



English Translation of the Nicene Creed: “I” or “We”

A funny meme about the Credo was posted on FaceBook and many people commented about the English retranslation of the Nicene Creed, specifically the pronoun, “I” used throughout (as in “I believe...”) in the most recent English translation of the Roman Missal (Third Typical Edition), comparing it to the pronoun, “We” used in the previous English translation of the Roman Missal (Second Typical Edition). A great question was asked by many of the commenters in these or similar words, “If liturgy is communal prayer, why are we using “I” instead of “We” in the Creed?”

Indeed liturgy is communal prayer and “I believe” is not only a more accurate or literal translation of the Latin, “credo,” but also theologically expresses an even more communal identity of the baptized celebrating the Eucharistic liturgy than “We believe.” In ancient times, an individual was not defined by their own individual characteristics (as we greatly are in 2022 in the West), but by those of the community to which they belonged. When we sing the Credo at liturgy and sing “I believe in one God...” we are not singing, for example, “I, John, a Male, from Wisconsin, tall, brown hair, musician and liturgist, believe in one God,” but rather, “I, as a member of this royal priesthood and holy nation, a people set apart, who with my baptized brothers and sisters have been plunged into those waters of death and new life and have “put on Christ,” entering into that great mystery of our faith: the Paschal Mystery, believe in one God...!”

The “I” throughout the Credo is a vocalized, audible sacrament (outward sign of a reality) that in the Eucharistic liturgy, we as individuals are defined by the characteristics of the baptized community “at table”: the congregation, the body of Christ, dialoguing with the celebrant, “in persona Christi,” the Christ-head, together forming the “Totus Christus,” entering into the Paschal Mystery in that ultimate act of worship: the source and summit of our faith!

(This Eucharistic, liturgical identity is expressed with rich theology by Paul in his first letter to Corinth [6:15; 10:17; 12:12, 14-20; 12:26] and in sermons by Augustine, particularly 272)!

John Gaffney

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