

THE CATHOLIC MASS

INTRODUCTORY RITES:

The Introductory Rites begin when the people stand after the bell is rung and finish when they sit down before the Readings. The purpose of these Rites is to ensure that the Faithful establish communion as God's Family and dispose themselves to listen fruitfully to God's Word and celebrate the Eucharist with devotion.

THE OPENING SONG: On Sundays everyone usually sings an Opening Song. It should be such that everyone is able, in some degree, to join in. Its purpose is to open the celebration, foster the unity of those present, introduce their thoughts to the Liturgical Season in hand or Feast being celebrated and accompany the entrance procession, if there is one. The Opening Hymn or song normally replaces a one-sentence psalm from the psalms to be found in the Missal for the Mass of the Day - so much the better if the choir can sing the psalm for the time the procession lasts.

THE ENTRY PROCESSION: On Sundays the procession, consisting of (Thurifer), Cross-bearer, Candle-bearers, Readers (one carrying the Book of the Gospels) and Priest moves up the centre aisle of the church and unhurried. The Reader who carries up the Book of the Gospels places it reverently on the centre of the Altar and bows before it. After the Priest venerates the Altar he may incense it before going to the Presidential Chair to begin Mass.

SIGN OF THE CROSS: The Priest makes the sign of the cross while saying or singing the appropriate words after which the people respond by saying or singing 'Amen'. 'Amen' is borrowed from the Hebrew.

THE GREETING: The priest then has a choice of three greetings to use and the response to these is changed in the revised translation. When the Priest says: "The Lord be with you" the congregation responds with "And with your spirit". The words are intended as a prayer as much as a greeting. They are said at five pivotal times during the Mass. Both the greeting and reply are rooted firmly in the Bible. "The Lord is with you" is found in Judges 6:12, Ruth 2:4, Chronicles 15:2, and Luke 1:28. "And with your spirit" is found in 2 Timothy 4:22, Galatians 6:18, Philippians 4:23 and Philemon

OPENING WORDS: After the greeting the Priest may introduce the Mass with a few brief but well-chosen words. This helps to focus people's minds on the theme of the Mass being celebrated.

PENITENTIAL ACT: There are three options for the Penitential Act. They are in the form of three acclamations concluding with 'Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy' which everyone repeats after the Priest. Priests have the option of substituting the English words 'Lord, have mercy' with the original Greek texts, 'Kyrie elision, Christi elision, Kyrie elision'. Another popular form of the Penitential Act is the prayer known by its Latin title, 'The Confiteor'. The 'Confiteor' is followed as always by 'Lord, has mercy'. The priest concludes the Penitential Act with an absolution – though it is not to be confused with the one he gives in the Sacrament of Penance.

THE GLORIA: We sing or recite it on all Sundays of the year except during Advent or Lent. It is also said or sung on other Feast days. Everyone may sing or recite *the Gloria* together or, if sung, the people may alternate with the Choir or the Choir may sing it alone. It may be intoned by the Priest, Cantor or Choir. The text of *the Gloria* (5th century) should not be altered from that which is in the Missal whether sung or said.

THE COLLECT (Opening Prayer): The '*Collect*' completes the introductory Rites. It may be sung or said. After the priest says, 'Let us pray', all observe a brief silence so that they may be conscious of the fact that they are in God's presence and call their own petitions to mind. The Collect expresses the character of the celebration and prepares the congregation to listen to God's Word.

Questions

1. *Do you feel there should be quietness in the church before Mass.? We're not talking here about a monastic silence but a generalised air of stillness. Discuss*
2. *Do you think that 'greeters' or 'welcomes' at the door of the church before Sunday Mass are necessary. Should not the 'welcomes' limit themselves to a few short words and not engage their friends in chit-chat about everything under the sun. Discuss*
3. *Should we encourage mothers and fathers with babies who are crying all the time and never let up to hear Mass in the Narthex where there is a P.A. system? (We're not talking here about babies who cry out now and again)? Discuss*
4. *How do you feel about the priest giving casual or personalised greetings to the congregation at the beginning of Mass or would you prefer it to be more formal as the Missal seems to suggest?*
5. *Have we become slaves to the 'four hymn' sandwich at Sunday masses considering that hymns are not part of the mass proper but added extras. For instance is it necessary to always sing a hymn at the Offertory hymn or a 'final hymn' at the end of Mass considering that the mass is ended when the priest or deacon says: 'the mass is ended, go in peace'. Could we not replace it with some uplifting organ music as the people are leaving? Discuss.*
6. *Have you got used to the revised edition of the Roman Missal which came out in 2011. Discuss*