

“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2: 14)

“Gloria” is the first Christmas hymn by the angels. When the angel of the Lord announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in Bethlehem, St. Luke writes: "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' " (Lk 2:13-14).

The Gloria reminds us of the mystery of the incarnation. The Gloria that we sing during the Eucharistic celebration recalls the angelic hymn. Pope Benedict XVI, during his homily at Christmas Midnight Mass in 2010 said: “The Church, in the Gloria, has extended this song of praise, which the angels sang in response to the event of the holy night, into a hymn of joy at God's glory - 'we praise you for your glory' ". In the Gloria, we praise the love and goodness of God who does not hesitate to send his only son as the savior and redeemer in the mystery of the incarnation. God's love and goodness are made visible and tangible in the birth of Christ.

The peace that St Luke's gospel speaks about (Lk 2:14; 7:50; 8:48; 10:5–6; 19:38, 42; 24:36) is something more than the absence of trouble or war of the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace); The concept of peace (*Shalom* in Hebrew) in the Old Testament is about the security and well-being of every creature. God gives this peace to the world by sending his only son as our savior and redeemer. Jesus, as the savior and redeemer, leaves this peace with his apostles during his last supper discourse: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid” (John 14: 27).

The peace that God gives us through the mystery of incarnation of his son is enjoyed only by those on whom God's favor rests. In order to enjoy the Peace of God as a Christmas gift we should be the recipients of God's favor. Finding favor of God means gaining approval, acceptance, special benefits or blessings from God. We need to be in the state of grace in order to enjoy God's favor and consequently the peace of God as a Christmas gift. The peace that God gives us is not dependent on our own strength or the situation around us. No matter what hard realities we are faced with, we can ask for a peace that comes from the powerful love of God.

Jesus comes to us as the Prince of Peace prophesied by the Prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah's prophecy we read: “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9: 6). Let us be ready and in the state of grace to receive the Prince of Peace.

May the Peace and Joy of Christmas be with you all through the New Year 2019.