

## New and Corrected Translation of the Mass – Part 3

### The *Confiteor* – Part 1

**I confess to almighty God** *Psalm 51.5-6; Luke 15.18; 1 John 1:9*  
**and to you, my brothers and sisters,** *James 5.16*  
**that I have greatly sinned** *2 Samuel 24.10; 1 Chronicles 21.8*  
**in my thoughts and in my words,** *Wisdom 1.3; James 3.8-10*  
**in what I have done and in what I** *Romans 7.15-20; James 2.17*  
**have failed to do,**

The Bible tells us, ‘Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another’ (James 5.16). So after the opening greeting at Mass, we have the penitential rite, usually with the *Confiteor* (the Latin prayer beginning ‘I confess’). Why do we need to confess? ‘If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity.’ (1 John 1.8-9). The *Confiteor* is a personal prayer. Therefore it is an admission of personal guilt. It is not a replacement for sacramental confession, nor does it impart a sacramental absolution. In other words, you still need Confession as a sacrament, and this isn’t a substitute.

Notice that the *Confiteor* confesses to God (against whom all sin is directed) but also to the Church (‘my brothers and sisters’). Sin not only separates us from the love of God, but also from that same charity which is the bond of the Communion of Saints. That is why we need to confess both to God and to the Church. Sin could be committed in at least four different ways: (1) in our thoughts, (2) by what we say, (3) by what we do, and (4) by failing to do the good that we ought. This prayer reminds us of all four.

**through my fault, through my fault, through my most** *Ecclesiasticus 20.2*  
**grievous fault.** *Luke 18.13*

The first part of the *Confiteor* ends with this threefold admission of guilt, accompanied by a gesture. We sinned by thought, word and action, so we confess by thought, word *and action too*. We make a fist with our right hands, and strike our sternum (breast bone) at the three repetitions of the word ‘fault’. In doing so we acknowledge that we ourselves are to blame, making no excuses for what we are genuinely responsible. The beating of our breasts (a biblical gesture) signifies a battering of our hearts, to reveal our faults within, asking that God’s grace may shatter the hardness of our hearts and change us.