

# *Season of Christmas*



*December 25, 2009 – January 10, 2010*

# Gloria in Excelsis Deo!

You see it on Christmas cards and sing it in carols—*Gloria in excelsis Deo!* “Glory to God in the highest!” This is the song of the angels in Luke’s story of Jesus’ birth: “And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.’” (Luke 2:13–14).

You also know it as a song we sing at Mass. At Mass, the singing of the Gloria is the entire action taking place—no processions or anything else—because giving praise to God is what we were made for, especially when we gather for the Eucharist.

The Gloria is the Church’s way of giving praise to God simply for being God. The first part of the Gloria is all about who God the Father is for us—heavenly King, the Almighty who is worshiped, blessed, thanked, and praised. We fully see God’s glory in the coming of Jesus Christ. So the second part of the Gloria gives praise to Christ who is Son of the Father, Lamb of God, and seated at the Father’s right hand. Even the two phrases that are petitions, “have mercy on us” and “receive our prayer,” are statements of praise because we trust in God’s mercy, which we receive through the Holy Spirit. The Gloria culminates in a “doxology,” an acclamation of praise to the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

When we sing the Gloria at Christmastime and throughout the year, we learn how to give praise to God first for who God is as well for what God does for us. In this season when the desire to “get” things can easily overshadow the need to give, the Gloria reminds us to “give”—praise to God. Gloria!

## Table Prayer for the Christmas Season

For the song of the angels:

*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

For every gift sent from heaven:

*Glory to God in the highest!*

For the birth of our Savior:

*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

For the love of God in the human family:

*Glory to God in the highest!*

For the food on this table:

*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

For our growth in faith, hope, and love:

*Glory to God in the highest!*

For the work of feeding the hungry:

*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

For every good deed done in God’s name:

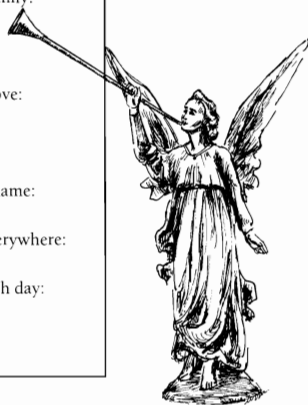
*Glory to God in the highest!*

For peace on earth and good will everywhere:

*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

For joyful glad tidings today and each day:

*Glory to God in the highest!*



# A REVELATION CELEBRATION



Here's a Christmas season riddle: What happens when you put together magi, a river, and a wedding feast?

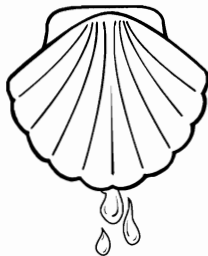
You get an Epiphany!

"Epiphany" means a "revelation," "manifestation," or "appearing," and on this great Christmas season feast we remember how God was revealed to the world as an infant in a manger. Among the first to see this were the magi, foreigners who followed a star to see the Christ Child (Matthew 2:1-12).



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But the story of the magi is just one part of the "revelation celebration." For the Eastern Orthodox churches, Epiphany (January 6) is also the day to remember Christ's revelation as God's beloved Son at his baptism in the river Jordan (Matthew 3:16-17). On this day they celebrate the sacrament of baptism, and in some (very cold!) countries, cross-shaped holes will be cut in frozen rivers to immerse the new Christians!



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This still isn't a complete picture of Epiphany. Christ's divinity was also revealed at the wedding feast at Cana, where Jesus turned six jars of water into wine (John 2:1-11). Here, Christ reveals his divine power through this first of his miracles.

These three stories form a triptych. A triptych is a piece of art divided into three panels or sections showing different, yet related, scenes, and their combination gives the entire work deeper meaning. So these three Gospel passages show us the deeper

meaning of Christ's birth in human flesh.

The Epiphany is not only about revealing Christ's divinity but also about highlighting his humanity. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ's body, broken and handed over, risen and glorified, transforms our human lives into divine revelations—signs—of God with us.

When you celebrate Epiphany this year, remember not just the three kings but also the three ways God's wondrous love for humanity is revealed. And the next time you see a tiny baby, dip your hand in the water of the font, or toast the bride and groom at a wedding, see if you can recognize the divine presence of God revealed in these holy, human events.



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## Christmas Season Daily Morning Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
be with me as I begin this day.  
Joy of the angels,  
let your good news  
fill my every word.  
Bright Morningstar,  
shine through my thoughts  
and deeds.  
Sun of Justice,  
rise in my heart today  
and every day. Amen.



## Christmas Season Daily Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
stay with me,  
for evening has come.  
Glory of heaven,  
may I rejoice with the saints  
at your throne.  
Light of the world,  
remain with me  
through the darkness.  
Prince of Peace,  
grant me a restful,  
restoring sleep. Amen.

# *The Season of Christmas and the Mass*

*... and the Word became flesh.*

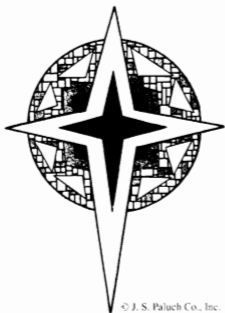
Being fully human, Jesus' mortal life was limited, as ours is. Just as he was born, he would also—eventually, somehow—have to die. He did so through the sacrifice on the cross, and rose again, glorified, from the dead. The Spirit of God continues to unite wondrously the mortal and immortal natures of Christ in every Eucharist. We receive in our own bodies the very presence of the true Body and Blood that were sacrificed on Calvary and raised from the tomb for our eternal glory.



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*All the ends of the earth have seen God's saving power.* At the end of each Mass, we become a people "on the go" again—like Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and the magi. We are also like Christ at his baptism, when he began his public ministry. Our baptism also calls us to let others know that Christ is the heart of our daily story. It is through us that the Holy Spirit continues to make the Word of God come alive for others. We go forth in joy, to love and serve, so all the earth will see God's saving power!

# *The Season of Christmas and the Mass*



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*Arise in splendor!  
Your light has come!*  
People in the  
Christmas stories  
are “on the  
go”—Mary and  
Joseph journey  
to Bethlehem, the  
shepherds leave  
their flocks to find  
Jesus lying in the  
manger, the magi  
wander by the light  
of a star to worship

Christ. We are people “on the go” who come to adore him, Christ the Lord, when we gather to celebrate the Eucharist. Each Sunday we may come from different places, but the heart of the story for all of us is the same now as then: Christ the Lord.

*In the beginning was the Word . . .*

John the Evangelist begins his “Christmas story” with these words. The Word he describes is eternal and is the source of all created life. This is why our weekly time with the words of scripture are so important: it is our way of being in touch with and instructed by the divine presence of God, who speaks to us through these words. For us today, these words are still the source of our life, as the Holy Spirit who inspired them continues to inspire us.

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