

Holy, Holy, Holy

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During the Eucharistic Prayer, we, the faithful, have three acclamations: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Memorial Acclamation (for example, “When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, / we proclaim your Death, O Lord, / until you come again.”) and the great Amen at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer. These acclamations are part of the prayer, and together with the priest, we offer our praise and thanksgiving to God, through Christ Jesus and in the power of the Spirit. The Holy, Holy, Holy is an acclamation to the Preface that was just proclaimed by the priest. Typically, this Preface highlights the death and Resurrection of Christ who breaks bonds of sin in order to unite us with himself.

The word *Sanctus* is Latin for “holy.” Hence, the name of this acclamation comes from the very first word, rather three words, of the text. Here is the text of the Sanctus:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

The text of the Holy, Holy, Holy in the revised translation of *The Roman Missal* has only one change, and that change is to the first line. We once sang, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might.” Now, as we see above, the

translation is rendered, God of hosts. While the word “hosts” is a literal translation of the official Latin edition of *The Roman Missal*, it also opens up the interpretation beyond God being only for those who are mighty and powerful to a God who is of the hosts: God of heaven and earth. God’s dominion, reign, or kingdom stretches beyond our worldly understandings of power and might to a God who is God of all. Indeed, God is holy.

Moreover, God’s holiness is tangible in heaven and on earth. This acclamation is one that not only the church on earth sings, but also the entire communion of saints. Heaven and earth unite in this great prayer of thanksgiving for the holiness of God who becomes tangible in the person of Jesus the Christ.

The third and fifth lines are taken from the twentieth chapter of Matthew. “Hosanna in the highest.” The people proclaimed these words to Jesus as he rode on a donkey through the streets of Jerusalem. They waved palm branches and shouted praise to him as he processed with them. So, the Holy, Holy, Holy is not only a text about God’s greatness, but also an acclamation of who Christ is for us and with us. Christ “comes in the name of the Lord.” It is he who is also holy and deserving of our praise. It is Christ who would save us from sin by his death on the cross. God would raise him up to take away our sin so that we might be in communion with him and with one another.