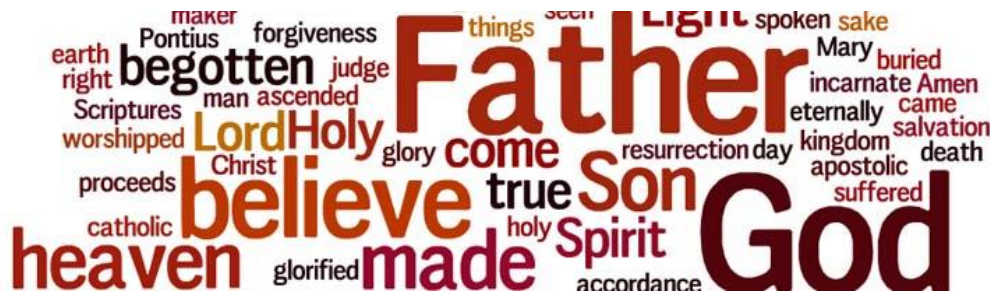


OneWith community, **OneWith** faith, **OneWith** Christ.

January 26, 2020

Grade 9 ~ Session #9



Catholicism Unpacked:

The Nicene Creed:

- The Creed is the summary of what the Catholic Church believes about the nature of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.
- Catholics worldwide profess the Creed as part of our liturgical celebration.
- “Amen” is a Hebrew word whose meaning can be translated different ways depending on the context. In the Bible it is most often used to indicate reliability, truthful or dependable. In Catholic liturgy, its uses as a statement meaning “it is true” or “I believe”

Catechetical Learning Goals:

- Youth review and discuss their personal beliefs and observations about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and other core spiritual beliefs.
- Youth will review the Nicene Creed and discuss the importance of clarifying religious beliefs.
- Youth will begin to break-down the components of the Nicene Creed and compare it's insights on faith with their own lived experience – (the results of this process will be the basis for the “Discipleship Group Creed” that your group will craft in April).

Session Schedule

6:00 pm – Discipleship Group time (Wherever you meet)

7:05 pm – The Creed (Worship Space / 9th Grade)

7:20 pm – Closing Prayer (Worship Space / All Grades)

Review (10-15 minutes)

“I Believe...”

For the rest of the year we will be breaking down the Nicene Creed so that it not just the part of the Mass where you get to sneak a peek at your phone – but a chance to articulate what we really believe about God in unity with the body of believers we call the Church.

Begin by reviewing the collections of beliefs that your group worked on during our first few sessions. Feel free to add to or edit your lists. If you have lost, forgotten or were not able to complete your lists earlier in the year you will want to compile them now because these collections of beliefs about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, etc. will be the basis for Group Creed Project that each group will present to their peers in April.

~ Barry

On a whiteboard or poster board make a list from the following questions...

What do you believe about God...

- *What do you believe about God?*
- *Name some qualities of God?*
- *Is there anything that you would like to add?*
- *Looking at your list, identify those things on which you can all agree.*
- *Work this list to your top 3-5 qualities/attributes that you can all agree on.*

What do you believe about Jesus...

- *What do you believe about Jesus?*
- *Name some qualities of Jesus that stand out to you?*
- *Looking at your list, identify those things on which you can all agree.*
- *Work this list to your top 3-5 qualities/attributes that you can all agree on.*

What do you believe about The Holy Spirit...

The Holy Spirit is perhaps the most elusive yet pervasive persons of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit is a force – manifesting as fire and wind. The Holy Spirit is a presence – love, peace (that surpasses all understanding) and hope. The Holy Spirit is inspiration, beauty, truth, wisdom (“Sophia” in Greek – revealing a feminine personae of God) and much more.

- *Share one personal example of a time when you witnessed or experienced the work or presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.*
- *What do you believe about the Holy Spirit?*
- *Name some qualities of the Holy Spirit, as you understand Her/Him.*
- *Identify those things on which you can all agree.*
- *Work this list to your **top 3-5 qualities/attributes that you can all agree on.***

Keep these lists! You will be referring back to them in a few weeks.

Creed (15 minutes)

More than 1,600 years ago, the Council of Nicaea brought bishops from all over the Christian world to clarify and put into writing the basic beliefs about the nature of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the role of the unified Church.

Use the handout to read through the Nicene Creed together...

The Nicene Creed

*I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.*

*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.*

See pages 9-11 for tips on “How to Teach the Nicene Creed without Hosting a Snore-fest”

- What word or phrase stands out to you?
- Which statement of faith do you find reassuring? Challenging?
- Which statement of faith would your group like to explore more in-depth?

OneWith Creed Project (15 minutes)

Over the next few sessions your group will be “unpacking” the statement of faith that make up the Nicene Creed. I March you will be asked to compare/contrast and evaluate the group’s set of beliefs about God/Trinity/Church with the beliefs asserted in the Creed, and using the Nicene Creed as a model – you group will compose your own creed! Fr. Mike will review your Creed, offer y’all feedback – ask clarifying questions, etc.

At our next-to-last OneWith session in April (04/19/20) we will have a “Mini-Ecumenical Council” (a peer review/presentation) where each group’s creed will be posted.

Many churches recite creeds during their worship services (Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, etc.) others don’t (Baptist, “non-denominational”, etc.) What are the creeds, and are they really important?

The term “creed” comes from the Latin word *credo*, and means: “I believe.” The most famous creeds were forged by the early church. But the Old Testament also contains what could well be considered creedal statements as well. A good example would be the Hebrew Shema which is found in the Old Testament (Deut. 6:4), “*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God — the Lord is One.*”

In the New Testament there are several passages which can be considered to be creedal statements. A good example would be 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: “*For what I received I passed on to you, that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day.*”

The Need for Creeds...

The Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the Creed of Chalcedon. Were all creeds were that were written early in the Church’s history... and all were developed with very specific purposes in mind. First and foremost, they were written to refute heresies that had arisen in the church. For example, the Nicene Creed was written to counteract the dangerous Arian heresy. This heresy denied the full and unqualified deity of Christ. Secondly, the creeds also provide a very positive affirmation of what we as Christians hold in common. The Athanasian Creed, for example, affirms the truth of the Trinity, Christ’s Incarnation, Ascension, second coming, and the final judgment. So it’s not a bad idea to teach the creeds to our children and to reinforce them in church.

- *Why are creeds important to help us understand our faith?*
- *What might be considered a specific purpose for composing your group’s creed?*
- *Has anyone ever asked you what you believe about God? (I hope so!) What did you say? How would an in-depth understanding of a Creed (like the Nicene Creed which we recite here at SJTW) help you answer that question?*
- *What questions do you have about your group’s **OneWith Discipleship Group Creed Project**? (Barry will be happy to answer any of your unresolved questions)*

7:05 pm – The Creed (Worship Space / 9th Grade)

7:20 pm – Closing Prayer (Worship Space / All Grades)

Resources

Articles to get you thinking about ways to explain the Nicene Creed...

[How to Teach the Nicene Creed without Hosting a Snore-fest](#) (*Clever Blog post*)

[Why do Catholics pray the Creed](#) (*LifeTeen Blog post*)

[The Nicene Creed: Symbol of the Catholic Faith](#) (*phrase-by-phrase breakdown*)

[Bishop Nicholas Loses His Cool \(At The Council of Nicaea\)](#): So much for “Jolly o’l St. Nick”!

Creed Videos...

[What is the Nicene Creed](#) (*One Minute Apologist – I’ve tagged this video before, but if you have not used it...*)

[“Creed”](#) (*Music Video – 3rd Day & Brandon Heath*)

[The Trinity Explained in Under 3 Minutes](#) (*Bob Rice*)

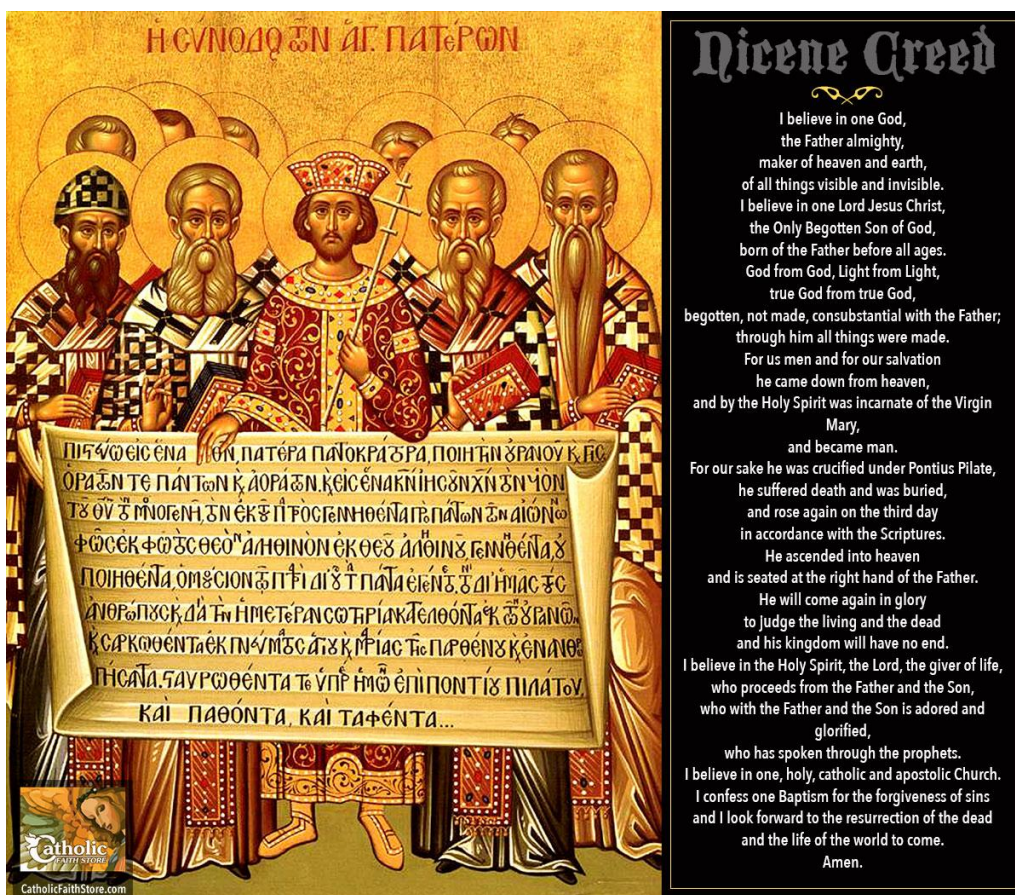
[Don’t be a Robot](#) (*Excellent video from Outside da Box*)

Links for total nerds

[What is the Trinity?](#) (*Bishop Barron*)

[Christian "Trinity" Explained in 3 Minutes](#) (*nice explanation of C.S. Lewis multi-dimensional analogy*)

[St. Patrick's Bad Analogies](#) (*One of my favorite videos ever!*)

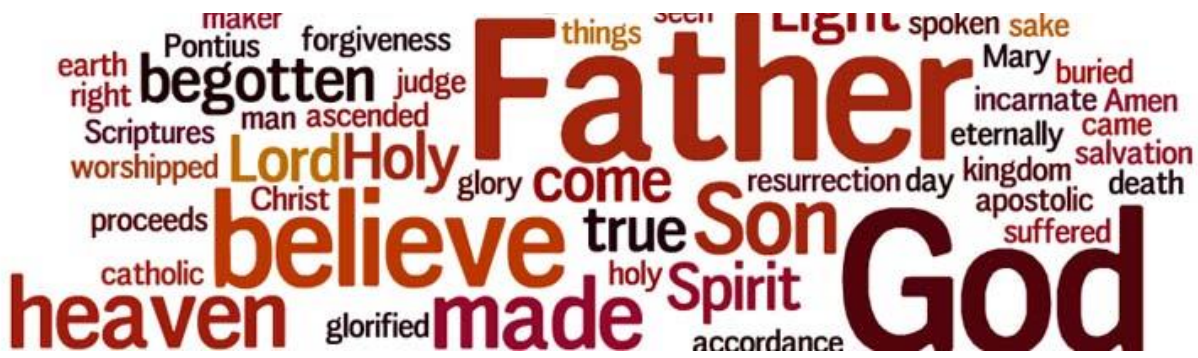


All the way back in the 4th century (AD 325 to be exact), a group of 318 bishops came from Rome, Jerusalem, Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Greece, Asia Minor, and more to meet in Nicaea (present-day Iznik, Turkey) to settle a very important matter —that there is One God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

At that time, there were many conflicting ideas about the nature of God, Jesus and the concept of the Holy Trinity. In particular, was a heresy (think of it as 4th century Fake News), that said; if Jesus was created by God He must have had a beginning, and therefore, like every other part of creation, was not as eternal as God. They reasoned that Jesus' powers given to Him by God but that He was human, not true God.

The bishops settled on a series of statements about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the role of the Church that all people of faith could rely on. These statements of faith became known as the Nicene Creed. In the 6th century, the creed was officially added as part of the liturgy; to be recited by the gathered faithful following the homily. It is a great reminder of what we believe about our awesome God – just as we are about to encounter Him in the Eucharist [think of it as an ancient version of a “push notification”].

For nearly 1,700 years the Nicene Creed has helped guide and form the way we understand the nature of God. This simple *profession of faith* is still relevant today. In a society with so many competing ideologies; a barrage of conflicting ideas of what to believe about God; where celebrity and fame is idolized and our own technological achievement and knowledge is worshiped; the Nicene Creed provides a firm foundation for Christians everywhere to build our life of faith.



"I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible."

We are proclaiming that we believe in one God, who is almighty—having absolute power over all—who is the creator of everything in existence, spanning heaven and earth and things that are visible to the eye and things that are not, such as angels.

"Jesus is 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."

Here, the Church is making clear the divinity of Jesus, that He was not made or created by the Father, but that Jesus always existed "before all ages." *There was never a time when Jesus did not exist.* It helps to understand this line further by defining certain words. Merriam-Webster defines *begotten* as: "to produce especially as an effect or outgrowth," and *consubstantial* as: "of the same substance."... Or as Fr. Don likes to say OneWith!

Jesus therefore, is the same substance as God the Father, and both are one in the same; one-with. Jesus was "*produced or brought forth*" from something that always existed (not created like when we were conceived and born).

"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."

This is the core of our faith: Jesus became human and walked the same earth we do to save us from death. Unlike us, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and is both fully-divine and fully-human. The Virgin Mary is also referenced to remind us of her role in the story of salvation.

"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."

As Jesus foretold, He suffered, died, and rose again three days later to give us the gift of eternal life. Forty days after His resurrection, He left the physical world and ascended into heaven. As believers we're reminded that Jesus will come a second time to judge all the living and the dead and those judged worthy will enjoy eternal peace in God's endless kingdom.

"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."

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and as the Creed states, should be adored and glorified, because *the Holy Spirit is God*. As Scripture shows us, there were instances when the prophets reveal that the Holy Spirit spoke through them, "*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted...*" (Isaiah 61:1) and "*Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say, 'This is what the LORD says to the people of Israel: I know what you are saying, for I know every thought that comes into your minds (Ezekiel 11:5).'*"

"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."

In the final lines, we "confess" or "believe" that through our baptism we have died to original sin, and that we are reborn as a "new creature" in Christ.

Finally, though people have proposed many images of what "the resurrection of the dead" will look like, the truth is that it will be more than we can imagine. As the apostle Paul reminds us: "*eye has not seen, and ear has not heard ...what God has prepared for those who love him*" (1 Cor 2:9). For now, we look forward to being joined to Christ's resurrection and sharing in his life.

How to Teach the Nicene Creed without Hosting a Snore-fest

Emily Jeffries

"I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth ... something, something, something ... God from God, light from light, true God from true God ... something, something, something, I believe in the one, holy, and Catholic -- doh! I mean, I believe in the Holy Spirit ..."

Sound familiar? Seems like every Sunday, we come to the part of the service when we recite the creed, and everyone morphs into lifeless drones with very low battery levels. I'm Catholic, but I'm sure it happens in every Christian service that includes the creed.

The Church is an institution with an absurdly long history. Like, even if you don't count the first years when God was leading His chosen people, the Church is four times as old as the Roman Empire when it tanked. The Catholic Church is older than Islam by (at least) 600 years. It's old, okay? That means that if there is a prayer or tradition that seems stuffy or nonsensical to us, that is probably because it goes waaaay back. In the case of the Nicene Creed, we are talking 1,690 years ago.

The Nicene Creed takes its name from the Council of Nicaea (325), where the first version was drafted. The version we know today was completed at the Council of Constantinople (381). Like most councils of the early Church years, these were convened for the purpose of [hammering out heresies](#) and establishing the official Church teaching. So there were some very specific issues to clarify in no uncertain terms.

But I'm a Theology Teacher, Emily! I already know these things, and teaching the creed is still a snore-fest!

Geez, don't be so whiny; you sound like a bunch of seniors in high school (don't get me started on seniors). Here are a ideas for religion teachers to jazz up the classroom come creed time:

1. Paint a picture -- heresy made people do crazy things in the old days. Remember the Protestant Reformation? Such a peaceful name for such a bloody, contentious, all-out chaotic period of Church history. People were slaughtered in the streets, either for staying loyal to the pope in a Protestant area or declaring the pope to be the anti-Christ in a Catholic one. Generations of Christians killed their neighbors over "boring" topics such as justification, authority of the pope, free will, and the role of grace. Why? Because where you fell on these subjects determined how you lived your life. There was a sense that falsehood being advertised as truth made for a devilish recipe. By way of example: If God expected our cooperation with His grace in order to be saved, but we believed that we were incapable of cooperating, wouldn't that result in some pretty scary scenarios for our souls?

Come to think of it, it's not just ancient people who got fired up about heresies. Ever met anyone who feels neutral on the homosexual marriage issue? How about abortion? Maybe we don't run each other through with swords, but sometimes we sure feel like it!

Use these ideas as a precursor to your lessons on ancient heresies, particularly the [Arian heresy](#). Provide some stats which demonstrate that Arian "Christians" were rampant by the

end of the 4th century, and the movement was spreading like wildfire. Imagine if a colleague of yours had only met "Christians" who claimed that Jesus was just a really really important man ... problem, no?

2. Hypothetical -- what if not knowing the creed was standing between you and martyrdom? Students need to know that being a martyr is awesome. It is even awesomer than dying for one's country. You know how awesome it is when William Wallace throws caution to the wind to fight for Scotland's freedom? Martyrdom is ten times cooler than that. (Note: you will have to think of a more recent movie than this. Trust me, I've made so many [Braveheart references](#) in vain).

Well, what if it's your time to shine, Christians are being oppressed, bad guys are kicking the doors down, and you don't have an appropriately awesome line for the moment when you offer yourself up instead of the adorable girl in pigtails, holding her stuffed Elsa? You know what will get you a high-five from St. Peter when you go? If your last words were, "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth." BOOM! Added advantage: if it takes the bad guy a little more time to load his weapon, you've got plenty more to recite in the meantime.

If you feel this approach is a little too "A-Team" for your taste, I have an alternative. It is very rare, but some Christians are called to defend their faith with their lives. This may never happen to your students, but if God *did* call them to this terrifying responsibility, the creed is one of the best prayers to cure their fears. Why? Because it is a summary of our faith; it is the purpose of our existence boiled down into a dozen or so lines. It ends with the words, "I look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen." If there's anything that can get your priorities straight in a hurry, it's praying the Nicene Creed with your heart in it. That's right, kids, this prayer can come in handy.

3. The Trinity is ridiculously difficult to wrap your mind around. Don't want to be a heretic? Read the creed, man. I have a master's degree in Sacred Theology from probably the nerdiest theology school in the country. It's so nerdy, the friars asked me how the heck I found them in order to apply. It's so nerdy, I had to study downstairs in the library just to get away from all the religious brothers who were teaching themselves ancient Hebrew *out loud*. Even so, I think I could name only five or six guys in the whole place who could coherently explain anything about the Trinity to me. I mean, I took an entire semester of Trinitarian Theology, and about all I can tell you is what the Trinity is *not*, and that I may not even comprehend it when I get to heaven.

That said, young people have a ton of questions about the Trinity. It is bound up with greatest paradoxes of the universe. Trying to teach such mysteries can be frustrating. But you know who is your nearest and dearest friend in the Trinity game? Yup, the Nicene Creed. Have your students know by heart a few basic truths: 1) There is One God 2) God the Father is the principal of creation 3) Jesus was begotten of God and not created like all us other material things 4) The persons of the Trinity are three, but the substance (nature) is one, and 5) All three persons are present and working at the same time, without changing (there is no morphing between Father or Son or Holy Spirit). Then, they can spend the rest of their lives contemplating how these things can be. In the meantime, if a curious Gentile asks about the doctrine of the Trinity, they won't look like [Dory the fish](#) when she forgets ... anything.

4. Memorize the darned thing, and then you can actually think about the words! Assign the students to memorize the Nicene Creed at the end of the unit. Have them actually recite it *by themselves* in front of the class. If you want to be all cool and high-tech about it, film a couple of your braver characters trying to say the creed by themselves at the start of the unit. Then you can play the tape just before they get tested to boost their confidence and make them giggle and think you are the coolest teacher ever.

This method has several advantages. First, their parents and neighbors will be so impressed when they confidently (and audibly) recite the creed during Mass. You might even get a heart-felt email from a grateful parent! If nothing else, you will be remembered as the teacher who made them memorize the creed. At first, they will not like that. Years later, it will make you and your classroom stick in their minds.

Second, as the students sit down to memorize the creed, each new line will recall the lesson that went along with it. When they memorize the phrase, "Only Begotten Son", they'll remember the day you presented examples of begetting vs. making (i.e. the rabbit begets the bunny, but the bunny makes a wasteland of your garden). It will be another way to make your lessons stick.

Third, it provides a life-long opportunity for the student to *pray* the creed, rather than recite it. As everyone of the older generation knows, memorizing important works results in a life-long payout. Over the years, each line will shed a new meaning, and every word will be weighted with a different relevance to their lives. Memorizing the creed means that never again will they waste precious prayer time concentrating on whether "Holy Spirit" or "one, holy, catholic" comes next.

I'm sure that I have only touched the tip of the iceberg when it comes to sprucing up your lesson plan on the creed. The important thing is to remember that the creed is vitally important to the life of the Church, and we should thank God every chance we get that he inspired the Church to write it. It may be in an antiquated language, but in my experience the denser the ground, the deeper the treasure.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-teach-nicene-creed-without-hosting-snore-fest-emily-jeffries/>