LITURGY BYTES





Now that we are into Lent by five weeks, do you wonder why we no longer sing the "Alleluia" before the Gospel? Actually, the Lenten season is marked by two very distinctive liturgical omissions. Neither the "Gloria" nor the "Alleluia" verse are permitted to be used during the entire 40 days of Lent with a few exceptions. Why?

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 Messiah to come and save them. It is a similar season of expectation as is Advent, but instead of awaiting Christ's birth, Christians await Christ's second *birth* from the tomb on Easter morning.

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. The word *Alleluia* is rooted in a Hebrew expression that means praise the Lord. We join with the Israelites in saying: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Psalm 137:4) and omit it during the Lenten season.

As a result, the focus for Lent is not one of rejoicing, but mourning the things that prevent us from an authentic relationship with God. Once we make attempts to remove these *things*, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we are able to rejoice again at Easter. Afterall, it is only through Christ's resurrection that we celebrate Easter and our own rebirth as sons and daughters of God!

Have a blessed, peaceful and safe week ahead!~ Michele Hall

