



## Ask, Father James:

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*“Why Do We Pray the Nicene Creed at Sunday Mass and We Pray the Apostles Creed When We Pray Privately?”*

The creed is to be said each Sunday at Mass. The Catechism of the Catholic Church makes a rather heavy distinction between the “We believe” of the Nicene Creed, and the “I believe” of the Apostles Creed (CCC #167). It teaches that the Nicene Creed emphasizes the communal nature of faith, and the Apostles Creed emphasizes the faith professed personally by each believer. So when we gather at Sunday Mass, we profess the faith as a community using the Nicene Creed and when we profess the faith as individuals, say, like when we pray the Rosary at home, we use the Apostles Creed.

The reason why the Creed (Nicene or Apostles Creed) in the new English translation of the Creed begins “I believe” is to bring the text in conformity with the authorized Latin text which has “Credo,” namely, “I believe” for the opening word of the Creed. The original text of the Creed coming forth from the Council of Nicaea used the Greek *pisteuomen*; a first-person plural meaning “we believe.” It was worded in this way because it was to be a communal profession of the faith. Thus they rightfully said “we believe.” However in the years that followed, when the Creed was brought into the liturgy, the form was switched to the first person singular *pisteuo* “I believe.” This change was made because the Creed was now said by the individual believer, in the context of the liturgy.

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