

THE NEW TRANSLATION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL

The *Gloria*

Current Translation	New Translation
<p>Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.</p> <p>Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.</p> <p>Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,</p> <p>you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

This week, we continue our study of the Order of Mass by examining parts of the *Gloria*, which the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (the “instruction book” for the Mass) describes as “a very ancient and venerable hymn in which the Church, gathered together in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb.” The *Gloria* dates back to the Early Church, and should be sung on all Sundays outside Advent and Lent, as well as on feasts, solemnities, and certain special celebrations.

Much of the text of the *Gloria* comes from Scripture: the first lines are derived from the angels heralding the glad tidings of Christ’s birth in

Luke 2:14 - “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” The opening words (“Glory to God in the highest”) also correspond to the Latin, “*Gloria in excelsis Deo*” - a phrase universally familiar from the popular Christmas carol, “Angels We Have Heard on High”.

There are clearly substantial differences between the new liturgical text and the *Gloria* translation that we have been using. The current text reads, “peace to his people on earth,” which the new text expands to “**on earth peace to people of good will.**”

(Continued...)

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The *Gloria*—continued

The new translation of the *Gloria* is a richer reference to the fact that the Messiah’s coming brings the world a higher order of divine peace that only the incarnate Son of God can bestow. Those who live in accordance with God’s will and receive His grace shall experience the fullness of this peace.

Turning to the second sentence of the new *Gloria*, we notice something striking – the new translation recovers entire phrases that were left out of the current translation. In the current translation, we sing, “we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.” However, the Latin text of the hymn offers five successive ways in which we should pay homage to God: “**We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory.**” In a general sense, these all convey the same idea of worshiping God. But liturgical prayer is enhanced by poetic repetition, and these five descriptions of worship do hold subtle distinctions. Together, they combine to express the extent to which it is our Christian duty to give “glory to God.”

Notice that the first half of the hymn is addressed to God the Father, whereas the remainder is addressed to God the Son. In the second half, we find that “only Son of the Father” is replaced by the title, “**Only Begotten Son.**” The phrase “Son of the Father” is moved to after “Lord God, Lamb of God.”

The addition of “Only Begotten Son” recovers a key phrase from the Latin text – “*Fili Unigenite.*” This is a venerable title of Jesus Christ, which speaks of the fact that the Son of God comes forth from the Father, yet is no less an eternal Person of the Divine Trinity.

Unlike our current translation, the new text includes two lines (rather than one) that begin with “**you take away the sins of the world,**” thereby reflecting the Latin text. By regaining this line and an additional “have mercy on us” in the next line, the new translation features a classic

threefold structure of supplication: “**have mercy on us...receive our prayer...have mercy on us.**” We also see this sort of structure in the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei*.

In addition, there is a slight change within the phrase, “you take away the sins of the world” (which comes from John 1:29). The current translation has “sin of the world,” while the new translation will have the plural, “sins” (in Latin, “*peccata*”). Though a seemingly minor change, it does give greater emphasis to the fact that Christ does not just conquer sin in general, but also forgives all our individual sins.

It is important to recognize that the *Gloria* really should be sung whenever possible – it is a hymn, after all. The text of the *Gloria* is also most clearly expressed when it is sung straight through (“through-composed”) without refrains (i.e., repetition of the opening line). This better preserves the content structure (again, the *Gloria*’s first half is addressed to the Father; the second half to the Son), while encouraging the whole assembly to learn and sing it in its entirety, thereby fostering greater participation.

Due to substantial changes in wording, the *Gloria* has been the most challenging piece for sacred music composers to render in English. English chant versions of the *Gloria* and other Mass parts have been developed, drawing inspiration from various traditional Latin settings. Having musical settings that are simple to learn, yet very beautiful, will contribute greatly to making Mass more reverent and to giving proper glory to God.

This series was prepared by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. For more Roman Missal resources, please visit <http://www.diocesefwsb.org/diocesan-offices/>