

## Why are the Gloria and Alleluia omitted during Advent/Lent?

Throughout the liturgical year, the Catholic Church makes certain changes to the Mass to reflect the different liturgical seasons. Besides the change in the color of the priest's vestments, the Advent and Lenten seasons are marked by two very distinct liturgical omissions. Neither the hymn known as the Gloria (*Glory to God in the Highest*) nor the *Alleluia* verse sung before the Gospel proclamation is permitted during the entire 40 days of Lent (with a few small exceptions).

### Why is that?

First of all, the Gloria is a hymn that celebrates the coming of the Lord (using words from the angels at Christ's birth). The Church during Lent returns in spirit to a time, when the people of God were in exile, waiting for the Christ or Messiah to come and save them. It is a similar season of expectation as is *Advent*, but instead of awaiting Christ's birth from the womb of Mary, the Christian people await Christ's second "birth" from the womb of the Holy Sepulcher.

Secondly, following this same spirit of exile, the Church joins Moses and the Israelites as they wander in the desert for 40 years. It is a time of agony and purification, one where the faithful join together in saying, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Psalm 137:4) The word "Alleluia" is rooted in a Hebrew expression that means "praise the Lord" and is thus omitted during *Lent*.

As a result, our focus in Advent is the second coming of the Lord, while in Lent we are not rejoicing, but in mourning for our sins, looking at those things that prevent us from an authentic relationship with God. Once these are removed through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we are able to rejoice again at Easter; for it is not only Christ's resurrection that we celebrate, but our own rebirth in the spirit.

### The Meaning of the Alleluia

The Alleluia comes to us from Hebrew, and it means "praise Yahweh." Traditionally, it has been seen as the chief term of praise of the choirs of angels, as they worship around the throne of God in Heaven. It is, therefore, a term of great joy, and our use of the Alleluia during Mass is a way of participating in the angels' worship. It is also a reminder that the Kingdom of Heaven is already established on earth, in the form of the Church, and that our participation in Mass is a participation in Heaven.

### Our Lenten Exile

We Christians today are on a spiritual journey, toward the Second Coming of Christ and our future life in Heaven. In order to emphasize the penitential nature of that journey, the Catholic Church, during Lent, removes the Alleluia from the Liturgy of the Mass. We no longer sing with the choirs of angels; instead, we acknowledge our sins and practice repentance, so that one day we may again have the privilege of worshipping God as the angels do.

## **The Return of the Alleluia at Easter**

That day comes triumphally on Easter Sunday—or, rather, at the Easter Vigil, on Holy Saturday night, when the priest chants a triple Alleluia before he reads the Gospel, and all of the faithful present responds with a triple Alleluia. The Lord is risen; the Kingdom has come; our joy is complete; and, in concert with the angels and saints, we greet the risen Lord with shouts of "Alleluia!"

## **What Should Replace the Alleluia During Lent?**

When the Church omits the Alleluia before the Gospel during Lent, we usually still sing something else to introduce the Gospel reading. Most Catholics probably think that they know what the Catholic Church offers as a replacement for the Alleluia: it's "*Glory and Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ*," right? You might be surprised to learn that this acclamation, which is widely used during Lent in the United States, is not the only option (or even necessarily the preferred one) in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), the Church document that instructs priests on the Liturgy of the Mass.

## **There Are Many Options**

Instead, Chapter II, Section II, Part B, Paragraph 62b of the GIRM states:

During Lent, in place of the *Alleluia*, the verse before the Gospel is sung, as indicated in the Lectionary. It is also permissible to sing another psalm or tract, as found in the *Graduale*.

The *Graduale Romanum* is the official liturgical book that contains all of the chants that are proper (that is, the chants that are prescribed) for each Mass throughout the year—for Sundays, weekdays, and feast days.

So, in fact, the GIRM indicates that the only thing that is sung before the Gospel is the prescribed verse (which can be found in a missal or missalette, as well as in the official Lectionary that the priest uses) or another psalm verse or tract (a biblical passage) found in the *Graduale*. Nonbiblical acclamations should not be used, and the verse (according to paragraph 63c of the GIRM) can be omitted altogether [at the discretion of the priest celebrant of the Mass].

## **Yes, "Glory and Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ" Is One Option**

In case you're wondering, "Glory and Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ" is both drawn from a biblical passage (cf. Philippians 1:11) and found in the *Graduale Romanum*. So while it is not prescribed as the only possible replacement for the Alleluia, "Glory and Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ" is an acceptable one, though the verse before the Gospel, found in the Lectionary, is the preferred substitute for the Alleluia.

(SR: <https://aleteia.org/2019/03/01/why-are-the-gloria-and-alleluia-omitted-during-lent/> and <https://www.learnreligions.com/no-alleluia-during-lent-542948>)