

Apostles' Creed Unit Plans

Day 1: Introduce the basic order & content of the Apostles' Creed (as-is, was a short class day, and we didn't get to the vocabulary portion ~30 min.) **Remind students daily to be practicing the Creed for memorization – at the end they will have to write or say it from memory. Start and end each class by reciting the Apostles' Creed.**

- Discuss that we often learn to say the words of a prayer without always understanding what they mean. Goal: Learn (since often blurred together with the Nicene Creed) and understand the Apostles' Creed.
- Students independently cut & lay out the phrases of the Apostles' Creed in the order that they believe is correct (don't glue yet!). When done, allow them to walk around and look at at least 5 other students' orders. Return to own prayer & adjust order if desired.
- Whole class, check & put prayer into the correct order. Glue into notes.
- Independently, silent read the prayer twice to be ready to pray it aloud.
- Pray it aloud as a class, slowly enough not to rush-through or mumble words.
- Have students silent-read through the prayer again several times, with their focus being on paying attention to the details that are included. Let them know they will soon be asked true/false questions about the content of the prayer, and will not be able to look back at it.
- Tic-tac-toe game: Form groups of 3 students each. Have them choose one person to be the "game host". Host reads the true/false questions to the players. If the player answers correctly, he/she gets to mark their X or O. If not, they miss that turn and it is the other player's turn to answer a different question. Once someone wins tic-tac-toe (or it's a cat's game), groups should switch "game hosts" and continue playing. We played with dry-erase markers on desktops, then wiped down all the desks with a wet-wipe at the end. <http://www.loyolapress.com/apostles-creed-tictactoe.htm>
- If time, highlight and define unfamiliar vocabulary (ex. thence, ascended, conceived)

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Day 2: What does it mean to say something is a "creed"? Why was the Apostles' Creed written?

(Discussions, videos, lecture... have students bullet-point notes to answer these two guiding questions.)

- **Arrival Activity: (5 minutes)**
 - Place a large sheet of paper on the wall (poster size for a small class – bulletin board size for a large class). Write across the top of the paper in large letters "I Believe In..." (Or on SmartBoard...) - give students ¼ to ½ sheets of paper & have them write what they believe in, may also decorate/illustrate it
 - Have the students add to a Graffiti Wall by writing or drawing something on the large sheet of paper you have placed on the wall. – have students add their small papers to the large poster
- Creed/Credo/Creo – I believe...
- CHOSEN (Lesson 4) Segment 2: Founding Fathers created a nation & wrote it down so the important principles would be passed on through generations. Jesus gave teaching authority to the Apostles: Sacred Scripture & Sacred Tradition
- Written to declare the basic, essential beliefs that make someone Christian – required for Baptism, composed by the Apostles as a unifying statement of belief
- **LESSON IV** <http://www.therealpresence.org/courses/lesson4.htm> (see end of this document for the hard-copy version, print & highlight what you want to cover)
- There ARE other Creeds in the modern, Catholic faith... Nicene Creed is recited at almost every Mass. The Apostles' Creed is the first one of these.
- CHOSEN (Lesson 4) Segment 3: (may cut it short after first portion...) Faith: We can learn about (know about) God and it points to a logical belief in God (intellect), we can come to trust God, but we have to then act on our belief and trust – leap of faith, but not a blind or foolish leap. Analogous to jumping from an airplane & trusting that the parachute and the person who packed it will help us land safely.

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Day 3: Examine the Trinitarian portion of the Creed

(Discussions, videos, lecture... have students bullet-point notes to explain "God" as Three-in-One, Father, Son, Holy Spirit.)

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord" ... "I believe in the Holy Spirit"

- CHOSEN (Lesson 4) Segment 1: God is the creator, I can know he exists by logic & creation reveals glimpses of who he is. Triune God...mind blown! Son of God became flesh & dwelt among us... reveals himself to us directly and also shows our worth... his own life!
- We proclaim faith in God the Father who is the "Creator of heaven and earth." We begin this unit by focusing on God's great gift of creation. It is crucial for us to study and reflect upon creation because it deals with the basic human questions of "where do we come from?" and "where are we going?" ([CCC 282](#)) The story of Creation in the Book of Genesis is placed at the very beginning of the Bible for a reason: to make the emphatic statement that all of creation, especially the human family, comes from God, is directed toward God, and is good.
- skip to the Holy Spirit part... Holy Spirit – shared Love between the Father and Son that is so real, it is expressed as a third 'person' of God... Brings the life of God into each of us at our Baptism, guides us, strengthens us to carry out our mission.
- 3-part Venn Diagram to show the attributes of God in Three Persons
- **Brain Break (5 minutes)**
 - Have the students stand up. Make a fist and circle it in front of them. Make four circles as they say "God, Father, Almighty, Maker". Make a fist with the other hand and circle it four times in front of them as they say "Jesus Christ, Son, Lord". Then challenge them to do the same thing while reversing their circles (If they circled inward the first time, ask them to circle outward as they repeat the exercise. See if they can repeat the exercise while circling inward with one hand and outward with the other. Make up your own variations. Research has shown that the brain is stimulated when you do circles with a fist and then reverse your circles.

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Day 4: Examine the Life of Christ

(Discussions, videos, lecture... have students bullet-point notes to explain the "Jesus" statements enumerated below .)

"Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

- "Amen" song from Lilies of the Field (online video - 3 minutes) – recounts Jesus's life from birth through Resurrection
- Probing questions: "Is Jesus human or God?" ... "What percent of Jesus is human? What percent is God?" The mystery of our faith: Jesus is True God and True Man (not either/or, but "both/and" – 100% of each!)
- Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice "once, for all" to redeem us from our sins and reunite us with God (at Mass, Transubstantiation – not a reenactment, not Jesus sacrificed multiple times, but really the miraculous transcendence of time that we are experiencing the moment of Jesus's sacrifice of himself...)
- Jesus conquered death and opened the gates of Heaven, restoring everlasting life "bridging the infinite gap" that was made between humanity and God when Adam & Eve sinned and said, "No," to God. (Optional video: Catholic 101, The Creed, 33:00-37:00)
- Jesus ascended – returned, body and spirit, to heaven – his body was not just a shell, Jesus was fully human and so his body was part of "him" (*Think about it... when someone hits you or kicks you, you say, "Why did you hit/kick me?" Your body IS you...*)... that humanity is now part of the living triune God!
- Jesus is seated "at the right hand" – in the place of honor and authority, to judge our actions and determine at the end of our lives if we are fit to live united with God in heaven (remember that Jesus is both just AND merciful – he gave his own life so that we can be redeemed, but we must accept that gift and live in a way that says, "Yes," to God. By giving us free will, God also gives us the option of choosing NOT to live with him forever; we choose union (heaven) or infinite separation (hell) by the way that we live our lives on Earth, and by seeking forgiveness (or not) when we have sinned.)

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Day 5: Examine the list of beliefs about the Church and its teachings

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen."

- Reminder from earlier lesson: Holy Spirit – shared Love between the Father & Son that is so real, it is expressed as a third 'person' of God... Brings the life of God into each of us at our Baptism, guides us and strengthens us to carry out our mission.
- Holy Catholic Church – 4 marks of the Church (from the Nicene Creed)
 - *DECISION POINT: 9.2 "One, Holy, Catholic, & Apostolic" (10 minutes)*
 - *One – united in faith, agape love, mission; joy may be full*
 - *Holy – set apart for a special purpose by God and for God; continue redemptive, sanctifying work in the world*
 - *Catholic – universal, for everyone! on a mission for everyone in the human race...*
 - *Apostolic – authority to lead the church (Peter & apostles... current bishops & popes); foundation on which Jesus chose to build his church*
- Communion of Saints
 - *online video about the Communion of Saints (5 minutes) from The Word Exposed (Jesuit)*
 - We state in the Apostles' Creed that we believe in the Communion of Saints, consisting of all the faithful on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven. The Holy Spirit brings all the baptized together into one communion, one Body of Christ. The faithful on earth, joined together in common worship and work for the coming of the kingdom, offer prayers and sacrifices for the holy ones in purgatory, and they seek the intercession of the holy ones who are in heaven. The faithful in purgatory are awaiting entry into heaven and benefit from the prayers of the faithful on earth and in heaven. The saints in heaven intercede for their brothers and sisters in Christ who are on earth and in heaven, and they aid the faithful on earth through the example they gave of how to live Christian lives. The life shared by all these faithful is the life of Christ, brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God the Father.
- Forgiveness of Sins – Reconciliation, Jesus's redemptive sacrifice
- Resurrection of the body & life everlasting – end of time, we will be given a glorified body (humans are body AND soul, the body is not just a shell for our soul), after our death & purification we will live forever with God

"Amen" – Yes, I believe. This is true.

inspirational online video about "don't just say it, pray it!" – based on Nicene Creed

Day 6: Review/Quiz about the Apostles' Creed

- from memory, be able to fill-in-the-blanks to complete the Apostles' Creed prayer (or recite it from memory or write it completely from memory... teacher's discretion)
- open-notes quiz about the history and meaning of the Apostles' Creed

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Video Resources in DVD format – get from Kelly Kmicek or school library:

CHOSEN video lessons on “How do I know God is real?” (Lesson 4) Each segment is 5-10 minutes long

CHOSEN (Lesson 4) Segment 1: God is the creator, I can know he exists by logic & creation reveals glimpses of who he is. Triune God...mind blown! Son of God became flesh & dwelt among us... reveals himself to us directly and also shows our worth... his own life!

CHOSEN (Lesson 4) Segment 2: Founding Fathers created a nation & wrote it down so the important principles would be passed on through generations. Jesus gave teaching authority to the Apostles: Sacred Scripture & Sacred Tradition

CHOSEN (Lesson 4) Segment 3: (may cut it short after first portion...) Faith: We can learn about (know about) God and it points to a logical belief in God (intellect), we can come to trust God, but we have to then act on our belief and trust – leap of faith. Analogous to jumping from an airplane & trusting that the parachute and the person who packed it will help us land safely.

DECISION POINT: 9.2 “One, Holy, Catholic, & Apostolic” (10 minutes)

One – united in faith, agape love, mission; joy may be full

Holy – set apart for a special purpose by God and for God; continue redemptive, sanctifying work in the world

Catholic – universal, for everyone! on a mission for everyone in the human race...

Apostolic – authority to lead the church (Peter & apostles... current bishops & popes); foundation on which Jesus chose to build his church

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come 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 life everlasting. Amen

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LOYOLA PRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

Maker of Heaven and Earth

In the Nicene Creed, we proclaim faith in God the Father who is the “Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.” We begin this unit by focusing on God's great gift of creation. It is crucial for us to study and reflect upon creation because it deals with the basic human questions of “where do we come from?” and “where are we going?” ([CCC 282](#)) The story of Creation in the Book of Genesis is placed at the very beginning of the Bible for a reason: to make the emphatic statement that all of creation, especially the human family, comes from God, is directed toward God, and is good.

The Communion of Saints

We state in the Apostles' Creed that we believe in the Communion of Saints, consisting of all the faithful on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven. The Holy Spirit brings all the baptized together into one communion, one Body of Christ. The faithful on earth, joined together in common worship and work for the coming of the kingdom, offer prayers and sacrifices for the holy ones in purgatory, and they seek the intercession of the holy ones who are in heaven. The faithful in purgatory are awaiting entry into heaven and benefit from the prayers of the faithful on earth and in heaven. The saints in heaven intercede for their brothers and sisters in Christ who are on earth and in heaven, and they aid the faithful on earth through the example they gave of how to live Christian lives. The life shared by all these faithful is the life of Christ, brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God the Father.

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LESSON IV <http://www.therealpresence.org/courses/lesson4.htm>

THE APOSTLES' CREED <http://www.therealpresence.org/essentials/acc.htm> (each line of the Creed is explained in depth)

The Apostles' Creed was originally a profession of faith required of converts to Christianity before they were baptized. As a formula of belief, it goes back in substance, if not in words, to the twelve Apostles.

Following Christ's declaration that, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16), the Apostles' Creed was the precondition for baptism. Only believers could be baptized. Even when children were baptized in the early Church, someone had to profess the faith for them.

Since the Apostles' Creed was first formulated, there have been many other Creeds approved and used by the Church. But this creed still remains the most common profession of the Christian faith in the world.

There is no other place to start talking about Christianity than with the Christian faith. "Only faith," we are told, "can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen" (Hebrews 11:1).

What the Apostles' Creed tells us is what everyone who calls himself a Christian must accept on the Word of God, that is, on faith.

We accept three fundamental truths in the Apostles' Creed:

- We believe that the world did not always exist, but was created by God who existed from all eternity.
- We believe that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ, that He was born of the Virgin Mary, died on the Cross and rose from the dead, and that He will return on the last day to judge the living and the dead.
- We believe that Christ sent His Holy Spirit, who is the soul of the Church which Christ founded, and that through the Church we receive all the graces we need to reach the eternal life for which we were made.

What needs to be emphasized is that belief in these revealed truths is the foundation of Christianity. We can hope only in what we know to be true; faith provides us with the guarantee that our hope is not in vain. We can love only what we know to be good; faith provides us with the vision that God is so good we should love Him with our whole heart and soul.

This chapter will be a short one. It covers only the factual information of what the Apostles' Creed is and what are the principal truths it contains.

Since this is a manual for Catechists, all the chapters-beginning with the first will be aimed at helping

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you share with others what you learn about your faith.

Focus

The main thing to keep in mind is that the foundation of Christianity is the faith; that this faith can be expressed in plain, ordinary language; and that the Apostles' Creed is the most ancient and widely used summary of what Christians are to believe.

Key Words

Apostle	Credo
Apostolate	Credo of the People of God
Article of Faith	Faith
Catechesis	Faith, Act of
Catechism	Nicene Creed
Credibility	Truth

Catechetics

You should explain to your pupils that the Apostles' Creed is a living proof of the Church's stability since the time of Christ.

What keeps a society, any society, stable for any length of time? It is the agreement among its members on certain basic principles. As long as they agree on the fundamentals, the society continues to exist and to prosper. But once they disagree among themselves on these basics, the society weakens and finally disappears.

One of the reasons why the Catholic Church has remained constant over the centuries is that her members have continued to believe the same revealed truths, as contained in the Apostles' Creed.

But remember that the Creed is not just a collection of words. It is a set of convictions about the most important realities in life. When the ideas in our mind agree with realities outside the mind we possess the truth. That is why the Apostles' Creed is a series of twelve truths about God, about Jesus Christ, about the Church He founded and about our eternal destiny.

Practice

As a Catechist you want to help those you catechize to put into practice what you teach them. Here are some recommendations for living the Apostles' Creed.

1. *Memory* Have your students learn the Apostles' Creed by heart. Have them recite the Creed out loud with no memory aids. Have them also write out the Creed on paper. And in both cases, make sure that

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what they recite or write is word-perfect, with not a single word missing or changed.

2. *Meditation*. Tell your students to think about the words of the Apostles' Creed for a few minutes in God's presence. Have them first become aware of God. Then, in prayerful conversation with Him, go over one article of the Creed after another while asking Him, "What does this mean?"

3. *Sacred Song*. While in India, St. Francis Xavier would teach the faith by putting some of the Christian mysteries into song. Someone with musical talent can make the Apostles' Creed into simple melody.

4. *Comparison*. For the more advanced students, you might have them compare the Apostles' Creed with other famous Creeds. The Nicene Creed is regularly used in the Eucharistic Liturgy, and the Credo of the People of God was formulated by Pope Paul VI in 1968, on the nineteenth centenary of the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

Church Teaching

"The twelve Articles of the Apostles' Creed are the first things . . . that Christian persons must hold. For these take their origin from the holy Apostles, the authorities and teachers of the faith, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When they received their mandate from the Lord to go forth into the whole world as His representatives to preach the Gospel to every creature, they thought it proper to compose a formula of the Christian faith, so that all might be 'united in the same mind and the same judgment' (I Corinthians 1:10). By this statement of the faith the Apostles intended that there should be no division among those called to the unity of faith, but that all should be perfectly united in the same internal meaning and the same outward profession" (*The Roman Catechism*, Introduction).

There is special value in having at least a few questions on the Apostles' Creed because it is the basic summary of our Catholic faith. All the following questions can be answered from the sources at your disposal. But if you have access to *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom* (edited by the author), you will profit immensely from reading the Commentary on the Apostles' Creed by St. Thomas Aquinas. It will give you a deeper understanding of your faith, since everything we believe as Christians is enshrined in this fundamental Creed.

1. **Indicate** whether the following statements are true or false.

- _____ 1. The Apostles' Creed was originally a profession of faith for converts to the Church.
- _____ 2. The truths of faith professed in the Apostles' Creed were taught by the twelve Apostles.
- _____ 3. There have been various creeds among Christians since the Apostles' Creed.
- _____ 4. To be professed by Catholics, a creed must be approved by the Bishop of Rome.
- _____ 5. Each of the twelve Apostles contributed one article to the Apostles' Creed.

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- _____ 6. Among Christians, only the Roman Catholics profess the Apostles' Creed.
- _____ 7. The foundation of Christianity is charity.
- _____ 8. The foundation of Christianity is faith.
- _____ 9. The Apostles' Creed should be memorized by every Catholic.
- _____ 10. The term Creed comes from the Latin word Credo, I believe.
- _____ 11. We are to believe, but not try to understand, the articles of the Apostles' Creed.
- _____ 12. The Nicene Creed is part of the Eucharistic liturgy.
- _____ 13. The Nicene Creed is really the Nicene-Constantinople Creed.
- _____ 14. All the articles of the Catholic Faith are explicitly stated in the Apostles' Creed.
- _____ 15. An article of faith is whatever a Catholic must believe, as revealed by God.
- _____ 16. An Act of Faith is an assent of the will to what God has revealed.
- _____ 17. We believe with the mind, but we love with the will.
- _____ 18. In the Apostles' Creed, we profess to believe in the Holy Trinity.
- _____ 19. We can prove, from reason, that what we believe in the Apostles' Creed is credible.
- _____ 20. We can hope only in what we believe is true.

III. **Match** the terms in the following columns.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| _____ 21. Pope Paul VI | 21. The blessing that we hope for |
| _____ 22. He who believes and is baptized | 22. I believe |
| _____ 23. Our faith can guarantee | 23. Truth |
| _____ 24. Conformity of mind and reality | 24. Arianism |
| _____ 25. Credibility | 25. Credo of the People of God |

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_____26. Credo	26. Apostle
_____27. Nicene Creed	27. Reasonable grounds for believing something to be true
_____28. Messenger and authorized representative of the sender	28. Will be saved
_____29. The Apostles' Creed	29. Our faith
_____30. Can prove the existence of the realities	30. Precondition for Baptism that at present remain unseen
_____31. We believe that the world	31. The Apostles' Creed
_____32. The most common profession of the Christian faith	32. An assent of the mind to what God has revealed
_____33. Act of divine faith	33. Infants baptized
_____34. Someone else professes the faith	34. Endurance of the Apostles' Creed
_____35. Living proof of the Church's stability since apostolic times	35. Did not always exist

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Arrival Activity: (5 minutes)

- Place a large sheet of paper on the wall (poster size for a small class – bulletin board size for a large class). Write across the top of the paper in large letters “I Believe In...” (Or on SmartBoard...)
- Have the students add to a Graffiti Wall by writing or drawing something on the large sheet of paper you have placed on the wall.

Brain Break (5 minutes)

- Have the students stand up. Make a fist and circle it in front of them. Make four circles as they say “God, Father, Almighty, Maker”. Make a fist with the other hand and circle it four times in front of them as they say “Jesus Christ, Son, Lord”. Then challenge them to do the same thing while reversing their circles (If they circled inward the first time, ask them to circle outward as they repeat the exercise. See if they can repeat the exercise while circling inward with one hand and outward with the other. Make up your own variations. Research has shown that the brain is stimulated when you do circles with a fist and then reverse your circles.

<http://images.umph.org/Cokesbury/9780687642335.pdf>

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History of the Apostles' Creed

<http://catholicmom.com/2010/06/05/apostles%E2%80%99-creed-lesson-plan-by-kristi-mccabe/>

The Apostles' Creed is said to have been composed by the twelve Apostles. It is basically a summary of what the Apostles believed to be the most important aspects of their faith and is still recited by Catholics today. The beliefs expressed in this concise statement include events of Christ's life on earth, belief in one true God, and that of the Resurrection. It is important to discuss the separate parts of the Creed with children and explain their meaning, so a deeper understanding of our Catholic faith will be nurtured in them.

1. Begin with a short story about the history of the Apostles, such as "The First Christians: The Acts of the Apostles for Children" by Marigold Hunt or "The Apostles" by Pope Benedict XVI (for older kids). "I Believe in God: The Apostles' Creed" by Fr. Lawrence Lovasik is a picture book and more appropriate for younger kids. Read aloud together; it may be a good idea to summarize lengthier sections or select a few chapters to read.
2. Encourage kids to ask questions about the components of the Apostles' Creed. Try the following for discussion starters:
 1. What is a creed? (a statement of beliefs)
 2. Why do you think the Apostles wrote down a creed? (to make a statement about what they believed and to encourage unity among believers)
 3. Why do you think the first part of the Creed deals with belief in God? (we are to love God above all things)
 4. Do you think the Apostles said this Creed just among themselves or shared it with others? (accept all reasonable answers)
 5. Make a copy of the following kid-friendly version of the Apostles' Creed (see below). Cut each section into strips, to form puzzle pieces. Read the Creed aloud to kids a few times and practice reciting it together. Then, give each child a baggie with the puzzle pieces and have them try to put the pieces in order. Check each to make sure they are in the correct order.
 6. Have children glue their puzzle pieces to a piece of construction paper and decorate it, if wanted. Make sure they write the title "Apostles' Creed" and encourage them to display it at home.