



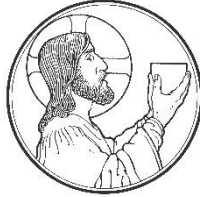
ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Holy Thursday

April 17, 2025



Holy Thursday

“The LORD’s Passover” and “the blood of the covenant” at Mount Sinai were preeminent types of the Lord’s Supper. The blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, now covers us, and we keep his Supper as a feast to the LORD. In him, we see the God of Israel, and yet he does not lay his hand on us to punish us. As disciples of Jesus, we recline at the table with him to eat and drink in peace. The apostles, who received the New Testament in his body blood on the night when he was betrayed, delivered the same to his Church, which we also now receive in remembrance of him and for the forgiveness of our sins. In the Lord’s Supper, the Lord remembers us in mercy and remembers our sin no more. As he thus feeds us in love, let us love one another, just as he has loved us.

First Reading³ Jeremiah 31:31-34

Through Jeremiah, the Lord describes the new covenant established by the promised Messiah, the covenant that has been established with us. The two-sided covenant of old is no more. God had been faithful; Israel had not. The new covenant is a promise signed in the blood of the Christ. This new covenant is now revealed to nations. The teachings and promises of the Lord will be written on hearts and minds and sin will be remembered “no more.” For the Lord’s righteousness will come to hearts of faith.

Second Reading³ Hebrews 10:15-25

Linking promise to fulfillment, shadow to reality, the Holy Spirit testifies to the new covenant. The sacrifice has been made, once for all. The purifying waters of baptism have connected us to his death and life. His blood marks the door frames of our hearts. Yes, all barriers have been removed so that we may approach the God of the Covenant in the full confidence of forgiveness.

Gospel³ Luke 22:7-20

Here is the final Passover and the establishment of the New Covenant meal. Through the sacrifice of his own body and blood, the Lamb of God brings assurance of the forgiveness of sins and strengthening of faith. Participation in this, his body and blood, proclaims his death until we eat and drink it with him in eternity.

Psalm of the Day⁴ Psalm 116 B “I Will Walk in the Presence of the LORD”

The Church sings Psalm 116 in services that celebrate the Lord delivering us from death. The original meaning of “cup of salvation” is debated, but because the psalm was commonly sung at Passover, it came to be associated with Holy Communion. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 116 is a psalm of thanks. The psalmist is joyful, thanking God for hearing his prayer and for rescuing him from the agonies of death and the anguish of hell. Enemies still threaten us and want us to drink from the cup of their wrath. But we take the cup of grace and salvation, and through preaching pour out that cup on anyone who will drink with us and draw their comfort from the word of peace.”

Gospel Acclamation 1 Corinthians 11:26

“Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” When we receive the Lord’s Supper we are proclaiming to ourselves and every generation that we are receiving the blessings of the New Covenant God made with man – the forgiveness of sins won through Jesus sacrifice on the cross. The Lord’s Supper looks forward to Christ’s return on the Last Day, when he will bring all believers to eternity in heaven, where we will join in the heavenly celebration in the presence of our God.

Prayer of the Day

Lord Jesus Christ, in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, you give us your true body and blood as a remembrance of your suffering and death on a cross. Grant us so firmly to believe your words and promise that we may always partake of this sacrament to our eternal good; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day 659 “Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior” (John Hus, c. 1369-1415; Martin Luther, 1483 – 1546)

Church Year Season ² Lent

The season of Lent leads the Church on a forty-day journey of repentance and prayer, of remembrance and renewal of our baptism. God calls to mankind: Return to the Lord! The journey begins with Ash Wednesday’s warning of mortality and culminates at the Service of Holy Baptism in the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday.

The Church’s Lenten worship is muted and quiet. For centuries, the Church has omitted her most jubilant songs of praise during this season of repentance (e.g. the “Gloria in Excelsis,” and the use of the word “Alleluia”) to reflect the somber nature of the season. Note, however, that the Sundays are designated as Sunday in Lent, not Sundays of Lent. The Sundays themselves are not considered part of the forty days, but are islands of refreshment in our Lenten walk.

Traditions & Customs Stripping of the Altar

The stripping of the altar is done in remembrance of our Lord’s abandonment by his disciples in Gethsemane and in preparation for Good Friday. Since the Christian altar symbolizes Jesus Christ, we also recall how Jesus’ body was stripped of its pure seamless undergarment on Good Friday. These garments were divided among the Roman soldiers just as prophesied in Psalm 22. As we begin to meditate upon our Lord’s Passion, the church is emptied of its ornamental beauty and darkened. It will remain so until the Vigil of Easter on Holy Saturday when it will be decorated again for our celebration of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

Colors & Symbolism Purple / Violet or White

Purple is a sign of royalty, self-discipline, sorrow and repentance. Purple also reminds us of sacrifice, not only because that colored clothing was very expensive (sacrifice of money), but also because in order to make purple clothing in ancient times, one had to dye the cloth in the blood of snails (sacrifice of life). Thus purple is a fitting color for the penitential season of Lent, during which we focus more intentionally on our sinfulness, and how our King and Savior, Jesus Christ suffered in our place and sacrificed himself on the cross to take away our sins.

Nain Paraments Lent

Superfrontal: The lamb at the center of the parament represents Jesus, the Lamb of God who was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29; 3:16-17). The nimbus (halo) around its head reminds us that Jesus was a perfect sacrifice, even greater than the unblemished lambs required of the Passover meal (Exodus 12:5).

The palm branches remind us of Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem on the Sunday before he died (John 12:13). Palm branches were used in celebration of victory. Jesus entered Jerusalem to conquer sin, death, and the devil. Our crucified and risen Lord assures us in his Word that his victory is ours by faith (1 Corinthians 15:57).

[The significance of the crosses on the far left and right of the superfrontal are explained below]

Lectern & Pulpit antependia: The cross formed by four nails represents Jesus’ death by which he was nailed to the cross (Luke 23:33; John 20:25,27). The white sash around the arms of the cross symbolizes Jesus’ righteousness and his perfect victory over our enemies through his resurrection (Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23;54-57).

¹ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author.

² Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

³ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year C”. Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.

⁴ From *Christian Worship: Psalter* © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Reprinted by permission.

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