

Mass Parts 6/52: *Penitential Rite*



The Penitential Rite at the beginning of Mass is to free us from any venial sin before we actually start the joyous celebration of the Eucharist. This rite, no matter how much we may want it to be, is not the same as confession. It only forgives venial sin. If we are aware of any mortal sin on our hearts, we must still go to confession. Naming our sins out loud and hearing the words of forgiveness are the very stuff of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Also, the priest's absolution prayer is different. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the priest is acting in the name of Jesus the High Priest and says "I absolve..." Here in the Penitential Rite, the priest is joining with the congregation: "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life." As a note at this point as well, we don't have to make the Sign of the Cross during this prayer, but it is OK if some do.

The Penitential Rite of the Mass can take one of three forms:

Form A: "I confess to almighty God..."

Form B: (I do not know of many parishes that use this one.)

Priest: "Have mercy on us, O Lord." People: "For we have sinned against you."

Priest: "Show us, O Lord, your mercy." People: "And grant us your salvation."

Form C: "Lord, have mercy" with different invocations.

-(I'll speak more about this next week)

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters,

Of course we admit to God that we have sinned, but there is also a social nature to sin. Known as the Butterfly Effect, what I do has an effect on other people as well. In the Jewish liturgy, *Yom Kippur* is the Day of Atonement and asking God for forgiveness of sins. The day before, the "eve", is *Erev Yom Kippur*, the day when the community asks for forgiveness of sins from each other.

that I have greatly sinned,

Though they do not "break" our relationship with God, venial sins still harm the relationship, and, if they become habits, can lead us on a slippery slope to more serious sin. We admit that we haven't just messed up a bit or made a mistake, but that we have sinned.