

ROMAN MISSAL

THIRD EDITION

Three Scrutinies and Purification and Enlightenment

Parish life is easier when Lent and the *Lectionary for Mass* Year A texts coincide. The necessary readings required for the celebration of the three Scrutiny rites are already read aloud at every Sunday Mass. But when the Church uses the Year B and Year C Lectionary texts, many questions and concerns arise concerning readings, preaching, and the unity of Lent.

The Three Scrutiny Rites

Needed ritual books. No minister is surprised that the following books are needed for doing these celebrations in suitable and worthy fashion:

- For the readings – *Lectionary for Mass*, second edition [LM];
- For the prayers – both the *Roman Missal, Third Edition* [RM3] and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* [RCIA];
- For the songs – the suggestions found in the above ritual books and the music in the parish songbooks and repertory.

What are the scrutinies? The scrutinies are a series of liturgical rites that are part of the 40 Days retreat for the spiritual benefit of the elect, those who will celebrate the three Sacraments of Christian Initiation during the Easter Vigil.

RCIA, no. 141. "...The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good....to give them strength in Christ...and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all."



The Mass and Its Parts – Navigating the *Roman Missal*

The pastoral effectiveness of a celebration will be greatly increased if the texts of the readings, the prayers, and the liturgical chants correspond as aptly as possible to the needs, the preparation, and the culture of the participants. GIRM, no. 352.

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Remote preparation for the scrutinies is achieved through celebration of the minor exorcisms during the Period of the Catechumenate (see RCIA, nos. 79, 89, and 90-94). In Christian Initiation, exorcisms – both minor and major, that is, the scrutinies – are always pre-baptismal. They are never celebrated with the baptized as subjects of the rite. The baptized Catholic candidates for completing the sacraments of Initiation and the baptized candidates for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church derive benefit in the same way the faithful do – by joining in the prayer for the elect.

What and where are the proper texts for the three scrutinies? Some liturgies are so important that the given texts must be used without any change for “pastoral reasons”. The three scrutinies fit this category. Start with the Ritual Mass section in the ritual books, “For the Conferral of Christian Initiation”.

Readings: The *Lectionary for Mass*, nos. 745-747 provides no texts in place. The rubrics refer the minister to the readings and chants as given for the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent, Year A – LM, nos. 28A, 31A, and 34A. There is one option given for the Second Scrutiny; Exodus 13:21-22 may replace the First Reading. It is not, however, found in the Lectionary.

Mass Prayers: The *Roman Missal, Third Edition* provides the texts in two places. In the Ritual Masses section are found the proper presidential prayers (Collect, Prayer over the Offerings, and Prayer after Communion); proper inserts for Eucharistic Prayers I, II, and III; as well as the two antiphons. In the Proper of Time section for Lent are found the proper Prefaces for the Samaritan Woman (First Scrutiny on the Third Sunday of Lent), the Man Born Blind (second on the Fourth Sunday), and Lazarus (third on the Fifth Sunday). Note: these Prefaces are always used when the Year A readings are used whether the scrutiny is celebrated or not. They are not used in Years B and C.

Ritual Prayers: Both the pastoral notes and the ritual texts for all three scrutinies are found in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Music: The ritual text gives the places and recommendations for necessary singing during the celebrations. See also *Sing to the Lord*, no. 205.

How many are celebrated? Three are always celebrated. Even with children of catechetical age. Only the Bishop may dispense from one for a serious obstacle or two in extraordinary circumstances. Pastoral reasons alone are not sufficient.

When are they celebrated? Sundays Masses on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent are the proper days. “When, for pastoral reasons these ritual Masses cannot be celebrated on their proper Sundays, they are celebrated on other Sundays of Lent or even convenient days during the week” [RCIA, no. 146].

They may be celebrated outside Lent. This, however, requires permission of the Bishop in each instance.

Readings and Preaching in Years B and C

Everyone involved in liturgical ministry knows of the time and energy devoted to good celebration. Preaching is hard work and requires intensive preparation. The additional rites in Lent – scrutinies and presentations with the elect, possible penitential rites with called candidates, celebrations of Penance, Stations of the Cross and other devotional prayers – fill Lent with many extra duties and preparations.

What about preaching in Lectionary Years B and C? Most of the priests in this diocese oversee more than one parish or church. They also celebrate more than one Mass on a Sunday. The work-load dilemma is this: preparing and preaching on the Year A readings for the Third Scrutiny on the Fifth Sunday of Lent, for example, and preparing another homily for the others Masses in Year B or C.

Whenever a scrutiny is celebrated, the proper given Year A readings must always be used. The Church does not permit adapting a scrutiny to suit other readings or prayers. The scrutiny texts are intimately tied to the Gospels.

But the Church does permit the Year A readings of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent to replace the ones given for Years B and C – even if a scrutiny is not celebrated. See the rubrics in the *Lectionary for Mass*, nos. 29B, 30C, 32.B, 33C, 35B, and 36C.

Is it a concern that some may never hear Years B and C readings? This may happen. It is not a great concern, however. The Year A readings are so ancient and so packed with meaning that it is doubtful their value will be exhausted in our lifetime. There are other days in the liturgical year where the same readings are proclaimed annually with no variation. Hearing the stories of the woman, the blind man, and the dead Lazarus year after year can serve the Church well.

The Year B and Year C texts may be used in other prayers held in Lent. A communal Penance celebration is one example.

The Basic Premise for the Scrutinies

Sin and evil are real. They are part of our lives. Their power is strong.

Salvation is also real. Christ's power to save, protect, and strengthen us is stronger.

Sin is only recognized in the light of grace. God's grace is always first.

The three scrutinies ritually celebrate the central mystery of life, death, and resurrection in the lives of the elect. It is the paschal mystery. The faithful see the power of God acting in them by participating in the rites, see the power of God at work, and decide once again to turn from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

Some Questions and Answers

- Q.** May any of the scrutinies be celebrated using the *Lectionary for Mass* Year B or Year C readings?
- A.** No. Never.
- Q.** May the Year A readings for the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent be used in any year?
- A.** Yes. Even if the scrutinies are not celebrated, these reading may be used.
- Q.** Can a parish or a pastor determine that celebrating all three scrutinies in a given year are too many, too much?
- A.** No. Only the Bishop may dispense one of even two. But never for merely pastoral reasons.
- Q.** What about unbaptized children of catechetical age? RCIA, Part II, Chapter I, "Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age" provides only one text. Is one enough for such children?
- A.** No. This is an adapted rite suited to their age. Children may always celebrate the rites with the older elect. But note the plural and not the singular usage throughout these pastoral notes: "Penitential Rites (Scrutinies)". Three are still celebrated. Because these rites, if used at all, are not Sunday rites by design, there is a broader list of readings that may be used.
- Q.** There is no "combined rite" in RCIA Appendix I for a single celebration with the elect and baptized candidates. Is that a mistake?
- A.** No. Scrutinies, which includes an exorcism, are pre-baptismal rites. RCIA, no. 463 reads in part: "Because the prayer of exorcism in the three scrutinies for catechumens who have received the Church's election properly belongs to the elect and uses numerous images referring to their approaching baptism, those scrutinies of the elect and this penitential rite for those preparing for confirmation and eucharist have been kept separate and distinct. Thus, no combined rite has been included in Appendix I."