

'Misericordia', or prayer of mercy "Lord/Christ have mercy"

We are further reminded of our need for repentance and forgiveness in the prayers of the 'Agnus Dei': "Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us" and, above all, just before we receive Holy Communion: "Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof but only say the word and my soul shall be healed". These must never be empty words. Our familiarity with them may lead us to become numb sometimes to their importance but nothing in the Mass is unimportant, especially the recognition of our sinfulness before God.



What is Genuine Penance?

The essence of sincere penance is fourfold: an acknowledgement of our **nothingness** before God; genuine **sorrow** and **repentance** for our sins; a sincere **resolve** not to offend God again; and **some action** to attempt to rectify the offence we have caused.

The recognition of our nothingness before God creates humility. No matter how rich or talented or beautiful or powerful we consider we are, these gifts have been given to us by God. Conceited pride is the greatest sin as it is the root of all sin. In the final analysis we all die and will have to face judgement. Jesus reminded us about this in several parables. All God wants is for us to rely totally on him, to love him wholeheartedly (which implicitly and necessarily includes loving our fellow human beings as well), to recognise our tendency to sin, and to realise he is always there to forgive us.

Perfect sorrow for our sins consists of the hurt we feel for hurting God. It is when we love him **for his own sake** and not for anything we hope to get out of him for ourselves. That would be another aspect of pride and selfishness. However, the Church recognises that sin may be forgiven, out of God's mercy, where the main reason for our sorrow is fear of God's punishment.

Penance itself is an attempt to put right any wrong we have done, to try and cover the effects of our sin. Prayer is not necessarily sufficient as a penance (unless given by a priest in Confession) and other actions may be more appropriate, like an act of charity, fasting or self-denial, almsgiving, or trying to remedy any unkind words we may have said or any uncharitable deeds.

The Mass

"Do This In Memory of Me"

Reminding Ourselves of The Mass' Uniqueness and Beauty

3.

The Mass as a Prayer of Penance



The Mass is the Most Important Part of the Church's Liturgy

The Liturgy consists of those public acts of worship that unite all Catholics together, all those living everywhere in the world as well as those who have died, the angels, the saints and Our Blessed Lady, in a truly magnificent Communion of Saints and, in turn, this Church of Christ becomes united with the Blessed Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit

In the Mass we are, therefore, in the greatest sense possible on this earth, part of the Mystical Body of Christ

The Paschal events of Jesus' Last Supper, his Death and Resurrection are re-presented, as if we were actually present at the time of their historical occurrence. That is why the Mass is regarded as being sacrificial.

In the Mass, there is the real presence of Jesus

As we go to receive Holy Communion, we go to receive Our Lord Jesus within us. Therefore, approach him with the humility of love and fear, as if we were walking towards God for our own judgment.

The Structure of the Mass



Introductory Rites

Opening Antiphon
Greeting
Penitential Rite
Gloria
Opening Prayer 'Collect'

Prayer of Penance

Prepare to receive the Eucharist by asking forgiveness for our sins and by recognising that we are nothing before God without his love for us. Yet, if we are in a state of grace, because of God's love for us, we become everything.

Liturgy of the Word

OT/ Psalm/ NT
Gospel
Homily
Creed
Prayers of Faithful

Prayer of Petition

Scripture reminds us to have faith in God and to pray to him in total confidence. This does not mean our prayers are guaranteed to be answered in the way we want, but if we pray in humility, and are willing to accept God's Will, they will nevertheless be pleasing to him and a source of grace.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Prayer over the Gifts
Preface
Eucharistic Prayer
Consecration
Eucharistic Prayer cont.

Prayer of Praise

Our first duty is to praise God for himself, without any ulterior motive of gaining something in return. This is perfect love and praise of God.

Communion Rite

Lord's Prayer
Sign of Peace
Breaking of Bread
Preparation for Communion
Communion Antiphon
Distribution of Communion
Prayer after Communion

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We must always thank God for what he has done for us, especially for the gift of himself in the Eucharist

Concluding Rite

Blessing
Dismissal

Sin, Repentance and the Mass as a Prayer of Penance

Sin is any offence against the infinite goodness of God.

Most of us will do things from time to time that we know do not reflect the love of God and which, afterwards, we are ashamed of and are sorry for, in many cases almost immediately after they happen. Relatively minor offences are called venial sins.



Serious and grave sins, termed mortal sins because they kill the life of the soul, are an outrage against God himself because they represent a deliberate rejection of him.

Serious or mortal sins must be confessed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation **before** receiving Our Lord Jesus in the Eucharist. It is a great sacrilege to receive Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin.

Only through the self-sacrifice of his Son has God given us a way to transcend any offence we may have done. The Mass is the prayer that provides satisfaction for our sins and releases grace to overcome it in our daily lives.



In the case of venial sins, we are not bound to confess them, although it is a very useful and humble practice to confess some of them, particularly those we keep committing frequently. The reason it is not necessary to confess our venial sins is because if we receive Holy Communion with a deep sorrow for them, and in humility before God, then our venial sins are removed by that sacrament, by the miracle of Jesus' real presence within us.

A sincere prayer of penance is essential to help us receive the Eucharist as worthily as we can and, indeed, to place us spiritually in the correct frame of mind for Mass. Ideally, we should really prepare before Mass, but the period from the beginning of Mass to the Gospel can be used to tell God of our sorrow for our sins, of our repentance and to ask him for his forgiveness.

The Church reminds us of the importance of repenting of our sins by the prayers of penance of the Confiteor (the 'I Confess') and by the