

CATECHESIS #11

May 19, 2019

Why do we sing the Gloria?

The opening line: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will” takes up the song of the angels who proclaimed the good news to the shepherds on the night of Christ’s birth. Scripture tells us, song is the language of Heaven, voiced by all, even for those of us who cannot sing a note in the here and now.

To show the importance of song in Mass, Church documents* quote St Paul who instructs the faithful to sing whenever they gather and that singing is the sign of the heart’s joy. It also cites the ancient proverb that tells us “Whoever sings well prays twice over.” The same document goes on to teach us that “Great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass” and that every care should be taken to include singing especially on Sundays. For these reasons, we join our voices in the timeless song of the angels by singing the Gloria.

The Gloria is an ancient hymn dating back to at least the third century, incorporating many truths of our faith. It is also considered a festive hymn used only on Sundays and significant feast days. We notice its absence from Mass during Advent and Lent due to the penitential nature of these seasons.

The Gloria has 4 parts. In the opening line of the angels’ song, we should notice, that peace is offered only to people of good will, not to all people. This reminds us that God’s peace must find a receptive soul to be able to receive it – if our soul is not in a state of grace, we will not experience God’s peace.

The second part of the song glorifies God the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is not absent but rather, it is the Holy Spirit who uses our voices to sing these praises. He is the spirit of love that exists between the Father and the Son so it is our privilege that our voices become one with His in this outpouring of love.

In the third part of the Gloria, we once again beg for mercy from the God who paid the price for our sin with His own blood.

In the final part of the song we extol the primacy of our triune God, naming the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for there is no other beside Him.