

AMOR ET MISERICORDIA DEI

Prayer Group

Sunday, 24th February 2013, from 3:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Sharing - Teaching

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Shalom!

Today, I shall continue talking about “faith”; this time it is the second part of the talk, in which I shall focus on the prayer called *the Creed*.

The Creed is a prayer professed by Christians during a particular church service. For Catholics, we do know that we are used to praying it after the Homily. Brothers and sisters, in order to remind us about the content of the prayer, let me read the prayer to you, and I invite you to see if there is any part of the prayer that touches you and that you may want to speak about what you believe, later. Here it is...

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
 I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.
 He was conceived by the power of the Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
 He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.
 He descended to the dead.
 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.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy Catholic Church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting.
 AMEN!

Brothers and sisters, have you been touched by the prayer since I read it? Do you want to share about what you perceive the prayer is, and what you do believe?

(...)

For me, I believe the Creed is a summary of the whole content of the Holy Bible. On the basis of my faith, let me explain what I perceive...but in order to talk about it I will take into consideration upon the prayer stanza-by-stanza.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

The Scriptures in the Old Testament explain about God existence, His creation and His people, and His Laws. Hence God exists....God exists before all things, that is before all things in heaven and on earth were established by Him. In the book of Genesis (1:1-2:25), God is the principal actor here, He is the Almighty one and He created our world and heaven. In Hebrew 1:3, the Scripture says, *‘It is by faith that we understand that the universe was*

created by God's word, so that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen.' Brothers and sisters, it is by faith that I could see God exists and He is with me, and you today, in the past and in the future for in Hebrews 13:8, the Scripture says, '*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*' **God is our Creator, who loves us infinitely**, and wants us to be saved by means of guiding our steps day-by-day towards heaven. On the 21st December 2012, God gave me His Word for us and for the world, He said,

"My dear people, I come to you at every moment of your life - are you aware of that? I come to you...because I LOVE YOU, and I want to SAVE YOU. Do not be afraid to come to Me, I repeat, do not be afraid...I can only help you if you can accept My love. There is no other than LOVE...Love changes your life. I create you to be My friends but not strangers. Will you accept My love? How much longer can I wait for your return to Me? I will never give you up, as you are My Creation...My beautiful Creation. I shall take you in My bosom, My little ones; I protect you as a father protects his children. I can never forget you, My love ones. Prepare yourself...for I'm coming to you...I bless you."

God's message here is clear that God is the Living God. We, His Creation, He loves us... Since God is the Living God, He then truly exists before all Creation is put into place later. We have breath, as He gives us life...HE is the God of love and compassion - hence if we live through love, we live in God's spirit; and when God's spirit lives in us, we too, become compassionate towards one another.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

In the New Testament, the Scriptures explain about God's love to His people: by this I mean, God's Word was made flesh, that is, the mystery of the birth of Jesus. Jesus is God's only Son, who is the Messiah. Hence Jesus' name is the greatest name of above all things on earth and heaven, in (Philippians 2:10-11), the scripture says, '*And so, in honour of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees, and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*' Yes, He is our Lord and Saviour. Brothers and sisters, since humanity does not see who God is He himself visibly came to us (to the world) in a form of a man; the man is called "JESUS". Our Salvation is given by God through the "Sign of the Cross": in order to save us, the Son of God, Jesus Christ died for our sins out of His love for us. Salvation is indeed a mystery of God's love to humanity. Therefore, we can only be assured that we all are saved through BELIEVING His son, JESUS CHRIST! He is our only SECURITY and HOPE! Amen!

He was conceived by the power of the Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

In the New Testament, in Luke 1:26-38, the Scripture describes that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary carried Jesus until he was born. Before the Virgin Mary was engaged to live together with Joseph, God sent His angel, angel Gabriel, to Mary to announce His plan to save humanity. Despite her fear of what was happening, she accepted it: Mary's humble heart opens up the door for God's plan. As you can see, the most important role here is the Holy Spirit making the Word into flesh - Jesus Christ. The Virgin Mary, however, is the second important role, as without her helped, Jesus would not be born and there would be no redemption for our sins, hence we would not have Salvation. In other words, God anointed Mary to be Jesus' mother. God relationship with humanity is a mystery to realise His plan to save all humanity from the destruction of sins! God's goodness to

humanity is A-M-A-Z-I-N-G! For without a united work between God and mankind, those of Jesus and Mary, Salvation does not exist.

He Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.

Brothers and sisters, do you know our Lord, Jesus Christ was extremely tortured under Pontius Pilate, who was a roman governor at that period? Yes, he was tortured, and that no man can understand the mystery of such suffering...we could only understand when we saw it through our naked eyes. However, Christians who live in God's way every day may be able to see that Jesus Christ suffering is indescribable painful! No man can support such suffering, except the Son of Man! Praise to the LORD! You may, perhaps wonder, why He suffered so much? Do you know why?

(I let the speaker to the floor for the answer...any one knows?)

If you see that God is your Creator, and that you love Him first in your life, you would consider His plan for humanity is absolutely an IMMENSE gift for you. God revealed His plan through His Son, Jesus Christ, out of the blue, meaning it is because only in one word, "LOVE." In 1 John 4:8-10, the Scripture says,

"Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. And God showed his love for us by sending His only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him. This is what love is: it is not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to bring the means by which our sins are forgiven."

The Scriptures clearly points out that God's plan for humanity, that is, His Son suffered so much for OUR SALVATION. Can you imagine that, how great God's love is for us? Ask yourself, how much do you love God? Is there any meaning in life without "LOVING GOD" first? That is the First, or rather the Great Commandment, in Mark 12:30, Jesus says 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' Brothers and sisters, if you experience God's grace of Love and Mercy, you will say to your brother "Love is greater than death, it is better to save others out of love." In John 15:13, Jesus says, 'The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them.' Ask yourself now, how much time do I spend praying for people who are in need? Do I help them when they are in incapable situations?

Now, this questions, reminds us as to why Jesus suffered so much...it is for us - to save us - if you believe! Jesus was crucified, died and was buried, as it is written in the Scripture in Matthew 27: 1-2, 32-60. Now may I have somebody to read this scripture? (...)

He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again.

Again, the New Testament states that the passion of Jesus and his resurrection. The verse 'Jesus descended to the dead.' What would it mean? What does this belief tell us? For me, I believe that it means that Jesus had experienced the Hades situation during his passion, that is, his terrible agony from the Garden of Gethsemane (i.e. at Mount Olives, see Luke 22:39-44) through the crucifixion (Luke 22:26-43). At Gethsemane Jesus was filled with great agony and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Jesus was cruelly tortured by being scourged, and later he was crowned of thorns, which penetrating into his skull (John

19:1-2). He then carried the cross upon his shoulders to Golgotha, where finally he was crucified there (John 19:16b-18b). Brothers and sisters, you could imagine how strong God is, as the cross He carried, no man are able to do so, given in such torturing conditions with a so weighty cross! I reiterate all this happened under Pontius Pilate authority, who was the Romans' governor at that time (Luke 23:1-25). In Matthew 12:40b, the Scripture says that the Son of Man will spend 3 days and nights in the depths of the earth. Hades (in Greek) is the depths of the earth, like Hell. Jesus had gone through such deadly place, but on the third day He rose again. Christian faith points out that Jesus resurrected from the dead on the third day, as the Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, '*Christ died for our sins...He was buried and that He was raised to life three days later...*' Jesus is resurrected - meaning He has overcome all Hades. His resurrection is our victory over our sins. How does our faith reveal in respect of God's plan of Salvation through the mystery of Jesus' passion and his resurrection? In Romans 3:21-26, the Scripture says,

'But now God's way of putting people right with himself has been revealed. It has nothing to do with law, even though the Law of Moses and the prophets gave their witness to it. God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with Him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. God offered him, so that by his sacrificial death he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that He is righteous. In the past He was patient and overlooked people's sins; but in the present time He deals with their sins, in order to demonstrate His righteousness. In this way God shows that He Himself is righteous and that He puts right everyone who believes (have faith) in Jesus.' AMEN!

He ascended into Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

In Mark 16:19, one of the disciples of Jesus, Mark says, "...He was taken up to heaven and sat at the right side of God." In the Acts 7:55-56, St. Stephen claimed that he "...saw God's glory and Jesus standing at the right side of God." "Look!" he said. I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right side of God." The Scriptures are the Word of God; hence if we have faith in God, we do believe the Scriptures tell us, though we do not see what was happening. Let us ask God for great faith to believe whatever the Scripture tell us, so that God will give us the Light to see and understand the Wisdom hidden behind the Holy Scripture. Amen!

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Faith makes us strongly believe that Jesus will return to the world, that is, in God's time and in His will. He will come again in the same way as He ascended into Heaven, for the Scripture says in the Acts 1:11, '*This Jesus...will come back in the same way that you saw him go to heaven.*' Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead, as Jesus says in Matthew 16:27-28, '*For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward (judge) each one according to his deeds. I assure you that there are some here who will not die (i.e. there are people who are alive still at this time, though the rests are dead) until they have seen the Son of Man come as King.*' Brothers and sisters, indeed, no one knows when this "end of the world" will happen except God the Father, for the Scripture says in Mark 13:32, '*No one knows...when that day or hour will come - neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son; only the Father knows.*' In Revelation 20:11-15, the

Scripture states about the reality of the Final judgement - the judgement will be for the living and the dead, all our deeds are written in the book of the living and in another books. Here what the Scripture in Revelation 20:12b says, *'Books were opened, and then another book was opened, the book of the living. The dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books.'* And in Revelation 20:15, the Scripture says, *'Whoever did not have his name written in the book of the living was thrown into the lake of fire.'* The word of God here is imminent. It is up to you whether you believe it. Brothers and sisters, hell exists, so mind your manners before God!

Brothers and sisters, if you have faith in God, it would mean that you love God, too, and you are no stranger to God. Therefore, you do not have to be afraid on the Final judgement, as your faith has already saved you from the dead or from the judgment...God is love; He judges us according to our act of love for Him and for His Creation...He comes to us every day to build up the new world, but not to destroy it, and His Law of Love has to be established in the heart of every mankind so that the new world can be realised through God's grace in us. AMEN!

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church,

Brothers and sisters, who is the Holy Spirit? Do you know Him? How do you explain who the Holy Spirit is (?). My personal experience in living with God helps me to testify you that the Holy Spirit is indeed, "God...who is the third person of the Holy Trinity; it represents as in the form of the **Holy Fire.**" The Holy Fire is like the tongue of fire - it is **the Love of God** that fills in me (and you) - in my and your heart. If you open your heart to welcome the Holy Spirit, in the same way, you welcome God to be your helper, sanctifier, strength, joy, hope, peace, and so on. The joy of having the Spirit of God in us is really beyond human joy - the joy is really a fulfilling experience, where the whole of our being is renewed, and make us a new person. Once we experience it, our conscience and understanding about who our Creator is becomes clear, and that His love always remains in us. Deep inside us we feel we are wholly belonged to God, as we surrender all to Him. God adopted us as His sons and daughters in Christ Jesus. This whole process of healing and change in us, helps us to be hunger for God's love more and more and desires to know Him better and better each day as we pray daily; the Love of God changes our lives completely to become God's 'real' children, meaning God expects us to have this new life in Him, with Him, and through Him. Thus you and I become His children forever. For this reason, clearly, the Holy Spirit is God Himself who comes to us, to be amongst us; it is like in the case of Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and was born through a human mother. God spirit omnipotent and lives today, yesterday and tomorrow...hence God lived amongst us already in a form of a man (i.e. Jesus) 2000 years ago. When Jesus ascended into heaven, He promised the disciples that He would continue to be with his disciples, that is, God sent them a helper called the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Catholic faith believes that God is a Three-Person: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father is our Creator, the Son is Jesus Christ our Saviour, and the Holy Spirit is the Paraclete, which means our Helper. In Luke 2:1-4, it tells us the coming of the Holy Spirit to a congregation of believers - because of their faith in God, all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in different tongues, in which we called it "speaking in tongue or singing in tongue." It is a gift from God; those who ask for the gift will receive such blessing. Now let me read what the Scripture says in Luke 2:1-4, so you may get the picture of my message here...

“When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks to be God! Amen!

the communion of saints,

What does this verse tell us? Brothers and sisters, may I ask you: who are “saints”?

(...)

For me, I believe saints are people whose lives have great love for the Will of God and try hard to abide by God's commandments and Law of Love. Saints are ‘new’ persons (life with God); their lives are consecrated to God, and help God's people through all good deeds. Of course, saints are sinners too like us, but they are called saints as by the grace of God; thanks to God's grace they live in holiness every day. They live in daily prayers, in charity and humility, dependent upon God's holy providence day-by-day. Catholic faith believes that saints exist, and feasible, such as St. Francis Xavier, St. Benedict, St. Bernadette, to name but a few, as much as Catholic belief of angels existence, which is not uncommon, for example the Angel Gabriel who visited the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michel the Archangel who is our defender against our enemies, and so on. In the Holy Bible, there are many statements about saints, like the book of St. Peter, St. John, St. James, the list can be long to say it - take your Holy Bible and see it yourself. Catholic faith also believes that the home of saints is in heaven, with God. Therefore, saints can help intercede (our prayers) to God if we pray with them, as in the same way if we pray with the Blessed Virgin Mary; she can ask help from God. In Lourdes, Banneux, and many other sacred places where the Blessed Virgin Mary had appeared, there have been a lot of graces obtained from God through believers' prayers with Her. Again, we pray...but we must pray faithfully and with humility to obtain any graces from God. Amen!

the forgiveness of sins,

Catholic faith believes that God is Mercy. For this reason, the Sacrament of Penance exists. Why do we have to go to confession? Because we are all sinners, so we need to put right with God during the confession. Since God is unseen: we cannot see Him like you see me and I see you; hence God gives us priests, through whom God gives a special grace so that we can have the absolution from our sins through their intermediary action. Therefore, we consider priests are God's representative on earth. Yes, I believe priests receive a special grace from God to give us an absolution, through which the Holy Spirit descends into our being, to purify our heart and strengthen our faith in God; God then gives us love and peace. After the Sacrament of Penance, we could feel the liberation in us - no more condemnation awaiting us - it is gone forever! Truly, the Sacrament is a gift from God. It is essential, therefore, to go to confession as often as possible, perhaps once a month. The act of penitence is a way towards holiness - to become saints of God. It is through confession that God gives us the grace to continue to follow His way, which is just and holy, for we cannot be “good” without His grace alone! We ALL are poor sinners! In the Holy Scripture, it is stated that Jesus has the power to forgive sins as God the Father has; God the Father is in Jesus Christ - they are ONE, together with the

Holy Spirit. So Jesus is Himself is God not only a man. Jesus cured many sick people of all kinds. Yes, indeed, Jesus has the POWER to forgive sins, and heal any sickness - your faith that will make you see this truth! In Mark 2:5b, "*Jesus said to the paralysed man, "My son, your sins are forgiven."*" The teachers of the Law then were angry against Jesus of what he said. Then Jesus proved them that He has the authority to forgive sins, in Mark 2:10-11, Jesus said, "*I will prove to you, then that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."*" So He said to the paralysed man, "*I tell you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home!"*" The paralysed man did so and hurried away. Brothers and sisters, do you believe in that? What do you have in your heart?

(...)

Brothers and sisters, all of us need God's grace. The Sacrament of Penance is one of the graces from God, so that we can receive healing in our body, soul, and mind. We need humbly come close to God and with a contrite heart (especially this Lent period) we need ask forgiveness from God from all our iniquities of our everyday life. In short, clearly, the Sacrament of Penance is a special gift of healing grace for us. Praise the LORD!

the resurrection of the body,

What does 'the resurrection of the body' here mean? It means there is life after death. Do you believe? (...)

Brothers and sisters, God made us, and He made us out of soil just like Adam and Eve who are our first-parents. In Genesis 2:7, the Scripture says, '*...the LORD God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; He breathed life-giving breath into His nostrils and the man began to live.*' From the Scripture, I understand that our "body" is formed by soil; God gives us life through His breath - that is our "soul" that inhabits in our body, and since we are made in God's own image, we have "mind" to think of something when we work - that is our "spirit". So we are human being, we are made of three important elements: body, soul and spirit (i.e. mind). When we die, our soul and spirit leave our body. If people are baptised in Christ before they die, they belong to Christ; thus even though the body is dead it is spiritually resurrected in Christ. Brothers and sisters, may I ask you: where do our soul and spirit go to after death?

(...)

I believe that after death, all souls go towards where God wants them to go, either to Heaven, to Purgatory or to Hell - you and me do not know. So if you want to go to heaven, then do what God's Will is and respect His commandment of LOVE: to love Him and to love His people; also, love who you are, meaning God gives each one of us a particular life, and God wants us to take care of it.

and the life everlasting. AMEN!

Now, what does 'the life everlasting' mean here?

(...)

I believe it means our life continues...We will have life with God in Heaven: we can find the route towards heaven through our obedience to God's will; meaning God gives us time to seek Him and His Kingdom. Our life is in His hands - He knows all what happens in our lives, and He continues to be near us to show us the way towards Him. We need to behave ourselves well before the Lord. I mean only through a daily silent prayer we can seek Him and know what He wants us to do, and we are the responder, "Yes" or "No" to His will. If we responded, "Yes", God works in our lives: meaning our lives continue to be in harmony despite tribulation ahead of us. If we responded, "No" - God respect us and we do everything by our own will. What happens later? At last we fail, and broken...Yet, God never abandons us. God let us see ourselves whether we can really inherit, "the life everlasting" simply by our own strength and will. What would you think of it?

(...)

In fact, we can start have "the life everlasting" with God from now onwards - His Kingdom is so close in our heart. All God wants us is to be like a child, and have repented heart. It is us to decide, whether to choose life with God now, or never - meaning you want your own life in the world. If you choose life with God now and have faith in God, God will take care of you and He will live in you now and forever for He is faithful (not us!)...And that God is with you even after you already dead, that is, the life everlasting... Amen!

In 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 the Scripture says,

'...the truth is that Christ has been raised from the dead, as guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised. For just as death came by means of a man (i.e. Adam), in the same the same way the rising from death comes by means of a man (i.e. Jesus Christ - the new Adam). For just as all people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ. But each one will be raised in his proper order: Christ, first of all; then, at the time of his coming (i.e. the second coming of Christ), those who belong to Him (i.e. those who belong to Christ will have eternal life).' Those who refuse to love God and ignore Him are dead...For the Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 15:33-34, *'Do not be fooled. "Bad companions ruin good character." Come back to your right senses and stop your sinful ways. I declare to your shame that some of you do not know God.'*

Brothers and sisters, to conclude this talk, let us take a few minutes to say the prayer "the Creed." Pray calmly and meditate upon it. The prayer is powerful, and helps us to understand the meaning of God's love for each one of us. May God bless you all! AMEN!