



SESSION TWO

The Introductory Rites

Elements of the Introductory Rites

- Entrance and Veneration of the Altar
- Sign of the Cross
- Greeting: “The Lord Be with You”
- Act of Penance: “I Confess ...”
- Kyrie: “Lord Have Mercy”
- *Gloria*
- Collect

Establish the Context

Before you begin this session, be sure to read Chapter 1, “What Is the Mass,” in the *Biblical Walk Through the Mass* book. Then read through the prayers of the Mass. This will give you the “big picture” of the Mass

before you zoom in on the details. As you read, think about the following questions:

- What are your first impressions?
- Is there anything in the rites and prayers of the Mass that you have not noticed before?
- What biblical words or images do you notice in the prayers of the Mass?
- What questions about the Mass would you like answered in this study?

In this session, we will focus on the Introductory Rites of the Mass. This is the opening section of the Liturgy that prepares us for encountering God in the Scripture readings and in the Eucharist. We will see how the prayers in the Introductory Rites lead us to examine our consciences, repent of our sins, trust in God's mercy, and praise him for his glory and his goodness to us.

Read

Familiarize yourself with the prayers for the first part of the Mass, the Introductory Rites. In the Order of Mass, these prayers start with the opening Sign of the Cross and continue through the *Gloria* and the concluding prayer, called the Collect.

Read Chapters 2 to 6, "The Introductory Rites," in Dr. Sri's book *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*. Also read the prayers of the Introductory Rites, from the Sign of the Cross at the beginning of Mass through to the *Gloria* and Collect.

Take a Deeper Look

Answering the following questions will help you understand the scriptural roots of the Introductory Rites of the Mass. If you do not understand something, make a note to bring it up in your small group discussion.

The Sign of the Cross

1. The early Christians saw that the Sign of the Cross was foreshadowed by a mysterious Old Testament sign. For the background to this, read Ezekiel 8:9-18, in which the Lord gives the prophet Ezekiel a vision of the sins being committed by God's people in Jerusalem. What sins have the people committed?

2. Ezekiel tells us that as a result of these and other sins, God's presence will leave the Temple. Babylon will destroy Jerusalem and the sanctuary, taking many of the people into exile. But not all will suffer this fate. Read Ezekiel 9:3-6.
 - a. In these verses, a certain group of people in Jerusalem receive a mysterious mark on their foreheads that protects them from the judgment that will come. In the Hebrew text of the book of Ezekiel, this mark is represented by the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet (*tahv*), which had the shape of an X or a cross. What kind of people receive this mark?
 - b. With this biblical background in mind, what might the mark in Ezekiel tell us about the Christian Sign of the Cross? How are they similar? For some ideas, review Chapter 2, "The Sign of the Cross," in the *Biblical Walk Through the Mass* book.
3. In the Sign of the Cross, we call on God's name: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Calling on God's name is a powerful biblical practice.
 - a. Read the following verses. What do they tell us about the power of God's name?

Psalm 54:1

Matthew 18:20

John 14:13

Philippians 2:9-11
 - b. What might this background tell us about the meaning of calling on God's name in the Sign of the Cross?

“The Lord Be with You”

4. This greeting, which announces God’s presence, is used four times in the Mass and several times throughout the Bible. In fact, it is often used by God or his angels to address someone who is being called to an important mission.
- a. Read the following verses about the call of three Old Testament heroes, Moses, Gideon, and Joshua. In the appropriate boxes, record the missions they are given, the obstacles or fears they face, and what God says to them in response.

Old Testament Hero	Mission	Obstacle or Fear	God’s Response
Moses (Exodus 3:10-12)			
Gideon (Judges 6:14-18)			
Joshua (Numbers 13:32-33; Joshua 1:4-6, 9)			

- b. Do you ever feel like Moses—overwhelmed by life and its demands? What challenges, fears, and obstacles are you facing in your life right now? In light of the biblical background, how might the greeting at Mass, “The Lord be with you,” offer encouragement?

“I Confess”

The next prayer in the Introductory Rites is known as the *Confiteor*, Latin for “I confess,” the first words of the prayer. In this prayer we express sorrow over our sins—something the Bible calls us to do.

5. Read the following verses. What does the Bible teach about why and how we should confess our sins?

1 John 1:9

James 5:16

Matthew 3:2, 6

Proverbs 28:13

Sirach 4:26

6. The *Confiteor* also challenges us to consider the four main ways we each sin: “... in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do.” Let us examine each of these areas. According to the following verses, what are some of the ways we can sin?

a. **In our thoughts:**

Matthew 5:22

Matthew 5:27-28

Matthew 6:25-34

Matthew 7:1-3

b. **In our words:**

2 Corinthians 12:20

Romans 1:30

Matthew 5:22

Colossians 3:8-9

1 Corinthians 5:6-7

Ephesians 4:29

c. In what we have done:

Romans 13:12-13

Galatians 5:19-21

2 Timothy 3:2-5

- d. In what we have failed to do:** Sin is not simply an evil action. James 4:17 teaches that we can also sin by failing to do the good we know we should do. These sins are known as “sins of omission.” Read Colossians 3:12-15. In this passage, what virtues of Christ are highlighted for us to imitate? We also confess whatever we lack in these and other virtues.

- e. For Personal Reflection:** Which of these four areas of sin do you find most challenging? Why?

“Lord, Have Mercy”

- 7.** After confessing our sins in the *Confiteor*, we confidently ask for God’s mercy in the *Kyrie*.

- a.** The Hebrew word often translated in our Bible as “mercy” is *hesed*, which describes steadfast, covenant love—a love that is unconditional and totally committed. Read Romans 5:8. In what sense do you think this verse expresses God’s unwavering and steadfast love for us?
- b.** One of the greatest examples in the Bible of how to ask for God’s mercy is found in Psalm 51. In it, King David humbly pours his heart out to God, asking for his mercy after committing a serious sin. Read Psalm 51. What aspects of King David’s prayer do you think make it a model for repentance? Explain.

The Gloria

8. The heart of the prayer called the *Gloria* tells the story of Jesus Christ, summarizing his saving mission, from his birth to his glorious ascension into heaven. Consider the biblical background to the following words from the *Gloria* and record in the chart the event in Jesus' life that each passage points to.

Line from the <i>Gloria</i>	Biblical Background	Aspect or Event in Jesus' Life
"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will"	Luke 2:14	
"Only Begotten Son ... of the Father"	John 1:14-15 and John 3:16	
"Lamb of God ... you take away the sins of the world"	John 1:29 and Isaiah 53:7-12	
"You are seated at the right hand of the Father"	Mark 16:19	

Application

This exercise will help you apply one of the key themes of the session to your life. After meditating on it, respond to God with a brief written prayer if you choose.

One main focus in this first part of the Mass is on purifying our souls before we encounter God in the Scripture readings and the Eucharist. We do this by confessing our sins and asking for God's mercy.

To help you prepare for this rite at your next Mass, take some time to examine your life. Adopt the humble and honest attitude of David in Psalm 51. As you do so, consider the following questions: What areas of your life need to change? Do you live more for success, praise, pleasure, or money than for God? Is there someone from whom you need to ask forgiveness (a spouse, child, relative, or friend)? Is there someone you need to forgive? Do you worry too much about what others think of you? Are you selfish? Do you struggle with greed, anger, impatience, or lust?

After examining your conscience, prayerfully reread Psalm 51 with those sins in mind, or write a prayer of your own, confessing your sins to God and asking for his mercy.

Dear Lord ...

**After the small group discussion, watch Dr. Sri's video presentation for Session Two.
The talk notes that begin on the following page provide an outline of the video presentation.**

SESSION TWO TALK NOTES

The Introductory Rites

I. The Power of the Sign of the Cross

- A. Recalls our Baptism
- B. The words – invoking God’s presence and power
- C. The ritual – signifying fidelity, asking for protection: Ezekiel 8, 9:4 – the *tahv*
- D. Importance and power – see Romano Guardini, *Sacred Signs* (available at ewtn.com)

II. Opening Greeting: “The Lord Be with You ...”

- A. Biblical perspective: a call to mission, with God’s presence
 - 1. Joshua
 - 2. Gideon
 - 3. Moses (see Exodus 3, 4)
- B. Response: “... And with your spirit”
The Holy Spirit’s unique activity in the priest at Mass

III. Act of Penance: “I Confess ...” (the *Confiteor*)

- A. An examination of conscience
- B. “Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault”



IV. The *Kyrie* (“Lord Have Mercy”)

- A. Hebrew word *hesed* describes a steadfast, merciful love
- B. Biblical roots
 - 1. Seeking God’s assistance (see Matthew 9:27)
 - 2. Entrusting others to God’s mercy (see Matthew 15:22, 17:15)

V. The *Gloria*

- A. Opening words inspired by the angels
- B. The *Gloria* tells a story
 - 1. Trinitarian structure
 - 2. Central part: the story of Jesus Christ
 - a. Incarnation (“Only Begotten Son,” John 1:14, 18)
 - b. Redemption (“Lamb of God”)
 - c. Ascension (“seated at the right hand of the Father”)

VI. The Collect

Collects or “gathers together” the intentions of the community

A BIBLICAL WALK THROUGH
THE MASS