



To review what we have covered so far regarding the Mass, we have recalled our baptism with the Holy Water, genuflected to honor Jesus in the tabernacle, quietly and prayerfully prepared for Mass, sung the opening hymn, made the Sign of the Cross, and humbly called to mind our sins and praised God's mercy in the Penitential Act. Now, it is time for another one of my favorite parts of the Mass: The *Gloria*.

A Song of Praise

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.” Many of us may recognize these words from St. Luke's Gospel as the song the angels sing in praise announcing the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (Luke 2:14). Each year on Christmas Eve, I recall our family traditions from when I was young, including Christmas Eve Mass together as a family. One year, we went to bed very early so that we wouldn't be too tired for the Mass at midnight. In my memory, I still hear very clearly my grandparents singing in the choir and the bells ringing with joy as we sang together the news of Christ's birth. As we grew older and became altar servers, my brother and I would practice so that we could ring the bells steadily throughout the *Gloria*. It took a lot of endurance!

As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* indicates, “The *Gloria in excelsis* (*Glory to God in the highest*) is a most ancient and venerable hymn by which the Church, gathered in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb” (*GIRM*, no. 53). The *Gloria* is full of phrases and titles from the Bible. Edward Sri explains, “one could describe this prayer, which goes back to early Christianity, as a mosaic of biblical titles for God and common biblical expressions of praise.” Sri goes on to list many Scripture references to these titles, such as “Lord Almighty” (Baruch 3:1; 2 Corinthians 6:18), “Lord God Almighty” (Revelation 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 19:6), and “King of Glory” (see *A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, p. 43).

Three Acts

From the context of the *Gloria*, we are clearly singing the first part to God the Father and then the second part to God the Son. According to Sri: “The next part of the *Gloria*, in a sense, tells a story—the story of Christ. Like a three-act play, the *Gloria* sums up the story of Christ's saving work moving from 1) his coming, to 2) his redeeming death, to 3) his triumphant resurrection and ascension into heaven” (p. 44). Once again, Sri highlights many references to the Scriptures, including the Divine Sonship of Christ (John 5:17-18; 10:30-38; 2 Corinthians 1:19; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 1:1-2); the Lamb of God (John 1:29, Revelation 5:6-14; 12:11; 17:14, among many others); and Christ's position at the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19) (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, pp. 45-46).

Sri continues, “Notice how the whole mission of Jesus is summed up in this section of the *Gloria*. We move from the Son's Incarnation, to his Paschal Mystery, to his enthronement in heaven. We move from praising Jesus as the ‘Only Begotten Son’ of the Father who became flesh and dwelt among us; to worshipping him as the ‘Lamb of God’ who by his sacrifice takes away the sin of the world; to praising him in his triumph over sin and death as he is ‘seated at the right hand of the Father.’ Indeed, the very climax of salvation history can be summed up in the *Gloria*” (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, p. 46).

Fittingly, we probably most often think of the *Gloria* as a hymn of praise. The Mass is our participation in the one perfect Sacrifice of Christ—the act of perfect worship of the Father. That certainly does call forth praises! The *Gloria* can truly be a great model of prayer for us and hopefully strengthens our readiness for the many fruits that will continue to come in the Mass. As we sing the *Gloria* together, it is a great lead into what comes next: The Collect, which gathers our prayers and presents our focus for the celebration of each Mass.