

Faith Seeking Understanding: What is Jesus Like?

Many Catholics learn the Nicene Creed, but don't necessarily know where it comes from or that there were Creeds developed before and after that.

The haggling over words may not seem important, but as St. Athanasius said, "what is not assumed is not healed", meaning if God did not take on our full humanity, then Jesus did not heal our full humanity. These beliefs are essential because they are about our hope of salvation in Jesus Christ.

In the early centuries of the Church, the faithful struggled to know how to speak about Jesus. A number of errors crept up that led people to believe that Jesus was a creature like us, or that God was three gods, or that Jesus never was really human. I've included 4 of the early creeds below and you can see how the understanding of Jesus developed and was stated more carefully and technically over time.

St. Paul to the Philippians 2:6-11(~50 AD) Jesus divine, human. Died, rose.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, **though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped**, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even **death on a cross**. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.

Apostles Creed(2nd Century) emphasizes his humanity: real birth, real death, real resurrection.

I believe in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord. **Who 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.

Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (from 325 and 381) Emphasizes divinity, eternal existence.

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.**

Chalcedonian Creed (451) One Person, Two Natures.

Following therefore the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man composed of rational soul and body, **the same one in being(homoousios=consubstantial) with the Father as the divinity and one in being(homoousios=consubstantial) with us as to the humanity**, like unto us in all things but sin(cf Heb 4:15). The same was begotten from the Father before the ages as to the divinity and the latter days for us and our salvation was born as to His humanity from Mary the Virgin Mother of God.

We confess that one and the same Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son, must be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion or change, without division or separation. **The distinction between natures was never abolished by the union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person(prosopon) and one hypostasis. He is not split or divided into two persons, but He is one and the same only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ**, as formerly the prophets and later Jesus Christ Himself have taught us about Him as has been handed down to us by the Symbol[CREED] of the Fathers.