

# CREDO

Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation at the Episcopal Church of the  
Transfiguration, Vail Valley  
Spring 2024

*Almighty God, we thank you that by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself, and that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit you have bound us to your service. Renew in us the covenant you made with us at our Baptism. Send us forth in the power of your Spirit to perform the service you set before us, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

*Credo.....Latin for "I believe," the first words of creedal Christianity, the foundational summaries of Christian faith. Over 65 English words are listed by [Thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com) as parallel descriptors of belief and believing. My favorites are *trust, confidence, assurance, passion* and from the world of cards, *going all in!**

Note neither full comprehension, total understanding, nor complete mastery are ever required or even mentioned as necessary to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord. No. The famed 20<sup>th</sup> century Austrian author Franz Werfel and his family fled Nazi persecution and took refuge in the small southern French village of Loudes, where a young French peasant named Bernadette saw visions of Jesus' mother Mary almost a century before. Franz found profound spiritual comfort visiting the grotto in which Our Lady visited young Bernadette, and he pledged if he survived the Nazi horror to write about this sacred grotto and spring. He did survive to author one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most significant devotional works, *The Song of Bernadette*. Werfel famously wrote,

*For those who believe, no explanation is necessary.  
For those who do not believe, no explanation is possible.*

Werfel, *The Song of Bernadette*, 1941

I agree with most of Werfel, but we Anglican Christians love our questions as much as the answers! Belief does not excuse nor denigrate a full apprenticeship following the Master, a journey of loving God and our neighbor with ALL our heart, mind, body and soul. A much older author and theologian, 11<sup>th</sup> century Anselm of Canterbury, famously claimed all Christian theology is *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding or comprehension. Faith first, commitment first, then explanation!

This time is for us to explore BOTH the answers of Christian faith and our many questions, all with the simple objective for us to stand before our God, our church, our family, our Bishop and ourselves with integrity, humility and courage to boldly proclaim Credo...I believe!!!

Where to properly start? Let's follow the ancient creedal wisdom and start with that first shocking claim in both the Nicene (the oldest) and the Apostles' Creed. *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.* This one sentence places us in league with our Abrahamic siblings in the Jewish and Muslim traditions, and completely out of sync with many other world religions and atheistic traditions. To simply believe in a Deity who created all things, visible and invisible, is so countercultural! Our faith claims a God who is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, ubiquitous and atemporal. Wow! Our faith claims a God who both created chronological time and space and will ultimately end both time and space as we currently experience them. Our faith claims a God who both desperately desires and purposes a relationship with all of creation, including us! Holy Scripture records some 48 occurrences in which God's own creedal promise is recited, I will be their God and they shall be my people! The Apostle Paul states clearly that through Jesus, God may be all in all (I Corinthians 15:28) Our faith claims a God who has a plan to consummate or crescendo all of creation into a new heavens and a new earth perfectly aligned with God's initial purpose.

Thousands of western culture's best and brightest have ruminated on these heady claims for centuries...you can see evidence of their conclusions in art, music, literature, science, and yes, in spiritual writing, devotional offerings, theology and prayer books, including our own 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Contemporary atheism, simply recycled cynicism from earlier generations, abnegates any supernatural phenomena due to lack of observable data. After all, does that tree make a noise falling in the forest if I'm not personally there to hear it? How sad it is to me that these folks are so quick to deny divinity while bounding their world based on only their own experiential perception. Jesus so correctly and gently admonishes them stating you don't deny the existence of air just because you cannot see from where the wind comes! Credo is a countercultural, radical and revolutionary statement dear friends. Are you ready?

QUESTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

- I. In a wonderful YouTube summary teaching, Fermilab's Doctor Don Lincoln explains the current scientific consensus on the creation of the universe. Find it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dr6nNvw55C4> under the title What Happened Before the Big Bang? After watching, some questions:
  - A. The Apostle Paul and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century theologian Theophilus of Antioch reference God's ability to create out of nothingness, in Latin called *creatio ex nihilo*, naming that ability as God's creative power. In the Hebrew text in Genesis' first few verses, the verb to create is reserved only for God's divine action which undergirds this belief. Only God can *bara* in Hebrew, while we humans can then *'asah*, or form, fashion, construct or make. God also *'asahs* but only God *baras!* We only *'asah.*" Does Lincoln's presentation inform your belief in God's creative power, and how?
  - B. Technically the Big Bang is not *ex nihilo* but *creatin ex materia*, as the singularity that created the observed universe is present but sub-atomic. Even so, Lincoln states current science prior to a provable theory of quantum physics cannot penetrate past that 1-13<sup>th</sup> of the first second barrier. Is that God being shy? Again, how does this belief impact your faith, and why?
2. The obverse of the Big Bang is popularly called the Big Crunch, when the outward expansion of the known universe reverses itself due to gravity re-asserting itself to produce a cataclysmic rapid cosmic contraction in a far-flung future. This theory is somewhat different than the Christian texts describing the End of Days, or Judgement Day, or what I have called above the Consummation. Estimates range from at least four to over 30 scriptural references to that moment when chronological time fails us. Please see Matthew chapter 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 and of course the Bible's final book, the Book of Revelations chapters 20-22. Note the Revelation chapters were written under severe Roman persecution as Roman governance had realized what a threat the fledging Christian movement was to their social order and notions of control. The trauma is embedded in every line. But this is the only text describing not just the end of the old cosmos but the recreation of the new. How does this searing narrative inform your faith?