

EASTER SPRINKLING RITE

It is common to celebrate the Sprinkling Rite instead of the Act of Penitence on the Sundays of the Easter Season. However, sometimes a concern is raised that the Introductory Rites become too “prominent” – with entrance hymn, a hymn during the sprinkling, and then the *Gloria*. Some have attempted to solve this dilemma by doing the sprinkling during the *Gloria*, but such an approach distorts the structure of the Sprinkling Rite (the closing prayer often gets abandoned) and misunderstands the purpose of the *Gloria*—which is to give praise to God in *response* to the Act of Penitence (or Sprinkling Rite). Such a practice should be discontinued.

While using the rite as found in the Missal is certainly fine, for those who find that three musical pieces so close together makes for Introductory Rites that are too busy, please allow me to recommend the solution offered in the US Bishops’ *Introduction to the Order of Mass* (#74).

In the model that they offer, the first part of the Introductory Rites (sign of the cross, greeting, prayer over the water) are done at the entrance (back) of the church. The sprinkling itself then takes place as the ministers process to the sanctuary—so the “processional hymn” and the “hymn accompanying the sprinkling rite” become one and the same. Once he gets to the chair, the priest closes the Sprinkling Rite (“May almighty God cleanse us...”). Then, the *Gloria* is sung.

A second concern that is raised is that the sacramentary provides prayers for *blessing* water, but not for using the Easter waters already blessed. One answer to this problem is to modify the prayer to be used in the Easter Season to bless water by omitting the sentence, “Hear our prayers and bless this water...man.” Thus, the prayer becomes one of thanksgiving instead of blessing.

An outline of the rite as described above is given below.

AN EASTER SPRINKLING RITE

The ministers gather at the door (back) of the church.

Priest-Celebrant: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.

Priest-Celebrant: The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
All: And also with you.

Or another greeting from the Missal may be used. Easter Water is brought to the priest-celebrant:

Priest-Celebrant:¹ *He begins in these or similar words:*

Dear friends, this water will be used to remind us of our baptism. Let us give thanks to God, and ask God to keep us faithful to the Spirit he has given us.

He then continues in these words:

Lord God almighty, hear the prayers of your people: we celebrate our creation and redemption. You chose water to show your goodness when you led your people to freedom through the Red Sea and satisfied their thirst in the desert with water from the rock. Water was the symbol used by the prophets to foretell your new covenant with man. You made the water of baptism holy by Christ's baptism in the Jordan: by it you give us a new birth and renew us in holiness. May this water remind us of our baptism and let us share the joy of all who have been baptized at Easter. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The entrance procession and entrance hymn then begin as usual. The priest celebrant sprinkles the people as he makes his way to the sanctuary. The entrance hymn may be prolonged to accommodate the sprinkling of those seated along side aisles if necessary.

After venerating the altar, the priest-celebrant goes to the chair and concludes the sprinkling rite:

Priest-Celebrant: May almighty God cleanse us of our sins, and through the eucharist we celebrate make us worthy to sit at his table in his heavenly kingdom.
All: Amen.

The Gloria follows, and then the Collect.

¹ If, instead, water is to be blessed, one of the blessing prayers from the Missal is used.