

Being come up to the altar, he bows his body and lays his joined hands upon it, testifying thereby his incapacity for so great a work, and giving God the glory : he kisses it, in testimony—1. Of our reconciliation to God, by the incarnation of his Son :—2. Of union and perfect peace with our neighbour and all the world : and 3. Of peace of conscience, and joy within ourselves, for being entered the house of God, and come to his altar. And he says this prayer in silence :

Quæsumus Domine, &c. “ We beseech thee, O Lord, by the merits of thy saints, that thou wouldst vouchsafe to pardon all my sins.” *Amen.* Which shows his apprehension of his sins still, and how dreadful they are to him, being now to be employed in so great a mystery.

INTROITS.

Then the priest, making a low reverence, goes to the right hand of the altar, signifying the *Emmanuel* promised in the law, which came first to the Jews, who, by reason of the divine law, were on the right part ; and the Gentiles, by reason of their idolatry, on the left.

The mass, indeed, is a representation of Christ's passion ; yet because this part was for the Catechumens, and for their instruction, the Church thought fit to represent unto them precedent mysteries, that they might the better understand, that all benefits received from the nativity, preaching, &c., were all effects of his most sovereign passion.

In the *Introit* you will find the *Antiphon*, taken out of the Psalm, the *Vergil*, and *Gloria Patri* ; all showing the ardent desire the Patriarchs had of our Saviour's coming ; and that we all ought to have of his presence.

The fathers earnestly desired thy coming, O Lord, and all the world sung *Gloria Patri*, at thy appearance. As, therefore, thou hast come for the salvation of mankind ; come now we beseech thee to our souls, and make us fitting to receive the fruits of this holy sacrifice. Thus O Christ do I here manifest in the beginning of mass, my burning thirst and vehement desires of thy presence, to the end I may with all reverence and

devotion attend these mysteries, which without thy special mercy and grace I shall never be able to do ; therefore I cry unto thee, “ Lord have mercy,” Christ have mercy,”† &c.

KYRIE ELEISON.

The priest goes to the middle of the altar and standing there as before the face of God, with submissive eyes, with body inclined, and hands joined, begs mercy, as likewise the people answering with all earnestness.

This language of the angels is nine times repeated in honour of their nine choirs ; or three times in honour of the Father, three of the Son, and three of the Holy Ghost. *Eleison* declares our misery ; in regard whereof, the Church for all her children compassionately cries out *Kyrie Eleison* ; for that without God's mercy and goodness, they unavoidably perish : *Christe Eleison* ; because without Christ no mercy is to be had.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS.†

The Hymn sung by the angels, at our Saviour's birth. The *Introit* reminds us of the incarnation, this of the nativity of our Saviour ; upon which all the following mysteries of his life, passion, &c., depend, in which it was expedient the Catechumens should be instructed. And what heart (reflecting upon this mystery, and the heavenly action of the angels) but will be moved with interior piety and devotion ?

‘ I announce to you a great joy,’ an everlasting joy, a joy that ‘ none shall take from you,’§ an universal joy to all people and nations, and to all the children of Adam, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, &c. All are concerned in this joy, ‘ For a Saviour this day is born’ unto us. *Luke 2. 10 11.* Our eternal God is become temporal, is born of a Virgin, is made one of us, an earthly citizen, that he may make us all citizens of heaven, and companions with angels. || *Parvulus natus est nobis, &c.* So that now we stand in generous competition with the celestial spirits, seeing our nature is assumed by the Word *Eternal.* Their King is descended,

† Ps. 122 3. † *Luke 18. 38. 39.* † *Luke 2, 14*
§ *Isa. 9, 6.* || *John 16, 22*