

Penitential Act

The Penitential Act recalls our sins and places our trust in God's unending mercy. The priest or deacon begins by saying, "Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries." There are three different forms the Penitential Act may follow and they are all deeply rooted in scripture.

Form A - Confiteor "I Confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned..." (prodigal son, Luke 15:11-24) "through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault..." (Pharisee and the tax collector, Luke 18:9-14) Then absolution is given by the priest which is followed by the Kyrie, "Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy." (two blind men, Matthew 20:29-34)

Form B – Dialogue "Have mercy on us, O Lord." "For we have sinned against you." (Baruch 3:2) "Show us, O Lord, your mercy." "And grant us your salvation." (Psalm 85:8) Then absolution is given by the priest which is followed by the Kyrie.

Form C – Kyrie with Tropes "You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy." (Psalm 147:3) "You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy." (Luke 5:32) "You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy." (Romans 8:34) Then absolution is given by the priest.

Tropes are interjections within the Kyrie that add scriptural emphasis deepening the meaning of the Kyrie in Form C, but are not used in Forms A or B.

Mary, Mother uses Form A of the Penitential Act most often, Form B during the Advent season, and Form C occasionally throughout the year, particularly on Feast Days.

Did you know? All three forms include absolution when the priest says, "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life." This addresses venial sin and prepares us for a worthy reception of Holy Communion, but is not sacramental absolution as in the sacrament of reconciliation.

A helpful practice: Be prepared to fully participate in the Penitential Act and acknowledge your sins. When you do, you will be welcomed at the banquet like the prodigal son, you will go home justified like the tax collector, and your eyes will be opened like the blind men to see Jesus in the Eucharist and follow him.

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