

PASTORAL LETTER**ON CREED**

Dear Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and my dear people,

**Thy Kingdom Come!
Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!**

As per our Pastoral Plan the year 2026 is The Year of the Creed and the Beatitudes. Here I share with you some reflections on the “Creed.” Whatever appropriate from these reflections may be shared with the faithful as pleases each one.

The Creed is the sum and substance of the Christian profession of faith. “Jesus is Lord”, is the central theme of the Creed in the early Church. St. Paul writes about it many times in his writings (Cf. Rom. 10:9, 1Cor. 7:22, 2Cor 4:5, etc.). The Creed had to be formulated in the early Church to refute heretical teachings and to safeguard the basic tenets of Christian faith. In the history of the Church, there developed two formulas of the Creed 'the Apostles Creed' and 'the Nicæan Creed'. There is a claim that the 'Apostles Creed' is written by the twelve apostles, which the Church historians and ecclesiologists conclude as not very reliable. Most probably it might have been formed in Rome during Pope Victor (189-199 AD). However, it is believed that the 'Apostles Creed' is strictly founded on the teachings of the apostles and that could be the reason why it is known in the history as “Apostles Creed.”

On the other hand, the 'Nicæan Creed' was formed in the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) and codified in the Council of Constantinople (381 AD). This creed is widely known as 'Nicæan-Constantinopolean Creed' and it is being used in our Holy Qurbana. In the early Church, the bishops and the theologians studied doctrines, new trends in theology and confirmed its fidelity to the revealed truth. The various Synods in the early Church decided about the heretical and faithful teachings. The Synods in the early Church has condemned the heretical teachings such as Arianism, Apollinarianism, Macedonism, etc. Thus the Synods confirmed the revealed truth and faithful doctrines of the Church.

In the early Church, the bishops like St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, St. Cyprian and others wrote treatises and letters voluminously clarifying and explaining the Christian doctrines. Priests in the parishes being busy with so many activities, these bishops helped them by their reflections and guided the pastors to be faithful in their teachings. St. Augustine confirms that the bishops are support and guide to their priests in their preaching ministry.

Bishops' ministry is described as shepherding the flock. Bishops are to ensure the welfare of the priests and guide them in preaching ministry to be faithful to the Church's teachings. The Vatican II document *Presbyterorum Ordinis* describes priests as co-workers of bishops. It points to unity in the teaching magisterium of the Church. Along with the bishops the priests are co-responsible for the faithful teaching of Church's doctrines and not only to reject but also to refute any heretical teachings.

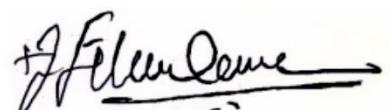
The various Church documents that deal with the ministry of bishops in the Church, lucidly articulate the duty of bishops to support priests in their theological thinking, preaching and

social involvements. Such recent documents are Christus Dominus (Vat. II 1963), Pastores Munus (John Paul II, 1988), Pastores Dabo Vobis (John Paul II, 1992) and Pastores Gregis (John Paul II, 2003). St. Augustine assumed that when bishops write pastoral letters they make their spiritual presence in the parishes and when bishops do pastoral visits they make their actual presence among the people. Both are required for the smooth functioning of the Church/diocese. Bishops continually speak to the people through their pastoral letters. On the other hand, priests make bishop present among people in unity of one priesthood of Christ by their parochial involvements in their parishes. Pastoral letters are tools for the care of the souls to teach and to provide spiritual guidance and moral instructions and to give theological clarity on current issues. Through priests it is disseminated to the people. It reflects the bishops' primary role as shepherds of the faithful, addressing matters of faith, doctrines, ethics and cultural concerns to foster a deeper relationship with Christ and guide the community towards virtuous living. The bishops' pastoral letters are considered as works of theological importance, serving as a means for bishops to teach, inspire, challenge and comfort the faithful in a direct and personal way. Thus the college of bishops as successor to the Apostles, bears the specific responsibility of safeguarding and transmitting the deposit of faith.

These reflections on the Creed is to help us to understand the ministry of bishops and priests in the Church. They serve the Church unitedly and give single witness in the world. They should respect mutually and complement each other in their ministry in the Church. The united works of bishops, priests and the religious in the diocese is a great witness in today's world (Cf. Jn. 17:21). A united teaching of doctrines, clarifying the theological concepts, moral principles etc. are dire need today. 'The Year of the Creed' is inviting us to reflect over our ministry in the diocese and give united witness of Christian faith. As members of the Holy Mother Church, we profess one faith and we believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church (Cf. Eph. 4:5). May the observance of the Year of the Creed unite us all - the bishop, priests, religious and the lay faithful, in love and communion.

God bless everyone.

Yours devotedly in Christ



† Ephrem Nariculam Bishop,
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