

“FOUR-FOR-FOUR”
CATECHESIS ON THE *ROMAN MISSAL*

Liturgy of the Word: Prayer of the Faithful, (March 5–6, 2011)

We’ve discussed how the Liturgy of the Word, the second part of Mass, is composed of eight rites:

1. First reading (usually taken from the Old Testament)
2. Responsorial Psalm (Old Testament)
3. Second reading (New Testament)
4. Verse before the Gospel (Alleluia) (New Testament)
5. Gospel (New Testament)
6. Homily
7. Creed (Profession of Faith or Symbol)
8. Prayer of the Faithful

And we’ve mentioned that there is specific pattern to the Liturgy of the Word, which applies to the individual rites and to the relation among the rites.

E.g., “The word of the Lord: **Thanks be to God.**”

E.g., “We pray to the Lord: **Lord hear our prayer.**”

This reminds us that we are supposed to offer Mass, as Vatican Council II teaches, with “full, conscious, and active participation” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14).

The pattern of proclamation–response also applies to the relation between the rites, which is based on the two functions of the Liturgy of the Word:

1. To proclaim the Scriptures (readings and homily)
2. Respond to the saving message of Scripture in faith (Creed and General Intercessions).

(See *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 55).

Today we’re going to focus on the Prayer of the Faithful.

The purpose is that, “The people [may] respond in a certain way to the word of God which they have welcomed in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 69).

The only change to note in the new translation of the *Roman Missal* is the name given to this part of Mass.

It called by one of three names:

1. “Prayer of the Faithful” (the “faithful” refer to all baptized members of the Church)
2. “Bidding Prayers”—because we “bid” or ask God for what we need.
3. “Universal Prayer”

The term “universal” remind us that these prayers are not our individual intentions.

(Individual intentions are gathered or “collected” into the Collect [Opening Prayer] at the beginning of Mass [*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 54].)

In the Prayer of the Faithful,
there is an outward movement from the Church to all in need.

The Bidding Prayers take the grace of salvation made present in the Eucharist and extend it to the whole Church and to the world.

This is the reason for the uniform series of petitions, which are adapted to local circumstances (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 70):

1. For the Church
2. For public authorities and for the salvation of the world
3. For those in need
4. For the local community
5. And, according to custom, for the dead