

"I Believe...but I must show my belief...beginning with audible prayer"

Well, we made it through the Christmas Season, having done fairly well with the new responses. Our next goal is now getting everyone to audibly respond. Our prayer is to support one another as we respond to the priest's invitation. I say this as the new Roman Missal indicates clearly the following:

- 1) the spoken parts of the priest,
- 2) those parts that are to be spoken together with the assembled faithful,
- 3) those that are the responsibility of the assembled faithful, the priest remaining silent.

Each has its own purpose and importance in the liturgy. Therefore, the following observations and encouragements are made.

Amen!

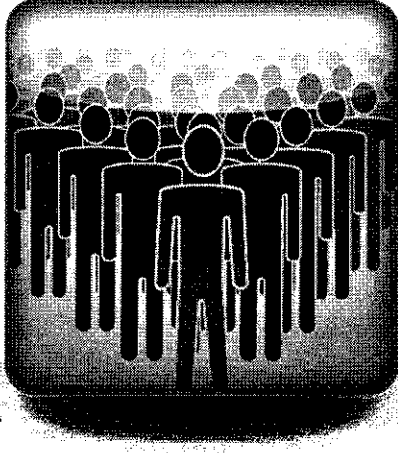
This audible response is the sole responsibility of the gathered faithful. It is to be audible for all to hear — never meant to be whispered or softly spoken. It is the conclusion of each prayer and a declaration of faith. *"I Believe!"* It seems we have become so concerned with the other responses that we've forgotten the most basic of declarations of faith. AMEN! One word with such great meaning that we should want to shout it from the rooftops. But since you can't get to the church roof, you can do it from the pews and blow the doors off the building.

"And with your spirit" sort of sneaks up on us at times during the Mass, like at the introduction of the gospel. But we're getting it.

"Pray my brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father." At the end of the preparation of gifts the priest invites the assembled faithful to pray. The response is that of the people and not the priest, who has already done so. The slight change in this prayer is so very beneficial since it acknowledges that the sacrifice, bread and wine being offered, along with our own lives, is all of ours and not just that of the priest. So the response of the faithful, *"May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church,"* is each person's hope of union with the Lord being lifted up. It is not to be said by the priest.

The same is true following the Lord's Prayer. The priest says, *"Deliver us, Lord...and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ."* The next part, *"For the kingdom, the power..."* belongs solely to the people.

Since they are already at the microphone, we're going to ask the cantors to initiate the response by the gathered faithful. The Cantor is not meant to be the only voice, and, therefore, will step back once the prayer has begun.



With Humble Acknowledgement

This phrase may best describe the actions we are asked to make during the Penitential Rite when we pray, *"Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault."* Just as we have submitted ourselves to sin, so now, we are called to realize that these sins have made us far less than the likeness of God, which we're meant to be. So often the actions of our lives are not those we'd perform when in the presence of God. Therefore, it is important that the actions we do perform before God are sincere and truly meant in asking for forgiveness. *If we think we're above this action, we may be placing ourselves beyond true contrition of the heart, and of forgiveness.*

The same is true concerning our praying of our Profession of Faith, the Creed. When we pronounce the words, *"and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man"* we are humbly acknowledging that without God coming as man, salvation would not have been possible.

Man's power — yours and mine — no matter what we possess or the position we hold, is no match for that of God. We cannot save ourselves. That is, salvation is not ours to bestow upon ourselves. Humbly we must admit that all comes from God and is completely grace — life made holy by his taking on our humanity, and his participation in our nature.

Ours to come to accept his life within us at all times. Only then does acceptance of salvation have purpose for us. It is a daily encounter with the Risen Lord rather than a haphazard approaching of God when in need.