

THE MASS: WHY DO WE...?

What is the Penitential Rite?

The *Penitential Rite* has its source in Matthew 5:23-24

“So, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

This is a means of **general** confession. The priest asks the assembly to call to mind any sins. This is our process of interior purification. The *Penitential Rite* helps us to prepare to enter into the sacred mysteries. It is followed by silence and a prayer(s) that may consist of the *Confiteor*, the *Kyrie*, or a *Blessing and Sprinkling of Water*.

The *Penitential Rite* concludes with the priest’s absolution. “May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.” **NOTE:** Although, the Penitential Rite may absolve us from any common (venial) sins and defects that enter into our daily lives, **it is NOT a substitute for the Sacrament of Penance.** “This absolution lacks the efficacy of Sacrament of Penance.” (GIRM 51)

The prayers of the Penitential Rite

First, the ***Confiteor*** is a prayer that acknowledges the **social** dimension to our sin, for those things we did, and those things we neglected to do. “*Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.*”

Second, the ***Kyrie***, is a Greek word which found its root from St. Paul, who used the term ***Kyrios*** to acknowledge Christ and his divinity. We continue today, to use this Greek (not Latin) term or its English translation “Lord have mercy” as a call for forgiveness.

Third, the ***Blessing and Sprinkling of Water*** is generally done by the priest during the Easter season. It is a reminder of our baptism and reconciliation brought about by Christ.

What is the Gloria?

The *Gloria* is an ancient text. It is often referred to as the ***Angelic Hymn***. We may recall the nativity story in Luke:2 when the angels exclaim: “*Gloria to God in the highest.*” We can also find numerous passages throughout the sacred scriptures that offer praise and glory to God.

The *Gloria* immediately follows the Penitential Rite. How fitting, that after receiving forgiveness we exclaim “Glory to God...we praise you! We bless you! We adore you! We glorify you! We give you thanks for your great glory!” What better reason to offer God our praise and thankfulness? (This is a prayer that doesn’t have to be saved for Sundays...what better way to start your day than to tell of God’s glory and ask His forgiveness?)

The *Gloria* is generally sung or recited on Sundays, solemnities, and feasts outside Advent and Lent.

What is the Collect?

The **Collect** is often referred to as the Opening Prayer. It closes the Introductory Rites. The priest begins with “Let us pray...” and allows for a brief pause. This is a time for us to call to mind our individual needs. These silent prayers are then “**collected**” into a common purpose for Mass. The wording of the **Collect** follows a YOU, WHO, DO, THROUGH formula, which often reflects the theme of the readings.

YOU: naming God the Father, to whom the prayer is always addressed;

WHO: naming the goodness that God has done for us;

DO: naming our petition to God, asking our needs for that day;

THROUGH: asking our petition through Jesus Christ in union with the Holy Spirit.

Listen closely the next time you hear the priest begin this prayer, and see if you can follow this formula.