

New and Corrected Translation of the Mass – Part 6

The *Gloria* – Part 1

**Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.**

Luke 2.14

This is the first of two places in the Mass where we take up the words of angels. Here it is the song of the angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem, after announcing Christ's birth. Very early on the *Gloria* found its way into the liturgy; it is also found in the Syrian and Greek liturgies, and not in the Latin one only. The 'good will' here is not that of the people, but rather the good will *of God* towards His people. Glory is given to God, and peace to men. And both of these are brought about by the sacrifice of Christ's Passion.

**We praise you, we bless you,
we adore you, we glorify you,
we give thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.**

*Baruch 3.6; Psalm 145.2
Rev 4.11; Rom 11.36; 1 Cor 6.20
1 Chron 16.24; 2 Cor 4.15
Rev 4.8; Tob 13.7; Dan 4.37
Gen 17.1; 2 Cor 6.18*

The second part of the *Gloria* focuses on God the Father. We carry out two ends of prayer here: adoration and thanksgiving. We praise, bless, adore, and glorify God. The words used are not synonymous. This shows us how we struggle to worship God as we ought, and as He deserves. In the old translation we praised God for His glory. Here, more correctly, 'we give thanks for your great glory'. That is, we thank God *for being God*. This is much more than simply praising Him. The thing which makes this hymn so liberal and magnificent (both words meant in a good sense) is that it does not pay tribute to God in proportion to man's indebtedness. We praise Him for what He is, and not just what for He is *for us*. True love could not entertain such scrupulous distinctions.

Rather, we direct our attention wholly at God. With the confidence of children towards a loving father, we are happy simply to be allowed to praise God. This hymn then has the power to free us from a narrow egocentrism, and bring us to an altogether higher plane of worship. We are freed from simply the community celebrating itself, and are directed to share in the heavenly liturgy, praising and blessing the One whose grace allows us both to glorify Him and to glory in His love. Even if no other hymn is sung at Mass, the *Gloria* should be. In fact, singing the *Gloria* at Holy Mass takes precedence over ordinary hymns.