



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last week, I wrote about the Penitential Act, and preparing for it. You may not be aware that there are three forms of the Penitential Act. Form A is often called "The *Confiteor*". *Confiteor* is Latin for "I confess" ... the first words of the prayer. Most documents and prayers in the Church are named for their first word(s).

"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."

This form of the Penitential Act not only acknowledges our "positive sins" (if I can put it that way), but also our omissions – "what I have failed to do." It is interesting that we often omit our omissions when we go to Confession, yet Jesus pointed to the omissions as that which will condemn us:

For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me. (Matthew 25:42-43)

Form A also acknowledges the communal dimension of our lives – that we confess not only to God, but to the people around us; we ask forgiveness from God, but also prayer from Blessed Mary, the angels and saints, and the people around us. We are not alone on this journey – we are community and our sins affect those around us.

After we pray Form A, the priest gives the absolution: "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life." From there, we pray the "*Kyrie eleison*" (which means "Lord, have mercy").

Form B is shorter than Form A. This is a call and response:

*The Priest:*

Have mercy on us, O Lord.

*The people reply:*

For we have sinned against you.

*The Priest:*

Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

*The people:*

And grant us your salvation.

This is followed by the absolution and *kyrie* (see above). The first part of the prayer of Form B is a standard cry found throughout the Old Testament, but can be found clearly in Baruch 3:2. The second half of the prayer comes from Psalm 85:8. It is good to remember that we are part of a much bigger community than we see here, and can share in the prayers of the ages.

Form C is the one with which we're probably most familiar. This form has an invocation and then the "Lord, have mercy... Christ, have mercy... Lord, have mercy" followed by the absolution.

Whichever form we use, what is most important is that we are aware of our sin and we throw ourselves into the merciful and loving arms of our God and Father. After receiving God's forgiveness, we're ready to praise His goodness in the *Gloria*.