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## *Creed provides basic summary of faith Apostles taught to world*

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According to legend, just before the apostles went their separate ways to spread the faith, they met to agree on the contents of the message they would share.

Each apostle added one article of faith to the message, creating the Apostles' Creed.

Although this story is fictional — albeit, widely believed in medieval Europe — it points to the fact that the Apostles' Creed grew out of the teachings of the Apostles as contained in Scriptures, and that the prayer provides a basic summary of essential Christian beliefs.

The very word "creed" itself comes from the Latin for the first two words of the prayer, "I believe."

According to the new Catechism of the Catholic Church, "The Apostles' Creed is so called because it is rightly considered to be a faithful summary of the apostles' faith. It is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome. Its great authority arises from this fact: it is the Creed of the Roman Church, the See of Peter, the first of the apostles, to which he brought the common faith."

More than syntheses or professions of faith, the catechism continues, creeds are "symbols of faith," and thus the Apostles' Creed is also called the *Symbolum Apostolorum*.

"A symbol of faith is a summary of the principal truths of the faith and therefore serves as the first and fundamental point of reference for catechesis," the catechism reads.

Indeed, the Apostles' Creed presents such a basic summation of Christian beliefs that the authors of the catechism used the creed — with some elements of the Nicene Creed — as a framework for "Part One: The Profession of Faith."

Meanwhile, catechumens involved in the restored Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults are presented with the creed during a ritual celebrated the third week of Lent.

And the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed have aided ongoing ecumenical discussions because the creeds offer a basis for agreement among Christian churches.

"Apart from Scriptures and sacraments, no element within the Christian tradition has been so greatly revered and widely employed as the Apostles' Creed," David Harned wrote in his 1981 book, "Creed and Personal Identity: The Meaning of the Apostles' Creed."

Father Berard L. Marthaler, OFM, Conv., professor of religion and religious education at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. and author of the 1987 book, "The Creed," observed that the creed serves as a profession of faith, a summary of the story of creation and salvation and as a hymn of praise for what God has done.

The creed is also a theological statement, Father Marthaler observed, noting, "To me, the importance of the creed is the fact that it is a trinitarian statement. It brings us back to an emphasis on the Holy Trinity, and what it means to be a Catholic Christian in the world."

The catechism highlights this trinitarian emphasis, Father Marthaler added.

Citing St. Irenaeus, the catechism notes, "The first part (of the creed) speaks of the first divine Person and the wonderful work of creation; the next speaks of the second divine Person and the mystery of his

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## *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.  
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.