

“Two Minute Teaching” on the Mass

01-10-2016 - **Penitential Act**

After the sign of the cross and the greeting, the Presider says “Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sinfulness ...” These words remind me of an AA meeting where a person says “Hello, my name is ... , I’m an alcoholic.” We say “Hello God, my name is I’m a sinner in a church of sinners.”

The congregation responds with optional prayers like “I confess... but, I personally like the Litany of Mercy, Lord ... Christ... Lord have mercy”, because the focus is not so much on my sins but Jesus’ awesome mercy. The Hebrew word for mercy is *hesed*, which means a lot more than forgiveness; it also means tenderness, compassion, peace. *Hesed* is best translated as “tender love”, like a mother holding her baby.

The word “mercy” is found often in our Mass prayers and songs. Whenever I hear the word mercy, I no longer think of forgiveness, but God’s “tender love” for us sinners.