

PREPARING THE ACT OF PENITENCE AND THE PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Act of Penitence

It is recommended that all texts that will be used in the liturgy be written out. This practice prevents last-minute preparations, poor word choice, and inadvertent error in doctrine.

If Form C of the Act of Penitence is chosen, it is currently permissible for new invocations to be composed—following the pattern of the seven models given in the Roman Missal. If you are going to exercise that option, please be aware that they are to be Christocentric in nature. Therefore:

1. The invocations are all directed to Christ. They are not directed to the Three Persons of the Trinity, or to the Father or Holy Spirit.
2. The invocations are based on a Christological title, or on what Christ has done for us. They are not to be a listing of our sins or failings. Images, titles, and events are suitably drawn from the readings of the day or from the feast or season being celebrated.

Prayer of the Faithful

In the composition of the Prayer of the Faithful, the following points should be kept in mind:

1. “The series of intentions is usually to be” (GIRM #70) for:
 - a. The needs of the Church
 - b. Public authorities and the salvation of the whole world
 - c. People burdened by any kind of difficulty
 - d. The local community
2. The petitions are not prayers themselves; we are naming groups for the assembly to pray for; therefore, one of the following patterns is usually used:
 - a. For...that... (announcing who and what to pray for)
 - b. That... (announcing what to pray for)
 - c. For... (announcing who to pray for)
 - d. After the petition, the deacon should pause and make eye contact with the assembly and then say, “Let us pray to the Lord.” Eye contact should be maintained as the people respond, in keeping with the dialogic nature of the prayer.
4. Please note that these are “general” intercessions:
 - a. They ought to be petitions that the assembly can, by and large, agree on.
 - b. They ought not become a “mini-homily” or a place to make a particular point.
 - c. They ought not single out individuals, but may include individuals as part of a group. Likewise a particular group—such as those newly confirmed—ought to be specifically mentioned at that Mass.
 - d. They should not be secret (“For a special intention”); otherwise the assembly cannot rightly give its assent. Likewise, the assembly should not be invited to add intercessions.
5. They are petitions, not prayers of thanksgiving; the great prayer of thanksgiving follows shortly.
6. The response by the people should be a general prayer that God would hear the invocation (e.g., Lord, hear our prayer; Lord, have mercy)—not a separate petition or other statement. If the people are not familiar with the response, it should be announced before the intercessions and/or be included in a participation aid.