

Preparing for the New Translation

The Gloria



In the order of the Mass, the *Gloria* follows the Penitential Rite on all Feast days and Sundays outside the seasons of Advent and Lent or when All Souls Day falls on a Sunday, and on all Holy Days of Obligation and other Solemnities. The *Gloria* may be either recited or sung although singing it is more in keeping with the nature of *Gloria*, which is a hymn of praise modeled on the canticles and psalms of the Bible. It is an ancient hymn composed originally in Greek that goes back to at least the 300s. It has been used in Sunday Masses in Rome since before the 500s.

The instructions for the New Translation read, “The *Gloria* is preferably sung by the entire congregation, but it also may be sung by the choir or recited.”

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

Commentary

The differences between the two translations are significant, and it will probably take some time to familiarize ourselves with this new translation since for many faithful Mass goes the current translation is known by heart. The New Translation, however, is much more faithful to the original texts. The Current Translation cavalierly removed entire lines of the text of the *Gloria* and reordered others. As you can see there are whole phrases that our Current Translation omits entirely.

The Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Liturgy (SC), in paragraph 54 says, “In Masses which are celebrated with the people, a suitable place may be allotted to their mother tongue. This is to apply in the first place to the readings and “the common prayer,” but also, as local conditions may warrant, to those parts which pertain to the people...Nevertheless steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass [e.g.. the *Gloria*, the Creed, the Holy, Holy, and the Lamb or God] which pertain to them.”

Since the Second Vatican Council, this has not been widely followed, and in part our current translations make this difficult. Even if you are entirely ignorant of Latin, if you take the text of the Latin *Gloria* found in most hymnals and line it up with the Current Translation you will notice that the English text is far shorter. The Latin text (and the New Translation) gives a string of five verbs (praising, blessing, adoring, glorifying, and giving thanks) to describe our confession of praise in the presence of God. The Current Translation offers only three. Likewise the repetition of the phrase, which is found in the Latin text, “you take away the sins of the world” goes missing in our Current translation.

The Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Liturgy certainly did call for *participatio actuosa* (usually translated as “active participation” but more properly “actual participation” by the faithful). This phrase, at times, has been used to justify all sorts of abuses and as a means of rejecting traditional elements of Catholic worship, such as sacred silence and the use of Latin in certain places. The phrase, however, should never be understood as frenetic physical activity or an attempt to shoehorn more and more people into the

Sanctuary. Instead, its true meaning should be found in the source from which the Second Vatican Council took the phrase, namely in Pope St. Pius X's *motu proprio, Tra le sollecitudini*, which he issued in 1903 just three months after he became pope, which advocated a revival of Gregorian chant and where the phrase was first used. St. Pius X taught that the faithful should be taught those parts of the Mass, such as the *Gloria*, and be able to enter into the prayer that they are singing or that is being sung on their behalf. True "actual participation" must first and foremost begin in our interior assent to the words that we are praying, and a conscious uniting of ourselves to Christ whose one perfect sacrifice we are entering into in the Eucharistic prayer and whose Body and Blood we receive at Holy Communion.

Lest anyone be too anxious, this is not an attempt to "roll back" the Second Vatican Council or to do away with English in the Liturgy. Instead, a more faithful translation into English makes it easier for those who do not know Latin to look across the page at the English translation and understand the words that they are singing (or at least hearing). It makes it more feasible for parishes to access the rich history of musical Mass settings, which, because the texts are in Latin, have gone largely unused in most places in recent decades.

A Closer Look

The *Gloria* is composed of two main parts: one praising God the Father and one invoking Christ. It is also a confession of praise, and according to St. Augustine of Hippo the Latin word *confessio* denotes not only the confession of sins but also the confession of praise and of faith. It is fitting, therefore, to confess the praise of God immediately following the confession of sins and the invocation of his mercy.

The *Gloria* begins with a reference to the angels' greeting to the shepherds on the night of Christ's birth (Lk. 2:14 "*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.*") Neither the ancient Greek nor the Latin text copy the Gospel verse exactly, but undoubtedly this is the origin of the beginning of the prayer.

Scriptural allusions are also made to Jn. 1:29, where St. John

the Baptist points to Christ and exclaims *Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*. Jesus is the one perfect sacrificial offering who takes away the sins of the world. In the Gospel according to St. John, sin is spoken of in the singular, namely the failure or refusal to recognize Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. In the *Gloria*, the Latin official text refers to sin in the plural reminding us that the forgiveness of every sin is made possible only by the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God. The New Translation reflects the Latin text where it says, *you take away the sins of the world*.

Finally, in the praise offered to Christ by the phrases *you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord*, there is an incorporation of Rev. 15:4 (*For you alone are holy*) and Ps. 83:19 (*Show them you alone are the LORD, the Most High over all the earth*) we see a confession of faith in the Divine nature of Christ in the nature of God as the Holy Trinity. [The use of the title "Lord" to refer to Christ in the New Testament, it should be remembered, was a way of referring to His Divinity since pious Jews often replaced the Hebrew word for God (YHWH) with Lord (Adonai) when they were reading from the Sacred Scriptures.] The confession of sins leads into the confession of praise, which instinctively reveals a confession of faith.

True "actual participation" must first and foremost begin in our interior assent to the words that we are praying, and a conscious uniting of ourselves to Christ whose one perfect sacrifice we are entering into in the Eucharistic prayer and whose Body and Blood we receive at Holy Communion.

The Collect /Opening Prayer

The introductory rites of the Mass conclude with the "Collect" or Opening Prayer. The role of this prayer is to gather up or "collect" the prayers of the Church. The priest in his role of supplicant on behalf of the People of God places the petitions mentioned in each Collect before the majesty of God. The Collect is to be said by the priest standing with his arms extended. The response of the faithful remains Amen. The Entrance Chant, the Collect, the Prayer over the Gifts, the Communion Chant, and the Prayer after Communion are all found in the *Roman Missal* in the areas known as the "Commons" or the "Propers". Aside from the chants, these prayers are said orally only by the priest, and they change from week to week (sometimes from day to day). The difference in translation of these prayers is far more substantial and noticeable than those changes made to the "Ordinary" of the Mass, which we are reflecting upon in these pages.

