

“FOUR-FOR-FOUR”
CATECHESIS ON THE *ROMAN MISSAL*

Liturgy of the Word: Creed, part 2 (February 19–20, 2011)

As we discussed last time, the Creed is called the “Profession of Faith.”

It professes faith in what has been announced in the readings.

Today we’re going to focus on changes to the second paragraph of the Creed, which concerns the Son of God.

The paragraph begins by describing the eternal relationship between God the Father and God the Son.

In other words, it establishes that the Son is divine.

Then the Creed narrates the events of Christ’s saving work in history: the Incarnation (Christ’s humanity and divinity); the Paschal Mystery (Passion, Death, and Resurrection); and the Parousia (Second Coming).

The first change to note is whereas we have been saying, “The only Son of God, eternally *begotten* of the Father,” we will now say, “The *Only Begotten* Son of God, *born* of the Father *before all ages*.”

As with other changes, this is a more precise translation of the Latin text.

In addition, the phrase “only Begotten” appears in Scripture:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only [-begotten] Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

The term also echoes what has already been proclaimed in the Gloria:

“Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
You take away the sins of the world...”

The second change is that the phrase “*one in Being* with the Father” will now become “*consubstantial* with the Father.”

This is a technical, theological term that the Church coined in order to explain the unique relationship between the Father and the Son.

The Latin term *consubstantialis* literally means “co-substantial” or, “of the same substance.”

It’s a way of saying that the Son is completely divine, as the Father is.

The problem with the phrase “one in Being” is that could imply there is no real distinction between the Father and the Son.

The third change is that “by the power of the Holy Spirit he was *born* of the Virgin Mary and became man” will now become “and by he Holy Spirit was *incarnate* of the Virgin Mary and became man.”

“Was incarnate” translates the Latin phrase *incarnatus est*.

It means to “take flesh.”

The problem with the previous translation is that it seems to say that the Son of God became a human being only when he was born.

But the Son of God became human at the moment of his conception.

It’s important to note that we are asked to bow during this line of the Creed, something that we should be doing already.

Gestures are important, because they are a form of prayer.

We pray with our bodies, as well as our voices.

In this case, we are showing with our bodies that the Lord had a body.

And we lower ourselves to show that He “lowered himself” as God to come among us as a human being.

As St. Paul says,

“Though he was in the form of God,
[Jesus] did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;
and found human in appearance,
he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death,
even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6–8).