



ABOUT THE PROPERS

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



First Sunday in Lent

February 26, 2023



Jesus Defeated the Devil for Us

The First Sunday in Lent has traditionally been called “*Invocabit*” Sunday. It derives its name from the Latin words of the Introit (the traditional opening verses) of the day: “He will call (*Invocabit*), upon me, and I will answer him (Psalm 91:15a).

The Son of God goes forth to war and defeats the devil for us. The Prayer of the Day sets the tone for the Sunday: the ancient foe warred on mankind in the garden, but God promised to send a champion to battle on our behalf. The Second Adam came to do what the first could not, and in the desert the battle was joined.

The Propers

The Propers are those portions of the service that change (i.e. are “proper” to) each Sunday or season of the church year. The Propers differ from the Ordinary (from the Latin ordo, which means “regular order”) portions of the liturgy, which do not change (e.g. the Lord’s Prayer). The Propers offer the variety to the worship service and emphasize particular worship themes throughout the liturgical calendar.

First Lesson¹

Genesis 3:1-15

Everything changed that day that Adam fell. But God looked down at these children that he created, and like the parent of a wayward child, he loved them in spite of themselves. God loved them and us and wanted us to live again—to live the way he had intended—with life and light and peace. So God made a promise: What you could not do, I will do in your place. Because man could not live perfectly and serve God faithfully, God promised to one day become a man to do it in our place. Thousands of years later God made good on his promise in the womb of the Virgin. He became man with one mission: to right what was wrong, to do what we had left undone. God became man to do what man could not.

Second Lesson¹

Romans 5:12-19

Paul provides a New Testament commentary on the First Lesson and shows the universal effects of the First Adam’s failure and the Second Adam’s victory. Adam was a son of God in human flesh (Luke 3:38), but Adam failed the tests of his sonship. Through his flesh he passed his failure on to all of his children, condemning us to sin and death. So God sent another Son in human flesh to be the Son that Adam had not been. He obeyed where Adam did not. The obedience of the second Adam had as wide an effect as the disobedience of the first: he gives his victory to us and declares us righteous and brings life for all.

Gospel of the Day¹

Matthew 4:1-11

The Second Adam goes to war to regain all that the first Adam had lost. Empowered by his baptism and led by the Spirit, Jesus defeats the devil for us. Let the preacher note that this pericope is not a “how-to” guide for Christians to fight temptation. The point, rather, is that Jesus fought as the champion of mankind by walking to the cross in obedience to his Father’s plan. Satan tempted Christ to use the greatest weapons at his disposal—miracle, mystery and authority—to shortcut this mission. He tempted the Son to have a distrustful Sonship, a presumptive Sonship, a disloyal Sonship. Satan would have had his way with us, but not with our champion! Jesus won this and every battle with the devil, and now one little word can fell him.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 46 A

“The LORD Almighty Is with Us.” This favorite Reformation psalm is the song of those whose whole trust is in the gospel promises of God for their salvation. We gladly join to sing it in the gospel-formed faith that God remains forever true to his gracious Word. God upholds the Church through his holy Word. He "is within her." His name will be exalted throughout the world. This Psalm inspired Luther to hold to God's truth even though the authorities around him so bitterly opposed him.

Gospel Acclamation

Hebrews 4:15

“We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses; we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin.”

Prayer of the Day

Mighty God and Father, our Lord Jesus walked into the wilderness to face the devil’s temptations, but he did not succumb to Satan’s lies or falter in his resolve to save the world from the prison of hell. Bolster our faith by his mighty victory that we may battle against the forces of evil with courage and confidence; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day

863 “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (Martin Luther, 1483-1546)

Luther’s well known work has been nicknamed “the battle hymn of the Lutheran Reformation.” Verses 1-3 of the original text were inspired by Psalm 46; verse 4 arose directly from Luther's persecution experience. The text expresses trust in God's protection amidst the battle that Christians wage against the devil and other evil forces – a battle won by Christ (v2). The closing line of the text provides much comfort: "Our victory is won; the kingdom’s ours forever!"

Church Year Season ¹

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.

Colors & Symbolism

Lent: Purple or Violet

These colors are 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.

. Clipart courtesy of “Ecclesiastical Art by Ed Riojas”