

### #10 MEA CULPA, MEA CULPA, MEA MAXIMA CULPA: THE PENITENTIAL ACT REVISED

This week, we will continue examining the “Introductory Rites” from Mass. After the greeting, which we discussed last time, the presider invites the community to acknowledge their sins and prepare for the celebration of the Eucharist. This is currently known as the Penitential Rite, but in the revised *Roman Missal* it will be known as the Penitential Act. According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), this “lacks the efficacy of the Sacrament of Penance” (51), but is a call to conversion of heart and mind that reminds us to give praise to God for his kindness.

In the current *Missal*, there are three options for the Penitential Act. The first is the *Confiteor* (I confess . . .) followed by the *Kyrie* (Lord, have mercy). The second option is the least familiar. The presider says, “Lord, we have sinned against you: Lord, have mercy” and the people respond, “Lord, have mercy” and so on. This too is followed by the *Kyrie*. The third option has eight variations and is probably the most familiar. It is a type of litany. It consists of a call such as, “You were sent to heal the contrite, Lord have mercy” with its response “Lord, have mercy”. This pattern continues for the other two invocations. In the coming weeks, listen to what the priest or deacon says during this time and then compare it to the new text at

<http://www.usccb.org/romanmissal/WhiteBookAnnotated.pdf>.

In the revised *Missal*, there are still three options, but some of the texts have been revised to follow the Latin more closely. The first option, the *Confiteor*, for example, reintroduces “through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault” with the instruction that each person is to strike his or her breast. You may want to ponder the relationship between this gesture and the text.

The second option is similar to the current one, but much shorter.

The third option has only one choice, unlike the 1985 *Missal*. It retains the pattern of call-and-response. You will notice that the prayer of absolution from this Rite is slightly different as well. Like the current *Missal*, the first two are always followed by the *Kyrie* litany.

The Penitential Act can also be replaced by a sprinkling of baptismal water (GIRM 51). This option can be used on any Sunday of the year, but is especially encouraged during festal seasons. During the sprinkling rite, we recall and reflect on the promises made at our baptism and are reminded to faithfully live out the gospel. When celebrated well, this ritual can be a profound reminder of God’s love. Next time, we will explore the Gloria and Opening Prayer.

#### Penitential Act Form B

**Priest:** Have mercy on us,  
O Lord.

**People:** For we have sinned  
against you.

**Priest:** Show us, O Lord,  
your mercy.

**People:** And grant us your  
salvation.