

THE BEAUTY OF THE MASS—15

The Entrance Rite continues with the **Gloria**. At the Gloria, we sing of God's wonderful majesty. The Gloria is very ancient. Most liturgical scholars believe that the Gloria was one of the earliest Christian hymns. The Gloria is sung or said on Sundays outside Advent or Lent, on solemnities and feasts, and on special celebrations. During this prayer of praise, we acknowledge the omnipotence and grandeur of our God Whom we praise as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Entrance Rite concludes with the **Opening Prayer** or the **Collect**. The priest says, “*Let us pray.*” After that invitation, there is a moment of silence. This silence does not mean the priest has lost his place in the Roman Missal. That moment of silence is meant to help all of us recollect our minds so that we can bring our personal problems, cares and needs to the Lord.

Our Protestant brothers and sisters have a beautiful tradition, one we should imitate.

Whenever the minister says, “*Let us pray,*” everyone bows their heads so that they won't be distracted as they enter into the stillness of their hearts in prayer.

After a moment of silence, the celebrant lifts up his hands and, on behalf of the people and all their prayers, prays the Collect—the official Opening Prayer of the Mass. As with the other two celebrant's prayers (the Prayer over the Gifts and the Final Prayer of the Mass), this prayer brings us into communion with people around the world. Everywhere in the world, on every Sunday, in every Catholic Church, every priest celebrant prays the same prayer.

The priest celebrant lifts his outstretched hands into the “*orans*” position as a sign that he is embracing all our prayers and lifting them up to the Father of us all. The Opening Prayer is called

the “*Collect*” because the priest “*collects*” the prayers of the entire congregation and offers them to the Father.

The Collect concludes the Entrance Rite. Its purpose is to gather us together and to prepare us to hear God's Word in the Liturgy of the Word.