

Lesson 5

Pew Book -- The Penitential Rite

Action

The Penitential Rite comes just after the priest's greeting to the assembly. The priest invites the people to join in an act of penitence using one of a number of different formulas such as, "*To prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries, let us call to mind our sins.*"

At this time, we call to mind our sins; the times we have failed to truly love and honor God or our fellow man.

After we recall our sins the priest may lead us in the *Confiteor* or one of the optional prayers where we ask for God's mercy and forgiveness known as the Kyrie eleison or Lord have mercy.

Next, the priest, gives a simple absolution. This absolution is not sacramental nor is it a substitute for the Sacrament of Penance, which must be done in private with a priest, but none the less it has a beneficial effect. It is a plea that the Lord will have mercy on us and if we are truly sorry for our sins it will take away our venial sins.

History

From the earliest times people understood how important and necessary it is to approach God honestly and humbly. All of us sin. Christ preached repentance from sin and the earliest Christians recognized their sinfulness and their need to be free from it. Because the Mass is a re-presentation of Christ's death on the cross, very early on people desired to be purified from sin before entering into the Mass - sacred mystery where Christ died for our sins. The Lord told us, "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there

at the altar and go first and be reconciled with your brother and then come and offer our gift.” (*Matt 5: 23-24*)

The Kyrie eleison or Lord have mercy, is an ancient chant pleading for God’s mercy. It was adapted from the Greek Liturgies. It was added to the Mass sometime around 529 AD. The Council of Vaison spoke of it, “as a custom that is introduced in the Apostolic See as in all the other provinces of the east and west.”

What we can do to better participate in the Mass

At this time we call to mind our sins. We recall the times we have failed to honor God by going against the covenant relationship we have with Him.

When thinking about our sins we might reflect on how we have gone against any of the Ten Commandments or the Precepts of the Church. We may recall the times we have failed to be a good Christian by our not doing something we should have done such as using our talents or resources for the good of others.

In a marriage to be intimate with one’s spouse is to be transparent and open to hearing what the other has to say. This is even truer in our relationship with Christ. At this time beg the Lord to be free from your sins so that you can more easily open your mind and heart to receive the Lord and truly hear and act on His Word.

“But every Lord’s Day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.” *Didache* (the Teachings of the Twelve Apostles) A.D. 110

The *Confiteor* is a Latin word that means, “I confess,” the first words of the prayer that we now say together. This is a public confession that everyone says together. Everyone is a sinner in the Church—to deny it is to be a liar. Our confession acknowledges that we are in need of Jesus our Savior.

When we say the Confiteor, at the words, *through my fault*, we strike our breast as a sign of sadness that we have purposely committed sin.

When the prophet Samuel went to offer sacrifice in Bethlehem he told the people, “Yes, I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. So cleanse yourselves and join me today for the banquet. (*1 Samuel 16:5*)”