



**Ecumenically Agreed Liturgical Texts**  
*from the English Language Liturgical Consultation*

*Rites and Prayers Supplemental to  
The Book of Alternative Services  
Of The Anglican Church of Canada*

*Authorized for use in public worship in The Anglican Church of Canada  
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**from the *English Language Liturgical Consultation*,**

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**1. The Texts**

**1.1. The Gloria**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to God's people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.  
For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High,  
Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**1.2. The Nicene Creed**

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

### **1.3. The Apostles Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

#### **1.4. Agnus Dei**

Jesus, Lamb of God.  
have mercy on us.  
Jesus, bearer of our sins,  
have mercy on us.  
Jesus, redeemer of the world,  
grant us peace.

##### **Alternative Version**

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.

#### **1.5. Te Deum Laudamus**

We praise you, O God,  
we acclaim you as Lord;  
all creation worships you,  
the Father everlasting.  
To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,  
the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise:  
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
The glorious company of apostles praise you.  
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.  
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.  
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you:  
Father, of majesty unbounded,  
your true and only Son, worthy of all praise,  
the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.  
You, Christ, are the king of glory,  
the eternal Son of the Father.  
When you took our flesh to set us free  
you humbly chose the Virgin's womb.

You overcame the sting of death  
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.  
You are seated at God's right hand in glory.  
We believe that you will come to be our judge.  
Come then, Lord, and help your people,  
bought with the price of your own blood,  
and bring us with your saints  
to glory everlasting.

### **Versicles and Responses after the Te Deum**

- V. Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance.  
R. Govern and uphold them now and always.  
V. Day by day we bless you.  
R. We praise your name for ever.  
V. Keep us today, Lord, from all sin.  
R. Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.  
V. Lord, show us your love and mercy,  
R. for we have put our trust in you.  
V. In you, Lord, is our hope:  
R. let us never be put to shame.

### **1.6. Benedictus**

The Song of Zechariah, Luke 1:68-79

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,  
who has come to his people and set them free.  
The Lord has raised up for us a mighty Savior,  
born of the house of his servant David.  
Through the holy prophets, God promised of old  
to save us from our enemies,  
from the hands of all who hate us,  
to show mercy to our forebears,  
and to remember his holy covenant.  
This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,  
free to worship him without fear,  
holy and righteous before him,  
all the days of our life.  
And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way,

to give his people knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of their sins.  
In the tender compassion of our God  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

### **Alternative Version**

Blessed are you, Lord, the God of Israel,  
for you have come to your people and set them free.  
You have raised up for us a mighty Savior,  
born of the house of your servant David.  
Through your holy prophets, you promised of old  
to save us from our enemies,  
from the hands of all who hate us,  
to show mercy to our forebears,  
and to remember your holy covenant.  
This was the oath you swore to our father Abraham:  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,  
free to worship you without fear,  
holy and righteous before you,  
all the days of our life.  
And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way,  
to give God's people knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of their sins.  
In the tender compassion of our God  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

### **1.7. Magnificat**

*The Song of Mary, Luke 1:46-55*

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
who has looked with favor on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

God has mercy on those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.  
The Lord has shown strength with his arm  
and scattered the proud in their conceit,  
casting down the mighty from their thrones  
and lifting up the lowly.  
God has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.  
He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,  
to remember the promise of mercy,  
the promise made to our forebears,  
to Abraham and his children for ever.

### **Alternative Version**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
you, the Almighty, have done great things for me  
and holy is your name.  
You have mercy on those who fear you  
from generation to generation.  
You have shown strength with your arm  
and scattered the proud in their conceit,  
casting down the mighty from their thrones  
and lifting up the lowly.  
You have filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.  
You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,  
to remember the promise of mercy,  
the promise made to our forebears,  
to Abraham and his children for ever.

## 2. Texts with Commentary

*The following is excerpted from the website of The English Language Liturgical Consultation,  
<https://www.englishtexts.org>*

### 2.1. Gloria in Excelsis

1. Glory to God in the highest,
2. and peace to God's people on earth.
3. Lord God, heavenly King,
4. almighty God and Father,
5. we worship you, we give you thanks,
6. we praise you for your glory.
7. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
8. Lord God, Lamb of God,
9. you take away the sin of the world:
10. have mercy on us;
11. you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
12. receive our prayer.
13. For you alone are the Holy One,
14. you alone are the Lord,
15. you alone are the Most High,
16. Jesus Christ,
17. with the Holy Spirit,
18. in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The author and source of this Greek “Christian psalm” are unknown. Since the fourth century it has been associated in the East with morning prayers. In Rome it found its way into the eucharistic liturgy only gradually, at first on special occasions such as Easter and Christmas (to which it is particularly appropriate). By the twelfth century a custom had grown of adding it on other Sundays as well, but not in Advent and Lent. Its purpose was to introduce the Liturgy of the Word. In 1552, for Anglican worship, Archbishop Cranmer transferred it, as an act of thanksgiving for holy communion, to just before the final blessing of the congregation. In recent years it has been generally restored to its earlier place.

It consists of a series of acclamations, a doxological and hymnodic form characteristic of the ancient Greek liturgies. Since it is not a dogmatic text like the creeds, a modern version may adapt its pattern to hymn structures that are more readily understood in English, without any basic modification of its substance and spirit. An analysis of the structure of the hymn shows that it consists of an opening antiphon based on Luke 2:14, followed by three stanzas of acclamation: the first addressed to God the Father, the second and third to God the Son. The above translation of the text, identical, except for one word in line 2, to that proposed by ICET, preserves this



structure, but transposes certain lines and phrases and omits others to avoid unnecessary repetition. It has proved widely acceptable in use.

**Lines 1-2.** The traditional English version “goodwill towards men” derives from a defective text of Luke 2:14 (*eudokia* instead of the better attested *eudokias*, “of good will,” which is followed by the Latin *bonae voluntatis*). The Eastern tradition, which refers the “favor” or “goodwill” to God, that is, God’s peace and favor to human beings, is almost certainly faithful to the original meaning. There is also a question whether “people” refers to the human race generally, or to the chosen people of God who are the recipients of God’s special favor. The proposed translation agrees with the consensus of New Testament scholars (evident in the Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible, the New Jerusalem Bible, and the New American Bible) that “favor” refers to God’s favor; but it leaves open, in the phrase “to God’s people,” whether “people” means all people or those who are specifically God’s people of faith and hope.

The “his” of the ICET text, which has no counterpart in the Greek or Latin texts, has been replaced by “God’s” to make the meaning clear and to avoid an unnecessary masculine expression. Other versions were considered but the one proposed was accepted as preserving the rhythm of the ICET text so that existing musical settings would not be disturbed.

The translation of *in excelsi* is difficult. According to biblical imagery, it would mean “in the highest heavens.” Today we do not have a cosmological theory of a series of heavens, whether three or seven. It would be a simple solution to translate the phrase by “in heaven,” but this lacks the exultant feeling of the acclamation. The phrase “in the highest” has therefore been used. This phrase agrees with familiar English liturgical and hymnodic usage.

**Lines 3-6.** This stanza is addressed to God the Father. The order of lines 3-4 and 5-6 in the original has been reversed to make it clear at once to whom the acclamations refer. The sense of the Greek phrases traditionally rendered “we bless you” and “we glorify you” is included in the words “worship,” “thanks,” and “praise.” The stanza now consists of two pairs of parallel lines, coming to a climax in the word “glory.”

**Lines 7-12.** This stanza is addressed to God the Son. The transposition of “only Son of the Father” and “Lamb of God” in lines 7-8 gives to each of these lines an acclamation that praises Christ in both his divine and human natures, and it also places “Lamb of God” in immediate juxtaposition with what follows in lines 9-10. The common Greek version introduces “and the Holy Spirit” after line 7, but this is possibly a later displacement from line 17 which is taken from the Latin. The double reference to Christ as “Son” in lines 7-8, which occurs in the Greek original, has been removed as redundant.

**Line 9.** The declarative form (“you take”) has been preferred to the relative form in lines 9 and 11, as more suitable to acclamation. The three acclamations of lines 9-12 in the Greek text have been reduced to two so that “have mercy on us” goes with line 9, and “receive our prayer” is related to Christ’s sitting at God’s right hand in line 11.

Some requests were received that “*si* (or *sin*) of the world” here and in the Agnus Dei be harmonized with each other. Those who prefer the singular refer to John 1:29. The Consultation agreed, but it also thought that the concepts of cosmic sin and individual sins should both be expressed in the liturgy. There is no effect on the musical settings whichever is chosen.

**Lines 13-18.** The third stanza continues the acclamations to Christ. In order to express the link, the conjunction “for” is used. The repetition of “alone” is emphatic, to show that the titles here given to Christ are those which also belong to the Father: “Holy One,” “Lord,” and “Most High.” Lines 16-18 are a joyous doxology ascribing glory to the Holy Trinity.

## The Nicene Creed

1. We believe in one God,
2. the Father, the Almighty,
3. maker of heaven and earth,
4. of all that is, seen and unseen.
5. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
6. the only Son of God,
7. eternally begotten of the Father,
8. God from God, Light from Light,
9. true God from true God,
10. begotten, not made,
11. of one Being with the Father;
12. through him all things were made.
13. For us and for our salvation
14. he came down from heaven,
15. was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
16. and became truly human.
17. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
18. he suffered death and was buried.
19. On the third day he rose again
20. in accordance with the Scriptures;
21. he ascended into heaven
22. and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
23. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
24. and his kingdom will have no end.
25. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
26. who proceeds from the Father,
27. who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
28. who has spoken through the prophets.
29. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
30. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
31. We look for the resurrection of the dead,
32. and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Creed called “Nicene” or the Creed of Nicaea and Constantinople is first known in its present form from the Council of Chalcedon (451), where it was accepted as the Creed of the Council of Constantinople (381). That Council is recorded simply as having confirmed the Nicene faith. The Council of Nicaea (325) framed its own statement of orthodox belief, stressing that the Son is of the same essential Being (*homoousios*) as the Father, against the Arian heretics who allotted the Son a lower rank. The original Nicene statement differs considerably from the one recognized at Chalcedon. The latter, our “Nicene Creed,” appears to be based on an earlier baptismal creed

possibly from Jerusalem or Antioch, and, in addition to the essential clauses from Nicaea, it incorporated material to combat later heresies.

Representing the statement of an ecumenical council, the Creed was naturally framed in the first-person plural, “we believe.” This plural use is not only original but is also appropriate in corporate worship. The reference is to the faith of the whole Church, of all times and places, and not only to that of the local congregation. This is in contrast to the Apostles’ Creed, which began as a personal profession of faith. The liturgical use of the singular “I believe” is, of course, a legitimate variation found both in the East and in the West. It may date back to the widespread use of this Creed for baptismal profession before its incorporation into the eucharistic liturgy. Its use in the Eucharist apparently began in Antioch in the late fifth century as a way of ensuring the orthodox belief of the communicants and later spread in the West but was not introduced in Rome until 1014.

**Line 2.** “the Almighty.” The addition of “the” brings out the significance of the Greek *pantocrator*, which is a noun and not an adjective. In Revelation 1:8, 4:8 it renders the Hebrew *Sabaoth* of Isaiah 6:3 and expresses God’s sovereign power.

**Line 4.** “seen and unseen.” This refers to “heaven and earth” (that is, the whole created universe) in the previous line and not to some further acts of creation. While the reference thus includes the angels, it does not preclude the notion that further creative processes may be part of the divine plan. A comma has been introduced after “is” for greater clarity, to indicate that what follows is an expansion of “all that is.”

**Line 5.** “We believe.” The repetition of this phrase, clearly implied by the sense, is found in several early creeds.

**Lines 6-10.** “begotten.” This word appears three times in the Greek to describe the Son’s unique relationship with the Father, as distinct from the process of physical birth. The Latin text dropped the formal equivalent (*genitum*) in line 7, and has *natum ex Patre* (“born of the Father”), which seems less appropriate than the use of *natus* with *Maria* in the Apostles’ Creed. It was thought sufficient to use “begotten” twice in English: it was dropped in line 6 as unnecessary and retained in line 7 to distinguish the truth conveyed by the Greek from any idea that the Son was created in time, or alternatively born in eternity.

**Lines 7-23.** In the original Greek the verbs in this section are expressed as a long series of participles which describe our Lord as one who is begotten (*gennethenta*) of the Father, descended (*katelthonta*) from heaven, made flesh (*sarkothenta*), became a human being (*enanthropesanta*), crucified (*staurothenta*), suffered (*pathonta*), buried (*taphenta*), risen (*anastanta*), ascended (*anelthonta*), sitting (*kathezomenon*), and coming (*erchomenon*). This sustained series could not be reproduced in the Latin version, nor can it be rendered satisfactorily in English. It has, however, influenced the handling of lines 14-16 as a closely linked sequence.

**Line 7.** “eternally begotten.” This phrase represents one of the statements in the original Creed of Nicaea that were specifically anti-Arian, directed against the assertion that the Son came into being at a certain time and only the Father existed from all eternity. (See J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 2<sup>nd</sup>ed. [New York: Harper & Row, 1960], p. 243, and *Early Christian Creeds*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [London: Longman, 1972], p. 238.) In the preparation of the ICET translation philosophical objections were made to an earlier proposal, “before time began,” while the older phrase “before all worlds” was thought to be archaic and obscure. A question has been raised whether the translation should read “begotten from” to represent the Greek *ek*, as in lines 8 and 9. It was finally decided that the English idiom “begotten of” more accurately represented the intimacy of the original.

**Line 8.** “God from God.” The use of the preposition “from” makes for a clearer as well as a more literal translation of the Greek *ek*. This phrase, repeated more fully in the next line, is retained to conform with the usual Latin and English versions. The fullness of expression also appears in the Greek text of the Creed of Nicaea, but “God from God” is absent in the Greek text of the Chalcedonian formulation used in the liturgy. (See Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, editio XXXVI [Freiburg: Herder, 1976], nos. 125, 180; also *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta* [Basel, 1962], p. 20.)

**Line 11.** The crucial Nicæan term *homooúsios* is difficult to translate, but “Being” seems preferable to “nature” or “essence” in a statement which tries to express the unity of the Godhead. The technical term “substance” has confusing materialistic overtones in modern English. “Being,” here with a capital letter to indicate that this is a noun referring to the uncreated Being of the Godhead, comes nearest to the literal meaning of the Greek philosophical term. The argument of the sentence is that because the Son is not made but begotten, he shares the same uncreated Being as the Father.

**Line 12.** The separation of this line and the use of “him” rather than the relative “whom” shows that the line refers to the Son and not to the Father, and that he is the Father’s agent in creation (John 1:3 and Hebrews 1:2).

**Line 13.** The omission of the generic “men” (Greek *anthropous*, Latin *homines*) in apposition to “us” may appear to weaken slightly the sense of the original, but this was considered less serious than insisting on a term which is increasingly misleading or excluding as tied to only one gender. A suggested alternative, “for us all,” was rejected because of a colloquial tendency in some places to attach “all” to virtually every plural pronoun, which would diminish the force of “us” as representing the whole human race.

**Lines 15 and 16.** These lines have been completely recast from the ICET version in favor of a fresh translation from the Greek. The new form of indentation makes it clear that the whole of our Lord’s redemptive work was for the salvation of the human race.

**Line 15.** “was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.” The Greek original (*ek Pneumatos hagiou kai Marias tes parthenou*) uses only one preposition *ek* (literally “out of” or “from”) in relation to both the Holy Spirit and our Lord’s mother. In English renderings of the Creed, however, the traditional idiom has long been “incarnate of,” which the Consultation has decided to retain. An objection to “from” in English is that it tends to suggest too slight a role for Mary, as a mere channel, in the work of redemption. For a similar reason it was decided to drop the ICET phrase “by the power of the Holy Spirit” (see the note on line 4 of the Apostles’ Creed). The received Latin version of the Creed makes a distinction in the prepositions used of the Spirit (*de Spiritu Sancto*, “by the Holy Spirit”) and the Virgin (*ex Maria Virgine*, “of or from the Virgin Mary”), but examination of earlier Latin forms of the Creed shows that this was at first a variant without special significance and may even have arisen from a scribal error (reading *ex* for *et*). There is an interesting and learned note in Pearson’s *Exposition of the Creed* [originally published 1659, ed. James Nichols, London 1854], page 242 showing the inadequacy of the supposed distinction between *de* and *ex* to express what some have taken it to express, namely a difference between the efficient and the material cause. In the Vulgate version of the New Testament *de* is used, where the Greek original has *ek*, of both the Virgin (Galatians 4:4) and the Spirit (Matthew 1:20). The Consultation believes that its version of line 15 accurately represents the original text. The Latin text might be rendered “by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary” but this runs the risk of wrongly suggesting “Mary’s Holy Spirit” without making it clear what the respective roles of Mary and the Spirit are. The Creed wants to make it clear that Jesus, the incarnate Son, is completely God and completely human and that the operation of both the Virgin and the Spirit were equally essential. According to Diogenes, bishop of Cyzicus, speaking at Chalcedon, this clause was added to the original Nicaean formulation to guard against Apollinarianism (a refusal to admit the completeness of the Lord’s humanity). For a critical discussion of this, see J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 333-337.

**Line 16.** “became truly human.” The Consultation faced great difficulty in adequately rendering *enanthropesanta* (literally “inhumaned,” see Denzinger-Schönmetzer, editio XXXVI, no. 150, where a literal version from the original Greek is given as (*inhumanatus est*). In the original sequence of participles (see above on lines 7-23) this one has a pivotal place in making a link between our Lord’s taking flesh and the reality of his suffering and death. It does not represent a further stage in time beyond the incarnation but spells out clearly the meaning of the incarnation. In some old versions of the Creed (see, for instance, Denzinger-Schönmetzer, editio XXXVI, no. 44) *enanthropesanta* was spelled out even more fully: “that is, taking on a complete human person, soul and body and mind and all things that belong to a human being apart from sin.” The Consultation believed that the sense was best captured by “became truly human.” It rejected a suggestion that the text should read “and became human,” as this, in common speech, implies something quite different, a change from severity to kindness. Some would have preferred to keep “and became man” as showing the particularity of the incarnation in a male person, Jesus. The Consultation rejected this as misrepresenting what the Creed affirms at this point. Neither the Greek *Anthropos* nor the Latin *homo* carry male overtones as “man” in contemporary English normally does.

**Line 18.** “suffered death.” The Greek *pathonta* carries the notions of both suffering and death. (See Christine Mohrmann, *Etudes sur le latin des Chrétiens* [Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1958], 1:210, on *passio*.) It can also be reasonably argued that a reference to “death,” as in the Apostles’ Creed, provides a necessary link between “suffered” and “buried.”

**Line 20.** “in accordance with the Scriptures.” For *kata tas graphas* (1 Corinthians 15:4) “in accordance with” was felt to be closer to the sense than “according to.” The latter might suggest that Scripture says one thing, while other authorities say something different. The Scriptures referred to are the Old Testament, as in the appeals to Scripture in, for example, Acts 2:25-28; 13:34-35.

**Line 21.** “he ascended.” See the note on line 10 of the Apostles’ Creed.

**Line 22.** “is seated.” This is preferred to “sits,” to emphasize the permanence of Christ’s position of honor.

**Line 25.** “the Lord, the giver of life.” These are two distinct phrases, both applying to the Holy Spirit. They avoid the possible misunderstanding of the older version, “the Lord and giver,” which might be taken to mean “the Lord of life” and “the giver of life.”

**Lines 26-28.** These lines have been recast to follow the original texts more closely and also to avoid referring unnecessarily to the Holy Spirit as “he.”

**Line 26.** “[and the Son].” The square brackets are not meant to be reproduced in liturgical forms. They are an indication that each Church must decide whether or not to include the words. The word Filioque, which was a controversial Western addition to the Creed, originating in Toledo in 589 and not accepted in Rome until after 1000, has been translated within the brackets, but it is left to individual Churches to decide whether or not to include it in their official orders of service. It was not within the province of the Consultation to recommend either its excision or retention. It should be noted, however, that those who strongly favor retention of the Filioque are often thinking of the Trinity as revealed and active in human affairs, whereas the original Greek text is concerned about relationships within the Godhead itself. As with many historic disputes, the two parties may not be discussing the same thing.

**Line 28.** In the ICET version, “Prophets” was capitalized. The word has now been given a lower-case p in correction of an oversight or printing error.

**Line 29.** “We believe in one holy;hellip;” This phrase illustrates the need of reference to the Greek original, even for translation of the Latin. The latter here omits the preposition “in,” which can be readily understood from line 25 and the use of the accusative case *unam sanctam... ecclesiam*. In the Greek *eis[mi]an* requires “belief in” the Church, as well as “in God” and “in Christ.” Some Western Fathers argued from the Latin text that belief in the Church is of a different order from belief in God (see Rufinus in Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina.*,

[Paris, 1844-1904], 21:373 and Venantius Fortunatus, *ibid.*, 88:35051). Notice the indentation of this line, in subordination to “We believe in the Holy Spirit.”



## The Apostles' Creed

1. I believe in God, the Father almighty,
2. creator of heaven and earth.
3. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
4. who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
5. born of the Virgin Mary,
6. suffered under Pontius Pilate,
7. was crucified, died, and was buried;
8. he descended to the dead.
9. On the third day he rose again;
10. he ascended into heaven,
11. he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
12. and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
13. I believe in the Holy Spirit,
14. the holy catholic Church,
15. the communion of saints,
16. the forgiveness of sins,
17. the resurrection of the body,
18. and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed in its present form dates back to a Latin text of the eighth century, but it clearly incorporates far older material. For the great variety of early texts, East, and West, see Denzinger-Schönmetzer, editio XXXVI, nos. 1-76. In origin, this Creed appears to have developed from a threefold questioning at baptism, probably based on the Lord's command in Matthew 28:19. The candidates were asked successively whether they believed in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit. To each question the candidate, standing in the water, replied "I believe" and was three times immersed, once after each answer. At least as early as the fourth century, the candidates were also taught a fuller profession of faith in the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. This took varying forms in different places. In Rome the local form developed into what became known as "The Apostles' Creed" — not because the Apostles wrote it, but because it was taken to represent the authentic apostolic tradition.

The primary association of the Apostles' Creed with a personal profession of faith at baptism explains the singular pronoun "I" at the beginning. Because this Creed is also used in such corporate services as Morning and Evening Prayer, and sometimes in place of the Nicene Creed at the Eucharist, the Consultation has included a final "Amen" and approves of the substitution, where desired, of the first-person plural at the beginning of each paragraph, for example, "We believe in God, the Father almighty. . . ."

**Line 2.** "creator." This is a translation of the Latin *creatorem*, in contrast to "maker" (Greek *poieten*, Latin *factorem*) in the Nicene Creed. For the sake of accuracy, it was thought the wording of the two Creeds should be kept distinct. "Creator" also has the advantage of suggesting that God did not make the universe out of pre-existing material but is the origin of all things.

**Line 3.** Although the words “I believe” are not repeated in the original at lines 3 and 13, they are clearly understood with each of the parts of the Creed. Their repetition brings out the basic structure when the Creed is recited. For “God’s” see the notes on the Gloria in Excelsis, lines 1 and 2, and the explanation of the second guideline for the revision of the ICET texts (see the [Introduction](#)).

**Line 4.** Two changes have been made to the 1975 ICET version of this line. The phrase “by the power of the Holy Spirit” was changed back to an older, simpler, and more literal form “by the Holy Spirit.” The reference to “power,” which is not found in the Latin form, was added originally to the ICET translation to dispel any mistaken notion of sexual activity. Unfortunately, this introduced the possibility of a different misunderstanding, that is, that the Spirit was so powerful that Mary’s free consent was not necessary.

At the beginning of the line, it was decided to restore the relative pronoun “who” rather than present the Creed as a series of separate statements. This has led to consequential changes in lines 5 and 6.

**Line 7.** “died.” The ICET version with an active verb has been retained here, though some would have preferred the finality of the traditional “dead and buried.” The decision hinged on whether the next line ended with “dead” or “hell.”

**Line 8.** The main problem in translating *descendit ad inferna* (literally, “he went down to the lower regions”) was whether the traditional rendering “into hell” should be restored, and, if so, what it would imply to a modern congregation. It represents *Sheol* and has little or nothing to do with *Gehenna*, a place of eternal punishment and separation from God, which “hell” is generally understood to mean. The line has been subject to various interpretations. Some have understood it as emphasizing the reality of the Lord’s death in the previous line. Others have seen it as stating that Jesus entered into the lowest depth of our human condition—a sense of abandonment by God. Others, following 1 Peter 3:19, have thought of it as beginning the resurrection sequence, with our Lord proclaiming his victory to the souls of the departed. Still others have thought of our Lord going to do battle with Satan, thus guaranteeing the deliverance of the saints. Some Churches have officially adopted one of the foregoing interpretations. The Consultation has attempted to provide a text which is open to all four. It believed, however, that the ICET punctuation which made the line a separate assertion, connecting it neither with line 7 nor with line 9, gave undue prominence to the line. The Consultation noted that all the common interpretations had to do with the departed or with a sense of spiritual death, and that some later texts read *ad inferos* “to those below.” While aware that some would have preferred “into hell,” the Consultation believed that “to the dead” was the least misleading version and that it allowed the same breadth of interpretation as the original. The notion of descent has been retained, since it is part of the symbolic language based on the picture of the universe which the Creed assumes.

**Line 9.** “he rose again.” The active voice “he rose” is retained as an accurate translation of the Latin *resurrexit*. The “again” is simply an English idiom corresponding to the Latin prefix *re-*. It

does not imply repetition, but restoration. Compare: “He fell over but quickly got up again.” While admitting that this traditional form has confused some, the Consultation found that the line seemed incomplete if “again” was omitted. The words “from the dead” have been omitted because of the translation of *infernus* as “the dead” in line 8.

**Line 10.** “ascended.” This is retained for the sake of the symbolic language and because it corresponds to the biblical picture presented in Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9; Ephesians 4:10. Further, the Ascension of our Lord has a prominent place in the Church’s calendar.

**Lines 11 and 12.** As with lines 4-7, these lines have been more closely linked than in the ICET version. This not only makes the lines easier to say but also corresponds more closely to the original.

**Line 11.** “the Father.” Repetition of the first line’s “God, the Father almighty” would make this line unnecessarily heavy, and so the Consultation has followed the Nicene Creed at this point.

**Line 12.** “and he will come to judge.” The “again” of the ICET version has been dropped since there is nothing corresponding to it in the original Latin, unlike line 23 of the Nicene Creed.

**Line 14.** “catholic.” With its emphasis upon wholeness, this word is richer than any suggested substitute, for example, “universal.” Just as the Latin Church judged the Greek term indispensable, so “catholic” has been the common usage of the majority of English-speaking Churches.

**Line 15.** “communion of saints.” The Latin *sanctorum communionem* could be translated either as a fellowship of holy people or a participation in holy things, for example, the sacraments. Though there are some strong arguments in favor of the latter interpretation, there is no adequate reason for abandoning the traditional rendering. Moreover, no adequate expression for “holy things” has been forthcoming.

**Line 17.** The traditional rendering “resurrection of the body” was considered the most adequate way of expressing the totality of the resurrection implied by the Latin phrase *carnis resurrectionem* (literally “resurrection of the flesh”).

## Agnus Dei

1. Jesus, Lamb of God.
2. have mercy on us.
3. Jesus, bearer of our sins,
4. have mercy on us.
5. Jesus, redeemer of the world,
6. grant us peace.

### Alternative Version

1. Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
2. have mercy on us.
3. Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
4. have mercy on us.
5. Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
6. grant us peace.

The *Agnus Dei* is an anthem in litany form traditionally sung or said to accompany the breaking of the consecrated bread at the Eucharist. In a varied form it occurs within the *Gloria in Excelsis*. It appears, for example, in *The Book of Common Prayer* of 1552 and 1662, not for use at holy communion but rather as a prayer within the litany.

Since its introduction in the seventh century into the Western liturgy the *Agnus Dei* has undergone a number of variations in Latin and vernacular forms. At first the petition *miserere nobis* ("have mercy on us") was unchanged at each repetition, but in the tenth and eleventh centuries it became common to substitute in the last line *dona nobis pacem* ("grant us peace"). This was also varied at requiems to "grant them rest" and "grant them rest eternal." The medieval period gave rise to other variations on the anthem. Sometimes phrases were added to bring out the meaning more clearly. In the Reformation liturgies of England and Germany, *pacem* in line 6 was rendered "thy peace" both to keep two syllables for musical reasons and under the influence of such texts as John 14:27. The German form also sought clarity by prefixing the name "Christ" to each of lines 1, 3, and 5.

"Lamb of God," though full of meaning for those familiar with the biblical background in such passages as John 1:29, Isaiah 53:7, and Revelation 5:6ff., does not reveal its richness at first sight. The first form above, based on ICET, reveals some aspects of the meaning more clearly and immediately. The name "Jesus" has been prefixed to the title "Lamb of God" at the beginning of line 1. The name rather than the title is then used at the beginning of lines 3 and 5. Instead of the three-times-repeated relative clause *qui tollis peccata mundi* ("who take away the sins of the world") a phrase is used in each of lines 3 and 5 to bring out the dual meaning of these words. The verb *tollis*, like the corresponding Greek verb *aireis* in John 1:29, means both "take away" and "bear" or "lift up."

The alternative, more traditional, version is especially suitable when the *Agnus Dei* is treated as the accompaniment to a sometimes lengthy breaking of bread. “Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us” may be repeated as many times as necessary.

In response to submissions received, the Consultation made three changes to the ICET text:

In both versions the punctuation has been lightened by replacing the colon at the ends of lines 1, 3, and 5 with commas.

To accord more closely with the *Gloria in Excelsis* and John 1:29, “sin” has replaced “sins” in the alternative version. The Consultation agrees that both the singular (a collective condition of alienation from God) and the plural (the many transgressions, individual and corporate, for which we need forgiveness) are legitimate and has therefore retained the plural in line 3 of the more modern version.

The last lines of both versions have also been made to agree. This is less confusing for congregations where both versions have come into regular use. “Grant” was preferred to “give” as being more gracious in this context and a better translation of *dona*, as against *da*. There were some requests for the phrase “your peace” but the Consultation was reluctant to add something not found in the original Latin text.

## **Te Deum Laudamus**

1. We praise you, O God,
2. we acclaim you as Lord;
3. all creation worships you,
4. the Father everlasting.
5. To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
6. the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise:
7. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
8. heaven and earth are full of your glory.
9. The glorious company of apostles praise you.
10. The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
11. The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
12. Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you:
13. Father, of majesty unbounded,
14. your true and only Son, worthy of all praise,
15. the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.
16. You, Christ, are the king of glory,
17. the eternal Son of the Father.
18. When you took our flesh to set us free
19. you humbly chose the Virgin's womb.
20. You overcame the sting of death
21. and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
22. You are seated at God's right hand in glory.
23. We believe that you will come to be our judge.
24. Come then, Lord, and help your people,
25. bought with the price of your own blood,
26. and bring us with your saints
27. to glory everlasting.

## **Versicles and Responses after the Te Deum**

1. V. Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance.
2. R. Govern and uphold them now and always.
3. V. Day by day we bless you.
4. R. We praise your name for ever.
5. V. Keep us today, Lord, from all sin.
6. R. Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.
7. V. Lord, show us your love and mercy,
8. R. for we have put our trust in you.
9. V. In you, Lord, is our hope:
10. R. let us never be put to shame.

This Latin hymn to the Father and the Son, traditionally (but probably wrongly) attributed to St. Ambrose in the late fourth century, is thought by some scholars to have been composed by Bishop Niceta of Remesiana. The versicles and responses following line 27 are not part of the original but were appended at an early date. The *Te Deum* is particularly associated with the Office of Readings in the Roman Catholic Church and Morning Prayer in other traditions. It has often been given special musical settings for independent use on occasions of great rejoicing.

The *Te Deum* contains a series of acclamations which are highly stylized in their original Latin form. An attempt to produce a literal translation, maintaining the Latin word order, would result in something which would sound unidiomatic and odd. Where the Latin structure could be followed profitably, this has been attempted.

**Lines 1-4.** Here at the outset is the problem of translating the Latin triplets:

*Te Deum laudamus:*

*te Dominum confitemur.*

*Te aeternum Patrem, omnis terra veneratur.*

The ICET text attempted to retain these three acclamations in a parallel structure with the original emphasis:

You are God: we praise you;

You are the Lord: we acclaim you;

You are the eternal Father:

All creation worships you.

*Prayers We Have in Common* also notes that the vocative “O God” of the traditional English translation has no place in the Latin, which means literally “We praise you as God.” Despite its fidelity to the original, and its daring solution to the problem of securing the original emphasis, the ICET version was widely criticized as abrupt and unrhythmic and regarded by some as inappropriate (“Why should we tell God who he is?”). In response to the criticism the Consultation has returned to something more traditional. It has, however, maintained ICET’s understanding of *terra* as “all creation.”

**Lines 7-8.** The Latin text is almost the same as that of the *Sanctus* except that the *Sanctus* does not have *maiestatis* (“of the majesty”). In the interest of simplicity it was decided to have the same text here as for the *Sanctus*. The idea of majesty has not been lost from the *Te Deum* for it occurs in line 13.

**Lines 13-15.** The first section of the *Te Deum* has a lyrical Trinitarian ending:

*Patrem immensae maiestatis;*

*venerandum tuum verum et unicum Filium;*

*Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum.*

In line 13 “unbounded” was considered a better translation of *immensae* than the “infinite” of the traditional English version. In line 14 *venerandum* is very difficult to render. The ICET phrase “worthy of all worship” was closer to the meaning of *venerandum* than the “honorable” of the traditional English text but proved difficult to say because of the repeated w sounds. “Worship” has therefore been replaced by “praise.” In line 15 no single English word is fully adequate to translate *Paraclitum*, but “advocate and guide” has proved an acceptable paraphrase.

**Line 16.** The line begins the second section, which refers to the Son. Here there is a reminder of the question in Psalm 24, “Who is the King of glory?” It is Christ who shares the Father’s glory.

**Line 18.** “took our flesh.” This has been substituted for the traditional “became man” used by ICET. This maintains the theological point of the original and thus avoids a misunderstanding of *homo* as a reference to Jesus’ maleness as such, which would have been expressed by *vir*.

**Line 19.** The revision “you humbly chose” is proposed as an accurate rendering of the divine condescension celebrated in this line. The poetic strength of a negative statement in ancient languages is often better conveyed in modern English by a positive statement (compare line 9 of the Lord’s Prayer). The Latin *horruisti* is difficult to translate. The positive statement avoids the unpleasant assonance of the ICET “spurn the Virgin’s womb” and the misleading implications of this and other suggested expressions like “abhor,” “disdain,” “shrink from.”

**Line 20.** *Devicto mortis aculeo*. Some understand the meaning as “drew (that is, extracted) the sting of death” rather than “neutralized the effects of the sting.” The traditional word “overcame” covers both interpretations.

**Line 23.** *Iudex crederis esse venturus* (literally, “as judge you are believed to be going to come”). This was translated in the ICET text as “we believe that you will come and be our judge.” In practice, the comma, intended to reveal the original emphasis, proved awkward. It has been deleted and “to” substituted for “and” to provide a smoother and more idiomatic expression.

**Line 24.** The word rendered literally as “come... and help” (*subveni*) is from the same root as *venturus* in the previous line and involves a play on words: “It is as judge that you are believed to be coming, but come to our aid.”

**Lines 26 and 27.** “and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.” This covers both the variant readings *munerari* (“rewarded”) and *numerary* (“numbered”).

**Versicles and Responses.** The original text of the *Te Deum* ended at line 27, but traditionally it was followed by certain verses from the psalms sung in the form of versicles and responses, known as *capitella*. The sources of these are as follows: lines 1-2, Psalm 28:10; lines 3-4, Psalm 145:2; lines 5-6, Psalm 123:3; lines 7-8, Psalm 56:1, 3; lines 9-10, Psalm 31:1. They are here printed as five separate couplets.



**Lines 9-10.** Some have regretted the use of the plural in these verses when the Latin has the singular. The Consultation believed that it was legitimate to change to the plural for corporate worship (compare *The Book of Common Prayer*, “O Lord, open thou our lips,” with the original singular in Psalm 51). There has also been discussion whether *confundar* should be treated as a subjunctive or a future indicative. Here the translation has been influenced by standard translations of Psalm 31:1.

## **Benedictus**

The Song of Zechariah, Luke 1:68-79

1. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
2. who has come to his people and set them free.
3. The Lord has raised up for us a mighty Savior,
4. born of the house of his servant David.
5. Through the holy prophets, God promised of old
6. to save us from our enemies,
7. from the hands of all who hate us,
8. to show mercy to our forebears,
9. and to remember his holy covenant.
10. This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:
11. to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
12. free to worship him without fear,
13. holy and righteous before him,
14. all the days of our life.
15. And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
16. for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way,
17. to give his people knowledge of salvation
18. by the forgiveness of their sins.
19. In the tender compassion of our God
20. the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
21. to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
22. and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

## **Alternative Version**

1. Blessed are you, Lord, the God of Israel,
2. for you have come to your people and set them free.
3. You have raised up for us a mighty Savior,
4. born of the house of your servant David.
5. Through your holy prophets, you promised of old
6. to save us from our enemies,
7. from the hands of all who hate us,
8. to show mercy to our forebears,
9. and to remember your holy covenant.
10. This was the oath you swore to our father Abraham:
11. to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
12. free to worship you without fear,
13. holy and righteous before you,
14. all the days of our life.

15. And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
16. for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way,
17. to give God's people knowledge of salvation
18. by the forgiveness of their sins.
19. In the tender compassion of our God
20. the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
21. to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
22. and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

This song, based on phrases from the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament, widely used in the first century), is placed by St. Luke in the mouth of Zechariah at the birth of his son, John the Baptist. The first part is addressed to God in thanksgiving for the fulfillment of the hopes for the Messiah; the second part (from line 15) is addressed to the child who is to be the Lord's forerunner. In the Eastern Church the canticle forms part of the morning Office but is often omitted. In the West it became part of the Office of Lauds and is now used in the Morning Prayer of many traditions.

In Hebrew prayer God is praised indirectly in the third-person as well as by direct address. The third- and second-persons may alternate, as for instance in the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2) and frequently in the psalms. There is also ancient liturgical precedent for converting an original third-person address to the second-person, as in the Sanctus where the original "his glory" has long been rendered as "your glory." In contemporary English, direct address is more natural.

In the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat* third-person of the original generates a number of masculine pronouns—considerably more in English than in Greek or Latin. The Consultation has therefore offered alternative versions, in which the third-person is replaced by the second-person.

The notes which follow apply to the first version of the *Benedictus* and *Magnificat* printed in each case, but may be readily adapted to suit the alternative version. The ICET text has been substantially revised after thorough examination of the Greek, and unnecessary masculine pronouns with no counterpart in the original have been removed.

**Line 1.** "Israel." This is a central theological term in the Bible and not only an ethnic and political one. The one people, named after their ancestor Jacob or Israel (Genesis 32:28), is chosen so that all the other families of the earth can receive their blessing (Genesis 12:3). Through this chosen people, the other nations will come to acknowledge God's greatness and love (Ezekiel 36:22-23; Isaiah 43:10-12; 45:14).

**Line 2.** "has come to his people." This renders *epeskepsato*, which is used for a "visitation" which effects a real change (see especially Genesis 21:1, 50:24; Exodus 4:31). The traditional "visit," to modern ears, suggests something too casual. "Set them free" (the New English Bible) is echoed in line 11 and is more direct than a literal rendering of *epoiesen lutrosin* ("made a redemption") would be.

**Line 3.** “mighty Savior.” This seems to be the best way to put into easily understood English the figurative “horn of salvation” (where “horn” is a metaphor for strength). The initial letter of ICET “savior” has been changed to a capital to conform with common practice.

**Lines 5-9.** Following the Greek, the two sentences of the ICET version have been combined. This sentence now conveys in a short series and in a stronger manner three aspects of God’s promise (salvation from enemies, showing of mercy, remembrance of the covenant). This is marked by indentation. At the same time, several problems of inclusive language are solved.

**Line 8.** “our forebears.” This is used in place of the literal “our fathers” since the reference is to all who have preceded us in faith. Line 10, on the other hand, refers to a specific person, Abraham.

**Line 10.** “This was the oath.” With lines 11-14, this expands the meaning of “covenant.” A fresh sentence makes this clearer than would an attempt to reproduce the Greek apposition and relative clause. Again, indentation is used to make the structure clear.

**Line 11.** The traditional phrase “to grant us that . . .,” while typically Lucan, is difficult English, especially when it is followed by the adverbial phrase “without fear.” The ICET version, here retained, is more direct and better suited to hymnody. Another word for “deliverance” is here, as in line 2, translated “to set free” for ease in rendering the lines which follow. “Hands” is substituted for “hand” as more vivid and more consonant in English with the plural “enemies” than the Greek singular.

**Line 12.** The connection of thought is made easier by repeating “free.” “Worship” is, in this Lucan context, an accurate translation of *latreuein*. Compare its use in Hebrews and in Philippians 3:3.

**Line 14.** “all the days of our life.” This is intended by the biblical text and gives a more complete and singable rhythm than the literal “all our days.”

**Line 15.** “And you, child.” The infant John the Baptist is here addressed by his father. The ICET text reads “my child” but “my” has now been omitted since it is not found in the Greek and it is not easy for a congregation to identify so closely with Zechariah. A number requested that “John” be written instead of “child” to make the meaning even clearer, but the Consultation was hesitant to depart so radically when translating a biblical text. “John” could perhaps be used in the alternative version. “And” has been added to the ICET text at the beginning of the line. This follows the Greek more closely, marks more clearly the transition from one part of the canticle to the other, and keeps the same rhythm as the ICET text after “my” has been dropped.

**Line 20.** The future tense (*episkepsetai*, “will visit”) instead of the past (*epeskepsato*, “has visited,” as in line 2) is the better-attested reading. While this is particularly suitable if the canticle precedes a New Testament reading, it can also have an eschatological meaning if the gospel has just been proclaimed.

## **Magnificat**

The Song of Mary, Luke 1:46-55

1. My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
2. my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
3. who has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
4. From this day all generations will call me blessed:
5. the Almighty has done great things for me,
6. and holy is his name.
7. God has mercy on those who fear him,
8. from generation to generation.
9. The Lord has shown strength with his arm
10. and scattered the proud in their conceit,
11. casting down the mighty from their thrones
12. and lifting up the lowly.
13. God has filled the hungry with good things
14. and sent the rich away empty.
15. He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
16. to remember the promise of mercy,
17. the promise made to our forebears,
18. to Abraham and his children for ever.

## **Alternative Version**

1. My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
2. my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
3. for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
4. From this day all generations will call me blessed:
5. you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
6. and holy is your name.
7. You have mercy on those who fear you
8. from generation to generation.
9. You have shown strength with your arm
10. and scattered the proud in their conceit,
11. casting down the mighty from their thrones
12. and lifting up the lowly.
13. You have filled the hungry with good things
14. and sent the rich away empty.
15. You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,
16. to remember the promise of mercy,
17. the promise made to our forebears,
18. to Abraham and his children for ever.

This song of praise, attributed by St. Luke to Mary when her cousin Elizabeth had greeted her as the Lord's mother, has been associated in the West with Vespers and Evening Prayer at least since the time of St. Benedict (sixth century). In the East it is sung in the morning Office before, or more commonly in place of, the *Benedictus*. The Magnificat has often been provided with antiphons to be sung before and after it, and many special musical settings have been composed for it. Its resemblance to the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2) has often been noted.

The reasons for providing an alternative version in the second-person are the same as those given in the notes to the *Benedictus*. As with that canticle, masculine pronouns have been used in the first version only if they have a counterpart in the Greek. This has sometimes meant expressing the subject of a verb, which is understood but not expressed in the original Greek, by "God" or "the Lord."

**Line 1.** The Greek has the idea of greatness in the verb, not in the object. The familiar translation "doth magnify" expresses this, but "magnify" is archaic in this sense. The translation "proclaims the greatness" expresses the idea of "greatness" but in a different manner.

**Lines 3-6.** The punctuation, which is largely an editorial matter, conforms to what is found in most editions of the Greek text.

**Line 4.** This line, which in the original begins "For behold, from now," begins a fresh sentence. ICET's lightening of it by omitting the introductory particles has proved acceptable. The colon at the end of the line shows that the verses which follow give the reasons why Mary is called blessed. This has also been marked by indentation.

**Line 6.** "and." This word is in the Greek and has been kept; it helps the rhythm, especially for singing.

**Line 8.** "from generation to generation." This replaces ICET's "in every generation." It is closer to the original Greek and also lengthens the line for musical purposes.

**Lines 9-15.** The striking but unnecessary repetition of "he" at the beginning of nearly all these lines in the ICET text has been avoided by revealing "the Lord" and "God" as the agent of these surprising reversals, and by twice introducing a participial construction where it was effective and seemed natural. In line 15, however, such a change seemed artificial and self-conscious and the "he" was retained.

**Line 12.** The word translated "lowly" comes from the same Greek root as the word translated "lowly" in line 3. It seems preferable to "humble and meek," both of which words have degenerated somewhat in popular usage.

**Line 14.** A slight rearrangement of the ICET line “and the rich he has sent away empty” not only removes an unnecessary pronoun but makes the statement more direct. The last part of the line, “away empty,” follows ICET and the Greek word order and emphasis.

**Line 15.** “to the aid of.” This seemed to the Consultation to give a smoother and more natural line than ICET’s “to the help of.”

**Line 16.** “to remember the promise of mercy.” This replaces ICET’s “for he has remembered his promise of mercy.” It is not only simpler but more faithful to the Greek.

**Line 17.** There were many requests to change ICET’s “our fathers” to “our forebears” or “our ancestors.” The Consultation preferred “forebears” as indicating not so much lineal descent as previous generations in the faith.

**Line 18.** It is not clear from the Greek whether the phrase “to Abraham and his children for ever” is in apposition to the phrase “to our forebears” in line 17, or whether it follows the phrase “to remember the promise of mercy” in line 16, with line 17 being parenthetical. Both alternatives remain open in this translation—the sense is much the same in either case.