

### **The Sanctus – Holy, Holy, Holy (Isaiah and St. John help us prepare for heaven on earth)**

During the Lenten season here at Our Lady of the Visitation, we are singing/chanting the Latin Mass parts, such as *The Agnus Dei* (which means *The Lamb of God*), and one of those Mass parts is *The Sanctus*. The Latin word *sanctus* is simply a word that means *holy*. Think of our modern English words, saint, saintly, sanctify, or sanctity. Therefore, when we sing *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* we are singing the ancient Latin words that were used during the Mass for *Holy, holy, holy*. In addition, these words come directly from Scripture! The prophet Isaiah is allowed by God to see a vision of Heaven. Isaiah mentions that he sees God in heaven surrounded by angelic beings, and these angels are singing a song of praise to Him. Their song is as follows, "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory!*" and found in Isaiah 6:3. This song is filled with spiritual riches that we can reflect on. One example would be how the word *hosts* refers to a large number and often specifically referring to an army, which implies God is in charge of an army of angels who constantly praise Him in this way! For another example, repeating a word three times was a common way to communicate dramatic emphasis of the word's importance. God is holier than we can possibly fathom.

Now, if we stick with this three-fold phrase found in Isaiah, we notice that it also appears in the Book of Revelation in the New Testament that was written by St. John the Apostle. Once again, St. John is seeing a vision of heaven in the Book of Revelation, and once again, like Isaiah, St. John sees a vision of God surrounded by angels. However, this time, it is not only God the Father, it is also God the Son become man, Jesus Christ, who St. John sees in heaven (Rev. 1:17). The angels once again sing out, "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come*" (Rev. 4:8). Then, just a bit later, twenty-four elders join in this song, and they declare, "*Worthy art though, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things*" (Rev. 4:11). It is not only the angels but now also the saints in heaven who praise and worship God in these ways. The beauty of this is that we are now joining in with both the angels and the saints in heaven at every single Mass by singing *The Sanctus*. However, we are not just one person getting a vision of heaven. Instead, the entire Catholic Church around the world is inviting into a heavenly banquet at each Mass, so we are recognizing this reality by singing this hymn! Heaven is coming to earth right in our midst at every Mass, and we get to sit around the throne of God, and worship Jesus Christ, God become man during each Mass. May we thank God that we can to praise Him in union with the angels and the saints who are currently in heaven perfectly, and that our imperfect praise here on earth may sanctify us and bring us closer to this eternal beatitude, which is our purpose and our goal.