New Translation:
Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa
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The long form of the Penitential Act directs the priest and the congregation to recite the Confiteor (“I confess to almighty God.”) The current translation reads:

I confess to almighty God,
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have sinned
through my own fault
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done,
and in what I have failed to do;
and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin,
all the angels and saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

The new translation is not substantially different, but does include an important correction. (I have placed in bold all the changes.)

I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done
and in what I have failed to do,
through my fault,
through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

There are three changes. Let’s discuss the last one first. The single word “and” is changed to “therefore”. This more accurately reflects the Latin word ideo, which can be translated in a number of ways; the most common are for that reason, on the account, and therefore. The rendering of ideo as and in the old translation changes the meaning and is not fully appropriate. In the former translation the plea to Mary, the Angels, and the Saints is seen as the next item in a list. The new translation, which more accurately reflects the Latin, presents the plea not simply as following the recognition of our sin, but as following from our plea to sin. We are not simply invoking the intercession of Mary, the Angels, and the Saints, but we are invoking their intercession precisely because we have sinned.

The new translation also properly restores the word greatly to “I have greatly sinned.” The literal translation of the Latin (peccavi nimis cogitatione) is “that by [my] thought I have sinned beyond measure.” Nimis can be rendered as beyond measure, too much, or excessively. Greatly is appropriate, but what is not appropriate is leaving the adverb off altogether. (In fact, the literal translation of the entire Latin phrase is “by thought, by word, by work, and by omission”.)

The most substantial change comes from the Latin mea culpa. This is a common Latin phrase that many will recognize as meaning “my fault.” What few will realize is that the original Latin does not contain a simple mea culpa; the full phrase is mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa. The Latin
maxima comes from maximus, which is actually a superlative of magnus. Magnus translates as “great”, its comparative (maior) translates “greater” (as in ad maiorem Dei gloriam ... for the greater glory of God), and the superlative (magnus) translates “greatest.” Thus, the translation of maxima culpa is “greatest sin” or “most grievous sin.” The old, deficient translation not only leaves out the reference to “greatest” but also abandons the entire repetition found in the Latin.

The rubrics at this point direct the priest and the congregation to strike the breast as a reminder of their own sinfulness. (This is true of the old and the new translation; of course this should be obvious as the new translation is simply that, and as such it did not alter any of the rubrics.) Before the simplification of the mea culpa it was customary to strike the breast three time, one for each mea culpa. With the new translation, striking three times will, hopefully, return. The three-fold confession is reminiscent of Peter’s threefold post-Resurrection response to the Lord’s question: “Peter, do you love me.” Of course, this threefold response corresponds to his threefold denial of Christ during the Passion.

All three changes to the Confiteor fall generally under the auspices of establishing a greater awareness of personal sin in the life of the Christian. After all, without sin, there is no need for a savior; without the need for redemption, there is no redeemer. The Christian life begins with the recognition of our personal and original sin; from this recognition stems our need for a savior, who is Jesus Christ.