

“DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME”

A Class on the Mass Part 3: Introductory Rites

Our Mass is made up of five parts: The Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Communion Rite and the Concluding Rite. Let us take a look at the Introductory Rite. We read in the GIRM:

“The rites preceding the Liturgy of the Word, namely the Entrance, Greeting, Act of Penitence, Kyrie, Gloria and Collect, have the character of a beginning, introduction, and preparation.

Their purpose is to ensure that the faithful who come together as one establish communion and dispose themselves to listen properly to God’s word and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily.” (GIRM 46)

This is why it is important that we arrive **early** enough to prepare ourselves along with the community to foster this communion. As we enter the church we bless ourselves with Holy Water to remind us of our baptismal commitment and then bow or genuflect (not curtsy!) to the tabernacle. We are called to become aware of those around us, greeting them, and offering them hospitality, especially those who may need help or are strangers.

Entrance

“After the people have gathered, the Entrance chant begins as the priest enters with the deacon and ministers. The purpose of this chant is to open the celebration, foster unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical season or festivity, and accompany the procession of the priest and ministers.” (GIRM 47)

The opening song therefore brings us together as a community and sets a tone for our celebration. The bishops instruct us:

“ Singing is the sign of the heart’s joy (cf Acts 2:46). Thus St. Augustine says rightly , ‘Singing is for one who loves. There is also the ancient proverb: ‘One who sings well prays twice.’every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on holy days of obligation.” (GIRM 40)

With everyone singing our celebration becomes truly a celebration filled with joy and life. If there is no singing, the antiphon in the Missal is recited by the faithful.

Greeting of the Altar and of the People Gathered Together

When the priest (and deacon) reaches the sanctuary he bows profoundly to the altar and then as an expression of reverence he (and deacon) kisses the altar itself. On special occasions especially feasts the priest may incense the altar. Then at the president’s chair the priest, together with the whole gathering, makes the Sign of the Cross followed by the Greeting. The priest has several options here but our response to his “The Lord be with you” is “And also with you.” (It is here that we will experience one of the changes in the new translation that will take effect next Advent. Our response will change to “And with your **spirit**” which is a more accurate translation.)

Penitential Rite: The Act of Penitence

To celebrate the Eucharist worthily we begin by seeking God’s forgiveness for our sins.

The priest invites us to acknowledge our sinfulness and to pray for God's mercy. During a moment of silence we recall our sins and then the priest or the deacon, if present, leads us through a formula of general confession. Most of these prayers seek our response "Lord, have mercy....Christ have mercy." One of these options is the "I confess". There will be a change in the words we use beginning next Advent. Now we say:

"I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do; and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God."

Beginning next Advent we will say:

"I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have **greatly** sinned in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, **through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault**; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God."

The priest concludes our Act of Penitence with the absolution: "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life." Although this is an absolution we do **not** make the Sign of the Cross.

If it has not been used in one of the forms above the "Lord, have mercy" or "Kyrie eleison" can be said or sung.

Gloria

The Gloria "is a very ancient and venerable hymn in which the Church, gathered together in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb." (GIRM 53) It is said or sung on Sundays and major feasts outside the Seasons of Advent and Lent. We are familiar with the version we now use but there will be a significant change in the new translation:

"Glory to God in the highest, and **on earth peace to people of good will.**

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, **Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father**, you take away the sins of the world, **receive our prayer**; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, **have mercy on us.**

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen."

Collect

The priest then invites us to pray by saying "Let us pray" and this is followed by a few moments of silence during which we at his invitation privately pray for a personal intention we want to ask of God during the Mass. The priest then "collects" all our prayers with the Opening Prayer of the Mass. This concludes our Introductory Rites and leads us into the Liturgy of the Word.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do we arrive early for Mass to prepare ourselves properly?
2. Are we aware of those around us? Do we know their names?
3. Do we actively participate in the singing?
4. Do we take the opportunity to silently pray our intention at the Opening Prayer?