

The New Roman Missal: The Nicene Creed

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When we begin using the New Roman Missal on the First Sunday of Advent, The Agnus Dei or Lamb of God is one of the prayers that has been re-translated to more closely reflect the meaning of the original Latin text:

This Creed was originally adopted at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 and updated at the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. It is therefore also referred to as the “Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.”



The first major change is difficult to miss: the Creed will now say “I believe” instead of “We believe.” Other language groups have been using “I believe” in the vernacular, because it is a straightforward translation of the Latin “*Credo*.” This offers a recurring opportunity to reaffirm one’s personal faith, just as when individuals respond, “I do,” if there is a renewal of baptismal promises during Mass.

The next change is from “seen and unseen” to “visible and invisible.” The Latin “*visibiliūm*” and “*invisibiliūm*” convey a more specific demarcation between the bodily and the spiritual realms. For instance, a child playing hide-and-seek may be unseen yet is still considered visible, whereas one’s guardian angel is indeed invisible by nature.

The new Creed translation also recovers Christ’s title, “Only Begotten Son” (“*Fili Unigenite*”), which we see in the revised *Gloria*. To say the Son is “born of the Father before all ages” is a profound theological truth, for the Son is not “born” in the human sense of beginning one’s life, but eternally proceeds from the Father while being always fully God. Therefore, we profess that Jesus Christ is “begotten, not made.”

Following this comes a major wording change: from “one in being” to “consubstantial with the Father.” “**Consubstantial**” (“*consubstantialē*” in the Latin text) is an unusual word that will require some catechesis, but **it is a crucial early theological term, asserting that the Son is of the “same substance” with the Father - meaning He equally shares the Father’s divinity as a Person of the Holy Trinity.**

Although it carries the same basic meaning as “one in being,” the more precise use of “consubstantial” is an acknowledgement of how the Greek equivalent of the word was so important for safeguarding orthodoxy in the early Church. In the Fourth Century, the description “*homoousios*” (“same substance”) was affirmed over “*homoiousios*” (“like substance”). The reality of who Christ is thus hinged upon a single letter!

There is another important change in the middle of the Creed: “and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” The current wording of “born of the Virgin Mary, and became man” can easily be misinterpreted to mean that Christ did not actually become man until the time He was born. Of course, the reality is that the Son of God took on human nature from the moment of His conception in the Blessed Virgin Mary’s womb, at the Annunciation. By using the term, “incarnate,” the new translation leaves no ambiguity.

One of the remaining minor changes in the new Creed translation is “I *look forward* to the resurrection of the dead,” by which one expresses a sincere desire, rather than simply “looking for” the resurrection. The Latin “*exspecto*” conveys a sense of anxious waiting and expectation!

PRESENT TEXT	NEW TEXT
<p>We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.</p>	<p>I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.</p>

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,
one in 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 was born of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius
Pilate;

he suffered, died, and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in **fulfillment of** the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from
the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son
he is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic
and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the
resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only **Begotten** Son of God,
born of the Father **before all ages.**

God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,

consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

and by the Holy Spirit
was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and
became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius
Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in **accordance with** the Scriptures.

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

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

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.