

“Two Minute Teaching” on the Mass

01-17-2016 - **Penitential Act - Part 2**

After the Presider says “Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sinfulness,” he then says “and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.” The word mystery comes from the Greek work *mysterion*. For the first four centuries, the Mass was celebrated in Greek because it was the common language of the Roman Empire and then later in Latin.

In the early church Christians referred to their core beliefs, like the Trinity, Virgin Birth, Resurrection, Eucharist and what we now call sacraments, as mysteries. A mystery was not seen as something to be solved, but as a wonder revealed by God that we can never fully understand. The word mystery is found often in our Mass prayers and sung by the Presider after the words of consecration: “The Mystery of Faith.”

After the Litany of Mercy, the Presider says “May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life. Amen. In the early church, people believed that their sins were forgiven at Mass, but big sins like murder, adultery, and apostasy (denying Jesus and worshipping the emperor as God) had to be confessed privately to the Bishop.