

**PENITENTIAL ACT:
KYRIE ELEISON ("LORD HAVE MERCY")**



When we ask God for forgiveness, we are asking him for mercy. At this point in the Mass, we plea for God's mercy 3 times, echoing the priest who is leading us. Asking 3 times demonstrates sorrow for our sins and symbolizes that we are praying to God: as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Repetition is common in the psalms and in prayers of the Mass. It helps to stir the human heart, mind, and soul to prayer. As children often do, we too ask repeatedly for what we desire most: God's mercy and love. We pray: Lord, have Mercy; Christ have Mercy; Lord have Mercy.

As you may recall, much of the New Testament texts were written in Greek, and many of the early Christian liturgies were also initially in Greek. Even though Latin became the language of the Roman Catholic Church circa 500 CE, this prayer was retained in Greek, "*Kyrie eleison*" throughout the universal Church; Christians have said this same prayer for over 1500 years!

During the Penitential Act (at the beginning of the Mass), depending on the prescribed form the priest utilizes, we participate in a dialogue with the priest before God, asking for the His Mercy:

Priest:	Lord, have mercy.	Priest:	Kyrie eleison.
People:	Lord, have mercy.	People:	Kyrie eleison.
Priest:	Christ, have mercy.	Priest:	Christe eleison.
People:	Christ, have mercy.	People:	Christe eleison.
Priest:	Lord, have mercy.	Priest:	Kyrie eleison.
People:	Lord, have mercy.	People:	Kyrie eleison.

The Lord, Our God loves us unconditionally. All He wants is for us to be in a covenantal relationship of dependence, friendship and love with Him. So, no matter what we have done, He wants us to go to Him. As we repeat the prayer-filled **plea**, "*Lord, have Mercy*", we can never forget that our Father in Heaven is always "*Rich in Grace and Mercy*." Rightly so, in this action, we openly acknowledge our absolute dependence on God's love, grace, and mercy, and we ask Him to spiritually dispose (or orient) us to: (1) Hear his Word and (2) Receive Him in the Eucharist.

The theme of God's mercy is mentioned throughout the Bible. For example, in the Gospel reading of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14). "God, be merciful on me, a sinner," prayed the Publican. His only plea was for mercy: *Kyrie Eleison!*

The same theme of God's mercy is expressed again in the Gospel lesson of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Listen to the words of the Prodigal Son: " Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you [have mercy upon me]. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

(SR: ALTARATION: The Mystery of the Mass Revealed, Ascension Press, @2015)