

## The CORE of our Christian Faith

The Philippines claims to be the only Christian nation in Asia. We ask: What is the CORE of the Christian faith?

The CORE is clearly summarized in the APOSTLES' CREED. This creed is accepted by all branches of the Christian church -- Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Egyptian Coptic, Protestants and Evangelicals. Below is a version in today's language:

### **THE APOSTLES' CREED**

*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 Holy 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 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.*

(From "Order of Mass",  
<http://myweb.lmu.edu/fjust/Mass.htm>).

### **FIRST QUESTION**

We need to ask FOUR questions regarding the Apostles' Creed. FIRST: Do I truly, honestly, sincerely believe in the Apostles' Creed in my heart? Or am I saying the creed merely as an EMPTY RECITATION? When we recite the creed, we must think about what we're saying and mean it with all our heart. Otherwise, we will end up as Christian in word only, not in heart and in deed.

The Lord Jesus warned us against being Christians in word only. He said: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew*

*you. Away from me, you evildoers!"* (Matthew 7:21-23).

### **SECOND QUESTION**

SECOND, we need to ask: What is the meaning of "the holy Catholic Church"?

(1) First, let's have a little review of church history. In the beginning there was only one Church. Later on, two major divisions were recognized, the eastern division (centered in Constantinople), and the western division (centered in Rome). Eventually, the eastern division became known as the Greek Catholic Church (now also known as Greek Orthodox), and the western division became known as the Roman Catholic Church.

Please note: The Apostles' Creed does not say "I believe in the holy Greek Catholic church" or "I believe in the holy Roman Catholic Church". It simply says, "I believe in the holy Catholic Church".

(2) Second, we must remember that the word CATHOLIC, means "all" or "universal". The Catholic (Universal) Church includes all peoples who are genuine members of God's church, whether they are from the Greek Catholic or Roman Catholic or Russian Orthodox or from any other Christian group that holds firmly to the CORE of the Apostles' Creed.

Again, the words of our Lord Jesus imply that it is possible to be a member of a Greek Catholic or Roman Catholic Church or any other Christian Church but not be a member of God's Church. He said: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"* (Matthew 7:21-23).

### **THIRD QUESTION**

This brings us to our THIRD question: Who are true members of the holy Catholic Church? The holy Catholic Church is composed of all those who truly believe in Christ and whose names are written in the Book of Life in heaven. No earthly church or earthly religious leader -- pope or bishop or priest or pastor -- has the power or authority to write names in the Book of Life. Only God has that right and power to write names in His book.

The names of members of the holy Catholic Church are written, not in some earthly church registry but God's book in heaven: *"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven..."* (Hebrews 12:22-23)

While he was on earth, the Lord Jesus reminded his disciples that there was something more important than the power over evil spirits: *"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."* (Luke 10:20)

The apostle Paul and his fellow workers knew that their names were written in the Book of Life: *"And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life".* (Philippians 4:3)

At the Last Judgment, at the end of the world, the Book of Life will be opened: *"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.... And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."* (Rev. 20:11,12,15)

The holy Catholic Church consists of all those whose names are written in the Book of Life. This is why the Lord Jesus warned us: *"Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven."* It is not enough to RECITE the Apostles' Creed. It is not enough that your name is written in the membership roll of a church on earth.

#### **FOURTH QUESTION**

The FOURTH question is this: Is your name written in the Book of Life in heaven? How can you be sure that your name is written in the Book of Life? We can be sure that our name is written in the Book of Life by making sure of our PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord describes how to establish this relationship. He says:

*"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me"* (Revelation 3:20).

Inside our heart there is a throne, and our rebellious sinful SELF (**S**) sits as king or queen on the throne. Christ (**+**) is knocking at the door. He is waiting for us to open the door, and invite Him in, and surrender the throne to Him. To believe in Christ is to receive Him as LORD and SAVIOR and to submit to His complete authority.

This is the problem with our Christianity in the Philippines.. We pride ourselves as THE ONLY CHRISTIAN NATION IN ASIA. But one survey rated us as among the TOP TEN MOST CORRUPT COUNTRIES in the world... and one of the TOP THREE MOST CORRUPT IN ASIA!

Most of our government officials claim to be Christians, but why are they corrupt? What kind of Christians, and what kind of Christianity do we have in the Philippines? A Filipino Jesuit scholar described Philippine Christianity as SPLIT-LEVEL CHRISTIANITY.

In other words, many Filipinos BELIEVE at the intellectual level, but in their practical daily life they LIVE in contradiction to their belief. In simple terms: Christians in word, but not in deed. This is implied in two popular Filipino sayings: "Mula sa simbahan, tuloy sa sabungan." "Dasal nang dasal, mura naman nang mura." The first one may be roughly translated: "From the church, straight to the cockfight (a form of gambling)." The second one says: "Always praying in church, but always cursing."

Until the whole nation, from the president down to the barangay captain, and down to every individual citizen, becomes Christian in heart and not in words only, we will continue to slide down the slippery slope of graft and corruption.

#### **RELATIONSHIP NOT RELIGION**

In order for our Christianity to result in moral change, let's be clear about the bottom line truth: Personal RELATIONSHIP with God, not intellectual or verbal commitment to a RELIGION will truly bring spiritual change to our lives. We must become true Christians in heart and in deed, not in mere words and church rituals. How can we be sure that our name is written in the Book of Life? The answer is: RELATIONSHIP not RELIGION.

And this relationship is established by PERSONALLY INVITING THE LORD JESUS into our hearts and surrendering to Him the throne of our life.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU RECEIVE CHRIST?

(1) First, you become a child of God, a member of God's family, a genuine member of the holy Catholic church listed in heaven.

*"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12)*

(2) Second, having Christ in your heart assures you that you have eternal life, that you will live forever with God in heaven someday.

*"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:11,12)*

(3) Third, you will have a changed life. A true Christian will keep growing spiritually towards becoming more and more Christ-like in thoughts, attitudes, and actions. The true Christian will no longer be motivated by the SINFUL SELF, but rather inspired and empowered by the Spirit of God.

"Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

## A PERSONAL QUESTION

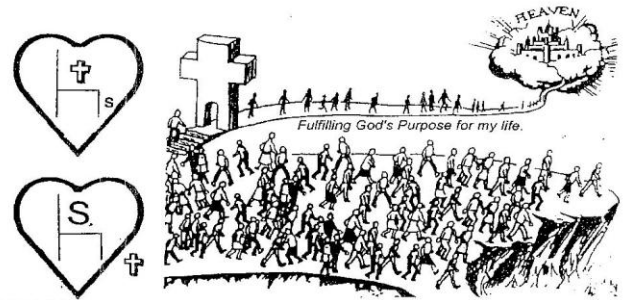


Christ is knocking at the door of your heart.

Where do you want Christ to be – INSIDE your heart? Or OUTSIDE your heart?

You need to choose between two kinds of hearts -- the heart with CHRIST (+) inside on the throne, and the SELF (S) submitted to Him... Or the heart with SELF (S) on the throne and CHRIST outside still knocking at the door. Which heart do you want

your life to be? Your choice will determine your eternal destiny.



If you want Christ in your heart, sincerely pray:

***"Lord Jesus, I want to be a real Christian in my heart. Lord, I believe in everything that the Apostles' Creed says. But I want to have a personal relationship with You. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for knocking at the door of my heart. I open the door of my heart, and I invite You into my heart and receive You as my Lord and Savior. Lord, I surrender the throne of my life to You today. Forgive me for my self-controlled life in the past, and for ignoring or totally disobeying You. Lord, I ask You to be the King and Master and Savior of my life. Help me to follow You beginning today. Amen."***

REMINDER: By accepting Christ, you do not join a religion. You just make sure that you have a personal relationship with Christ in order to become His true follower.

## WHAT NEXT?

Now that you have a personal relationship with Christ, what's next?

The Lord Jesus Himself answers that question in John 8:31, 32: ***31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."***

True followers of Christ will abide – continue – in His Word. This means that you need to study the Bible, God's Word. To guide you in your study, you may download free Bible lessons from the NEWLIFE SERIES at:

<https://pastorbiendiscipleship-resources.com/>