



## "I believe..."

### EDWARD SRI

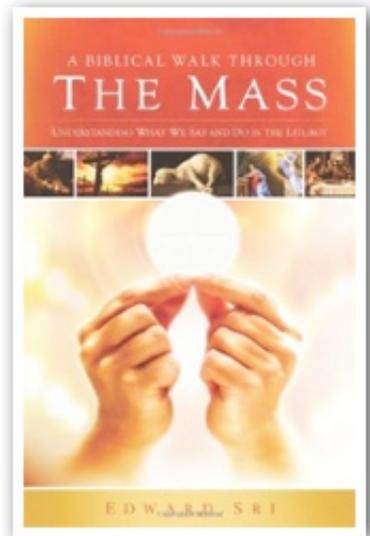
On the First Sunday of Advent, 2011, the new translation of the Mass will go into effect in U.S. dioceses. The structure of the Mass will be the same, but some of the responses by the people will change. This is the third of a series of articles on those changes and the reasons behind them.

Can a one-letter word really make a great difference? In the case of the new Mass translation of the Nicene Creed, the answer is emphatically, "Yes!"

Instead of starting the Creed at Mass by saying, "We believe in one God..." we will begin to say, "I believe in one God."

The use of the singular "I" unites us with the rest of the Catholic world. After Vatican II, English was the only major language that translated the opening Latin word of the Creed (*Credo*, which means, "I believe") with the plural "We believe." However, the singular "I" makes the Creed more personal and challenges each individual to interiorize the faith. As the *Catechism* explains, "I believe" expresses "the faith of the Church professed personally by each believer" (*Catechism*, no. 167).

This is what we do when we renew our baptismal promises during the Easter season or when attending a baptism. The priest asks if we believe in the various statements of faith in the creed: "Do you believe in God the Father, the Almighty?" "Do you believe in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son...?" And each individual answers for himself, saying "I do." It is fitting that we will more regularly make a similar personal act of faith by using the singular "I believe" whenever the Creed is recited in the Mass.



### From "One in being" to "Consubstantial"

The revised translation of the Creed aims at helping us more precisely profess a concept about the nature of the Son and his relationship with the Father. The words we say now describe Jesus as "one in being with the Father." We will soon speak of Jesus as "consubstantial with the Father."

So what's the difference? Simply put, the new wording more closely reflects the theological language of the bishops at the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) who wanted to safeguard that Jesus was acknowledged as the eternal Son of God, equal to the Father. The council condemned the false teaching of a man named Arius who held that there was a time when the Son did not exist. According to Arius, God created the Son and then adopted him. He said the Son of God "came to be from things that were not" and the Son was "from another substance" than that of the Father (*Catechism*, no. 465).

In opposition to this, the Council of Nicea taught that the Son is "God from God, light from light, true

God from true God" and "of the same substance" (*homoousios* in the Greek) as the Father. The Son was not created by the Father, but rather is a distinct divine Person who has existed from all eternity, sharing the same divine nature with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

When *homoousios* was translated from Greek into Latin it was rendered *consubstantialem*, which has traditionally been translated as "consubstantial" in English. The new translation of the Mass returns to this traditional, more precise rendering and invites us to reflect more on the divine nature of Christ and the mystery of the Trinity.

---

### From "Was Born" to "Was Incarnate"

Another important theological term is now preserved in the new translation of the Creed's statement about Jesus' unique conception. The present translation refers to the Son in this way: "By the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the virgin Mary, and became man." The new translation says that Jesus, "by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man."

This phraseology more accurately reflects the Latin text of the Mass which includes the word *incarnatus* ("incarnate"). This theological term refers to "the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it" (*Catechism*, no. 461). In the words of John's Gospel, "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). Accordingly, we soon will say that the Son, "by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man." The Son of God was not just born of the Virgin Mary. The Eternal Son of God actually took on human flesh!

---

Edward Sri offers the following reflections  
on the new translation of the Mass:

["And with your spirit"](#)

["Through My Most Grievous Fault"](#)

"I believe..."

A Happy Meal or the Supper of the Lamb?

For All or For Many?

The New Mass Translation: Just Going through the Motions?

---



---

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

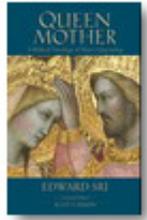
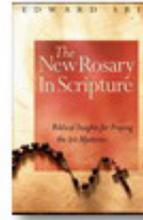
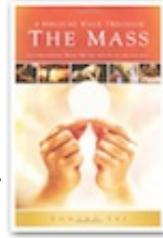
Edward Sri. "I believe...." *Fathers for Good* (October 21, 2011).

[Fathers for Good](#) is an initiative for men by the Knights of Columbus.

This reflection is based on Edward Sri's new book, [A Biblical Walk Through the Mass: Understanding What We Say and Do in the Liturgy](#) and is reprinted with permission from the author.

### THE AUTHOR

Dr. Edward (Ted) Sri is provost and professor of theology at the Augustine Institute in Denver. Edward holds a doctorate from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. He resides with his wife Elizabeth and their five children in Littleton, Colorado. Edward Sri is the author of [\*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass: Understanding What We Say and Do in the Liturgy\*](#), [\*Mystery of the Kingdom\*](#), [\*The New Rosary in Scripture: Biblical Insights for Praying the 20 Mysteries\*](#), and [\*Queen Mother\*](#).



Copyright © 2011 [Edward Sri](#)

---