

Day 105 (Wednesday, July 1)

Happy Canada Day. As I listened to the news waking up, I heard of many tragic things happening around our world, and many events planned to celebrate this day...despite the hindrance of COVID 19. Although it is raining (not anything new this year) and I will get my car muddy this evening when I travel to Albertville, and I just washed it Monday, I reflected on the many blessings I have experienced in this beautiful country. I would ask that sometime during this day, you take a moment to thank God for giving us this wonderful country.

Reflecting on the goodness of our life, reminds me of the goodness of our faith. Which is a good way to lead into the Creed. And know that even though we recite the Apostles Creed (which is actually older than the Nicene Creed) at Mass in Canada, the Nicene Creed, because of its history, is a more complete understanding our faith. To that end I offer you today's and many more reflections.

Origins of the Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed was formulated at the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in AD 325 to combat Arianism, and it was expanded at the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in AD 381 to balance its coverage of the Trinity by including the Holy Spirit. It is the only creed that was promulgated by any of the seven ecumenical councils and thus it is the only creed that is truly ecumenical and universal. In the Orthodox Church, it is the only creed.

The New Testament and the Nicene Creed are deeply entangled with each other. The wording and the concepts in the Nicene Creed come from the New Testament—in fact, one of the most important debates at the Council of Nicaea concerned whether it is proper to include a word in the Nicene Creed that does not occur in the New Testament. On the other hand, at the time that the Church issued the official canon of the New Testament, it customarily compared writings to the Nicene Creed to determine if they were orthodox. To put it more precisely, the Nicene Creed and the canon of the New Testament were formed together as part of the same process.

The Nicene Council and the Trinity

The Nicene Council did not invent the Trinity in the early fourth century, as some people imagine. A full century before the Nicene Council, Tertullian wrote a voluminous explanation and defense of the Trinity. His third-century contemporaries used the Nicene Creed to defend the orthodox Christian faith to unbelievers. A couple of decades before Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenaeus, bishops at opposite ends of the Mediterranean basin, both taught the Trinity. A half century or more before Irenaeus and Clement, we find Trinitarian teachings in the authentic works of Justin Martyr, who died in 157. St. Ignatius, a respected bishop, was martyred in his old age. On his way to his martyrdom, he wrote epistles to the churches along the way, making theological statements that are best understood in the context of Trinitarian theology. It is important to note that Ignatius was born about AD 33 and that during his adulthood; people who had known the apostles were still alive. Finally, the Didache, an ancient manual of church discipline that could possibly date from the middle of the first century, quotes the Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:19 in its instructions for baptism.

We can trace the dogma of the Trinity straight back to apostolic times. We have it from the pens of bishops and theologians who were charged with preserving and passing on the faith and who lived all over the Mediterranean basin. From this, we can only conclude that mainstream theology in the ancient church before the Council of Nicaea was Trinitarian.

Tomorrow we will begin an in-depth study of the Creed.

Below is a link. I know it is long. Cut and paste it to your internet. Watch it. The video is about 1 minute long. When you watch it, think of Jesus the Good Shepherd and how he goes to where we are, to bring us home.

