

the Creed says that Jesus was ‘born of the Father’ and twice states that He was ‘begotten’ of God and was ‘God from God’? Perhaps the easiest way to try to grasp the significance of these terms is to refer to the metaphors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> /3<sup>rd</sup> century Christian author, Tertullian, who said: “I confess that I call God and his Word – the Father and the Son – two. For the root and the tree are distinctly two things, but correlatively joined; the spring and the river are also two forms, but indivisible...” This reasoning seems to be in perfect harmony with the opening of St John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the word was God...”

The Anglo-Saxon word ‘begotten’ can mean to produce a child in the ordinary, human way; hence “Abraham begat Isaac” etc [St Matthew Ch1 v2 (King James Version)]. However, Romantic language translations for ‘begotten’ in the Creed use their equivalents of ‘engendered’. This to my ear sounds slightly preferable to encapsulate our belief. A final nugget: it is thought by some that our expression ‘not one iota of difference’ may refer back to the First Council of Nicea and the Arian controversy. Homoousios is the Greek word translated as ‘consubstantial’, whereas Homoiousios - with

an additional ‘i’ or ‘iota’ was the term advocated for by the Arians and means only “of similar substance.” Just one iota was critical to Christian doctrine.

Stephen S.



Image: Nicene Creed-Wikipedia

*"God the Father's a deep root; the Son's the shoot that breaks into the world; the Spirit spreads the beauty & fragrance" - Tertullian.*



**First Reading: Zephaniah 3 14-18**

**Psalm 12: Response:**  
Sing and shout for joy for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

**Second Reading: Philippians 4: 4-7**

**Gospel Acclamation:**

Alleluia, alleluia! The spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor. Alleluia!

**Gospel: Luke 3 10-18**

**Memorial Acclamation:**

Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free

## Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday Cycle C, 2021

Weekly reflection.

The Creed (1): What do we mean when we say: “...consubstantial with the Father?”

We recite the Nicene Creed regularly at Mass. A number of things we say that we believe contain concepts which are extremely complex and have been the subject of a vast number of learned treatises across the centuries. As practising Catholics we quite rightly take them on trust. Nevertheless, I hope some brief notes from a layman on a few of the truths we utter may be of interest.

The Church faced heresies in its early years. A serious challenge to orthodoxy which had been simmering for some time was highlighted by the priest, Arius. The heresy which bears his name, Arianism, is evident in one of his letters when he wrote: ...we say that the Son has a beginning, but that God was without a beginning..... We say this because he is neither part of God nor part of his essential being...” The clear implication of this was that Jesus was of created substance and was not God! The Council of Nicea affirmed that Jesus was from uncreated substance. He was of the same substance as God and was Himself God. But what are we to make of the fact that