

From the Pastor – 090113 – The Mass – Introductory Rites

Dear Friends,

Today I am doing my once-a-month column on the Mass and am again focusing on the Introductory Rites, the first of the four parts of the Mass.

Introduction to the Mass. Right after the Sign of the Cross and the Greeting, the priest may give a brief introduction to the Mass of the day. He may do this especially if there is some special theme or during one of the major liturgical seasons like Advent or Lent.

Penitential Act. Next the priest asks us to recall our sinfulness and need of God's forgiveness. There is usually a brief pause or moment for recollection at this point. The idea is for us to be aware of our humanity and of our need for God's love and the healing and wholeness that God offers us in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The prayer in this Penitential Act usually takes one of two forms. We might pray together the centuries old prayer, "*I confess to almighty God...*" (in Latin called the "*Confiteor*"). This is followed by the "*Lord, have mercy*" ("*Kyrie, eleison*"). The alternative to this, used most of the time, consists of three invocations praising the Lord or Christ for his saving action. An example is, "*Lord Jesus, you came to reconcile us to one another and to the Father, Lord, have mercy...*" Notice that these also include the "*Lord, have mercy,*" the ancient invocation dating back to at least the fourth century. Apparently, as the Mass was set in Latin in those early centuries, this was the only prayer ("*Kyrie, eleison*") which was retained from the Greek. We will still sing the "*Kyrie*" from time to time since it has such early origins and still conveys, even for us who do not know Greek, a sense of our need for God's mercy.

The Glory to God. Following the Penitential Act, on all Sundays except during Advent and Lent, we sing or recite the *Glory to God*. This is an early hymn, dating to the fourth century. The first line comes from the gospel account of the birth of Jesus. The *Glory to God* expresses our awe in the presence of God and so we repeatedly sing of our awe as we say "*We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you.*"

The Collect. The Introductory Rites end with the prayer called the Collect. The priest introduces this by saying "*Let us pray.*" This may seem odd because, after all, we have already been praying. However, this introduction is intended to invite all present to silently state their intention for this Mass, in other words, what it is that they are seeking from God today. That is why there is again a pause for silence here. Then the priest "collects" all of our prayers in the Collect for the day that is given in the Roman Missal. All respond "*Amen*" ("*Yes*") at the conclusion.

In early October I will begin reflecting on the second major part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word. My intention, little by little over time, is to work our way through each part of the liturgy so as to deepen our appreciation of its richness. I welcome any comments, reflections, or questions that you may have. By the way, the past columns on the Mass (June 2, July 7, and August 4) can be found on the parish website at www.stmargaret.org.

Father Mike