

Sprinkling Rite with Easter Water

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 to make it one of thanksgiving instead of blessing or to modify the thanksgiving prayers used at baptism to omit references to the immediate celebration of that sacrament. The prayers so modified are given below.

The rite below envisions the Bishop as the presider. If a priest is presiding, the usual greeting for Mass is used (instead of “Peace be with you”).

AN EASTER SPRINKLING RITE

For use during the Easter Season, if water blessed at the Vigil is available. The prayers are modified from the Rite of Infant Baptism.

At the chair or at the back of the church (door, font):

Bishop: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.

Bishop: Peace be with you.
All: And with your spirit.

Bishop: Dear brothers and sisters, let us praise the Lord our God for this water he has created, and which will be sprinkled on us as a memorial of our Baptism. May he help us by his grace to remain faithful to the Spirit we have received.

FORM 1

Bishop: Lord our God,
in your mercy be present to your people's prayers of thanksgiving
as we recall the wondrous work of our creation
and the still greater work of our redemption.
For you created water to make the fields fruitful
and to refresh and cleanse our bodies.
You also made water the instrument of your mercy:
for through water you freed your people from slavery
and quenched their thirst in the desert;
through water the Prophets proclaimed the new covenant
you were to enter upon with the human race;
and last of all,
through water, which Christ made holy in the Jordan,
you have renewed our corrupted nature
in the bath of regeneration.
Therefore, may this water be for us
a memorial of the Baptism we have received,
and grant that we may share
in the gladness of our brothers and sisters
who at Easter have received their Baptism.
Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

FORM 2

Bishop: Praise to you, almighty God and Father,
for you have created water to cleanse and to give life.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, the Father's only Son,
for you offered yourself on the cross,
that in the blood and water flowing from your side,
and through your death and resurrection, the Church might be born.
Praise to you, God the Holy Spirit, for you anointed Christ at his
baptism in the waters of Jordan, so that we might all be baptized into
you.
We pray, by the mystery of this consecrated water remind us of our
new and spiritual birth in baptism. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

FORM 3

Bishop: Father, God of mercy, through these waters of baptism
you have filled us with new life as your very own children.
From all who are baptized in water and the Holy Spirit,
you have formed one people, united in your Son Jesus Christ.
You have set us free and filled our hearts with the Spirit of your love,
that we may live in your peace.
You call those who have been baptized
to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ to people everywhere.
We pray, by the mystery of this consecrated water remind us of our
new and spiritual birth in baptism. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

If beginning at the back of the church, the entrance procession and entrance hymn then begin as usual. The bishop 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 sprinkling (at the chair):

Bishop: 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