

Discovering The Riches of The Mass **Session # 1: Introductory Rites - Notes**

Welcome to Session # 1 in our Biblical Walk through The Mass. This First Session covers the opening parts of the Mass called the Introductory Rites. This takes us from the opening Sign of The Cross, through the Kyrie (Lord Have Mercy), to the Gloria, and concludes with an ending prayer of this section called the Collect.

T1. The Sign of the Cross:

The Sign of the Cross is a Holy gesture we make at the beginning of Mass. We use this in many forms of prayers as Catholics – what is this all about? Is this simply just a way to begin prayer? It is a powerful prayer itself.

A. Recalls our Baptism: We think about how the Sign of the Cross was traced over us at Baptism. So in a certain sense, every time we make the Sign of the Cross, especially at the beginning of Mass, we are recalling our Baptism. How we were marked off with Christ (Cross), how we were infused with the life of the Spirit, dwelling within us at our moment of Baptism.

B. Two Aspects of the Sign of the Cross

1. Actual **Words** that we recite
2. The **Ritual** – the tracing of the Cross over our bodies.

C. The Words of the Sign of the Cross – In the Name of the Father, and of The Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Invoking God's Presence and Power)

1. We open up by calling on God's Name. That is a holy Biblical practice. Great heroes throughout Salvation History called on the Name of the Lord. Wither is was Seth in Genesis 4, or Abraham in Genesis 12, or Isaac, or the Jews when they would recite the Psalms, they would call on the Name of the Lord. Inviting His Presence, invoking His Holy Name, calling on His power into their lives.
2. And they call on God's Name in worship. One big theme you find in the OT, when you see someone calling on the Name of the Lord, their calling on God's Name in worship and they are also calling on His Name for help. Inviting God into their lives, asking Him to help them with their lives. That is one thing we do at the beginning of Mass.
3. We call on God's name in worship; we invoke His Holy Presence among us. We ask Him to be with us as we consecrate this 30, 60, or 90 minute period, where we participate in the Holy Sacrifice of The Mass.

D. The Ritual of Tracing a Cross over our bodies: (Signifying fidelity, asking for protection)

1. This is found in Ezekiel 9:4 when the Jews were facing a great crisis. Many of the Jewish leaders, even the priests had become corrupt. In Ezekiel 8, Ezekiel is given a vision of idolatry that is taking place right in the Temple. As the Jewish elders are offering incense and worshipping foreign gods e.g. the sun.
 - a) He sees all this corruption and God announces there is going to be judgment in Jerusalem. God is going to come in judgment upon this city. But God also points out that there are some who are faithful to God in the midst of this cultural chaos. There are some who choose not to go along with what is happening in Jerusalem and they are going to remain loyal to Yahweh. And these faithful ones are going to be protected when the time of judgment comes on Jerusalem.

b) So in Ezekiel 9:4 we see God sending an angel through the streets of Jerusalem to find those faithful Jews and mark them with a sign on their forehead. A mysterious mark on their forehead.

2. It is the mark of the last letter **Taw** **X** in the Hebrew alphabet, which looks somewhat like a cross. This mark was a sign of their fidelity to God in the midst of all this great Apostasy taking place in Jerusalem. And it was a sign of protection – that God would protect them in the time of judgment.

And some of the early Christians saw this sign in Ezekiel was a foreshadowing of the Sign of the Cross. You can see that there are some clear similarities here. Every time we make the Sign of the Cross – what are we doing? We are tracing this mark over us, something like the mark of Ezekiel – now fully revealed as the Sign of the Cross.

3. And when we trace that Sign of the Cross over us we are saying, just like the righteous Jews in Israel's time – we choose to be faithful to God, we are not going to live like everyone else in the world. We are not going to follow the world standards – for love, for happiness, for life. We are going to follow the standards of Christ, the standards of the Cross, which is the only way to true happiness.
 4. And we are also asking God for His protection over our lives. This is a great practice to make the Sign of the Cross all the time. The early Christians when you leave your house make the Sign of the Cross, when you go back in your house, make the Sign of the Cross. When you are walking through the streets make the Sign of the Cross,. Before you go to bed, make the Sign of the Cross. They constantly turned to the power of the Sign of the Cross.
 5. It is a great practice to do with children, trace the Sign of the Cross over the foreheads of our children. To mark them off for Christ, to dedicate them to the Lord, and ask for God's protection over them.
- A. This is what we do at the beginning of Mass. We call on God's Name, invoking His Presence, as we begin our worship in the celebration of the Mass, and we trace the Sign over us saying, Lord we wish to follow You, not the standards of this world and we ask Your protection over our lives.

T2. Opening Greeting: The Lord be with you.

Not the Catholic way of simply saying hello, it sometimes seems like Father is just saying Good Morning, and then we say Good Morning to you too Father – The Lord be with you.

- A. If we really understood, what these words meant – The Lord be with You from a Biblical perspective we might approach the Mass with a little more fear and trembling. Because these were words used by God or God's messengers to address people who were being specifically called to an important role of leadership, to play an important role in God's plan of salvation. And the future of Israel was dependent upon on well this person played their part.
- B. So you think about some great heroes in the OT like Joshua who heard the message that the Lord was going to be with him as he was going to go into the Land (Promised Land) where all these powerful armies were ready to pounce on them. Joshua was going to have God's Presence with him in the midst of the taking of that Land.
- C. Gideon was living in a time when the Israelites were being oppressed by a foreign nation. And God calls him to rescue the people. God tells him through the angel that the Lord will be with him.

- D.** Moses at the Burning Bush, when he was called to liberate the Israelites. That was not a job that Moses was really gunning for – was he? Was Moses trying to say that I cannot wait to go back to Egypt and confront the people that were trying to kill me. No, No, No, Moses tries every trick in the book to get out this call. He says, I do not speak very well, I am not eloquent, people will not believe me, not really going to believe I talked to God. And what does God say to Moses? Does God say Moses, you are not that bad, you have a lot more talent than you think.
1. No God says to Moses, there may be a lot of weaknesses here, but I will be with you Exodus 3 and 4 – The call of the Burning Bush – The Lord will be with Moses.
 2. Moses is not sent to a Toastmaster conference to learn how to be more eloquent in his speaking – Moses is worried about speaking. That is not what God does with Moses. He does not send him to a school for diplomacy to learn how to negotiate with dictators like Pharaoh. He does not learn military strategy from the Pentagon.
 3. God gives Moses what he needs the most, His Presence with him. So think about this, every time we go to Mass and we hear the Priest say, The Lord be with you, we are hearing the same words that were spoken to Moses, to Joshua, to Gideon, to David, to the Blessed Virgin Mary. We are standing in a long tradition in a whole roster of heroic men and women who were called to do great things.
- E.** And we may be looking at our lives and be saying, what am I called to do? Each one of us has a particular role to play in this world that no one else can play. Whether it is in our own marriage, in the raising of our children, in our friendships, in the particular relationships we have with the people at work, in our parish, in our neighborhood, our communities.
1. How are we going to be light to this world? How will we radiate the love of Christ to the people around us? We may be looking at our lives and saying I do not know how to do this – this is hard. I do not know how to be a good husband or be a good father, or share my faith with others, or give more at the parish, I just don't know that much.
 2. We may feel like Moses did – very inadequate, but the message of The Lord be with you, this theme through out salvation history, is one that should encourage us. Yes it involves a demanding call, we are going to be stretched out of our comfort zones. But yet, what every person was told was very assuring – that God is going to be with them. God would make up for whatever inadequacy whatever was lacking. God's strength is made manifest through our weakness.
- F.** So at the Mass we are reminded of our great call and God's Presence is with us to help us through those trials we have in our families, in our friendships, at our work, in our lives. Now how do we respond to this call this greeting. The Priest says the Lord be with you and we say And with your spirit.

T3.And With Your Spirit

- A.** This is not only a more faithful rendering of the Latin text of the Mass and unites more deeply with Christians who say the same thing – And with your spirit, but it also makes a profound theological point. We are recognizing the unique roll of the Holy Spirit in the Priest. When that Priest was ordained the Holy Spirit who dwells in all of us comes to act through him in a unique way that enables him to offer the Mass.
- B.** That through the Priest, the bread and wine will be changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. That is not the Priest doing, it is the work of Christ and His Spirit working through the Priest. So when we say, And with your spirit , we are recognizing the great work of the Holy Spirit, of God, so that whatever is happening at Mass is not dependent

purely, solely on what going on with this human being before us, but it is the Spirit that works through him by virtue of his ordination.

T4. Confiteor I Confess to Almighty God and you my brothers and Sisters:

This prayer can serve as an examination of our conscience for our lives. Think about what this prayer ask us to consider:

- A.** We examine our lives and think about the ways we have sinned: in our thoughts, in our words, in what we have done, and what we have failed to do. That covers a whole lot of territory in our lives – doesn't that.
- B. Think about our thoughts** – how many times do you have angry thoughts, jealous thoughts, comparing ourselves with someone else, envious thoughts, lustful thoughts, discouraging thoughts. Do you ever get those discouraging thoughts wondering how this is all going to work out, where we really do not have thoughts full of faith and trust in God? These are things we should confess to the Lord, we bring that to the Mass in this prayer.
- C. In my words.** How often do we Christians fall into sin with our words. We start speaking critically of other people, we talk about someone else and say they are a great person, but ... and then we go on a list some negative points. Why are we doing that?
 - Or falling into the sin of gossip. These are things we could confess; we bring them to the Lord in our hearts when we pray this prayer.
- D. What I have Done:** We think about the time we have broken the Ten Commandments, we have hurt other people, we have done things directly to hurt our relationship with God.
- E. What I have failed to Do:** I do not know about you, but I think for me, and probability for most of us too, the most changing part of this prayer is the last point.
 1. Think about all the good we could have done. Here in this prayer we are reminded that in the Catholic Life, the Christian Way, is not simply a via negativa (Latin for "negative way") — avoiding sin, avoid doing bad things, avoid hurting other people, that is kind of what the world looks at. The world talks about we should just be tolerant, we should be civil, we should just get along, we should just coexist.
 2. That is not a Christian vision, we are not called to just build up a civilization of tolerance, (we need tolerance – don't get me wrong), but if all we had was tolerance we would not have a great civilization.
 3. We are called to build what John Paul II called a civilization of Love. We are called to have deep profound right relationships where we give of ourselves to others and serve others radically like Christ did. Not just coexist, but really love.
 - Think about many areas in our lives where we have not treated our spouse with the great honor and service that they deserve. Or we have not given our attention to our kids, we have been too distracted with work or other projects. Have we really given the best of ourselves? Maybe we have not hurt them directly. But by not investing ourselves personally in them, have we affected their lives - absolutely.
 4. So in the Confiteor we are reminded, of how we are not just called to simply avoid doing bad things, but we are called to imitate Jesus Christ in radical love. We are not called to not hurt people directly, we are called to serve in self giving in sacrifice to others.

F. Through my fault, through my fault through my most grievous fault.

1. Once again this more fully reflects the Latin text of the Mass, but it helps us express deeper contrite hearts, to express our true sorrow for our sins. You ever do something where you hurt somebody, family member, co-worker, or a friend?
 2. Or sometimes you did something you did not mean to, like you just bumped into them by accident, stepped on their toe, you just want to say to them - I am sorry.
 3. But have you ever done something where you hurt someone deeply? Where you said something or you were not as attentive – and you felt really badly about that. Do you just go up to them and say – oh hey, sorry excuse me. That does not work in a marriage, if your spouse is really hurt you do not go up and say - oh hey, sorry excuse me about that. You might say something like – Oh, I am so sorry – awe I really did not mean that as soon as I did that I realized that I should not have done that, please forgive me.
 4. We say it in many ways, right. Well that is what we do here at Mass, we don't just say, I am sorry God. But we say that I have sinned through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.
- E. So in this prayer, I confess prayer, the Confiteor, we are not just simply making an apology to God, this updated translation helps us to really approach the Lord more humbly and express really heart felt contrition even more.

T5. The Kyrie – The Lord Have Mercy Prayer

- A. What does it mean? When we think of mercy, we think of God showing mercy to us. Ask God for mercy. Remember the little kids' game called mercy. Two kids get together and they put their hands together, then they try to over power each other. The game is not over until the one who is losing cries out Mercy, Mercy please stop!
- B. That is not what Biblical Mercy is all about. It is not that we have sinned and there is this wrath coming down on us, Oh Please don't God! That is not what Biblical Mercy is. A Catholic understanding of Mercy is so much more powerful.

Story of my two children when they were younger, when the older child pulled the toy out the hands of her younger brother. I was watching from the other room and I thought ought oh, and I am getting ready to come in and issue discipline. But just at that moment, the older child turn to her little brother and put the toy back into his hands and gave him a big hug and said Oh, I am so sorry. I saw the heart o my daughter that day – her heart felt badly about having hurt her brother.

- C. That is what Mercy is all about. When we sin, The Father in heaven does not see just the fact of our sins, of our violations, of what we have done wrong. If we are sincerely sorry, we really feel badly about what we have done, and we are trying to get our life back on tract, we are trying to set things right, Our Father sees not just the fact, He sees our hearts. So He comes and He responds with great love.
- D. John Paul II once wrote about Mercy. He talked about how Mercy is not simply about a more powerful person pardoning a less powerful one. Mercy is an expression of love. God sees the change in us, He sees our contrite hearts, He sees the good that is there, and He responds with love. So if we are truly sorry, we should not approach God with shame, we should be confident in His love.

That is what we do, when we confess our sins.

- E. In the Bible we see people calling out for Mercy for their sins, but people also call on God's Mercy for help in their lives, when they are seeking God's assistance.
 - a. In Matthew 9:27 - And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed (him), crying out, "Son of David, have mercy on us!"
 - b. So when we go to Mass and we ask for God's Mercy, first and foremost we are asking for God's Mercy on our sins, but we can also entrust to God our sufferings, our fears, our uncertainties, our weaknesses, our struggles, even our struggles with sin – Lord have Mercy on me.
 - c. Lord help me in this difficult trial I am going through, help me with this big discernment I have to make, help me with this difficulty I have in my spiritual life.
- F. Another thing we see in the Bible is people entrusting those they love to God by calling out for Mercy.
 - a. Matthew 15:22 - And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, "Have Mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon."
 - b. Matthew 17:15 - "Lord, have Mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly.
 - c. So we can think about a friend who is ill and say Lord have Mercy on my friend who was just diagnosed with cancer. Or Lord have Mercy for my son who left the Church. Or Lord have Mercy for my daughter who is lost in life and very unhappy.
 - d. We can follow the Biblical examples of those great men and women who approached Jesus asking for His assistance in their lives and for help with those who they love by calling out for God's Mercy.

T6. The Gloria Prayer

- A. The Gloria comes from no ordinary hymnbook. The opening lines of the Gloria were inspired the Angels in Heaven. Think about those words that we repeat at the beginning of the Gloria, they are echoing words you may recall from Christmas.
 - 1. In Luke 2: when Jesus is born, there is a host of angels over the fields of Bethlehem singing God's praises. They sing Glory to God in the highest and peace to men of good will. We echo those words every time we repeat the Gloria.
 - 2. It is fitting that we would echo the words of those angels who welcomed Jesus, made manifest now in the world, born there in Bethlehem. Because what are we doing, here in the Introductory Rites we are preparing ourselves with an encounter with God. In the Introductory Rites, we are preparing ourselves for a sacred encounter with God.
 - a) We are going to encounter Him in His Word. The Liturgy of the Word is God's inspired Words of Scripture are proclaimed to us.
 - b) Then we are going to encounter Him in the second main part of the Mass, The Liturgy of the Eucharist. Where our God is going to come down on our altars, sacramentally, under the appearances of bread and wine. then enter into us in Holy Communion.
 - 3. So to prepare ourselves for hearing God's Word and especially for receiving Jesus into our lives, is it not fitting that we sing The Gloria. Because the angels used those words to welcome Jesus, we use those same Biblical words of the angels to

welcome our Lord here in the Liturgy of the Word, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and in Holy Communion.

- C. The Gloria itself, tells a beautiful story. There is a Trinitarian structure to the Gloria, which gives praise to The Father, gives praise to The Son, and then to The Holy Spirit, who is mentioned at the very end of the Gloria.
- D. Central part of the Gloria is all about the story of Jesus Christ. Titles given to Jesus in the Gloria: He is called
 1. The only begotten Son – taken from John 1:14, 18 - And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth... No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.

When we praise Jesus as the only begotten Son of God in the Gloria, we are echoing those words of John's prologue, which celebrates The Incarnation, the unique Son of God, the divine Son of God who was made flesh.
 2. The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This divine Word that was made flesh, this only begotten Son, who came to dwell among us. He comes as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. And that image of the Lamb brings to mind the Passover Lamb. The Lamb offered up in sacrifice. So we refer to Jesus in the Gloria, it's a reference to Jesus as the great Passover Lamb, a reference to His Sacrifice on the Cross on Good Friday.
 3. He is Seated at the right hand of The Father. That points to the closing of Mark's Gospel, Mark 16:19 - So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God.
- E. Gloria opens up with all the joyous praise of God as He was welcomed in Bethlehem and then we celebrate the life of Jesus by referring to Him as the only begotten Son. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We move to the scene on Good Friday, atoning death on the Cross. Then we see His Resurrection triumph and Ascension into Heaven as He sits at the right hand of The Father. The King of Heaven and Earth, Jesus Christ. So the Gloria is the whole summary of Salvation History in praise.

T7. The Opening Prayer - The Collect

- A. The closing of the Introductory Rites is the prayer known as the Collect. Where the Priest collects, gathers together the prayers of the whole community, and offers them up to God.
- B. The Collect concludes the Introductory Rites, which is all about preparing for hearing God's Word, in the Liturgy of the Word, and receiving Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- C. The following was not included on the DVD.
 1. The Collect, which concludes the introductory rites, has been given the name "Collect" from the Latin word "collecta", which means "to gather up". Even in the early days of the Church, it was a tradition for the leader of the assembly to gather up the needs of the people and offer them to God in prayer.
 2. Priest: Let us pray: (then the Collect Prayer is prayed).
 3. By an ancient tradition of the Church, the Collect prayer is usually addressed to God the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and is concluded with a Trinitarian ending.