The Kyrie Eleison

	Original in Greek:	Greek transliterated:
Lord, have mercy.	Κύριε, ἐλέησον.	*Kyrie eleison.*
Christ, have mercy.	Χριστέ, ἐλέησον.	*Christe eleison.*
Lord, have mercy.	Κύριε, ἐλέησον.	*Kyrie eleison.*

[Kyrie eleison
KI-ree-ay ay-LAY-ee-zonn]



This is one of the oldest and most used prayers in the Church — the *Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy)*. A popular conception that the prayer is one of penance, asking God to spare us from a righteous punishment — asking for the mercy of being forgiven for our sins, even if we don't deserve it. However, if we look back to early Christian usage, at the end of evening prayer (vespers) the deacons would read out lists of petitions, and names of people to be prayed for, and after each the boys' choir would call out *Kyrie eleison*. And, so, the prayer has more to do with God's gracious mercy than our sinfulness. It is an expression of joy for blessings received. So while it has a penitential element, it also is an expression of joy. In this way, it makes an appropriate bridge from the Penitential Act to the Gloria — giving God glory!

The Kyrie elesion is a part of the Introductory Rites which open with the Greeting which is followed by the Act of Penitence. The Kyrie elesion always follows this unless it was already part of the Penitential Act. It is a chant by which the faithful acclaim the Lord and implore his mercy, it is usually executed by everyone, with the priest and the people or with the choir/cantor and the people. Each acclamation is usually pronounced twice.

Sources: https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/general-instruction-of-the-roman-missal/girm-chapter-2 ; https://www.usccb.org/offices/public-affairs/structure-and-meaning-mass ; https://www.ocp.org/en-us/blog/entry/kyrie-eleison-lord-have-mercy