

The Third Edition of the Roman Missal

The *Penitential Act*

Form A -The *Confiteor*

The Penitential Act takes one of three forms. The first form (Form A) is most commonly known as the *Confiteor*, a Latin word that, when translated into English, gives us the well-known beginning of the prayer, “I confess . . .” The *Confiteor* is a communal statement that acknowledges our brokenness and calls upon the whole Church to pray for one another, asking for God’s mercy and forgiveness.

“I confess to almighty God / and to you, my brothers and sisters . . .” Notice the communal nature of this prayer. This acknowledgement of our individual brokenness is made to God *and* to the rest of the assembly. It is a communal recognition of our sinfulness and an act of praise for God’s mercy and forgiveness. Each of us, one to the other, takes a humble stance and, in the face of the great mercy and love of God, admits and acknowledges our human frailty. The *Confiteor* helps to remind us that although we are broken in our humanness — our God is a God who wants nothing more than to make us *whole!* And *this* is where our hope takes us as together, in one voice; as one body, we confess in the *Confiteor*.

The English translation continues: “I confess . . . **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 . . .” Some may notice the addition of the word “greatly,” in reference to our sinfulness. This might be seen, not as much as an emphasis on our sinfulness, as much as it is on the simple fact that *any* sin is a threat to our relationship to God and to our brothers and sisters.

The Confiteor continues: “**through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.**” This will sound different from the previous translation, in which our “fault” is mentioned once (“that I have sinned through my own fault”). The English translation of the third edition of The Roman Missal maintains the original poetic repetition found in the Latin text and is a direct translation of the Latin phrase “*mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.*”

During the *Confiteor*, the faithful should “strike their breast” while saying, “through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.” This prescribed “striking” is a symbolic tapping of the chest with a clenched fist over one’s heart, signifying remorse. It is an ancient gesture expressing sorrow and is a sign of our contrition. This action also recalls the penitent tax collector in Luke, chapter 18, who “beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’”

It is good to acknowledge our sinfulness at particular times, just as we should do at sacramental Confession. Unlike Reconciliation, we are not sacramentally absolved of our sins at this point during the Holy Mass. Nevertheless, it is an appropriate way to “prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

The remainder of the *Confiteor* remains as we now know it and ends with the individual asking for the prayers of the rest of the assembly and the Saints, led by the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose sinlessness and humility are the perfect model for our own Christian lives.

Current Translation

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have **sinned through my own fault**

in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do;

and 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.

Updated Translation

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,
**through my fault,
through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;**

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

Form B - Lord, we have sinned against you

Form B is the least used form of The Penitential Act. The words spoken by priest and the response of the people using Form B have changed.

Current Translation

Priest: **Lord, we have sinned against you: Lord, have mercy.**

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Priest: **Lord, show us your mercy and love.**

People: And grant us your salvation

Updated Translation

Priest: **Have mercy on us, O Lord.**

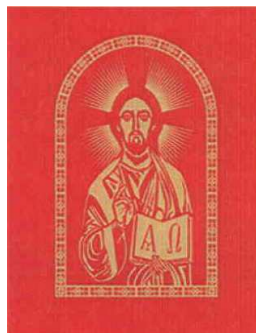
People: **For we have sinned against you.**

Priest: **Show us, O Lord, your mercy.**

People: And grant us your salvation.

Form C - Lord Have Mercy

Form C is the most familiar form of the Penitential Act. It is most commonly known as the "Kyrie, eleison". Form C has not changed.



REFERENCES:

Preparing Your Parish for the Revised Roman Missal: Homilies and Reproducibles for Faith Formation © 2011 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 3949 South Racine Avenue, Chicago IL 60609; 1-800-933-1800; www.LTP.org. Excerpts from the English translation of *The Roman Missal* © 1973, 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL).

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