

Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE
PROCLAMATION OF THE
WORD OF GOD



Psalm 119:105
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.

JANUARY 2010



GOD'S GIFT TO MEN

GOD IS A KIND and loving heavenly Father who delights in bestowing gifts and blessings upon the children of men whom He has created in His own image. In His great love, God placed man in the beautiful garden of Eden. Through the deceit of Satan, man yielded to temptation and sinned in the sight of God. Even though man had fallen into sin and come under the law of sin and death, God in His love gave the promise of a Savior on the day of the fall. He said, *And I will put enmity between thee (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15)*

Man had become corrupt and God saw that he could in no way save himself. Man had sinned in the flesh and in order to pay man's debt of sin, it was necessary for God to become man. He must be subject to temptation. He *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)* He must suffer, the guiltless for the guilty. *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)* The only way Christ could be both human and divine was to be born of a human mother with God as His Father. Thus in the fullness of time Christ was born of the virgin Mary, being conceived of the Holy Ghost. He was born in a manger in Bethlehem among the lowly of this earth.

He took upon Himself the form of man so that He might become the Savior of the world.

His birth was first announced by the angel of the Lord to shepherds who watched their flock by night in the fields near Bethlehem. To these shepherds, who were sore afraid, the angel said, *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Luke 2:10-12)*

“Fear not.” God never intended that His creatures should be afraid of Him. God wishes to dispel all fear from our hearts. The coming of a Savior should bring comfort and joy to every heart. When Christ sensed the fear in the hearts of His disciples, He comforted them saying, *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32)* God's gifts to mankind are such as bring blessings to us in time and in eternity. Though we may strive to understand the love of God, we can never fathom the immensity of the gift which God bestowed upon the world when *he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)*

“For you.” God's gift is a personal gift. Though Christ came to save the whole world, he wants to become a personal Savior to every man. He is the Anointed One of God, the only One who is able to reconcile you to a just and righteous God. *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)* *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)*

He who accepts this gift of God, the Christ of Bethlehem, as his personal Savior will receive that blessing of Christ's coming into this world as proclaimed by the heavenly host: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:14)* May the Christ child find room in every heart.

*the late W.A. Karvonen
December 1945 CM*

GROWING IN CHRIST

Growing in Christ means to grow in grace and to diminish in oneself. First of all, read in *Ezekiel 47:1-6* how the man who had the line in his hand measured the water:

Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this?

These four times depict four periods of time in a Christian's life. First, in childhood, he understands very little about Jesus or Christianity; then a little more in youth, and much more in manhood. When the water is to the loins, he understands the redemptive work of Jesus and lives accordingly, but he still has his feet on the bottom, trusting a little on his own works, though he may not realize this within himself.

When he reaches the fourth period of life, comparable to the measure of the fourth one thousand cubits, he finds the hidden roots of sin in himself, such as jealousy, greed, pride and vainglory, which affect even his holiest endeavors. He must say, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Romans 7:24)* He finds as the apostle Paul did, *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (Romans 7:19)* Now he can see that he has nothing of his own to stand on; his feet must be loosened from

the bottom of his own works. He must cast himself to swim in the sea of grace, saying, "I am what I am through the grace of God, and that grace has not been in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:10)

A servant of the Lord, Juuso Runtti, wondered what fault lay in him that he could not enjoy the happy feelings of grace. He heard a voice saying, "Juuso, you are foolish to search for one fault in yourself; don't you know you are one big fault with God?" His heart was warmed when he realized this; he rejoiced to hear God's Word when he felt so sinful and unworthy.

It is an eternal truth that whenever a person grows in Christ he diminishes in himself, and grace abounds more and more. As we begin to see the wretchedness within ourselves and then see how God has cast all our sins and sinfulness upon His Son, as we read in Isaiah 53, Jesus becomes our all in all. Now is the vessel cleansed from within so that the outward life becomes upright and a glory to God.

When we grow in Christ all else becomes as dross and to know more of Him becomes most important to us. Our salvation is not based on changeable feelings, but on the knowledge of Jesus, whom God has made to be unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). In this knowledge there is much room in which to grow; that is, to know the Jesus of the Bible who is the Savior of sinners.

Sometimes a child of God must believe himself righteous even though he feels that he is filled with demons, and again his feelings of grace are so overwhelming that the vessel of clay nearly bursts with joy. We understand that we are saved by grace, whether downcast with temptations or in the heights of joy. When we grow in grace in this way, we are growing *unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)* Such a Christian is not easily swayed by winds of doctrine and can judge all matters by the Scriptures.

Jesus says, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. (John 10:27-28)*

*the late Janne Marttiini
December 1966 CM
Submitted by Dave Impola
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MARVEL AT THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. (Luke 2:33)

What are those wonderful things spoken concerning Him? They are the things concerning which Simeon had spoken immediately before, when in the temple he took the child Jesus up in his arms, saying: *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)* At these things, Luke says, they marveled, namely, that this aged and holy man stood there before them in the temple, took the Child in his arms and spoke of Him so exultingly, calling Him the Light of the world, a Savior of all nations, a Glory of all the people of Israel; Simeon himself thinking so highly of Him that he would now fain depart this life after he had seen the Child.

Now it must indeed excite wonder that such things were proclaimed openly by Simeon in that public and sacred

How could such a Child be considered the Savior of all men, the Light of the Gentiles and the Glory and Honor of all Israel?

place with reference to that poor and insignificant Child, whose mother was so humble and lowly and whose father Joseph was not wealthy. How could such a Child be considered the Savior of all men, the Light of the Gentiles and the Glory and Honor of all Israel? At present, after we have had so many proofs of Christ's greatness, these words do no longer seem so wonderful; but then, when nothing as yet was known of Jesus, they were indeed marvelous, and this lowly Child was very unlike the great and mighty being portrayed by Simeon. But Joseph and Mary believed it nevertheless, and therefore they marveled. If they had not believed it, the words of Simeon would have appeared to them insignificant, untrue and worthless, and not at all wonderful. Therefore, the fact that they marveled shows

that Joseph and Mary possessed a strong and sublime faith.

But some one might say: why then do they marvel at this? Had not the angels told them before that this Child was Christ and the Savior, and had not the shepherds also spoken glorious things concerning Him? It was also very wonderful that the kings or wise men had come from distant lands to worship Him with their offerings. Mary knew well that she had conceived Him of the Holy Spirit, and that wonderful events had attended His birth. Moreover, the angel Gabriel had said that He should be great and be called the Son of the Most High. In short, all the preceding events had been marvelous, up to this time; now nothing wonderful occurs, but only those things are announced and proclaimed concerning Him which have not happened and are not yet seen.

It seems to me that in this case we need not look very far for an explanation. The Evangelist does not deny that they had also marveled before this. He simply desires to relate here what they did when Simeon spoke such glorious things concerning the Child. He means to say: When Simeon spake thus, the child's parents did not despise his words, but believed them firmly. Therefore they remained and listened to him and marveled at his utterances; what could they have done in addition to this? Thus it is not denied here that previously they marveled just as much, if not more.

We shall inquire later into the spiritual significance of this wonderment; now we are concerned about the literal sense, serving as an example of our faith and teaching us how wonderful are the works of God concerning us; for the end is very unlike the beginning. The beginning is nothing, the end is everything; just as the infant Christ here appears to be very insignificant, and yet He finally became the Savior and Light of all nations.

If Joseph and Mary had judged according to outward appearances, they would have considered Christ no more than a poor child. But they disregard the outward appearance and cling to the words of Simeon with a firm faith, therefore they marvel at his speech. Thus we must also disregard all the senses when contemplating the works of God, and only cling to His Words, so that our eyes and our senses may not offend us.

The fact that they were marveling at the words of Simeon is

also mentioned to teach us that the Word of God is never preached in vain, as we read in *Isaiah 55:11*: *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth (i.e. out of the mouth of God's messengers): it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* Thus the Evangelist would say that Simeon delivered a warm-hearted, beautiful sermon, preaching the pure Gospel and the Word of God. For the Gospel is nothing but a sermon whose theme is Christ, declaring Him to be the Savior, Light and Glory of all the world. Such preaching fills the heart with joy and wonder at this great grace and comfort, if it is received in faith.

But although this sermon was very beautiful and comforting, there were only a few who believed; nay, people despised it as being foolish, going hither and thither in the temple. Some prayed, others did something else, but they did not give heed to the words of Simeon. Yet, as the Word of God must produce results, there were indeed some who received it with joy and wonder, namely Joseph and Mary. The Evangelist here also rebukes the unbelief of the Jews, for as this occurred publicly in the temple, there were many present, and yet they would not believe, the fact that the Savior was only a child causing them all to stumble. Thus we learn here that we should hear the Word of God gladly, for it will invariably produce good fruits.

Martin Luther

2010 ALC CALENDARS

The 2010 Apostolic Lutheran Church calendars may still be ordered. The price for each calendar is \$5.50 to cover the cost of printing and mailing. Do not send your payment with your order. An invoice will be included with the shipment for payment to be mailed to the Federation treasurer.

Please send your order in one of the following ways: By email: alc_calendars@mac.com or by telephone: 925-454-1648 or by mail to: Corrie Karlsen, 2994 Rodeo Lane, Livermore, CA 94550.

Corrie Karlsen
ALC Calendar Committee

THE LITTLE BABE

When a baby is born, we stand in awe and wonder at the gift that God has given to the parents. We often comment on whom the baby favors and what characteristics he or she may have. The birth unites the family closely and more so as it grows. What a blessing this is.

As the Christmas season just has passed, we remember the one Babe that came from heaven; He came into the family of Joseph and Mary. This little Babe has reached many hearts and families throughout the ages. The characteristics of this Babe bear the image of our heavenly Father and heaven itself. When this Babe, who was given the name Jesus as instructed by the angel Gabriel to Mary, lives in our hearts, the characteristics of that Christ Child are what we have as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. (Luke 2:40) As the story reads in the remaining text of Luke chapter 2, Joseph and Mary were at the feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. On their journey home they realized He was missing, and they found Him in the midst of the doctors in the temple asking questions and hearing them (Luke 2:46).

The power that this Babe has had in the hearts of men for all the centuries that have passed since His birth is the greatest work that this earth has known. This little Babe so meek and mild has filled the mighty chasm that separates us from God throughout the ages with His perfect, complete, finished work. This He has done in the hearts of men.

The wise men came seeking this Child; we too should come. They brought Him the most expensive gifts. The gift that God gave was this Babe. He gave of Himself for all to receive. The Holy Spirit teaches us these truths that we may share this gift from Heaven.

What a joyous thought—to be in the family of God. What a blessing it is as it grows. May we always hear the whisper of that Babe say, "Merry Christmas!"

*With Christmas & New Year Blessings,
Carol A. Levijoki
Camp Verde, Arizona*

VICTORY IN JESUS CHRIST

The Word, "our food," is a needed daily diet to keep us remaining in Christ Jesus as we enter God's rest, and there our joy is complete. As Jesus says, *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.* (John 15:5)

We can be so thankful for God's patience and mercy and grace and unconditional love, displayed in sending His beloved Son to take our place for the debt we owed. "Oh, victory in Jesus, my Savior forever! He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood." (E. M. Bartlett)

Now I am His willing servant of righteousness forever. I am His and He is mine. I am safe and secure, by the seal of the Holy Spirit of Christ Jesus who directs and corrects and comforts and counsels and enables me to love and to do our heavenly Father's will and purpose for my daily life, all for His glory and praise and plans and purpose; for everything conforms to His will. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8:28)

May the God of hope magnify your joy in Christ Jesus. May the Spirit of Christ Jesus be with you always—in thought, in word and in deed.

*Elaine Bertagnoli
Menahga, Minnesota*

The holiest we enter In perfect peace with God,
Through whom we found our center In Jesus and His blood:
Though great may be our dullness in thought and word and deed,
We glory in the fullness of Him that meets our need.

Much incense is ascending Before th' eternal throne;
God graciously is bending To hear each feeble groan;
To all our prayers and praises Christ adds His sweet perfume,
And Love the censer raises These odors to consume.

Mary Bowley

God's peace, Children,
in our land and in far away lands,



First, I would wish all of you a **Blessed New Year!** Last month we read about Jesus' birth. Now let's finish up and hear again about the first few years after His birth. You can find this in *Matthew, chapter 2*.

GOD LEADS THE WISE MEN TO JESUS

It was nearly two years after Jesus was born, and some wise men from another country far away saw a very different star than they had seen before, and I believe the Spirit of God told them the meaning of the star. Soon after, they set out for what turned out to be a many month journey to find this Babe. They may have traveled on camels and we don't know how many of them there were.

Once they reached Jerusalem, they went to King Herod and asked him, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.* (*Matthew 2:2*)

This question troubled King Herod as he was very selfish and did not want there to be any other king. He asked the wise men how long ago they had seen this star, and the wise men told him. He sent them on their way saying, "When you find him, come back to tell me so I can worship him too." Herod did not want to worship but rather to kill this "new king."

The wise men left Herod's palace and, as they came outside, there in the sky was the same star that had been leading them before. They were amazed and yet happy to see it.

The star came to stand still over a home in Bethlehem. They knocked on the door and it opened and there before their eyes was this King of the Jews—a Baby! They fell down and worshipped Him and gave Him gifts of **gold, frankincense and myrrh**. I'm sure those were very special moments for the wise men, moments they would never forget. That was long ago, but we can and still do experience special times in our lives as believers, and we will always remember those times.

After the wise men left Jesus, they were warned by God not to go back to Herod but to go to their own country another way.

God then came to Joseph in a dream and told him to take the young Child and His mother and flee to Egypt to protect Jesus from being killed by Herod. They were to stay in Egypt until the Lord said it was safe to leave.

After Herod died, the angel of the Lord came to Joseph again and said to go to Israel. Joseph took Mary and Jesus and went there, but Joseph was not comfortable staying there because Herod's son was the ruler and Joseph was afraid of him. The Lord saw Joseph's concerns and told him to go to Galilee. They went there and lived in the city called Nazareth and this prophecy was then fulfilled, *He shall be called a Nazarene. (Matthew 2:23)*

God protected His Son so that He would grow up to be the Savior of the world so that you and I could have eternal life.

God protects you and I and all believers, as He wants us to come to live with Him in heaven. God will certainly be with us all and keep a watchful eye on each of us even in this New Year.

I pray that you children, and you older people too, will keep believing in the Lord as He has a heavenly reward waiting for you!

*I leave you in Christ's care,
Gwen Wilson*

WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE?

Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "A person will worship something, have no doubt about that. We may think our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of our hearts, but it will come out. That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will determine our lives and our character. Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming."

Eventually what dominates our innermost thoughts and imaginations comes forth as that to which we give our allegiance and worship. Indeed, long before Emerson, Jesus warned similarly that *where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:21)*

*Unknown
Submitted by Alvar Helmes
Battle Ground, Washington*

WITHIN THE VEIL

And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. (John 10:23) But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God. (Hebrews 10:12)

See Him, then, in these two different conditions: 1. walking in Solomon's porch; 2. seated at the right hand of God.

1. *Walking in Solomon's porch.*—He walks there as the Substitute; our Substitute as truly as when he groaned in Gethsemane or died on Golgotha. As one consenting for a season to be shut out from the presence of God that we might enter and dwell in that presence for ever, He stands, or sits, or walks outside the sanctuary. Thus He bears our banishment: He takes upon Him not merely the penalty of suffering and death, but that of exclusion from the house and home of God. That penalty He has endured: that exile He has undergone: that distance He has experienced: and all this as the Substitute, bearing what we should have borne, in order that we might inherit all to which He could lay claim. Through means of this substitution of the Son of God in the room of the exiled sinner, that sinner finds free access to the innermost shrine of heaven, the very presence of the Father. And the Father's message to each banished one is, enter in! Stand no longer afar off; despair no more, as if the gate were closed. Behold, it is open, wide open! Go in, and find peace, love, friendship, acceptance, through Him, to whose finished work of glorious substitution the Father is bearing such blessed testimony! Why should we depart from the living God, seeing the Son of God has removed all reason for our departure? Why remain in alienation, seeing here is that which has taken away all the hindrances in the way of friendship? Why remain afar off, seeing God asks you to come nigh? Why stand outside, seeing God says, COME IN?

Nor is it bare *liberty* of entrance that has been secured; as if the door had been reluctantly thrown open, and the way grudgingly cleared for us. Such is the efficacy of our Substitute's life and death, that we have BOLDNESS to enter into the holiest (Hebrews 10:19). We need not hide ourselves in the thicket; we need not run away from God; we need not, in terror and uncertainty, steal slowly and sadly back to our Father's

house; we need not wait, nor doubt, nor suspect, nor distrust; we may go at once, and go boldly, to God, on the simple security given to the sinner by the work of the divine Sin-bearer. That work has not simply made it possible for God to receive us but secured our reception. It has not simply unbarred the gate but flung it open, as widely open as God Himself could fling it, or as any sinner needs that it should be flung. Nay, it has sent out messengers of peace and messages of love, assuring us not only of a welcome when we return but of God's sincere desire that we should do so. It has not merely removed the restraints of grace which the Law imposed and set it free to pour itself out freely; but it has made grace a righteous thing; so that now love is righteousness, and righteousness is love.

It is not possible to imagine greater freeness for the sinner, in his going to God, than has been provided by the vicarious life and death of Him who is *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. (*Romans 10:4*) Nothing can be freer, safer, surer, than the *new and living way* (*Hebrews 10:20*). O men and friends, and fellow-exiles, we beseech you to turn back on your way of peril and sin. Turn back, lest ye perish! By the death of Him who died the sinner's death, by the life of Him who lived on earth the sinner's life of banishment, we entreat you to bethink yourselves and turn your footsteps toward your Father's still-open home.

2. *Look at Him within the veil, at the Father's right hand.*—He remained on the outside while here; He has entered in at last, and that not into the earthly sanctuary, the mere figure of the true, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. When outside here on earth, He was our Substitute; now when within, in heaven, He is our Representative. He has gone up and gone in for us. He carries us in along with Him, and gives those who accept His substitution and representation the same privilege of nearness and fellowship as He has Himself. As our High Priest, he communicates between us and God. As Intercessor, He pleads our case. As Representative, He has so identified Himself with our persons that we are lost sight of under His shadow. The Father sees Him in us, and us in Him. All our imperfection is lost in His glorious perfection; and we, in being presented to the Father, are presented as part of His glorious self; all our uncomeliness for ever merged in the

infinite comeliness of the beloved Son.

From the moment that faith linked us to His cross, and identified us with His person, we became inseparable. In no aspect could God view us, save as part of His Son—nay, wholly one with Him. And this connection, though now one of faith, is ere long to be one of sight. When He who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4). His second coming will be the visible completion of the wondrous identification which faith at first accomplished. Resurrection will bring out, more fully than either life or death, the mysterious oneness between the body and the Head. One cross, one death, one grave, was ours; for His cross was ours, His death ours, His grave ours. So, one glory, one crown, one kingdom, one city, one inheritance shall be ours hereafter; for all that He has is ours. He, one with us, took our place of exile outside the veil and bore our shame, our suffering, our death. We, one with Him, get His place of nearness to the Father, within the veil, and entrance to the many mansions of the eternal house; receiving the life, the love, the blessing, the eternal gladness which He has purchased for us, and which He so freely, so lovingly, presents to each one who is now afar off, each banished child of Adam, each prodigal of the earth, wandering in the far country, without a home or a Father, without a sanctuary, and without a God.

It is to this *innermost* place in the heaven of heavens, this *innermost* glory above, that the Lord invites the *outermost* of the sons of men, the *farthest off* of all earth's far-off wanderers. In love He took the lowest place that He might invite us to the highest. In love He went to the farthest circle of banishment that this earth knows, in order that, by bearing that banishment, He might bring us into the very center of divine fellowship, and nearness, and heavenly gladness—to the very bosom of the Father, out of which He Himself had come seeking the lost and devising means whereby his banished should be restored. Ah, surely there is not anything in our banishment that should lead us, for one moment, to prefer it to our Father's presence, nor anything in the distant land of exile to make us refuse for it the paradise of God!

Horatius Bonar
Excerpts, *Christ the Healer*



CREEDS OF THE CHURCH

In the early Church, as the good news of Jesus began to spread, this question arose: “What do we believe?” The people didn’t have the Bible readily available; when they heard different teachings, they couldn’t judge whether a doctrine was true or false. Creeds were formed to answer that question, to lay out the basic principles of the faith.

A creed is a statement of belief, a short summary of teachings and faith. The word ‘creed’ comes from the Latin word *credo*, meaning ‘I believe.’ *Credo* is the first word in the Apostles’ Creed in the Latin language. The common creeds of the Christian Church are the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

The Apostles’ Creed was not written by the apostles but is an accurate summary of their teachings, supported by Scripture. Following is the text of the Apostles’ Creed (all creeds from the *Book of Concord*):

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker 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, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick 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 the life everlasting. Amen.

*catholic means “universal” and is not a reference to the Roman Catholic Church.

The Nicene Creed reputed the false teaching that Jesus was not truly God. A heresy had arisen claiming that Jesus was a created being and that He hadn’t existed eternally. Groups of bishops met at Nicea to discuss this question. After much debate, they affirmed that Jesus is God and has existed forever; He was not created by the Father and is equal to the Father.

The text of the Nicene Creed follows:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Athanasian Creed focuses on the Trinity and the nature of Christ. It arose from controversy as well, refuting the heresy that God the Father was greater than the Son or the Spirit. It states that Father, Son and Spirit are equal. Regarding the nature of Christ, it affirms that the Son is of the same substance as the Father and that Jesus is true God and true man, refuting another heresy which taught that Jesus wasn't truly man but a kind of Super-Man without flesh and blood. The Athanasian Creed differs from the other creeds in that it includes condemnation to those who don't agree with the teachings of the creed. The text of the Athanasian Creed:

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father,

another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three Eternals, but one Eternal. As there are not three Uncreated nor three Incomprehensibles, but one Uncreated and one Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty. And yet they are not three Almighty, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none: neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before or after other; none is greater or less than another; But the whole three Persons are coeternal together, and coequal: so that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped. He, therefore, that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe faithfully the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood; Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not

two, but one Christ: One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead; He ascended into heaven; He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give an account of their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.

Creeds are a way to state in brief what the Church believes, but this short history is very incomplete. There is much more to learn! Study God's Word, study the creeds, and compare the two. Learn the differences and similarities of the creeds and why they were written; learn the history of the Church. You will be better prepared to explain and defend the faith that you confess, to witness the Gospel, and to *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.* (1 Peter 3:15)

*God's peace,
Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington*



But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?

Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen and help thee, and cause thee to stand
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.

When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

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For the New Year

Now, gracious Lord, Thine arm reveal,
And make Thy glory known;
Now let us all Thy presence feel,
And soften hearts of stone!

Help us to venture near Thy throne,
And plead the Savior's name;
For all that we can call our own,
Is vanity and shame.

From all the guilt of former sin
May mercy set us free;
And let the year we now begin,
Begin and end with Thee.

Send down Thy Spirit from above
That saints may love Thee more;
And sinners now may learn to love
Who never loved before.

And when before Thee we appear
In our eternal home;
May growing numbers worship here,
And praise Thee in our room.

John Newton

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

2 Timothy 1:6-10