



What Does That Mean?

As we celebrate the arrival of the 2019 Book of Common Prayer, it seems appropriate to review some of the vernacular that we use in our worship service. Here's one of those terms.

What is the "Gloria in Excelsis?" Why this term?

Gloria in Excelsis [Deo] (pronounced, "glôr-ē-ə ,in-eks-'chel-səs"), is Latin for "Glory on high [be to God]" and is based on the angelic proclamation to the shepherds at Jesus' birth as recorded in the Gospel of Luke, second chapter. It is known as the *Angelic Hymn* as well as the *Greater Doxology* and is most often abbreviated *Gloria in Excelsis* or simply *Gloria*. It is a recitation of God's great glory.

Its first use may date back to the second century. The Byzantine tradition introduced it to the Mass in the fourth century as another opportunity for those worshiping to participate early in the service. Cranmer incorporated it into the 1549 Book of Common Prayer after the ninefold *Kyrie Eleison*, but in subsequent editions, it was moved. The 1979 BCP restored the *Gloria* to its earlier position in the entrance rite. Over time, other verses were added to it, creating a doxology which the 2019 BCP retains. Other songs of praise may be used in lieu of the *Gloria*, and it is omitted during penitential seasons and days appointed for fasting.

Our response is to recite or sing the *Gloria* standing and to honor our Lord with a simple bow of our heads [optional] as we say His name. When we recite the *Gloria*, we are not only joining our voices with countless others who are saying it with us across the globe and with all those who preceded us, but also with the entire company of Heaven. Together, we rejoice that God gave us His only begotten Son so that we might live with the Trinity forever. Our liturgy celebrates this gift and Jesus' victory over death through the shedding of His innocent blood.



Sources:

- *The Anglican Way* (2014)
- Everipedia
- The Online Episcopal Dictionary
- Webster's Online Dictionary

