

## The Penitential Act

Last week, I introduced the first change to the Introductory Rites by focusing on the change in the greeting from “And also with you,” to “And with your spirit.” Immediately following the Greeting, the bishop or priest invites all present to take a moment of silence for interior recollection by saying, “Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.” After a moment of silence, the Confiteor is said. Here are the new words:

*“I confess to almighty God  
and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
that I have **greatly sinned**,  
in my thoughts and in my words,  
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,  
**And, striking their breast, they say:**  
**through my fault, through my fault,**  
**through my most grievous fault;**  
Then they continue:  
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,  
all the Angels and Saints,  
and you, my brothers and sisters,  
to pray for me to the Lord our God.”*

Most of the Confiteor has remained the same, but you will notice that the text in bold is a change from what we have said for the past 40 years. The first change includes the words “greatly sinned” instead of sinned. This is because the Latin text, which is the official language of the Universal Church, uses the adverb “nimis” which means “very much.” The triple acknowledgement of fault is also a reflection of the Latin text which says, “mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.” I have spoken to several parishioners who remembered saying this prayer in Latin before the Liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council. These parishioners have indicated that they like this return to what they used to pray at the beginning of Mass.

But why? Some might argue that the Church is placing too much emphasis on our sin. My friends, based on the lines I see at Confession each week, I do not think that is the issue. Blessed John Paul II often spoke of the “loss of a sense of sin.” When Pope Benedict XVI came to Washington in 2008, he said that true renewal within the Church in America would only come through a rediscovery of the Sacrament of Reconciliation by all her members. Although this prayer does not take the place of Confession, it does place before us our fallen nature and constant need of God the Father’s mercy and forgiveness. May we allow these words, spoken from a humble and contrite heart, to lead us into the ultimate act of mercy and love which is made present at every Mass.

Fr. Jesse