

## Gloria

The Hymn commonly called the Gloria or Glory to God is used on all Sundays except during Advent and Lent and on all Feasts and Solemnities. This change is one of the many ways the Church reinforces the difference between penitential seasons and other seasons and feasts during the year.

A penitential season is marked by other chants and even the inclusion or exclusion of certain words or phrases like the Alleluia. The only season when the Alleluia is dropped is in Lent. It is said that the Alleluia (which means Praise the Lord!) in Advent is not dropped because the nature of the season is preparation for the Lord's coming, rather than sorrow for His death and our role in that horrible tragedy. We still are living in joy at the expectation of the coming of the Savior, both at his original coming, and at the end of time, when the Lord will be victorious, once and for all eternity at the end of the world. We rejoice because we hope to be with Him forever, giving thanks and praise for His mighty deeds not the least of which is His resurrection and ascension into heaven as a "foretaste and promise" of our Advent is more like a sprucing up of the property for company. The way we do this is to examine our conscience, to repent of any sins we have committed and to root out sin in our lives through sacramental confession and penitential practices that we adopt freely.

Lent is another story. The penitential character, though it includes the sense of needing to repent of sin, the same as in Advent, it also focuses on our responsibility for the crucifixion of our Lord. Hence it has a deeper sense of regret, with a different kind of hope. We hope that we will not be judged for our sins, but that they will be washed away by virtue of our baptism, our repentance, and our ongoing practice of penance.

Penance, in itself is a strong tool in the journey to holiness. It is comprised of either doing acts we normally do not do, or of denying ourselves of things we have a right to in order to demonstrate to ourselves and others (including God) our seriousness with regard to our process of conversion. The suppression of the Alleluia in Lent (something we normally do) is symbolic of our mortification, of our sorrow for sin, of our difficulty with the clash between our baptismal promises and what we have done in our lives that is inconsistent with those promises. The conflict, or what psychologists call cognitive dissonance in our hearts and minds makes us feel like we are giving only lip-service to God when we say "Alleluia" and do something that does not honor God in our lives—sin. That is why we suppress the Alleluia in Lent.

Still, living a penitential is not only limited to two seasons a year. Doing penance keeps us mindful of our goal in life to "put on Christ" and "put away from ourselves the sins of the flesh." If we reflect every night on how we have not fulfilled our baptismal promises (our sins), make a firm decision of the will to try to do better tomorrow, make our act of contrition and confess monthly our sins, we will see how much more consistent we can become. Then our "Alleluia" will take on a deeper meaning for us, when at the Resurrection Day—Easter we raise our voices to thank God for his gift of healing, restoration, reconciliation and strengthening to avoid sin. Thanks be to God for His Divine Mercy, which He has shown us in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The *Gloria* is an ancient non-biblical hymn composed of phrases praising the triune God coming from different sources and times. It was originally an integral part of most celebrations of morning prayers; Matins (in the pre-dawn) and Lauds (Praises) which were sung at daybreak. According to the *Liber Pontificalis* Pope Symmachus (498-514) introduced this hymn into the opening rites for the Mass on Sundays and major feast days. Since that time it has been counted as one of the ordinary chants of the Mass.

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of  
good will.  
We praise you, we bless you, we  
adore you, we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great  
glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King, O God,  
almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten  
Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the  
Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of  
the Father, have mercy on us.  
For you alone are the Holy One, you  
alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus  
Christ,

with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of  
God the Father.  
Amen.

Father

Son

Holy Spirit

The opening of the text,  
"Glory to God in the highest, and  
on earth peace to people of good  
will." (Luke 2: 8-9; 13-14) recalls  
the praise of the angels when they  
appeared to the shepherds at the  
time of the nativity of our Lord.  
The new translation we will use in  
the new Sacramentary will have  
the order of phrases restored and  
some language more accurately  
translated. Here at the left is the  
new, revised text for the new  
Sacramentary:

Unlike the *Te Deum*, the  
*Gloria* was sung to many different  
melodies, as many as two hundred  
of them. There are various styles  
for *Gloria* melodies which indicate  
different ways of singing this  
prayer. With the easier melodies,  
perhaps the entire congregation  
would sing the *Gloria*, sometimes a  
choir or soloists would be indicated  
by more difficult settings of parts of  
the chant.

The second part of the Glory to God is directed to the Son of God, Jesus Christ. In a way, as the great doxology, it echoes many of the ideas of the Nicene Creed which we will soon be exploring.

The text of the new translation runs:

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.  
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,

To this portion is ascribed the petitions of the Glory to God, namely prayers for mercy and that the Lord would hear our prayer. But as is true of all petitionary prayers, both in Judaism and Christianity, the person addressed is named by who he is. Hence the first part of this section names Jesus Christ who is the only begotten (not created) Son of God, who is also Lord, and is Lamb of God. The last part of the naming statement seems almost superfluous, except that it names the relationship between the two persons so far addressed, the Father and the Son. Jesus is the Son of God, and is the Son of the Father. During his journey on Earth, Jesus makes many references (particularly in John's gospel) of his being the Son of Man, and Son of God, whom He names Abba or his 'papa.'

The 'peculiar kind of monotheism' referred to by Maimonides, the great Jewish Philosopher of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, is affirmed in the closing portion of the second section, viz a vis, the naming phrase You alone are the Holy One. That word One, echoes the watchword of Israel, which says "Hear O' Israel, the Lord your God is One, alone." If we also remember the word LORD is a rendering of the 4 letters of the Hebrew name of God which transliterated in our alphabet are YHWH, we see that the Glory to God is identifying Jesus with YHWH who is God alone—the One. In Greek the Philosophical tradition, it was believed that the God of all was called the ONE, who is perfect, simple, indivisible, all powerful, all knowing, all seeing, all present. The employment of the 'One' for the person of Jesus Christ and the Father, also appeals to this Greek tradition, a tradition that was used to develop the Church's theology of the Trinity. When we pray the Glory to God, as it is restored this Easter Sunday from its Lenten rest, we can focus anew on the God who is unchanging, Three-in-one, an undivided Unity of Three Persons, who yet in the unbroken unity of the person of the Son with the Father, came to save us as Son of God and Son of Man.



**Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us**

The symbol of Easter is the spotless Lamb with a banner of the cross held by its front leg, indicating the victory of the sacrificial victim of Passover/Easter. The Lamb is on a book with seven seals, the seals of judgment that will come at the end of the ages.

Jesus is the Paschal Lamb of the sacrifice, who taking away the sins of the world by his bloody death, has risen from the dead.

He alone is worthy to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing. He alone is worthy to open the book and to break open its seals (Revelation 4:11-5:10)

It is Him whom we praise in this phrase of the Glory to God. It is the Lamb of God who will sit in judgment over us, who will break the seven seals of God's wrath for sin and from whom we beg mercy. We would be deserving of the Judgment that will come upon the unrepentant and the apostates in the world because our "sins are as scarlet" and cry out for judgment. But because of our Baptism and our faithfulness to the gift of salvation given us through our obedience to the Laws of God and the teaching of the Apostles, we rely on our relationship through Christ to save us from the judgment that will come at the end of the age. St. Paul, in the Letter to the Romans says,

"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him? Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us. Who will condemn? It is Christ (Jesus) who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us." (Romans 8:31-34, NAB)

So we are thankful in the Hymn: Glory To God, for God's mercy and forgiveness that the Lamb of God has given us freely, and we sing His Easter Praises Every Sunday, Feast Day and Solemnity of the Church Year.

**With the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.** The Glory to God, ends with the acclamation of praise to the Holy Spirit, which seems to not give much or even equal honor to the Third Person as does the first and second parts (Father and the Son). It is interesting that this is so because the main experience that we have directly of the work of God in the world is through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the one who 'comes down' upon the waters of baptism, on the holy oils, the penitent, the elements of the Eucharist, the candidates for confirmation and priesthood, and in the healing of the sick, it is the charism of healing that comes upon the infirm to heal their soul and if it be God's will, their body and mind. It is the Spirit that inspires preaching and prophecy, the Spirit that makes the presence of God sensible to our emotions, to our intellect and to our intuition. It is the Spirit who sanctifies us. It is God the Father, with the Son but through the Holy Spirit who imparts the graces we need for daily living and overcoming sin. It is the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit that give confidence to the Christian by imparting Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, Counsel, Strength, Fear and Piety.

It is the Holy Spirit who empowers the saints to be heroic in their virtues so that they can become recognized Saints in the Church. As we approach the great Fiftieth Day, Pentecost, let us praise the Lord in all His Three Persons, in His Unity forever and ever!