

Day 123 (Sunday, July 19)

NOTE: I will be out of office on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, so I will not be sending out another musing until Thursday. May God bless you.

This article can be found at

<https://www.liguori.org/the-creed-gateway-to-grace.html>

Here Comes the Son

At the Council of Nicaea, the Church employed in its Creed a word that did not appear in the Bible.

In Greek it is homoousion. We translate it to English as “one in being” (or “consubstantial”). Even if the term is not in Scripture, it sums up the very meaning of Scripture, the very identity of Jesus.

Homoousion captures the basic meaning of sonship. We know from our earthly families that children—sons or daughters—must share the nature of their parents. A human father cannot sire a puppy or a kitten; nor can he adopt one as his legally recognized offspring.

When we say that Christ is “one in being with the Father,” we are saying that he is God as the Father is God. They are coeternal, coequal. They share a love that is life-giving, a love we know in an analogous and imperfect way through human fatherhood.

Through the Incarnation, God the Son became what we are. He stooped down to the level of a creature, taking up what is ours and giving us what is his. He didn’t just assume human nature to wear it, like a jersey, for a day or two. He lived human life concretely and in the most painful and sacrificial ways. The human life he lived is a revelation of divine sonship, and that sonship is a revelation of God’s eternal fatherhood. God is the perfect Father, and there was never a time when he was not a Father, for he always dwelt with the Son in the uniting love of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus became what we are, so that we might become what he is. Through Baptism, we have become “partakers of the divine nature” ([2 Peter 1:4](#)). From that moment, we dwell in Christ, and he dwells in us. Sharing his nature, we share his sonship. We live the love of the Trinity. Thus, God’s fatherhood is the key not only to Jesus’ identity, but to ours as well. If God is our Father, then we are his family, his Church is our home.

That is our baptismal faith. It is the faith we profess in our baptismal creeds. To profess a different belief is to believe in a different God and to hope for a different salvation. But there is no other God, no other salvation.

Not an iota’s difference?

The great Fathers of the fourth century knew that, and they were willing to give their lives rather than change the articles of the Creed. Their opponents—those who wished for a compromise with the heretics—proposed a least-common-denominator approach to doctrine. They suggested that a single letter be added to homoousion—the Greek letter iota (i), which would change its meaning from “one in being” to “similar in being”—homoiousion.

It was a deliberately ambiguous phrase, because objects that are one and the same could also, and truthfully, be called “similar.” But the bishops would not accept this watering down of the faith and the Councils explicitly rejected it. One iota made all the difference in the world. Some Christians were martyred because of that one little letter.

The Creed, as it has come down to us, conveys the relational core of Christian faith. In telling the truth about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we profess that the mystery of God is the interpersonal relations we are called to

share. We proclaim the relationship for which we have been reborn, and by which we are empowered to live as Jesus lived, to die with Jesus and to rise again to everlasting life.

And so, in the words of the Church, we “renew” our Baptism with the words of the Creed. And we are renewed. We are made a new creation, proceeding from glory to glory ([2 Corinthians 3:18](#)).

In the light of eternity, we're here for a very short time, really. We're here for one thing, ultimately: to learn how to love, because God is love. - James Finley

Sincerely,
Fr. Jim Kaptein