



## Liturgical Catechesis on the Mass

The documents of Vatican II have been affecting the church for over almost 40 years. Nowhere have we seen more impact than in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration (Mass), where the impact was felt rather immediately. There has been much explanation, and experimentation over these past years. The first English and Latin provisional missal for use on Sundays (1969-72) mixed the languages in the parts of the Mass. After a few years of that provisional text, the 1978 Missal of Paul VI was released as the First Typical Edition in two books, the Sacramentary and the Lectionary and was translated into the many languages of the world. These were revised in 1982 with minor changes, and again in 1986 with major changes (the Second Typical Edition) by Pope John Paul II. Soon, we will have a new (Third typical edition) Sacramentary, the last Missal of John Paul II—likely in 2011. The 1986 Second Typical Edition never was approved in English.

But these aren't the only changes we have seen over the intervening years since Vatican II. We saw an upheaval in music beginning in 1967-68 with the first folk Masses, then an upgrade as the St. Louis Jesuits and others led us into less "sing-song-y" and more dignified musical forms, yet still cast in the folk or "easy listening" style of music. Then, in the 90's came the Mid-west composers who sought to bring depth to the texts and ideas in their music.

We saw a lot of experimentation with theater in the Liturgy: passion plays, Christmas plays, clowning and miming the gospel, extra processions, decorations with felt banners with wild lettering, and balloons, and dance as well. In fact, the introduction of these non-liturgical forms made it harder for many to find the spirit of the ancient liturgy. It was as hard to find as it was with the old Latin Mass with all the extra prayers, symbols, crossings, blessings and so on which were ordered simplified by Vatican II. It was a flurry of creativity that had benefits, to be sure, but also took away from the Roman idea of noble simplicity.

Over the next year, with the new Sacramentary coming, we will be exploring from time to time different aspects and parts of the Mass and the revisions the new Missal contains. It is hoped, as we go forward through this liturgical year, that we will be deepened in the beauty, richness, history, and tradition that is the summit and source of the Catholic Faith: The Mass.

The main reason given for the revision of the Sacramentary by Pope John Paul II was to incorporate in the pages of the Sacramentary the numerous new prayers for saints days and masses for special needs, the revised Holy Week cycle, and the four new Eucharistic prayers. Some of the liturgical forms we use will be suppressed and others take their place that are more close to the Latin Typical Edition.

A note about this "Typical" edition. We all know what a proto-type is, namely the original article or mechanism that undergoes development until it achieves all that the creator of the device or thing is intended to do. For example, airplanes undergo many revisions and tests until the "proto-type" is presented to the public. Once the proto-type is achieved, then production may begin on the manufacture of copies of the proto-type. The Prototype then becomes the "typical" model for all the others that copy it. The same is true with the new Sacramentary called the Third Typical Edition of the Roman Missal—this is the third edition based on Pope Paul VI's revision of the Roman Missal.



The Penitential Rite in the Roman church was originally part of the private preparation of the priest before Mass. Earlier versions of the Roman Missal began straightaway with the sign of the cross and the opening prayer up until the Middle Ages. But the personal preparations of the priest have been done since before the Gelasian Sacramentary known to have existed since the 5<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Penitential rite is both a prayer for mercy and a thanksgiving for pardon received in baptism. In this it looks subjectively both backward and into the present. The acknowledgement of the need for God's mercy (*Kyrie eleison*) and the plea for Christ's mercy (*Christe eleison*) is required for each of us to enter into worship and Eucharistic union with Christ (cf. I Corinthians 10). St. Paul states that those who are not in a state of reconciliation with God and His Body (Church and Eucharist) are eating and drinking their own condemnation.

The Penitential rite, duly and contritely celebrated has the power to forgive venial sins, and makes one 'worthy' to receive Christ in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. It also makes us thankful that God, in His infinite mercy has forgiven us and restored us to communion with Him; a communion that will be consummated in the reception of the Most Holy Eucharist.

The acclamation pleas: *Kyrie eleison* come to us from the Greek language in which the Mass was celebrated until well into the 4<sup>th</sup> century. They were used as responses to a litany (a list of invocations or titles for God or a saint) as a processional chant. These invocations sometimes were expanded into rather long phrases called "tropes. (*Troparia* in Greek)." In today's liturgy, a troped *Kyrie* is used in Penitential Rite B, form C. One of them has the tropes:

V. "You were sent to heal the contrite, Lord have mercy. R Lord have mercy, etc. The first form of the penitential rite (Rite A) is the sprinkling rite. It begins with a prayer over the water, and then the celebrant goes to the congregation and sprinkles them with the Holy Water.

In rite B, form A, the familiar recitation of the prayer "I confess...", also called the *Confetior*. Rite B, form A, because it lacks any form of the phrases "Lord have mercy," requires the use of the "*Kyrie eleison*"

Another form of the penitential rite (B, b) has this exchange: V. "Lord, we have sinned against you, Lord have mercy. R. Lord, have mercy. V. Lord, show us your mercy and love. R. And grant us your salvation.

All forms of the penitential rite also have some form of the "absolution" May Almighty God..."

The mass has many opportunities to ask the Lord for forgiveness of sins (mercy). Pre-eminent of these opportunities is the Penitential Rite. Though the forgiveness of venial sins is available at this time and others during the Mass, the forgiveness of mortal sins is not. That is because mortal sins are so grievous that the Church wants to ensure that the penitent is clear about the gravity of their behavior with regard to their eternal salvation and their relationship with the Church. All sin robs the Church of its testimony of holiness, but mortal sins bring grave scandal to the Church. One such scandal from which we have not yet recovered was the clergy scandal brought out into the open in 2001-2003. Now the church in Europe is undergoing the same pain as we did for the last decade.

It is not only public Catholics that bring scandal to the Church. Private persons, despite their anonymity at the greater level, are still known by their friends and family. If they are living in a manner contrary to the faith, their smaller circle of influence is aware of their sin. Many times these people are also members of the local parish. If they go forward for communion while yet having not repented and confessed their sins. People either think that they can also receive communion in a state of mortal sin, or they become appalled that the church would give them communion. Usually these scandalous sins are centered around the 3<sup>rd</sup> (non-attendance at mass), 6<sup>th</sup> (adultery and other sexual sins), and 7<sup>th</sup> (stealing) commandments. That is why people in mortal sin must not go to communion until they have repented of their sin and been to confession.

The Penitential rite begins with a short examination of conscience, done by each of the Faithful in their own way. It is followed by either A) a renewal of baptism in the sprinkling rite, B) a verbal acknowledgment of sinfulness with the prayer "I confess..." followed by the litany "Lord, have mercy.", or a verses said by the deacon or celebrant followed by the refrain " Lord have mercy... Christ have mercy." Following that acknowledgement, the people continue (On Sundays and Holy Days) with the hymn of thanksgiving for God's mercy: the "Glory to God.." Even within that hymn, there is yet another plea for mercy.

Other times provided during the Mass are the preparation of the gifts, during the Eucharistic Prayer, after the "Our Father," and the preparation for communion. It is almost as if the Church recognizes that sometimes we have fleeting thoughts and distractions during Mass, and some of these may lead us to sinful attitudes or a nonchalance in receiving Holy Communion.



## Private Penitential Prayers of the Celebrant

During the Mass there are a number of prayers that the priest is directed to say in a low voice. These prayers are usually penitential prayers or prayers of purification which serve to both forgive venial sins and to remind the priest of his unworthiness to celebrate these sacred actions but for the mercy of God.

The first of these prayers in the revised Missal of Paul VI that flows from Vatican II, and already discussed in these articles, is prayed before the proclamation of the Gospel. At the close of the Offertory, the priest, before inviting the congregation to the prayer over the gifts, says quietly the following two private prayers, one at the altar and the other at either the side of the altar, or lacking a server, at the credence table. These prayers have been changed significantly from the current form in the new Roman Missal. At the termination of the offering of the gifts he says the first one on our behalf:

**With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God.**

And then, for himself, as he washes his hands:

**Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.**

Then the celebrant turns back to the people and says the protracted version of the "Let us pray, as we stand:

**Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters), that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.**

To which the people respond in the same text as we currently use: **May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of His name, for our good and the good of all His holy Church.**

Following this, the prayer over the gifts is prayed. This collect brings to a close the entire complex of rites of the offertory, opening the door to the Preface, Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion Rite.



## What is a collect?

The prayers of the Mass including the Opening Prayer, the Prayer over the gifts and the Prayer after Communion are commonly known as *collects*.

A collect has come to mean a prayer of the day which brings to a close a certain rite in the Mass. For example, the Opening Prayer brings to a close the Opening Rite, or Introductory Rites. The Opening rites include the entrance antiphon and procession, the greeting, the Penitential Rite, the Hymn of Praise (Glory To God) and the Opening Prayer. The Opening Prayer states the reason for the celebration, and illumines some aspect of it by petitioning God for some specific grace. The Prayer Over The Gifts may mention something of the feast, but is intended to focus the attention on the upcoming consecration of the elements. The Prayer After Communion asks that the grace of this Mass would be effective in our lives and continue through the week.

The form of a *collect* is summed up in the phrase “You, Who... Do... and Through.” That outline basically [1] names who God is (You) [2] by what he does (Who) [3] the petition (Do) and [4] finally that all prayers are made through Jesus Christ (Through). So the collect for today which appears at the bottom left of our bulletin fills out this outline like this:

- **You:** *God*
- **Who:** *Almighty and ever-living*
- **Do:** give us new strength from the courage of Christ our shepherd, and lead us to join the saints in heaven,
- **Through:** *he (Christ) lives and reigns with you...*

Collects begin with an invitation to prayer “Let us pray”, or like the longer form before the prayer over the gifts which begins with the phrase “Pray bretheren...”. Then follows the collect to which the people’s response is made by saying “Amen.”

In times past collects weren’t always so limited. The Good Friday liturgy has a remnant of the older tradition of the collects: the lengthy introduction “let us pray for the whole church...etc” and followed with the actual petition of the prayer. These are now called the *General Intercessions*. The ancient tradition of collects was that the church would gather at the station church in Rome or walk in procession to the station church through the city on the feast of the patron of that church or its dedication. The prayers were prayed by the collected (people) *collectio* and led by the clergy. Like the Good Friday prayers, they had an introduction, a petition and a response. The people would pray them standing (*stantes*) but might also be invited to kneel for a private prayer in silence before all the private intentions were gathered (*collegere*) into the summary prayer or collect.

Currently there are more than the three main collects of the Mass (*Opening Prayer*, etc). They are at the end of the general intercessions which are said after the homily, and the *Prayer Over The People*, which happens just before the final blessing and dismissal.



## The Prayers of Intercession

The new missal has this rubric that follows on the heels of the Creed. *“Then follows the Universal Prayer, that is, the Prayer of the Faithful or Bidding Prayers”*

The Universal prayer or prayer of the faithful are really two different prayers, and the term bidding prayer is a new term.

The universal prayer is the set of ten prayers that appear in the Good Friday Liturgy called the solemn reading of the passion, veneration of the Cross and Communion, in the current Sacramentary. These ten prayers have an introduction to each prayer, followed by a silent prayer on our knees and then we rise for the prayer portion of the intercession.

The Prayer of the Faithful is a series of prayers: That end with a litany response such as Lord have mercy, or Lord hear our prayer. The common themes for each of the prayers include on each for the world, the political leaders, the Holy Father, the sick, the dying and the dead. Local custom may add a prayer for this or that need in the parish, which arises from the events of the week, or a parish program, the season of the year or feastday. Samples of the structures for these prayers can be found in the current Sacramentary, and it is presumed that there will still be seasonal prayers in the new Roman Missal.

The term bidding prayers refers to the prayers of general intercession, a title with which we are more familiar. These may be more locally produced as are the Prayers of the Faithful.

The theology undergirding this part of the Mass is that we do intercede with the Lord, utilizing our right as the Baptized to exercise our baptismal priesthood to sanctify the world, and to invite God to work in our world, and in our own lives. Because we are often asked to pray for people for many needs, the Church gives us this opportunity in the Sunday Assembly and at daily Mass to act as a communion of saints—indeed with The Communion of Saints—to pray for one another’s needs. In this we fulfill the scriptural mandate to “bear one another’s burdens” in prayer, and to show solidarity with those in need.

Anthropologically speaking, those in need of God’s intervention also are in need of a ‘show of solidarity’ because when in need or ill, we often perceive ourselves as isolated or “the only ones” who are afflicted. These prayers of intercession, even if only related by a friend who says “We prayed for you today at Mass,” give comfort to the afflicted as the charity of the Christian community is shown in action.



## The Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

Before the gifts are brought up, and during the time when the collection is taken up, the altar servers and deacon (if present) bring what is needed for the sacrifice to the altar. These items are arranged, with nothing on the central corporal until they are placed there by the celebrant. The items include

A corporal on which the vessels for the consecration of the bread and wine will be placed.

The purificators, for wiping the sacred vessels during and after communion

The bookstand and book

The communion cups for distribution under both kinds

The Celebrant's Chalice, with a purificator, paten with host, pall (which is square card with a linen cover)

As custom dictates, a cruet with water.

When all is ready, the celebrant, deacon, and sufficient servers go to receive the gifts of bread and wine. Where it is customary, the offerings of the collection are also brought forward and received by the celebrant. These are held by the servers until required during the preparation of the chalice, whether done by the deacon or celebrant.

The deacon or celebrant prepares the bread and wine for the offering with prescribed prayers and blessings, offering the bread and wine for the sacrifice to God.

**By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.**

If the deacon prepares the chalice, he says the prayer at the mixture of the water into the wine before the celebrant comes to the altar. The same prayer is said by either priest or deacon as the water is mixed, but the priest prepares the chalice after offering the bread:

In the new Missal, these prayers have been re-translated, but the people's parts are only slightly changed. Here are the new texts for the offering of the bread and wine, with its response:

**Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received**

**the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.**

**R. Blessed be God forever.**

Then the paten or consecration bowl is placed on the corporal by the celebrant.

After mixing the water in the celebrant's chalice, if it has not yet been done by the Deacon during the preparation of the chalice, the celebrant says:

**Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands it will become our spiritual drink.**

To which the people respond the same as before.

Then the celebrant places the chalice on the corporal.

## The Offertory

Technically it is called the Offertory Antiphon, the chant that is sung during the procession and preparation of the gifts at the altar. There are all together four processional chants in the Missal of Paul VI (also called the *Novus Ordo Missae*). They are the entrance antiphon (*introit*), the Gospel acclamation (*alleluia* or *tract*), the offertory (*offertorium*) and the communion antiphon. In all four cases there is movement of the congregation or ministers: the *introit* brings in the ministers to the sanctuary, the gospel acclamation brings the deacon, and ministers to the ambo, the offertory brings the bread and wine to the altar, and the communion antiphon (*antiphon ad communionem*) brings the people forward for reception of communion. In the Extraordinary Form (Latin Mass of 1962) what is now called the Responsorial Psalm was formerly called the Gradual because it covered the movement of the Missal by the minister from the left side of the altar, over to the right for the reading of the first reading (or Epistle). When the alleluia or tract was sung, the Missal was moved back to the left side.

The form or shape of all these antiphons is that the singing of the antiphon alternated with sufficient verses from the prescribed psalm accompanying the text until the "liturgical action" had been completed. The liturgical action of the offertory nowadays includes the movement of the bread and wine by some of the congregants from a table to the ministers, the placement of sacred vessels, linens and water cruet, and the Missal on the altar, the preparation of the chalice(s), the incensation (if used), and the washing of hands. If there is no incensation the offertory antiphon can be shortened so that the offering of the gifts is said aloud with the people responding "Blessed be God forever."

Of the four antiphons that currently mark processions the texts of the Offertory antiphons are a medium length in comparison with the entrance antiphon or *Introit*. The texts refer to either the readings of the day or the purpose of the feast. So, for example, one of the offertory antiphons for Christmas begins "Rejoice O you heavens, exult O Earth at what the Lord has done, for He comes.

## The Liturgy of the Eucharist



The second major division of the Mass is called the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is in this part, that the second and most important part of the Eucharistic Celebration takes place: the reception of Our Lord by all the faithful who are in a state of grace and therefore made worthy to receive Him. The outline of the rite is as follows:

- Offertory procession (including collection of the gifts and presentation of them to the priest)

- The preparation of the gifts of bread and wine at the altar

- The offering of the gifts of sacrifice and antiphon

- The prayer over the gifts

- The preface

- The eucharistic prayer, which is divided thus:

  - Thanksgiving

  - Consecration of the elements

  - Memorial Acclamation

  - Memorial prayers

  - Supplications

  - Great Amen

- The Communion rite which has the following parts:

  - The Our Father, anamnesis,

  - The Peace

  - The Fraction Rite

  - The Reception of Communion and antiphon

  - The Post Communion prayer.

In the centuries before the reform of Vatican II, the Mass was divided into two parts, the Fore-mass or Mass of the Catechumens, and the Mass of the Faithful. In this division, the catechumens would be dismissed before the Creed, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist has a parallel structure to the Mass of the Catechumens in this way: At the beginning of Mass, including the opening rites and the Mass of the Catechumens or Liturgy of the Word, the people are prepared to hear the Word of the Lord and receive it by prayers and penitence. In the Mass of the Faithful or Liturgy of the Eucharist, the preparatory rites prepare the people and the gifts which take the gifts of bread and wine and the people and make them ready for the sacrifice which is part of the Eucharistic Prayer. The bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ so that in receiving them, the people ratify their baptism which made them the Body of Christ, and the Eucharist they receive renews the Real Presence in them. We become what we receive.