

# Gathering Rite

Commentator's Copy – Week Two: New Translation of the Roman Missal

**Commentator:** Read Introduction and Paragraphs #1 and #2 at the very beginning of Mass before the Opening Hymn is announced.

**Introduction:** The General Instruction of the Roman Missal encourages the use of frequent instruction at Mass:

“Lest Christ’s flock go hungry...the Holy Synod commands pastors and all others having the care of souls to give frequent instructions during the celebration of Mass...among other things, they should include some explanation of the mystery of this most holy sacrifice (11).”

This weekend we focus on the **Gathering Rite**. The **Gathering Rite** consists of *Your Preparations at Home before Coming to Church*, your *Gathering at the Church before Mass*, the *Opening Hymn*, the *Sign of the Cross*, the *Greeting*, the *Penitential Act*, the *Gloria*, and the *Collect Prayer*.

## 1. Your Preparations at Home Before Coming to Church

It is with joy that we come to the Eucharistic feast, though at times it can be trying and sacrificial. At the Mass, we remember God’s love outpoured for us through Jesus’ death on the cross. We also lift up to God our Father, in union with Jesus, our whole lives through the same sacrifice. We prepare ourselves then by intentionally offering our lives to God and by giving Him thanks and praise for all He has done for us.

Since we are nourished by the Word of God and by the Eucharist, and since “man cannot live on bread alone,” please remember that part of our preparation includes fasting at least one hour before Mass.

## 2. Gathering at the Church before Mass

As we enter the doors of the church, we transition from earth to the heavenly liturgy. We call to mind this transition by blessing ourselves with Holy Water and by genuflecting to the Lord’s real presence in the Eucharist, housed in the tabernacle. We should remind ourselves that Christ is present in the assembly, in the priest, in the Word of God and in the consecrated bread and wine. Therefore, the lay faithful ought to prepare themselves for the Mass by taking a few moments in silent prayer and by maintaining an atmosphere of still recollection for all those present. There is ample time for socializing after Mass. Our focus prior to Mass should be on opening our hearts to an encounter with Jesus. Reflecting upon the readings before Mass is a good way to begin this encounter with the Lord.

Read #3 after Opening Hymn is **announced**, giving congregation time to find the page.

**3. Opening Hymn**

The purpose of this chant is to open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical season or special celebration, and accompany the procession of the priest and ministers.

Read #4 after the priest does the Sign of the Cross.

**4. The Sign of the Cross**

The *Sign of the Cross* is the simplest, most basic form of all Christian prayer, reminding the faithful of the manner in which Christ died, as well as giving honor to the Blessed Trinity. All of the Church's public prayer begins with this gesture, and it is strongly encouraged that private prayer does so as well.

Read #5 after the priest greets the people and they respond "And with your spirit."

**5. The Greeting**

The priest signifies the presence of the Lord to the community gathered by means of *The Greeting*. The response "And with your spirit" acknowledges that Christ is present in the person of the priest. It also brings us to a deeper realization that we are not just at a social gathering encountering people, but are at a Sacred Gathering encountering the Lord.

Read #6 after the priest invites the people to reflect on their sins.

**6. The Penitential Act**

During this time the priest asks us to acknowledge our sinfulness before both God and one another and to turn to the Lord in merciful supplication. In this act, we confess that each and all of us are sinners and in need of God's salvation. The repetition in praying "Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault," helps us to realize the seriousness of our sins and the harm it brings to ourselves and others.

Read #7 after Penitential Act absolution and before the Gloria.

**7. The Gloria**

The *Gloria* is a very ancient and venerable hymn in which the Church, gathered together in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb. In the new translation of the *Gloria* there is a noticeable build-up of intensity through repetition and the more poetic use of language. This is intended to help us to lift up our minds and hearts in truly glorifying God.

Read #8 after the priest says, “Let us pray”.

**8. The Collect Prayer**

With the priest acting as mediator, the prayers of the gathered people are collected together and then addressed to God. This opening prayer often reflects a specific theme for the liturgy of the day. Note that the other prayers prayed by the priest, as well as the scriptural readings of the day, plus liturgical music, all tie in with this theme. The ascent of the faithful to this prayer is made through the response, “*Amen.*”