

On the Revised Translation of the Mass
Bulletin Insert 6
“I confess”

It seems strange that we refer to the Mass as a “celebration” and yet right after it begins we’re asked to call to mind our sins. We don’t normally celebrate by calling to mind the bad things we’ve done.

If we think of the Mass as a celebration that participates in Heaven then it makes perfect sense that we should start by remember the things that might separate us from God and His ways revealed by Jesus. Think of it as wiping your feet, or removing your shoes before entering a friend’s house.

After a brief moment of silence during which we consider our sins, we often recite the *Confiteor*, or “I confess.” The new translation of this prayer will sound strange at first because of its use of repetition:

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,

Here all strike their breastbones once with their right hand while continuing:

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.

The “through my fault” part corresponds to the “*mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*” in the original Latin. While it may sound clunky and repetitive in English, it actually helps to remind us of the distinction between what Saint John calls deadly and non-deadly sins, or what we now call mortal and venial sins. Venial sins are those we commit without purposefully deciding to – sometimes a white lie that we tell and then ask ourselves afterward why we even lied about something simple is an example. “Grievous” faults are mortal sins, which we deliberately choose to commit.

The new translation of the “I confess” is another of example of praying what we believe to be true in our Mass – *lex orandi, lex credenda*.