



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I hope you had a blessed Christmas Day, and are having a great Christmas season. Now, we'll return to our examination of the Mass.

Two weeks ago, I began discussing the Nicene Creed. The Creed begins:

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

First, the words "I believe." Prior to the retranslation of the Mass, we used to say, "We believe." There was a beauty to that, recognizing that it is not just my personal faith, but the faith of the whole Church, in which I participate. However, in being more faithful to the Latin (*Credo*), "I believe" also points to the truth that I cannot just ride on the coattails of the greats in the Church, but **I** must assent to the faith, I must be a part of this faith. Believing in God is not just a passive stance – like

believing that the earth is about 93 million miles from the sun (depending on the time of year). Belief in God is not just belief in His existence, but also in His goodness, in His love, in His omnipotence, and in His care for my life, among other things. Believing in God means I am staking my life on this truth.

The we say that we believe "in one God." This is the basis of Biblical faith. Of all the religions in the world, only the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) believe in one God. All the others believe in many gods, demons, or nothing. We're saying God is *one*, unique. He is incomparable to any other being. In fact, when He reveals His name to Moses at the burning bush, He reveals that He is not *a being*, but *Being Itself*. He is the ground of all being, and nothing in existence can *be* without Him.

The next part is "the Father almighty." God reveals Himself to be Father. This first person of the Blessed Trinity shows us that He is *personal*, not a "cosmic force." We can know Him and be known by Him. This is distinct from the "deistic" understanding of God, which is analogously like a "watchmaker" – he makes the watch, winds it up, and then lets it do its thing. God as Father, though, is intimately involved in the moment to moment existence of the universe – not just creating at the beginning of time, but continuing to create everything in each instant of its being. Therefore, He is *almighty*. Sometimes, we have the image of God and Satan as the yin and yang – light and darkness fighting each other, with equal power, and we don't know how it's going to end. This is a lie! God is *almighty!* The difference between God and Satan is greater than the difference in size between the Empire States Building and an ant. In fact, the difference is greater than the difference between the size of the whole universe and a single electron. God is *all-powerful!* Satan has greater spiritual power than us, but our Daddy is so much bigger than that bully! God wins. Period.

God is "maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible." We believe that God created everything from nothing (the technical term is *ex nihilo*). It's not that God made everything from some pre-existent cosmic sludge, or took part of Himself to make the universe. No, He made everything from literally nothing. He made *all* things – everything that is tangible, and every spiritual being (angels, demons, etc.).

"So, did God make evil?" is often a question. Evil is not a being itself, but a twisting of the good, a deprivation. Demons are angels that chose not to follow God. Evil is good that has been twisted. For instance, if I sin by lying, I am using the good things that God made – my intellect and will, my vocal chords, lungs, and mouth to speak. But it is lacking the full truth. It is a lack; the good is twisted. So, God did not make evil, because evil isn't a thing, but a twisting of the good. But He did make all things that are.

Next week, we'll move into the section on the Son.