

I'd like you to turn to page 14 of the Sunday bulletin. You can see the Creed in English in the left-hand column, and I can tell you it's also the Creed in the right-hand column.

Now join me in reading out loud the Nicene Creed in its original form in the right-hand column: "Pist-U-O Ace ena Theou Patara, Panto-kratora poi-At-An ouranou....." Impossible, I hear you say!

Okay, I couldn't resist. But it does make my point – the Creed was originally constructed and written in another language – in this case ancient Greek. Which means that even the Creed we're using today at 10:30 a.m. in the right-hand column, or the one at 8:00 a.m., is a translation.

I want to give you just one example of the pitfalls of translation: the phrase: "Tais parthenou kai enanthroposanta" – now are you still awake?! That phrase literally translated means "was birthed (parthenou) becoming "of the species called humanity" (en-anthropo-santa). The meaning, when translated literally, is clear – Jesus became human, not a fish, or a bird, or a gorilla! It would be incorrect, for instance, to translate that phrase as "became a man" – it's about species, not individuals.

Some interesting facts: in most mainline denominations (ourselves, the Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, etc.) what percentage of a congregation do you think will not routinely say the Creed? 20%

Which North American denominations have largely adopted the new translation of the Creed on page 14 in the last 20 years? We have, so have the Presbyterians, Lutherans, United Methodists, Baptists, Anglican Church of Canada, Christian Reformed, United Church of Christ...and the list goes on.

Why? Why adopt a new translation? Is it to address the concerns of those 20% Not really. The aim was to provide a more accurate (with emphasis on the word "more" – nothing will be totally accurate) translation that Christians can share. In other words, it's about unity. This is a good thing.

But what about that 20%? Indeed! And what about a much larger group that are willing to say the Creed in worship, but have real doubts about their willingness to actually say they believe what they're saying – this is a much bigger group – what about them?

And what does the Church – all the Churches – say about people who cannot, in good conscience, subscribe to the Creed? Do they say "get out!"?

I suppose the answer to all of these questions is dependent on what you think the Creed actually is!

For want of better language we tend to describe the Creed as a statement of belief – that, after all, is how it begins: "we believe....." The problem is that what was meant by "Pist-U-O" wasn't about belief in the modern sense at all.

Our contemporary world is a product of the Enlightenment. When we use the word “believe” its generally in relation to scientifically certifiable categories – in other words, we are being literal, we’re saying “this is how reality is” – and, by implication, there’s the language of proof: “and I can prove it” – or perhaps, in this contemporary world, “scientists can prove it”.

When we say “we believe in God” we understand ourselves to be making a statement that’s similar to “we believe that  $2 + 2 = 4$ ”. Both, we unconsciously assume, are similar statements.

That’s why if I were to say “I believe in the tooth fairy” for instance, you might look at me a little strangely!

Now you remember I started out by reciting the beginning of the Creed in Greek? “Pist-U-O Ace na Theou Patara” which is translated “We believe in one God the Father”. Then I talked about pitfalls of translation?

Here’s another pitfall: “Pist-U-O”. Translated “we believe”. That’s an acceptable translation but not the most accurate.

The most accurate translation is this: “We trust”. “We trust in God”. Every time that word “Pist-U-O” gets used in the creed – for God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” – the more accurate translation is “we trust”. We trust in God the Father. We trust in God the Son. We trust in God the Holy Spirit.”

When we trust we’re not making an intellectual statement of belief. Actually belief in the contemporary scientific proof-centered world is absent, and rightly so. In the end, what we’re really saying is this: “I give my heart to this divine vision of relationship”. We don’t have to believe it – in the contemporary meaning of that word – we don’t have to believe it for a second.

In fact we have to reject the language of belief – we have to step away from word-for-word literalism and enter the arena of relationship and – ultimately – of metaphor: that’s the only authentic way to approach something like the Creed.

The truth about Christianity – and you’ll have to take this statement on trust (!) because there’s not enough time to explain it – the truth about Christianity is that Christians have always had different ideas about and ways of approaching God.

What’s really important is for all of us to honor the plurality of ways we understand God and also commit to remain in relationship and conversation with each other about how those ways overlap and expand our understanding of the divine relationship that’s at the core of our faith..

In part, that’s why Trinity Sunday follows the Day of Pentecost in the Christian Calendar. Pentecost reminds us of, and repeats the story of, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Putting Trinity Sunday right after it is a way of saying this: “We trust in the Holy Spirit that we’re all on the same page, even if you end up saying “It’s all Greek to me!!!!” Amen.