



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The final part of the Nicene Creed is:

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

This section begins with what we call the four marks of the Church – the Church is **one, holy, catholic** and **apostolic**. What does this mean?

The Church is one: because she is the Body of Christ, and there is only one body, the Church is one. One of the great pains in the Heart of Jesus is the rupture of the body through the various denominations. Jesus meant to have one Church, but I've heard there's something like 30,000 denominations. As such, we pray for Christian unity!

The Church is holy. While the human aspect of the Church is broken, and filled with many unholy people, the Church is both human and divine. She maintains a true holiness, despite many unholy people. And she calls each member of the body (you and me) to holiness. May we have the eyes to see how the Church truly is holy.

The Church is catholic. This means universal. She is not a Church for Europeans but not Africans. No, she is a Church for all peoples, in all times, everywhere.

The Church is apostolic. The Lord founded the Church on the apostles, and they have passed down this authority from one generation to another, so that we know that we are still directly connected to Christ through the bishops, the successors of the apostles. This doesn't mean every bishop is always right about everything (look at Judas and Peter!). It does mean, however, that when the bishops as a whole, in union with the Pope, speak on matters of faith and morals, they have the full authority of the Church – the Body of Christ.

"I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins." We believe that once someone is baptized, they are never re-baptized. That's why we don't baptize most Protestants who become Catholic – we recognize they are already Baptized, already a part of the Body of Christ. This baptism is "for the forgiveness of sins." This is both Original Sin, and any actual sins (for someone who has reached the age of reason). Baptism does something – something real, objective. This is why we baptize babies. Babies cannot make the choice for God, but we believe that, while there is part of the Sacraments that require openness to God's grace, it is God who is working in the Sacraments, not us. He is drawing us near to His Heart!

"I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." This is important to our faith, that we believe that on the last day, not only will our souls be in heaven, but our bodies will be resurrected, and we'll be united soul and body (a glorified body). The Apostles' Creed says it more directly for belief in "the resurrection of the body." Too often, our world thinks we become angels when we die. There is a subtle hatred for the body. Our belief is that God created our bodies good, and He died and rose again not just to save our souls, but our bodies as well. On judgment day, our bodies will rise to new and everlasting life – in the "life of the world to come" – eternal joy and love in the Heart of God!

We close with a hearty "Amen," stating that our lives depend on these truths. May we become more aware of these great truths of the Faith, and always seek to build our lives on God's goodness.