

Year of the Eucharist

October 2004 to October 2005

Part 7 in a series on
The Year of the Eucharist
from
The Office of Rites and Sacraments
Catholic Diocese of Memphis
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The Structure of the Mass

The Gloria (Latin for *Glory [to God]*) has been a part of the Mass since about the sixth century. It is a joyful hymn containing numerous acclamations in praise of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. After having confessed our need for God in the Act of Penitence, we now worship God in song as we lift our hearts and voices in praise.

According to the *Introduction to the Order of Mass* (#75), "Every effort should be made to ensure that the Gloria can be sung; however, for pastoral reasons it may be recited instead."

It is clear that the norm for the Gloria is that it be sung. To recite the Gloria is the exception, and only "for pastoral reasons."

Number fifty-three of the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* refers to the Gloria as "a very ancient and venerable hymn in which the Church, gathered together in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb." It goes on to say that the text of this hymn may not be replaced by any other text."

Our prayer at Mass takes many forms. Some of it is recited, some is silent, some is done with gesture, as a bow or a genuflection. And some is sung. It is all prayer.

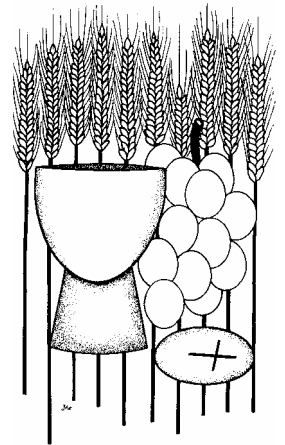
During this season of Ordinary Time, week after week in the *Gloria* we have sung the words, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth." During this Year of the Eucharist, as we sharpen our own awareness and participation in the Mass, we might ask ourselves if we have become so accustomed to the words of this ancient hymn that we sing them without giving them their due attention. A brief look at the daily news is enough to tell us that if ever we needed to pray for "peace to God's people on earth" it is now. The liturgy is designed to give us many wonderful opportunities to pray regularly. Perhaps this week we might focus on giving our full attention to the words of this sixth-century hymn as it is sung by cantor, choir and assembly.

The Collect (also called the *Opening Prayer*) concludes the Introductory Rites. The priest's words, "Let us pray," are followed by a brief period of silence. This silence is purposely placed at this time. It is a time for all present to remember that we are in God's presence and to silently express our own prayer and intentions.

The Collect is an opportunity for a moment of personal prayer, as each one gathered turns inward to listen to the Holy Spirit whisper the desires of his/her heart. We give those desires to God and wait in silence for the prayer of the priest as he gathers up, or "collects" our prayer and presents it to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. We make the prayer our own with our whole-hearted, full-voiced "Amen."

The Introductory Rites are designed to give the gathered assembly time to remember that we are more than a crowd of individuals. When we gather for Eucharist, we gather through Christ, in Christ and with Christ in the unity of the Holy Spirit to give glory and honor to God. As the Introductory Rites come to a close, we have had time to remember who we are. We have entered into worship in song, in spoken word, in dialogue with the priest, in our seeking God's mercy, in praising God and in listening to God in our hearts.

We are now prepared to receive God in Word and in Eucharist.



CONNECTING LITURGY AND LIFE...

There is a lesson to be learned from Horton the Elephant, a character in a delightful children's story by Dr. Seuss!

Horton is a kind-hearted elephant who agrees to sit on the egg of Daisy, the selfish bird who wants to go on vacation. Horton sits through rain and snow and beating sun. When his friends jeer, he repeats the same refrain: "I meant what I said and I said what I meant; an elephant's faithful one hundred percent!"

If we pay attention, if we mean what we say and say what we mean, the connections between liturgy and life will become increasingly obvious.

Text: Judy Gray
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