



Fr. Daniel's Corner

Mass Moment: Part 7

The Gloria:

The Gloria is an ancient hymn of praise to God, taking its first words from Luke 2:14, the hymn of the angels to the shepherds at the birth of Christ, "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to those of good will." The remaining verses were added later, and portions of them can be traced back to the 3rd and 4th centuries. Most of the lyrics of this ancient hymn, proclaiming the names and titles of God and Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, are drawn directly from the Scriptures:

Lord God (Exodus 20:7; Amos 5:1-3)
 Heavenly King (Psalm 24)
 Almighty God (Genesis 17:1)
 Father (Matthew 6:6-13)
 Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:28)
 Begotten Son (Hebrews 1:5)
 Lord God (John 20:28)
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29)
 Son of the Father (John 3:16)
 Only Son (coming from the Father) (John 1:14, 18)
 Seated at the Right Hand of the Father (Mark 14:60-62)
 Holy One (John 6:69)
 Lord (Acts 2:36)
 (Son of the) Most High (Luke 1:32; Luke 8:28)

By using the angels' same words, we know that we are singing with them now, acknowledging the heavenly hosts of angels in the gathered assembly. At Mass, we sing for the same reason that the angels sang; that God has sent His only Begotten Son among us. Humble and lowly he comes among us, and so, struck with awe at this unexpected shape of divine plan, as the angels themselves were, we cry out in a hymn to God's glory.

Through this hymn, the Church, gathered in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb. It helps us transition from our sorrow for sin to God's greatness, shown above all in our redemption that we may hope for eternal life in union with the Trinity through "Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father." In advent and lent, the Gloria is omitted because of the austerity of those seasons, but it is said on Solemnities and Feasts, and at particular celebrations of a more solemn character.

The first part of the Gloria is an address to God the Father, in the language of praise and adoration: "We worship you. We give you thanks. We praise you for your great glory." Then we turn to address Jesus Christ himself, acknowledging him first as "only Son of the Father." Then we cry out to him as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," and so in the midst of our praise we beg him for mercy. This is as we have just seen in the Penitential Acts (the Kyrie) last week. To Jesus, from whom we ask mercy, we say "You alone are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High." The Gloria concludes by exulting again in the triune name of God: "Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father."

Indeed, it is a beautiful prayer that is meant to point our hearts towards a spirit of awe. It reminds us, gathered in the pews of the church, that we are called to praise and glorify the maker of our hearts and souls.