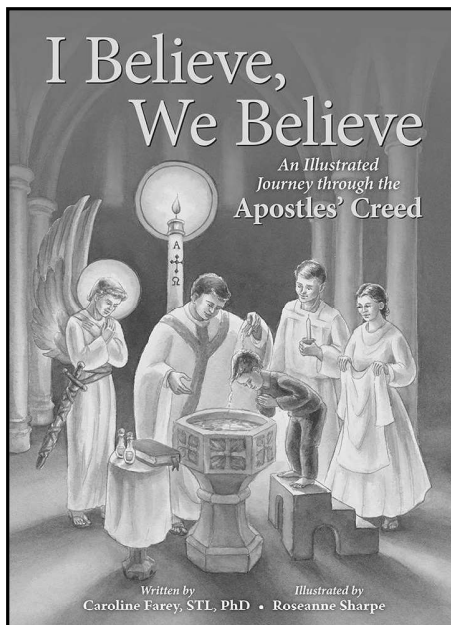


*I Believe, We Believe:
An Illustrated Journey
through the Apostles' Creed*

By Caroline Farey and Roseanne Shape
(Bethlehem Books, 2024, 43 pages)

REVIEWED BY PETROC WILLEY



IN HIS EXPOSITION ON THE CREED, St. Ambrose calls it “our heart’s meditation and an ever-present guardian . . . unquestionably, the treasure of our soul.” I wonder how many of us think of the Creed in this way—and how many children do? A *guardian*? The *treasure* of our soul? Something on which our heart *loves to meditate*? In *I Believe, We Believe*, however, we have been given a book for children and adults that not only teaches richly and attractively but

also feeds the longing of the soul for God's beauty and eternity.

It is an illustrated catechesis on the Apostles' Creed from Bethlehem Books with text by Caroline Farey and artwork by Roseanne Sharpe. Five double-spread watercolors delightfully proclaim the whole of the Creed in pictorial form, the images simple, strong, and clear. Each illustration is followed by a catechetical commentary that walks engagingly through it, highlighting and explaining the main images. The book takes the form of a journey through the Creed, using the central figure of a child being led through the doorway of baptism into the mysteries of the faith, accompanied by the child's guardian angel who introduces the mysteries and teaches the child. The book is recommended for ages nine to adult, with read-aloud interest for those of ages seven and up.

The second half of the book is made up of a section called "Enrichment Pages"—rich resources for catechists, parents, and teachers to use to introduce their children to essential and

We have been given a book for children and adults that not only teaches richly and attractively, but also feeds the longing of the soul for God's beauty and eternity.

foundational principles for understanding *any* aspect of the faith, principles that will help form the child in an authentic Catholic worldview. These pages draw from the same five illustrations, this time identifying images and features that appear in different ways and guises across the artwork as a

whole, in this way revealing the marvelous coherence of the Creed and the faith it proclaims. A glossary of terms and a set of cross-references to parts of the *Catechism* concludes the book.

I cannot recommend this work too highly; every place of Catholic formation, whether home, parish, or school, would benefit greatly from it. It is steeped in the catechetical principles that the Church prioritizes in her magisterial teaching. It is a

convincing testimony to the importance that mother Church places on beauty; on a gradual, mystagogical approach; and on designing materials for an accompanied, personal style of learning that make the spiritual life of the child the main concern.

One of the features of the book that makes it so valuable is precisely the way in which it encourages and supports the spiritual growth of the child: young children will find the watercolors attractive and intriguing—the faces and demeanor of Our Lord, Our Lady, and the saints will reassure and draw the child into the mysteries, while the young catechumen on the journey is present in each illustration to communicate attitudes of reverence, delight, and interest. Older children will also appreciate the affirmations and explanations of the faith accompanying the pictures. All of these truths are *lovingly* introduced in this close union of image and text, communicating a serene sense of the certainty of the faith that will aid the child in building trust in the faith.

The discovery method in the book also assists in each stage of this expanding understanding of the faith. Readers move from the initial simple contemplation of the art through the learning of terms and the basic understanding of the meaning of the text, and then gradually into an appreciation of how the biblical and liturgical figures and symbols present in the words and images lead them ever deeper into the mystery of Christ. It is a book that invites accompanied use. The parent, catechist, or teacher working with the child will find it easy to act as a midwife to the learning and will be able to follow and feed the child's appropriation of the work at whatever level. And meanwhile, the adult catechist will be learning how to communicate the faith from a place of beauty, using a text rich in Scripture and liturgy that will nourish the soul.

Dr. Petroc Willey is Professor of Theology and Catechetics at Franciscan University of Steubenville.