



The Introductory Rites

When the Church gathers for the celebration of the Eucharist, the Introductory Rites are meant to focus the community's attention on the mystery to be celebrated and prepare them to participate. There are many elements used in these rites:

Entrance Procession and Hymn: In every celebration of the Eucharist, the procession of liturgical ministers into the midst of the people who have gathered is led by the Cross. We are Christians who follow Christ who died to save us from our sins

Sign of the Cross: Upon reaching the chair, the priest leads the assembly in the Sign of the Cross to remind us of our baptism, which gave us the right to participate in this mystery. We allow Christ who was crucified on the cross to touch our bodies and draw us into the mystery.

Greeting: The priest greets the assembly: **The Lord be with you.** This greeting is expressive of the desire that the people experience the presence and power of the Lord in the community they form. It is Christ who greets us with this wish. The assembly responds: **And with your Spirit.** This response will be new for us. It is a more formal language, to be sure, but it is there to remind us that this gathering is not like any other gathering.

Act of Penitence: Christ ate with sinners, he cured sinners, and reached out to sinners who were most in need of God's mercy. As the community of faithful gathers it acknowledges that it too is a sinful people. We confess our sinfulness to God, to each other, and to all the angels and saints.

Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling with Water: During the Easter Season, and sometimes on Sundays and more solemn occasions, the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling may be used as a reminder of our baptism and thereby of our call to share in the Pascal Mystery.

Gloria: As we join the choirs of angels and sing the glory of God, we are reminded of the great gift God has given us in Christ Jesus. Although it is permitted to recite the Gloria, we realize that the awesomeness of the mystery can be lost in mere recitation.

Opening Prayer (Collect): The Introductory Rites end with the Opening Prayer or Collect, the prayer of the gathered community who, having acknowledged its sinfulness but having rejoiced in the Triune God, is now aware that it is in God's presence. The priest then collects

these prayers and presents them to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. The people make the prayer their own by responding Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

At the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy (the Mass), we are nourished at two tables: the Table of the Word and the Table of the Eucharist. Both are necessary. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states, "When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the Gospel". (GIRM, n.29). We need to ponder these words and make them our own.

For Christians, the words of Sacred Scripture are a primary way God reveals himself to us, the means by which we come to know the depth of God's love for us and the responsibilities entailed in being Christ's followers. What is more, the Word of God proclaimed in the liturgy possesses a special power to bring about in us what it proclaims. At the celebration of the Eucharist God speaks and we respond.

Throughout the Liturgy of the Word, we are called to listen . . . to listen as we would if our eyes were open and we could see Christ speaking to us. We are invited to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit who will reveal what in our life needs to change so that we could be more like Christ. The Word of God is living and active. Each of us individually, and all of us together, are called to make a response that affects our daily lives.

Please return weekly to this website or the St. Therese of Lisieux church paper to continue reading about the changes to the Mass beginning this Advent season, 2011.