

# Scriptural Basis for the Mass: Session #2: Introductory Rites and the Beginning Conversation Regarding the Liturgy of the Word

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## Introduction

So our conversation has begun. Last week we began our journey by setting down some basic understandings. We looked at making sure that regardless of where the conversation goes that we all understand that Jesus is really and truly present in the Eucharist. We also discussed that the Mass is a participation in the sacrifice of Jesus. This we will hear more about as we discuss the Eucharistic prayers. We talked about some of the first and most basic prayers of our faith and where they come from such as the sign of the cross. Finally, we also talked about that, when we are at Mass we are meant to be in communion or common union with God. If we are not it isn't because God is distant, it's because we are not participating fully. It is because we have shut ourselves off some how to the experience of Christ. Often times we are not participating by choice (don't want to be there for example), or for we allow distractions to entertain our mind; whatever the reason full participation takes concentration and effort, and over time we need to train ourselves to hold full attention during the Mass.

Today we are going to look at the Opening Rites which include the Opening Song, Greeting by the Priest, the Penitential Rite, the Gloria (in the appropriate season) and the Opening Prayer. We are going to move rather quickly through these parts because I want to make sure we have enough time to begin our discussion of the Liturgy of the Word. But, before I go any further I want to offer a disclaimer. What we are doing in this study is to look at SOME of the connections between what we do and say at Mass and what was said and done in the Bible. As I said last week if you are looking for a specific detailed map or "how to" document (much like an instruction manual) in the words we find in scripture as they relate to the Mass, you could find it. But that is the work of greater scholarly minds than mine and quite frankly we don't have the time. But I do encourage your continued study on this topic (among others). Knowledge brings understanding and understanding brings freedom. And in the case of study of scripture and Catholic teachings, study brings faith. My intention in this five week study is more of an introduction; to get us thinking about what we do and say at Mass in new and different ways so that we find greater meaning and purpose in our prayers. In many instances what I will be focusing our attention on is the tradition of prayer out of which we come through Jesus Christ. As I said last week the bible doesn't end with the last words of the book of Revelation. What we do and say, our experiences and history in faith but specifically in the Mass is a continuation, is the next generation of the faith story and salvation history.

As Mass begins we should be in our seats and prepared to celebrate. While it does happen, usually during a weekday celebration, there are certain times we are expected by the rubrics of the Mass to

have music. The beginning and end are two of those times. The songs selected for these two moments are meant to do a variety of things:

*Therefore, sacred music is to be considered the more holy, the more closely connected it is with the liturgical action, whether making prayer more pleasing, promoting unity of minds, or conferring greater solemnity upon the sacred rites.*

#112 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Second Vatican Council

We sing to do three things:

- To Pray
- To Unit Us
- To Bring us into the Spirit of the Mass

Once the entrance process, which consists of the Altar Servers, (In some parishes all the ministers of the Mass such as Eucharistic Ministers), the Lector, the Book of the Gospels, the deacon and priest takes their place on the Altar we offer a Sign of the Cross and move into the Greeting.

**Greeting:** Immediately following the Sign of the Cross we move into the greeting words of the Priest. There are options but the one we hear most often is:

Priest: The Lord be with you

Us: And with your Spirit

While we tend to think of these words in the same way as "Good morning" or "Hello" there is a much deeper meaning to this greeting. First, we are acknowledging that God is here with us.

**READ: Matthew 18:20.** We hear in these words of Jesus himself that if we gather in God's name God is there present. But these words *The Lord be with you* are found throughout the Bible. There is a whole list of saints within the lines of scripture that are called by called into an important mission. Think of Isaac as he faced Abimelek (Genesis 26:24) and Moses as he was being sent back to Egypt (Exodus 6:6). These words were on the lips of Pharaoh as we dealt with Moses (Exodus 10:10) and Joshua as he prepared the Israelites to enter into the Promised Land (Joshua 1:1-9). There was King David (2 Samuel 7:3) and the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:6-8). But the most well know acknowledgement of God's presence come from the lips of the angel Gabriel as he greets Mary (Luke 1:28). In these biblical moments the individual was acknowledged in their holiness by the identification of God's presence. In the greeting the priest is offering a wish and a prayer that God be with us, not only in this moment but throughout our lives. And why are we here at Mass? Most are seeking strengthening in our weakness and resolve in our uncertainty and we desire God's presence by participate in the sacrament.

Our response is to the priest is: *And with your Spirit*. This is one of the reforms of the new translation of the Mass which came out a few years ago. It was changed because it more adequately reflects the words of St. Paul in Galatians 6:18. But there is more to it. In the old translation: *and also with you*

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alluded to equality between the laity and the priesthood. With the new translation, we, the faithful are acknowledging the unique activity that happens through the priest. I am not speaking here of the man but of the role or responsibility that comes by virtue of ordination through the sacrament of Holy Orders. In the context of the Mass as well as the other sacraments the priest is in *Persona Christi* -- in the person of Christ. It is interesting to note that the vestments the priest and deacon wear have a purpose. Part of that purpose is to remind all that in this moment it is not Fr. Gary or Fr. Mike who stand before us, but one who has been chosen and consecrated to lead in prayer and to God. This does not mean they are Christ here on earth. They are human just like us but during Mass and the other sacrament experiences it is like they lend Jesus their body so that He might be present to each of us. Our response reminds us that, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, God's Spirit is already with the priest.

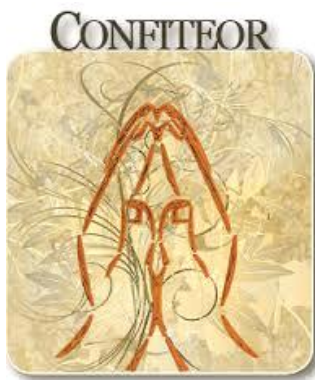
**Penitential Rite:** Last week we talked about coming into the Church through the heavy doors of faith and acknowledging both God and our baptism through the Sign of the Cross (among other things). After the opening greeting ("The Lord be with you...), now that we have acknowledge that God is here with us and our hopes to grow in our faithfulness to this God, we take a moment to prepare for what is about to take place. And what is about to take place? We meet God through Jesus Christ in the scriptures and most especially in the Eucharist. Our preparation takes the form of our recognizing our unworthiness to be in God's presence. So, we take a moment to acknowledge our less serious sins.

What does it mean to "prepare" for something? **READ Hebrews 10:5** (also 2 Timothy 4:2 and Mark 1:3). When something is important to us we take the time to prepare ourselves for the moment. We cleanse ourselves and put on the appropriate clothing. (That is why so many of us get outraged when we see the way that some people choose to dress for Church. They wouldn't dress so poorly if they were going to see a great sports or movie star. But rather than look down our noses at these people we need to pray for them. Pray for their ongoing conversion in the same way we humble ourselves to pray for our own conversion.) We read in Hebrews that what God desires is our "bodies" prepared. For St. Paul body means an inward state of mind. So we take a moment to assess our past week and ask for God's forgiveness.

Think of it this way. **READ: Matthew 17:1-6; Exodus 3:1-6.** What we are about to do is enter into "holy ground" as we enter into the Mass so our posture should be one of humble recognition that, in the words of Wayne and Garth from Saturday Night Live, -- "I am not worthy" to stand in the presence of God. In the Bible when God would manifest Himself unexpectedly the people would respond with fear and awe and often throw themselves on the ground in humility, covering their faces as an act of acknowledging that they were not worthy to stand before God. (See also Genesis

17:2; 28:17; Exodus 19:16.) We see Peter, James and John throw themselves onto the ground at the Transfiguration and Moses before the burning bush. Are we any greater than these men of God that we too should not recognize our own sinfulness as we approach God in the sacrament of the Mass? So, our first act is to prepare for this sacred encounter by cleansing ourselves from sin. And this is facilitated in the Penitential Rite.

Now, let me say before we go any further, the sin we speak of here are what is called Venial or small sin. The day to day encounters with wrong choices that we have experienced during the week. If what we are struggling with in our lives is serious or Mortal sin then we MUST go to confession BEFORE coming to Mass. Many of us will remember going to confession each Friday so that we could receive communion on Sunday. It was with the Second Vatican Council and the Church's renewal of Mass that the Church remembered that the Penitential Rite would facilitate the cleansing of our souls of the minor offenses. It was for this reason weekly confession was no longer stressed. So how often should we go to Confession? The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: *According to the Church's command, "after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year."* (1457) But for most of us going more often is essential if for no other reason that as an act of humility and obedience.



**Confiteor:** READ Psalm 38:1-6. Within the context of Mass the first we do is to take the time to confess our sins, not specifically but generally and only in our own thoughts and heart through the *Confiteor* or *"I confess to almighty God..."* Within scripture it is a long standing tradition to offer a formal and public confession of sins as a part of ceremony of repentance (See Nehemiah 9:1-3). While some sins were required to be confessed (Leviticus 5:5) at other times in the Old Testament there was an act of national repentance, confessing the sins of all of Israel (Daniel 9:20, Nehemiah 1:6). But the confession of sin, the act of repentance did not end with the Old Testament. What is one of the first elements of the synoptic gospels? We read of John the Baptist calling for all to confess their sins and receive a baptism of repentance. **READ: Mark 1:1-5.** (See also Matthew 3:1-6).

So in a posture of humility we take these first moments of the Mass to do what generations of believers have done, to confess our sins to "almighty God". The Confiteor challenges us to look at four specific areas of our lives in which we often fall into sin: *"...in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and what I have failed to do."* Next time you are looking for a structure within which to do an examination of conscience, look no further than these elements of the Confiteor.

- **In my thoughts** -- READ Philippians 4:4-9. Jesus, as he preaches during the Sermon on the Mount warns against harboring anger (Matthew 5:22) or adultery through lustful thoughts (Matthew 5:27-28) or in judging others (Matthew 7:1-2). Sin begins in the mind. But let me say this – thoughts pop

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into our head and we cannot always be held accountable for these spontaneous moments. Random thoughts happen, but if we entertain these thoughts, delight in these thoughts, encourage these thoughts and not work at training our mind against such moments... then we stand in a state of sin. These moments of entertaining and enjoying these moments is what we offer in the Confiteor.

- **In my words** -- READ James 3:1-12. As we read in the letter of James the tongue can do much damage. The bible contains many citations of ways harm can come from our speech. Examples: gossip (2 Corinthians 12:20; 1 Timothy 5:13; Romans 1:29); slander (Romans 1:30; 1 Timothy 3:11), insult (Matthew 5:22), lying (Colossians 3:9; Wisdom 1:11; Sirach 7:12-13) to name only a few. In this moment of Mass we look back over our week and confess those times we have gossiped, lied, insulted another on purpose and so on.

- **In what I have done** – READ Exodus 20:1-17. Little needs to be said here because this is the place most of us go to when we think of sin. Just remember, sin is determined by God not by society or our neighbors or by us. We look back over our week and using the tools such as the Ten Commandments we ask ourselves have we lived our life as we should.

- **In what I have failed to do** – READ James 4:13-17. Yes we are responsible for what we have done wrong but we are also held accountable for the good we fail to do. We choose to ignore the need of our neighbors or we choose selfish self-indulgence over helping someone. These are the sins we offer.

Most of us are not able to recite the Confiteor and simultaneously do an examination of conscious. My recommendation is that is why we get to Mass early, so that we have time to prepare ourselves. When the Confiteor occurs in Mass we have already recognized our sinfulness.

Let me make one final comment regarding the recent new translation of the Confiteor. Rather than simply saying “I have sinned” at the beginning of the prayer we now say “I have greatly sinned.” Later in the prayer we acknowledge that these sins are there because of OUR fault and we make this statement three times while striking our chest once finishing with “my most GRIEVIUS fault.” This recognition of the state of our lives reflects the attitude and actions of King David as repented before God. (2 Samuel 12:13; 1 Chronicles 21:8; Psalm 51:4). In the same way, when concerned with the possible loss or great damage of a relationship because of something we have done (or failed to do), we apologize not once but three times and give a physical response to our sorrow of striking ourselves. Think of the striking as an analogy of falling on our knees before the one we love begging their forgiveness. We don't just say it once and then walk away. If we are serious about our sorrow and more importantly we fear that we have damaged the relationship beyond repair, I don't know about you but I BEG for their forgiveness over and over again throughout the next days, weeks, months, possibly years. You might say, "Yah, but I thought we were talking about less serious sin?" True, we are. Think back to something you really wanted, such as a job, and obsessing over the

smallest details for fear that, say, a hair out of place would/could be the cause of not getting the job. We take our relationship with God through Jesus Christ all too often for granted. We should have this same sense of concern that the smallest of sin will be the straw that leads us from God.

**Kyrie:** While the “Lord, have mercy...” is primarily an expression of repentance it would be better thought of as a petition or prayer on the part of God’s people (us!) seeking God’s assistance and mercy in our lives. **READ: Luke 15:11-31.** Biblical mercy is NOT about a contract or obligation so as I ask for something and the other is bound or obligated to provide. Biblical mercy is about relationship, but more importantly about how God responds not to our productivity or action but the true desire found in our hearts. In reading the story of the Prodigal Son it is less about the son’s journey and everything about the Father who has waited, hoped and longed for his child’s return. The issue at hand is not the son’s action of returning, but of the son’s heart and his desire to be a better person. The son returns to the Father but the Father has hoped and longed for this moment. In scripture people cry out to God for mercy because they recognize their own inability to change and believe in the power of God before them to do for them what they cannot do for themselves. (Luke 17:13; 18:38-39; Matthew 9:27; 20:30-31; Mark 10:46-48). In the Kyrie, after recognizing in all humility our unworthiness before God, we now beg for God’s mercy to heal and lead us to become better people.



A word about the Sprinkling Rite and the Easter Season: Attendance at Mass during the Easter season will find many Catholic Churches temporarily replacing the Penitential Rite with a sprinkling rite. While the community sings the priest moves around the Church sprinkling one and all with Holy Water. What do you think it is meant to remind us of? Baptism! More specifically we should be thinking of our baptism which cleansed us of our sin and brings us into adoption with God; to be the sons and daughters of God. Each weekend at Mass the Church has the option to renew our commitment as Catholic Christians by renewing our promises to reject evil and all that does not give life. So while the actions are different the intent is the same.

**Gloria:** After the Penitential Rite (or Sprinkling Rite) we as a community move from an internal posture of repentance and sorrow from what we have done wrong to one of joyful praise for God's mercy, forgiveness and love. And I strongly suspect that there are many of you (if not all) who know the biblical moment we are entering into. **READ: Luke 2:8-14.** The only time we as a Church community do not sing



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the Gloria is during the Advent and Lenten season but otherwise each weekend we join with the angels and saints in heaven singing our glory and praise to God. At one time in my life I would close my eyes during the praying of the Gloria and imagine all the angels, the great men and women of salvation history, all gathered with us as we offered praise for God and all His great work in life and salvation history.

Last week (or at least in my notes) I spoke of the idea that the Mass is a mosaic of biblical references and that is very much seen in the praying of the Gloria. First think we should note is that the Gloria follows a Trinitarian pattern which begins with God, the almighty Father, and heavenly King.

- "God Almighty" There are over 125 different times in the bible that these two words are on the lips of someone --READ: Genesis 17:1; Exodus 6:3
- "Lord Almighty" Almost 300 references to these words -- READ: Baruch 3:1; 2 Corinthians 6:18

We also praise God as our King. Throughout the scriptures, God is described as king (Psalms 98:6; 99:4; Isaiah 43:15), as the King of Israel (Isaiah 44:6), as the king of glory (Psalm 24:7-10), and as the king of all gods (Psalm 95:3). When we pray the Gloria and we profess God as King we should be expressing our attitude, our acceptance of God as king or as complete ruler over our lives as well.



Next we turn our attention to giving praise and honor to "*Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son.*" An action that has three parts:

- First we address and acknowledge Jesus in his role and relationship as the Son of the God. **READ: John 10:30-38, Hebrews 1:1-2** (also see John 5:17-18; 2 Corinthians 1:19; Colossians 1:13). When we address Jesus as the "only begotten Son" in the Gloria, we are acknowledging that Jesus was more than just a great teacher, simply a messenger of God such as the prophets, or just another saint among sinners; we are giving praise to Jesus who is the divine Son of God, the Living Word who came to earth, became flesh and dwelt among us, the Incarnation—the mystery of God becoming man.
- Second we speak of Jesus as the "Lamb of God". This refers to Jesus' coming to earth to redeem the world. First it is important to see the image that is created here. Throughout the Old Testament lambs were offered in sacrifice in prayer and supplication before God (Genesis 22:1-8; Ezra 6:17). And as we talked of last week, in the Exodus the Israelites were commanded to sacrifice an unblemished lamb and paint the door posts with its blood so that the angel of death would pass over the homes of the faithful. (Exodus 12:1-13) Jesus became for us the New Passover lamb who was sacrificed for the remission of all sins. Think in terms

of the words of the "*Lamb of God... you take away the sins of the world*" we will hear again at the *Agnus Dei* or Lamb of God just before Communion. We are repeating the words of St. John in his Gospel. **READ John 1:29.** We will speak more of this when we talk about the Eucharistic prayers but Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth to offer himself as a living sacrifice, as the "Lamb of God".

- Finally, after we have acknowledged Jesus' relationship to God and then His relationship to each of us we end by praising Jesus in His present position as "*seated at the right hand of the Father.*" This line draws from Mark's account of the Ascension of Jesus. **READ Mark 16:14-19.** Throughout most of human history sitting at someone's right hand means a position of honor and authority. In Old Testament times the person at the right hand of the king shared in the king's authority. Remember Joseph from Genesis? He sat at Pharaoh's right hand and was given power over all the land. As we praise Jesus in the Gloria we are recognizing His authority over all of heaven and earth. And because of that authority we are asking Him to "*receive our prayers*" and to "*have mercy on us.*"

From the Kyrie to the Gloria it can seem a bit confusing because in the first we are expressing our need for salvation and in the second we are expressing our joy and gratitude that we have received salvation through Jesus Christ. If we get caught up in our human concept of linear time we will never enter into the mystery of this moment. We asking for what we need – salvation from our sins. This is what we pray for in the Penitential Rite. We also need to stand in humility before God saying that we are not God and we need His presence and intervention to become the people He intends for us to be. This is what we pray for in the Kyrie. But God has already done that all that. God, like the Forgiving Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, He has already forgiven us, longed for our return and is willing to help us. So we sing our praises, our gratitude for all that God is and has done. This is the recognition we offer in the Gloria.

After our acknowledging Jesus as saving us we sing our song of praises by using some of the biblical titles for Jesus

- **Holy One:** Mark 1:24, Luke 1:35, John 6:69. Even the demons recognize Jesus as such. Read Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34
- **Lord:** Matthew 8:2, Mark 7:28, Luke 6:5. In New Testament thinking, in the Roman Empire only the Caesar was called "Lord". So, for one to proclaim Jesus as Lord was an act of treason.
- **Most High:** Genesis 14:18, 2 Samuel 22:14. A title used for God we acknowledge that Jesus,



the Son is one with the Father as we proclaim Him as Most High.

We end by acknowledging Jesus in His Trinitarian relationship with the Holy Spirit and God the Father. So, through this song of praise we are acknowledging God as being God in our lives through the three persons in the divine trinity.



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**Collect:** All that we have done to this point and including what comes immediately next is the Introductory Rites. These Rites end with what is called the Collect which is a brief prayer that identifies a theme or direction for this Mass and collects all our prayers offering them to God. From here we move into the Liturgy of the Word. Through the prayers of the Introductory Rites we have been preparing ourselves to enter into God's Word and mystery. We have acknowledged, in humility, our sinfulness and need for God in the Penitential Rite, and we gave praise to God for being God in our lives. These prayers all culminate in this moment of prayer in the Collect. Within this prayer the priest is doing what the title suggests -- collecting all of our prayers and offering them up to God. But there is more. Each weekend this prayer is unique because it has as its intent to state a theme or direction for the weekend's or weekday's particular Mass.

After the Gloria the priest will say: "Let us pray" followed by a moment of silence. That silence is not intended just to wait for the altar server to pick up the Sacramentary (the official book of prayers of the Church) and bring it to the priest. In this moment the faithful should be bringing their final prayers of gratitude and praise to God. It can also be a time silent contemplation and joy of simply being in the presence of God.



When you are at Mass listen to what the priest offers in the prayer of the Collect. Traditionally, a collect consists of a single sentence with multiply clauses and has as its purpose to bring all of our prayers to God as well as to proclaim a theme or direction for our Eucharistic Liturgy. While there was a period of time that it was left up to the discretion of the celebrant to offer this prayer as spontaneous, now there is one prayer that is written for all Catholic Churches to offer in common union.

Something to note: When the priest is praying for or with the community in his official capacity through Holy Orders, note the direction of his hands. Palms up -- an action that signifies he is collecting the prayers of the people and directed to God. Palms down -- the blessings are from God coming down upon the faithful.

### Liturgy of the Word

Catholic Churches, specifically the sanctuary, is arranged in a specific manner. In churches before there was public address systems (PA) the pulpit was often up a flight of stairs. The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament here in the Detroit Archdiocese is a good example. The pulpit is high so that the priest or Lector's voice would be above everyone's head and the readings and homily cover as much

ground as possible. Today, with our microphones and address systems that is no longer a concern. So when creating a modern sanctuary for a Catholic Church we should think of two "tables" -- the table of the Eucharist and the table of the Word, the Altar and the Ambo (or pulpit). You will notice that both are on the same level although the Altar is often in the center. We need both. We need to be fed by God's Word and body and we do so in one single act of worship -- the Mass.

As we enter into the Liturgy of the Word it is extremely important to understand and realize that the Bible is not just stories about God or about Jesus. It is God's own speech. God is speaking to us through the stories and actions and words. We are intended to encounter God in the Bible and hear these words as if God is speaking directly to us. Yes, there was human authorship but the scriptures were inspired by God. "Inspiration" is based on a Greek word *theopneustos* which translated means "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). God breathed inspiration and humanity wrote.

*"To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while He employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though He acted in them and by them, it was a true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more."*

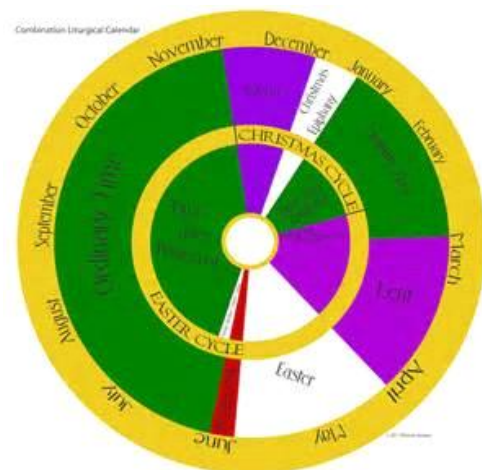
Catechism of the Catholic Church #106

In the Liturgy of the Word we are meant to open our minds and hearts to listen carefully and hear the stories of faith and the words written by ancient saints as God speaking directly to us. *"In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them."* *Dei Verbum* (2nd Vatican Council) #21.

That is why the lectors chosen for this important role should be prepared to not simply read what is before them but to **proclaim** God's word realizing that in this moment they are lending God their voice.

For those who may not be aware, the readings proclaimed each weekend are on a three year cycle. Every three years we repeat. (Weekday readings the Gospel is always the same for that date in the calendar but the first readings are on a two year cycle.) In our readings we hear from both the Old and New Testament in this order -- Old Testament (except during the Easter season then our first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles), Psalms, New Testament Letters and we always end with a reading from the Gospel. Even in this we follow salvation history.

Finally let's take a moment to look at the wisdom in the Church's Liturgical calendar. Our readings and therefore the focus of each Masses celebration is determined by a special calendar which has its roots in the Jewish liturgical calendar of the Old Testament. When we look at the year as a whole we see



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that throughout the course of each given year we enter into salvation History and the various facets of our faith.

- **Advent** begins our Church Year and in the same way the world prepared for the coming of the Christ Child as seen throughout the Old Testament, we are called to *prepare* ourselves in three aspects: 1. In thanksgiving for all those saints of the Old Testament who prepared for Christ to come, 2. To prepare for the present celebration of Christ coming into the world and into our lives, and 3. Recognize and prepare ourselves for Christ to come again. The color is purple.
- **Christmas** is the celebration of God entering into human history by becoming human. It is not just a day but an entire season. Think in terms of the Christmas Carol – The 12 Days of Christmas. The color is white and gold
- **Lent** is get ready for Easter by our recognition that we are in need of God's salvation. Advent is a season of preparation while Lent is a season of Penance. We do our penance by participating in three practices: 1. Greater times for Prayer, 2. Acts of Penance such as fasting and abstinence, and 3. Almsgiving or Service to the poor and needy. The color is purple.
- The climax of our calendar year are the three days of the **Triduum** -- Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the first Celebration of the Resurrection at the Easter Vigil -- in which we enter into the Pascal mystery of Christ's life, death and resurrection. The color, other than Good Friday which is red, is white and gold.
- During the **Easter season** we celebrate the resurrection but we are made mindful that with this great gift comes a great responsibility to live a life worthy of salvation and to proclaim to the world as Jesus' disciples of this great gift of God. The Easter Season Begins on Easter Sunday and ends on Pentecost Sunday. The color, other than Pentecost which is red, is white and gold.
- **Ordinary Time** comes from the word ordinal which means "to count". These weeks are weeks in which we have no seasonal celebrations and we focus on the various teachings of Jesus and of faith. We identify them by counting them: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary time is an example. We have two such seasons. First between Christmas and Lent and the second occurs between Easter and Advent. The color is green.

Other than for a determined special local celebration, the readings we hear at Mass are the same readings heard by all Catholics throughout the world. Think about that for a moment. We are meant to hear and study the words of God as one enormous worldwide community. The Liturgy of the Word is meant to be a weekly Bible study for all of Catholic Church. The Word of God is meant to be alive, nurturing and challenging us as we seek to live as faithful to God. I have said all too often -- Scripture is meant to comfort us in our afflictions of life, but it also should afflict us when we are too comfortable in life. But that isn't going to happen if we don't LISTEN and enter into the moment. **READ: Exodus 3:1-12.** Just as God spoke to Moses in the burning bush, God speaks to each one of us through the

readings. All too often we "act" as if we are present to the readings by taking out the missal and following along as the lector or priest reads. Yet, while we can honestly say that the correct words were read, do we know or remember what was read? I know there are various ways we learn and those who are visual learners you need to see to retain. I get that. But in many was all of us, through the school systems, have been trained to be auditory learners. And as such we should put the books down and simply LISTEN to what is read like we listen to others speak to us. Most people do not give us a script as they talk to us. God is speaking so let's listen with our whole being. And if we have prepared ourselves for Mass we will have already entered into the readings and can listen in a different way by being open to God's presence in the moment.

Session three we will get explore the process and intent, and the scriptural basis for the Liturgy of the Word. Until then three questions to help process this conversation:

1. In the Confiteor we strike our chest as an act of penance and our interior humility. Do you think this action is important in expression an interior disposition? Why or Why not.
2. The Liturgical Calendar helps us live each year the cycle of Salvation History. Which season is the most spiritually beneficial to you and why? Which is the least spiritually beneficial and why not?
3. What is something that you learned in this study that you don't want to forget?

## **Catechism of the Catholic Church:**

**1393** *Holy Communion separates us from sin.* The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is "given up for us," and the blood we drink "shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins." For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins:

*For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord. If we proclaim the Lord's death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If, as often as his blood is poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have a remedy.*

**1457** According to the Church's command, "after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year." Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution, unless he has a grave reason for receiving Communion and there is no possibility of going to confession. Children must go to the sacrament of Penance before receiving Holy Communion for the first time.

**1415** Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in the state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of penance.

**1438** *The seasons and days of penance* in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice.<sup>36</sup> These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies,

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pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works). (540, 2043)

**1189** The liturgical celebration involves signs and symbols relating to creation (candles, water, fire), human life (washing, anointing, breaking bread), and the history of salvation (the rites of the Passover). Integrated into the world of faith and taken up by the power of the Holy Spirit, these cosmic elements, human rituals, and gestures of remembrance of God become bearers of the saving and sanctifying action of Christ.

**1190** The Liturgy of the Word is an integral part of the celebration. The meaning of the celebration is expressed by the Word of God which is proclaimed and by the response of faith to it.

**1191** Song and music are closely connected with the liturgical action. The criteria for their proper use are the beauty expressive of prayer, the unanimous participation of the assembly, and the sacred character of the celebration.

**1192** Sacred images in our churches and homes are intended to awaken and nourish our faith in the mystery of Christ. Through the icon of Christ and his works of salvation, it is he whom we adore. Through sacred images of the holy Mother of God, of the angels and of the saints, we venerate the persons represented.