 12 Apostles wrote a creed. Each apostle supposedly wrote one sentence of it. We know that there was an accepted 'rule of faith' circulating in the second century among Christian churches which seems to have been some sort of credal statement.

One creed accepted by most Christian Churches is called the Apostles' Creed. It probably dates back to

the fourth century CE though it is likely that it is based on earlier creeds.

Reciting a creed is a reminder of the key beliefs which have been passed down by the Church.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Amen.

THE TRINITY

The Apostles' Creed expresses Christian beliefs about the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Trinity is central to Christian belief and is a teaching which makes Christianity different from all other religions. People outside Christianity sometimes think that Christians believe in three gods but this is not so.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion which has one God. The Trinity is a way of describing belief in three aspects of God which believers experience. The one God is made up of three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

THREE IN ONE AND ONE IN THREE

Tertullian, a Roman second-century Christian writer, described the Trinity as the sun sending out rays of sunshine.

FOR DISCUSSION

Have you come across other ways of describing or illustrating the Trinity?

Consider the meaning of the beliefs that the Apostles' Creed is expressing about:

- the Father
- the Son
- the Holy Spirit.

What does the phrase 'I believe' mean to you?

Some Christians do not use creeds. They may feel that the whole idea of having to recite a creed goes against the spirit of the teaching of Jesus. What do you think?

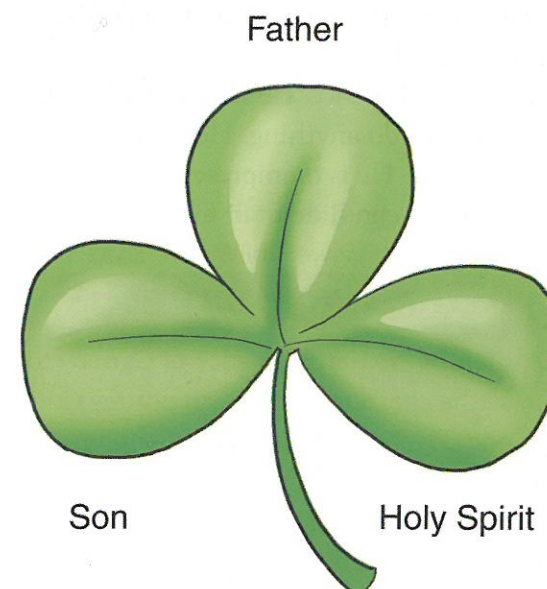
NICENE CREED

There are other creeds used by Christians today, besides the Apostles' Creed, for example, the Nicene Creed. This was created after the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. He called a council of Christian leaders and they met at Nicaea (Iznik in modern Turkey) in 325 CE. The Nicene Creed expands the same beliefs which are outlined in the Apostles' Creed. The council was called to consider the teaching of a theologian called Arius. He taught that Jesus did not possess the nature of God but only that of man. The council rejected his teaching as heresy.

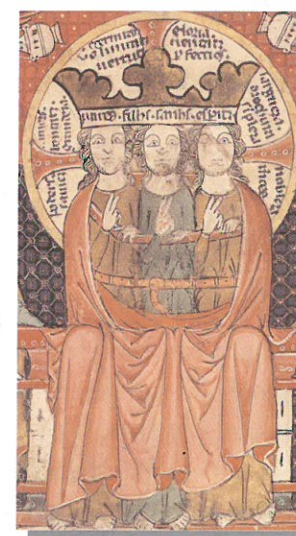
We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he



A legend says that St Patrick used a shamrock as a visual aid. Just like a shamrock has three parts in one leaf, so God is three parts in one being.



This is a mediaeval drawing to show the Trinity.