

New and Corrected Translation of the Mass – Part 18

The *Sanctus*

At the end of the Preface, we sing the *Sanctus*. This is the second time we take up the words of angels in the Mass. The first time was in the *Gloria*, which begins with the song the angels sang to the shepherds at Bethlehem. Here we take up the song the angels sing in eternity, before God's throne.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. *Ps 89.8; Isa 6.3; Rev 4.8*

Heaven and earth are full of your glory. *Num 14.21; Acts 7.55; Rev 15.8*

Hosanna in the highest. *Mark 11.10*

The threefold 'holy' is used of God alone in the Bible. The 'thrice-holy God' takes on a deeper meaning for us, now that God has revealed himself as the Most Holy Trinity. Two Hebrew words appear in the *Sanctus*: *sabaoth* and *hosanna*. 'Sabaoth' is translated as 'hosts', meaning 'armies'. In the Bible God is called 'Lord of hosts' or 'God of hosts' over 300 times. The hosts in question are angelical ones. God commands the heavenly armies of angels. This military language reminds us that we are waging a spiritual battle (cf. 2 Cor 10.3-4), for which we must be equipped (cf. Eph 6.10-17). And we can only be equipped by the holiness of the thrice-holy God.

'Hosanna' means "save, I pray" in Jewish worship, but by Jesus' time it already connoted a cry of joy, a liturgical hurrah. It is an exclamation of joy, triumph and exultation. That the hosanna extends to the highest means the joy of salvation achieved by Christ on earth extends throughout heaven and earth. Just as heaven and earth are full of God's glory, so too are they full of the joy of God's salvation.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The *Sanctus* concludes with the words of a psalm, which the people shouted joyfully as Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The irony is that the crowds do not realise that Jesus comes in His own name, since He is the Lord. And so in His lament over Jerusalem, Jesus declares, 'You will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' (Mt 23.39; Lk 13.35). Concluding the *Sanctus* with these words is thus an expression of our desire to see the Lord again. The words are fittingly introduced here, because shortly afterwards, after the consecration, we do see the Lord: under the appearances of bread and wine, but truly, actually and substantially present in the Blessed Sacrament.