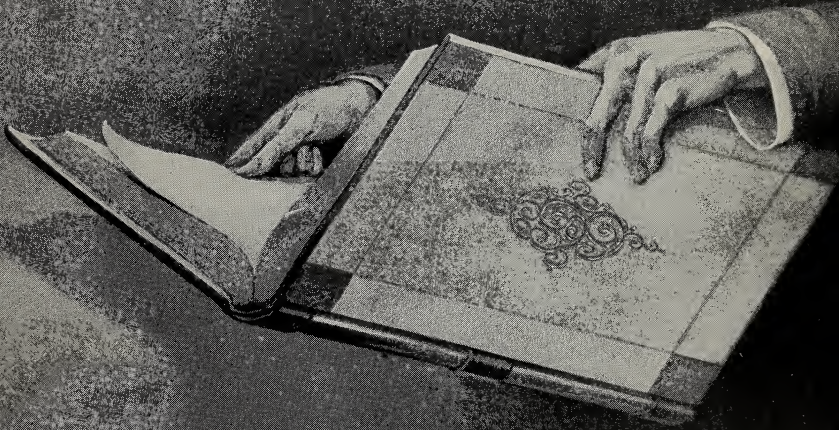


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What Do You Believe?



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CATHOLICS BELIEVE!

Nihil Obstat:

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN. S.T.D.,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES,
Archbishop of New York.

New York, April 2, 1938.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK, N. Y.

What Do You Believe?

By

JOSEPH FINEGAN, C.S.P.

Catholics Believe THE APOSTLES' CREED



**THE PAULIST PRESS
401 WEST 59TH STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y.**



THE APOSTLES' CREED

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 Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, sitteth 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 Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. *Amen.*

What Do You Believe?

By JOSEPH FINEGAN, C.S.P.

1. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth."

GOD is the Maker and the Father of all human beings. He loves all men of every nation and race. He never stops loving them.

GOD is the Maker of the whole universe. He made the earth and all things on earth; He made the sky and all it contains.

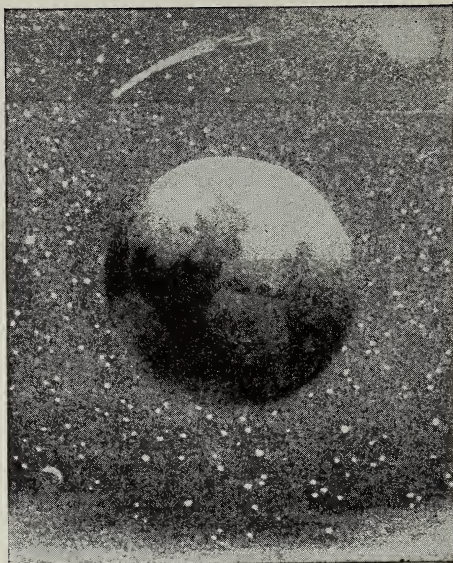
GOD made man so that man might always be happy. He placed man's real happiness in being always true to God. Man, finishing his life upon earth, was to go to Heaven and be everlastingly happy with God.

GOD is greater than any human being. He is different from men, for God is the Perfect Spirit. Human eyes do not see God: yet, because men see the wonderful things God has made and keeps beautiful for them, they know that God is in a world they cannot see now.

GOD is all powerful. He can do all things, such as give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, life to the dead. He is free to choose the manner in which He does all these things. He makes the plants to grow by the use of the sun, the rain and the air. In the same way He may choose to make the sick well by the use of doctors and other learned people. God is the Lord and



Master of all things that exist and of the manner in which all things are done.



GOD knows all things. He is in the midst of the most secret thoughts of every human being so that He knows what every person is thinking and doing even if no one else knows anything about it. It matters not that a man may not be found out in his wrongdoing by his friends or his enemies; he must still answer to God for everything he has done that is not right. God's law of right and wrong for man as He made man in the beginning is in the "Ten Commandments."

* * *

God makes Himself known to men in many ways. He reveals Himself in the whole Creation

—the earth, sun, moon, stars and sky, and the beauties and powers of nature. The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, did not keep clearly in their minds the Fatherly Goodness of God which would have kept them happy and which was so clearly to be seen in God's creation. They easily gave up the way of their true happiness.

God then found another way to make Himself known to men as their Father and a way to return to men their lost happiness. How Adam and Eve lost the Fatherliness of God and the way in which God returns His Fatherhood to all men is told in the story of Jesus Christ and His Church.

* * *

2. "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell."

JESUS CHRIST came on earth, sent by His Father to pay for mankind's disobedience and to obtain for men the priceless gifts of God that had been lost by Adam and Eve.

JESUS CHRIST is the one true Son of God, the Father. The Holy Ghost by miraculous action caused Jesus to be conceived in the womb of the Jewish Virgin, Mary. Jesus had no human father. God appointed Joseph, of the tribe of David, to act toward Jesus and Mary in the place of a human father. The family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is called the "Holy Family."

JESUS CHRIST was born into this world on the first Christmas Day almost two thousand years



ago, in a stable at Bethlehem. He is a true man as well as true God, because He was born into this world of a human mother. He grew from infancy to manhood as all other human beings. He ate, drank, slept, laughed and wept as do other men. His Mother, Mary, is called the Mother of God because she is the human Mother of Jesus Who is true God and true Man. Catholics honor Mary as Jesus did because she is His Mother.

JESUS CHRIST redeemed all men from sin. When God made the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, He placed them in a state of happiness so that they knew God well and could live without trouble in their world. Adam and Eve had the knowledge that is necessary to avoid sickness, quarrels with other human beings, and the things that make life hard on earth. God commanded Adam and Eve that they should not eat of one fruit in their Garden of Paradise, the fruit of the "tree of knowledge." This did not mean that they



were to have no learning, but, rather, that their learning was to be such that it would bring them happily through life to a perfect happiness with God forever in Heaven.

Adam and Eve, however, did eat of this forbidden fruit. This was their first sin. They lost

their greatest happiness and brought on themselves and on all their children, the whole human race, trouble, sickness, suffering and the death of the body. It became necessary, if men were to know God and to be truly friendly, that the sin of Adam and Eve and their children be corrected. Disobedience to God must be paid for and the Truth and Power of God must be brought to the lives of men.

God sent His only Son, Jesus, to live among men. Jesus was to earn the correction of man's disobedience and the priceless gifts of God that the human race had lost.

JESUS CHRIST was nailed to a cross on Good Friday afternoon, nineteen hundred years ago, died on that cross and was buried in a tomb. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Jerusalem, where Jesus was put to death.

* * *

From the time of Adam and Eve until the death of Jesus the gates of Heaven were closed. No one might enter. During these many centuries countless God-serving men and women had died. God did not allow these to be in the eternity of suffering, though they must wait until Jesus had opened the gates of Heaven. God placed these souls in a place of rest apart from Himself until their Deliverer, Jesus, should come to them.

* * *

JESUS CHRIST descended into hell. His body was laid in the tomb. His Soul went down to the resting place of the just to proclaim the nearness

of their deliverance. This is what is meant when the Apostles' Creed says: "He descended into hell."

3. "The third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven."

JESUS CHRIST rose, Body and Soul, from the dead the third day after His burial. He was seen by many men and women among whom He had lived before His Body had been in the tomb. He talked with many of His followers and even ate with them on at least two occasions.

* * *

Jesus Christ makes payment to the Justice of God for the sins of all mankind. He is by His Life, Death and Resurrection our Redeemer. He has earned for all men the Divine Truth and Power that men need if they are to live truly happy lives in this world and the next.

All men must come to Jesus to receive pardon for their sins and to receive those gifts of God that are necessary to be in His friendship. Even Mary, His Mother, received these gifts through her Son, Jesus. Because Mary, ever Virgin, was to be the Mother of Jesus, God gave these gifts to her at the very moment He created her soul. Through Jesus God protected Mary's soul from the first sin of Adam and Eve. This special favor is called the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

To have the pardon of God for sins and to receive the full gifts of God's friendship men must actually join their lives to Jesus. They must do the things

that Jesus commands and in the manner in which Jesus tells them.

* * *

JESUS CHRIST ascended into Heaven. After He had risen from the dead and had remained with His followers for forty days Jesus ascended into Heaven. His followers had gathered on a hillside near Jerusalem and from there they saw Him taken by a cloud into the heavenly regions.

Jesus going into Heaven opened the gates of that Kingdom to men. All men who join themselves to Jesus, believing that He is the Son of God, have now the hope of seeing God in the world to come.

4. "He sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

JESUS CHRIST sits at the right hand of His Father in Heaven. There He reigns forever. He is the Eternal King of the heavenly court of angels and men. Because He has overcome sin for all mankind all men owe Jesus allegiance before father, mother, kinsfolk, or country.

JESUS CHRIST is the Eternal Judge of all mankind. No man is exempted from the judgment by Jesus. Every human being is to be judged by the teachings and the life of Jesus. The good shall be forever with God in Heaven; the bad shall spend their eternity in a living death. They will be for-



ever unhappy, being unworthy to share the happiness of God in Heaven.

In the Apostles' Creed the "living" means those that live throughout eternity with God in happiness; "the dead" means those who live throughout eternity unhappy away from God.

5. "In the Holy Ghost."

THE HOLY GHOST or the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God's Eternal Truth and Love. Jesus, as He had promised, sent the Holy Spirit to dwell on earth in the lives of men. The work of the Holy Spirit is to continue on earth through all ages. This work is the completion of that which Jesus did while on earth. The Holy Spirit releases men from the power of sin and gives them the full gifts of God in their souls.

THE HOLY GHOST makes the redemption of Jesus effective in each person who properly accepts Jesus. The Holy Spirit makes each one a "child of God and an heir to Heaven" if he or she is willing to do what God asks. By the coming of the Holy Spirit God comes into the everyday life and thoughts of each human being. God is never far away, but close to everyone who is in the faith and love of Jesus.

THE HOLY GHOST never leaves the earth of men. He will stay always to make them good and to keep them good until the end of the world.

There is only One True God. God the Father is God. God the Son is God. God the Holy Ghost is God. This means that in the One True God there are Three Divine Persons. This is called "THE HOLY TRINITY." It is the greatest of God's secrets. Man knows that it is true because God tells him of it. Man cannot fully understand it now because his mind needs the light of Heaven to understand it. When man sees God face to face in Heaven he will then understand it. This will be one of the great joys of Heaven, seeing God face to face.



6. "In the Holy Catholic Church."

JESUS CHRIST formed a Church. When Jesus was on earth the people could hear His teachings from His own lips. Whenever anyone did not understand clearly what Jesus meant that person could ask Him and know His answer. Long before Jesus died He selected twelve men, known as Apostles. He made Peter, also known as Simon Bar Jona, the leader or head of this band. Jesus taught these men just what He meant by all that He said and did.

Jesus made this chosen band the beginning of His Church. Before He died He commanded these men to keep together in mind and heart and as a church of living men to teach His Name to all other

human beings. He promised that He would stay with His Church as long as the world should last.

* * *

Much that Jesus taught was already part of the ancient Jewish religion. This had been written into a number of sacred books. Put together these books make the Old Testament of the Bible.

After Jesus died His Apostles wrote down the story of His life and teachings from His Birth to His Ascension into Heaven. They also wrote letters to the first Christians about the teachings of Jesus. One, St. John, even wrote a prophecy about the future of the Church on earth and in Heaven. These writings make the New Testament of the Bible.

The Old and the New Testaments were written under the special suggestion and protection of God and so form the Word of God. The Bible was preserved by the Apostles and those who were later chosen to take the place of the Apostles when the Apostles died. Nineteen hundred years after Jesus died the world has God's history of mankind up to the coming of Jesus in the Bible, and also the Life and Teachings of Jesus.

* * *

Peter, the leader appointed by Jesus for the Apostles, went to the city of Rome, lived there the rest of his life and died there. He became the first Bishop of Rome. When Peter died the Christians chose a man to take his place and to be the leader of all the Christians as the Bishop of Rome. Through all the centuries since that time when the man who is Bishop of Rome dies another

man is chosen to take his place. In this way the Church that Jesus Christ founded comes right down to the present day through the Bishop of Rome, who fills Peter's place as the leader of all Christians.

The Bishop of Rome is by most people called "The Pope," which means the earthly spiritual Father of the children of Christ.

By this plan Jesus arranged that all men, no matter how many centuries they should be born after His Ascension into Heaven, could always be sure they were members of His Church. Men could always be sure that they were in the Church of Jesus if they were members of the Church that had the Bishop of Rome as its leader.

Jesus knew, of course, that no book could possibly contain all the teachings about God and men with such full explanations that every people of every race and language could understand all about the Way of Truth. He, therefore, sent the Holy Spirit to be the guiding Spirit of this Church He founded. Jesus devised on this Church of living men under the protection of His Holy Spirit to always teach the full meaning of God's Word.

This was the sensible thing because men change with the changes of the ages, know their own languages in the different places on earth, and can explain whatever their people cannot easily understand. The Holy Spirit is God and can keep the Truth of Jesus safe through all ages. Men do not have to guess at the meaning of Jesus about the way to Heaven. They can learn His true teaching from the Bishop of Rome. They can be as sure as though they had asked Jesus Himself, for Jesus

promised that the Holy Spirit would guide His Church until the end of time. Jesus is God and His promises cannot fail.

* * *

The Church of Jesus is known as the Holy Catholic Church under the Bishop of Rome. It teaches men:—

(a) About the Truths of God and of man's redemption.

(b) The exact meaning of the Ten Commandments and the Law of the Charity of Christ.

(c) The practices set by Jesus for the true worship of God and the salvation of men's souls.

These are:

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Seven Sacraments of Jesus.

The ways of religious penance.

The way to pray.

* * *

Men who would know Jesus truly and fully do so by becoming practicing members of the Church of Jesus Christ because that is the way that Jesus provides for accepting them as His own.

7. "In the Communion of Saints."

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS includes all the good people who have entered Heaven, the good who have died with some little trace of sin which must be removed before they are worthy of God, and the people still living on earth who expect by



their good lives to be happy with God after their death. It does not include the souls of those who die in hatred of God and are condemned to everlasting Hell.

* * *

HEAVEN is a state of everlasting happiness in the Blessed vision of God. Only the wholly pure of all sin can be happy in the sight of God. God is so pure that any but the sinless are put to shame by the brightness of His purity.

There are many people who live good lives in the important things, but who have small sins; these talk unkindly about their neighbors, boast about themselves, tell small lies, are cranky, use rough language. But they do these things sometimes with-

out thought of the harm they are doing. These people mean no harm and do not mean to offend God. When such persons die God purifies them after death in a state of suffering, called PURGATORY. Some day these people will go into the blessed Presence of God. As soon as their souls are purified of sin by suffering they will not be ashamed to be in the Presence of God.

There are some people, too, who having lived bad lives, are sorry for their sins and before they die they repent of their sinfulness. Sometimes it is on their deathbed that they repent of their sinfulness. They want to be in the Brotherhood of Jesus in the life to come. Like the Good Thief on the cross next to Jesus they ask God's pardon. God grants it. But their sins have been so great that there may not be time enough before death comes to pay up fully for their sins. God, in His Infinite Mercy, has this state of PURGATORY for purifying these souls after they die. When they have been purified they can go into God's Presence without the shameful remembrance of their sins. All souls that go to PURGATORY after dying will some day be in Heaven with God. They are "the souls of the just made perfect."

* * *

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS. The souls in Heaven with God, the souls suffering in Purgatory and the good people still living on earth all have the same purpose—to love God and to bring others to love Him. These are the "Communion of Saints." They might also be called the Brotherhood of Jesus. The souls in Heaven help the souls in Purgatory and the souls of the good on earth by praying to God for them. The souls in Heaven

are the proven friends of God. God listens to them especially as one does listen to those who have proved themselves by faithfulness.

The souls of those on earth can find courage in the example of those who "have fought the good fight" and have succeeded in reaching Heaven. So those on earth honor those in Heaven, the Saints, as the true friends of God. Good souls on earth can pray and suffer in behalf of the souls that are being purified in Purgatory. This is called "praying for the dead."

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS or "the Brotherhood of Jesus" unites all good people with their dear ones in Heaven, in Purgatory and on earth. The "communion of saints" makes the good on earth the special care of Jesus, His Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, the Apostles, the Christian martyrs, all the good souls of Old Testament times, and all the good Christians of the nineteen centuries since the Ascension of the Saviour into Heaven.

Many people have the statues of Jesus, His Mother, and other famous saints of God of different times in the history of the world to remind them how much the saints loved God and how well they served Him. It is much the same as having the photographs of one's dear ones in the home.

All the good who are in Heaven are saints.

8. "In the Forgiveness of Sins."

God will forgive any and every kind of sin. There is no sin that God will not forgive if the sinner asks God's pardon and promises to live a good life in the future. God forgives sin forever so that once a sin

is forgiven God never brings it up again. Jesus has obtained pardon for all sins of all men by His death upon Calvary's Cross. When God forgives sins He starts a healing process in the soul of the sinner. God starts the curing of the soul from the disease



of sinfulness. The forgiving of sin and the healing of the soul are all part of the "forgiveness of sin."

God provides the way in which He forgives sins and heals the soul of the weakness caused by the disease of sin. Jesus has set the way. Sinners must use the way that Jesus has provided if their sins are to be forgiven and their souls made healthy in the



goodness that is pleasing to God. One cannot choose his own way, but must follow the way that Jesus has appointed. Jesus has set two Sacraments for the forgiving of sins and five more to heal the soul of the weaknesses caused in the soul by sin. These Sacraments Jesus gave to His Church so that His Church could always give pardon for sins to sinners.

Baptism is the Sacrament that Jesus gave His Church for the forgiving of the first sin of Adam and Eve that descended to the whole human race and that takes all men out of the close friendship of God.

Penance or Confession of sins to the priest is the Sacrament that Jesus gave His Church for the forgiveness of all sins that men might fall into after they had been baptized. Baptism and Penance (or Confession) require that a person be sorry for the wrong he has done and that he intend to keep himself good and sinless in the future. There is no forgiving of sins unless the sinner intends to serve God the rest of his life. Men are weak and sometimes do not keep the promises that they make to God.

God can forgive again, but always the sinner to be forgiven must really try to be good in the future.

There are five other Sacraments of Jesus. Each of these in a different way helps to heal the soul of the weakness that sin has caused in it.

Holy Eucharist:—The True Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the form of bread and wine. This is the spiritual food of Jesus' followers.

Confirmation:—The strengthening of the soul by the Holy Ghost that the soul may be powerful for good and the Glory of God, and the Name of Jesus.

Matrimony:—Christian marriage to form the Christian family.

Holy Orders:—This Sacrament makes certain men priests to carry on the Church of Jesus in the manner of the Apostles. They conduct the true worship of God for the people, give the people the Sacraments of Jesus and preach the Gospel.

Extreme Unction:—Prepares the soul that is sick unto death for the journey to the Hereafter.

9. "In the Resurrection of the Body."

One day this entire earth in which man lives will come to an end. This is the promise of Jesus. On the last day of this world the bodies of all persons who have lived and died on earth will be called forth from their graves by the Angel of God. Each body will be joined to the soul from which death on earth had separated it. The bodies of "the just made perfect" will enjoy happiness forever with God; the bodies of the souls condemned forever to Hell will share the sufferings of their souls in Hell. The Body



of Jesus coming to life from the tomb is the first of the Resurrection from the grave and the Ascension of the Body into Heaven.

The bodies that will come forth from the grave are the same bodies in which the soul lived upon this earth. True Christians respect their bodies as the house of their immortal souls. They will not defile their bodies by any kind of sin. They expect, on the word of Jesus, that their bodies, like His Own, will on the last day come out of their graves to live forever in Heaven with God. They will again be their own selves just as they were on earth, but they will be perfect in God's love and they will know no sorrow or trial, no sickness or death.

10. "In Life Everlasting."

Life in the world beyond the grave will never end. All men are made by God to live forever in a life after death. When each person dies God judges him or her as to the goodness or badness of their life upon

earth. The good or just go into Heaven to be happy with God forever. The bad or unjust are forever unhappy separated from God in Hell. There is never any change in this final judgment of God. It is just because for each person God's judgment is according to the way that that person has lived.

Heaven is the happiness of the just and is forever.

Hell is the punishment of the unjust, is unhappiness and is forever.

No person ever dies in Heaven or in Hell; each one lives forever, happy if on earth they had been faithful to the teachings of Jesus, unhappy and in torment if they have been unfaithful to Jesus' teachings.

