

The new Roman Missal: The Gloria

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When we begin using the New Roman Missal on the First Sunday of Advent, The Gloria is one of the prayers that has been re-translated to more closely reflect the meaning of the original Latin text:

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* describes the *Gloria* as “a most ancient and venerable hymn by which the Church, gathered in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb” (no. 53).



Much of the text of the *Gloria* comes from Scripture: the first lines are derived from the Angels heralding the glad tidings of Christ’s birth in Luke 2:14 - “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” The opening words (“Glory to God in the highest”) also correspond to the Latin, “*Gloria in excelsis Deo*” - a phrase universally familiar from the popular Christmas carol, “Angels We Have Heard on High.”

There are clearly substantial differences between the new liturgical text and the *Gloria* translation that we have been using. The current text reads, “peace to his people on earth,” which the new text expands to “on earth peace to people of good will.” It helps to know that some versions of the Bible render Luke 2:14 as “on earth peace, good will toward men.” The new translation of the *Gloria* is a richer reference to the fact that the Messiah’s coming brings the world a higher order of divine peace that only the incarnate Son of God can bestow. Those who live in accordance with God’s will and receive His grace shall experience the fullness of this peace.

Turning to the second sentence of the new *Gloria*, we notice something striking - the new translation recovers entire phrases that were left out of the current translation. Right now, we sing, “we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.” However, the Latin text of the hymn offers five successive ways in which we should pay homage to God: “We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory.” In a general sense, it is true that these all convey the same idea of worshiping God. But liturgical prayer is enhanced by poetic repetition, and these five descriptions of worship do hold subtle distinctions. Together, they combine to express the extent to which it is our Christian duty to give “glory to God.”

The addition of “Only Begotten Son” recovers a key phrase from the Latin text - “*Fili Unigenite.*” This is a venerable title of Jesus Christ, which speaks of the fact that the Son of God comes forth from the Father, yet is no less an eternal Person of the Divine Trinity.

Unlike our current translation, the new text includes two lines (rather than one) that begin with “you take away the sins of the world,” thereby reflecting the Latin text. By regaining this line and an additional “have mercy on us” in the next line, the new translation features a classic threefold structure of supplication: “have mercy on us... receive our prayer... have mercy on us.” We also see this sort of structure in the *Kyrie* and Lamb of God.

PRESENT TEXT	NEW TEXT
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,

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;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

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.

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, receive
our prayer;**

you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
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.