The Archdiocese of Detroit has given us the beginnings of guidelines to help prepare all our parishioners for the New Roman Missal that will be introduced in its entirety at Advent this coming year. We begin this week with the opening prayers of the Mass up to and including the Gloria. Please take a look at the information. It both prepares us for the New Missal changes and reminds us of why we do what we do each time we celebrate the Solemn Liturgy - the Holy Mass.

**The Introductory Rites**
When the Church gathers for the celebration of the Eucharist, the Introductory Rites are meant to focus the community’s attention on the mystery to be celebrated and prepare them to participate more worthily in that mystery. There are many elements used in these rites:

*Entrance Procession and Hymn:* In every celebration of the Eucharist, the procession of liturgical ministers into the midst of the people who have gathered is led by the Cross. We are Christians who follow the Cross on which Christ died to save us from our sins. That same Christ is here with us for He promised, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20). Christ is present in the community gathered. He is present in the priest who makes the invisible visible to the eyes of faith. Christ will lead us in this celebration. All have come together to praise and honor God for the gift of his only Son, who reveals to us the way to eternal happiness. The Cross is accompanied by at least two lighted candles and sometimes by incense. The Gospel Book is carried by the deacon and placed on the altar where, later, the bread and wine will be placed, because the food of the Word cannot be separated from the food of the Eucharist. And we sing.

*Sign of the Cross:* Upon reaching the chair, the priest leads the assembly in the Sign of the Cross to remind us of our baptism, which gave us the right to participate in this mystery. Romano Guardini, the noted theologian, wrote: “When we cross ourselves, let it be with a real sign of the cross...let us make a large, unhurried sign, from forehead to breast, from shoulder to shoulder, consciously feeling how it includes the whole of us... It is the holiest of signs” (Sacred Signs, 1956, p.13). Allow Christ who was crucified on the cross to touch our bodies and draw us into the mystery.

*Greeting:* Upon arriving at the chair, the priest greets the assembly. *The Lord be with you.* This greeting is, in reality, expressive of the desire that the people actually experience the presence and power of the Lord in the community they form. It is Christ who greets us with this wish. The assembly responds: *And with your Spirit.* This response will be new for us. It is a more formal language, to be sure, but it is there to remind us that this gathering is not like any other gathering. It is special. By restoring the more literal ancient greeting, “And with your Spirit,” the community will be calling more expressly on the “spirit” of the priest.

*Act of Penitence:* One of the things that Christ was most frequently criticized for by leaders of the Jews was that he drew sinners to himself. He ate with sinners, he cured sinners, and reached out to sinners who were most in need of God’s mercy. As the community of faithful
gathers to celebrate this paschal mystery, it acknowledges that it too is a sinful people. We confess our sinfulness to God, to each other, and to all the angels and saints.

**Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling with Water:** During the Easter Season, and sometimes on Sundays and more solemn occasions, the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling may be used as a reminder of our baptism and thereby of our call to share in the Paschal Mystery.

**Gloria:** This hymn is often called the *Angellic Hymn* because its first words were used by angels at the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. As we join the choirs of angels and sing the glory and praise of God, we are reminded of the great gift God has given to us in the Incarnation. Christ was sent by the Father to become truly flesh of our flesh and like us in all things but sin. We are filled with awe that God would do this for us and so we cry out in hymn the glory of God the Father, in his Son, and through the Holy Spirit. Although it is permitted to recite the Gloria, we must realize that something of the awesomeness of the mystery it reminds us of can be lost in mere recitation.

**Opening Prayer [Collect]:** The Introductory Rites end with the Opening Prayer or Collect, the prayer of the gathered community who, having acknowledged its sinfulness but having rejoiced in the Triune God, is now aware that it is in God’s presence. The community is invited to pray and given a brief time to silently present its needs to God. The priest then collects these prayers and presents them to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. The people make the prayer their own by responding Amen. We are now prepared to hear God’s Word.

*To be continued . . .*