

***Twenty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time (English Mass)***  
***Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost (Latin Mass)***  
***September 3, 2023***  
***Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant***

*“The just is first accuser of himself: his friend cometh, and shall search him.” (Proverbs 18:17  
Douay-Rheims Bible)*

If we live long enough, we will all experience a situation which leaves us feeling helpless, lost and confused. This situation may solely affect us. It may also affect those we love, our families. There are even some situations which branch out from individuals and families to affect the community at large. In this last situation, many people can feel confused, lost and desirous of answers and guidance. With the rise and influence of social media, some individuals will try to enlighten this darkened void with their own self-styled rays of intellectual light. And, due to our own intellectual blindness in those situations, we will be tempted to parrot the opinion of others. Before anyone assumes I am speaking of them, might I remind you that the preacher must always preach first to themselves before they can preach to another. My family, God already knew we would experience situations such as these and has offered to us both His Word and the Liturgical Worship of His Bride, the Catholic Church, to assist us. Today, I need to be reminded of this. I can do this by reflecting upon His Word found in the Old Testament book of Proverbs. Allow me to read to you one line which should be tattooed upon the heads of some and the hearts of all: *“A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.”* (Proverbs 18:2 Navarre Bible).

The Church’s Liturgical Worship reminds us of this, our need to humble ourselves, through the Penitential Rite found in the beginning of each Mass. This awareness of our sinfulness is expressed beautifully each time we recite together the words of the *Confiteor* (I Confess). From our experience of offering the Liturgy of the Rite of Saint Gregory the Great, later referred to as the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite (*usus antiquior*) under Pope Benedict XVI, we can recall the priest and servers at the foot of the altar. The priest begins by first confessing his own sinfulness. When he is finished, the servers recite this confession on behalf of themselves and those present. Now, within the Rite of Pope Saint Paul VI, all present recite this confession. This general confession is not a particular confession, as one does not sacramentally confess one’s sins in kind and number. However, this general confession reminds all present of our need for God’s assistance. We desperately need His Grace for are we all not keenly aware of just how far we each are from the sanctity required to enter into His Kingdom? The beauty of the *Confiteor* is that it reminds all, not just the priest, of our deplorable condition as we stand before Him. Are we not all called to be pure and blameless as we approach His altar? In our confession, we remember the dignity we were presented with at our Baptism. With this confession, we state how often we have failed to live in that dignity. We confess the times we have been negligent in our duties and the offenses; even if we think them light. We all stand accused in His Presence. We have every reason to both confess and weep at the many times we have fallen. We also have every reason to beg for both God’s Mercy and the assistance of the angels, saints and each other to begin anew to live the Christian life. It is never enough to just confess that we are sinners. We must also ask for the courage to start living as His Children, for that is what we all are — God’s Children.

I think it wise that we each reflect upon this, perhaps overlooked, moment of our Catholic Liturgy. Let us no longer resort to viewing ourselves as a tarnished mirror which dully reflects the ill-informed opinions expressed by others. Instead, if we feel we must reflect another, might I offer the example of the tax collector of Saint Luke's Gospel who stood in the temple, at a distance, with head bowed, striking his breast and saying: "*God, be merciful to me, the sinner!*" (Luke 18:13 Douay-Rheims Bible). For did not our Lord Jesus finish this parable by saying: "*I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other: because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.*" (Luke 18:14 Douay-Rheims Bible).