



Dear Friends,

Can you believe it? Lent is only about 10 days away! With so much going on in the world - new government, division in the nation, COVID-19, possible opening of restaurants and bars, international upheavals, fights over school openings and school sports, etc., etc. - it's understandable that we're not paying attention to the start of Lent. Since Lent is the season to reflect on our relationship with God both as individuals and as a community of disciples, I would like to help us reflect as a community.

Each Sunday we profess our faith by reciting the Creed. How often have we paid close attention to what we are saying, and, even if we are, do we understand it? As with anything we repeat over and over, we find ourselves absent mindedly mumbling words without paying much attention to what we're saying. So, I thought if we look at the Creed together, we may have a better appreciation of our faith and the life style we promise to live. So, let's begin.

We start at the beginning: *I believe*. What does it mean to "believe"? One definition says that to believe means to accept something to be true that we cannot prove. We have evidence of this today given all the people who have *believed* what right-wing extremists have to say regardless of how wild it may be. While there's no proof to back up these assertions, many good people are willing to accept it as truth. And that "truth" becomes the basis for the way they live their lives, how they treat others.

So, the question for us seems to be - *do we accept as true what the Creed says and do we base our life on it?* That question should get us wanting to know exactly what is it that the Creed says. And that leads us to the next three words - *in one God*.

What does it mean to believe in *one God*? What do we mean by "God"?

From ancient times people have believed in some power bigger than the human race. In ancient times people were looking for an explanation for how Nature worked both in the sky and on earth and to know how we humans got here and why we are the way we are. For the longest time people explained all this through a number of gods having various powers. Some 5,000 years ago or so, one people began to proclaim that there was only one God, the God of the Hebrews. This idea of one God has grown through the religions of Judaism to Christianity to Islam. As the human race grew in knowledge, the idea of multiple gods began to seem less and less likely. What did remain was the question of a purpose to life. Why am I here? What's the purpose in life?

While the Greek and Roman pagans thought the gods really didn't care about humans, the God of Israel revealed just the opposite: God himself has a purpose, namely, to take care of humans. It was this God who personally led the Hebrews from Egypt to Mt. Sinai where he spoke directly to Moses telling him how he made humans to live — the Ten Commandments. God made a pact with these people: "you will be my people and I will be your God." God, then, is more than an impersonal power, like "the force" in the Star Wars movies. Our God is a person, actually a

community of 3 persons, a community that cannot be broken up. And God's purpose: to watch over all creation and help the human race mature. God purposely involved himself in human life. In Jesus, God literally does just that. This is our *one God*.

What God's trying to do with us is the same parents do with their children. Think about it. Parents are all about their kids. While they are small, there's strict following of the rules, beginning with lots of "no, no" to little ones; then comes punishment for breaking rules as they grow older. Adolescence follows when our children challenge the rules, pushing boundaries as far as they can exercising their free will. We want our kids to make our values their own while allowing them to make their own mistakes. And we hope our kids will move to the next phase - maturity - where they realize life is about relationships and relationships are mysterious. I remember saying to a good friend that I didn't understand his wife. His response? "I've been married to her for 35 years and I *still* don't understand her." People are mysteries, not puzzles to be solved. So is God, in whose image we are created, which is the next phrase.

*I believe in one God.* I can't prove it, but I believe it.

*Fr. Denis*