



# ABOUT THE PROPERS

*An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service*



## The Ascension of Our Lord

May 21, 2020



The Ascended Lord Jesus Is with Us Always in His Church on Earth

On the fortieth day after his resurrection, our Lord Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father. But although Jesus is hidden from your eyes, he is not absent from you. For he now fills all things in heaven and on earth. He continues to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins through those sent in his name, pouring out on you a double portion of his Spirit in the Word and the Sacraments.

### The Propers

*The Propers are those portions of the service that change (or, 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 Lesson** <sup>1</sup>

Acts 1:1-11

The weeks of Easter had been filled with breathless joy in the presence of their living Savior. For forty days the disciples listened to Christ speak about the kingdom of God. All that kingdom talk whetted their appetite for power and authority. They had seen their Savior suffer; now they were ready to see him win. Jesus offered them the tantalizing promise of something greater than John’s baptism, whom he had called the greatest man even born. What could it be? What heights of power and authority were waiting now that Jesus reigned as God and Lord? And so, because of that, they asked him a question that makes us marvel. Verse 6 displays the depth of their culturally ingrained misunderstanding of Messiah: they certainly had spiritual hopes for Jesus, but even at this late date they could not divorce them from their expectations of an earthly kingdom. Christ’s answer gives direction for the Church of all time. They would get power, but not for an earthly kingdom. Rather, they would receive Spirit-power to be heralds of the impending kingdom of heaven.

#### **Second Lesson** <sup>1</sup>

Ephesians 1:16-23

The post-ascension disciples no longer had their teacher with them walking the roads of Israel as before. We end-time disciples do not have Jesus’ visible presence with us either. Yet there is no ascension sadness, because the Church knows exactly where Christ is. He has taken up his power and has begun to reign with might that knows no limit and glory that knows no bounds. With a head like that, what foe have we to fear?

#### **Gospel of the Day** <sup>1</sup>

Luke 24:44-53

Ascension marks the coronation of our Prophet-Priest as King. Today we see his enthronement in glory and power to rule all things for the Church. Even at this late date, the disciples failed to understand Jesus’ mission. So Christ opened the Scriptures to them to show once more that this was the Christ as prophesied. He told them, “This was the way it had to be! And you, you are now well-informed witnesses of the fact that I am both Lord and Christ.” Finally, his disciples understood: Christ is God. There was no more doubting, no more fearing, no more worry. Christ is God. They worshipped the God-Man and watched him depart with his hands raised in unending blessing. No wonder they went home rejoicing! No longer would they hide behind locked doors; no longer would they cower; no longer would they fear the Sanhedrin. Instead they would fill the temple with public praise, because Christ is God! Their rabbi, their friend, their brother...he was God and ruled all things for his Church.

**Psalm of the Day**

Psalm 47

"God has ascended amid shouts of joy." Jesus, the King of all, ascends to his heavenly throne amid shouts of joy. We join with the angel choirs to sing the praise of our risen and ascended Lord.

**Verse of the Day**

Matthew 28:20b

"Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. (Jesus said) 'Surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.' Alleluia." Christ's words of promise to his disciples before he ascended are fulfilled in his gracious presence among believers in the Word and Sacraments.

**Prayer of the Day**

Lord Jesus, King of glory, on this day you ascended far above the heavens and at God's right hand you rule the nations. Leave us not alone, we pray, but grant us the Spirit of truth that at your command and by your power we may be your witnesses in all the world; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Hymn of the Day**

173 "On Christ's Ascension I Now Build" (Josua Wegelin, 1604-40)

We are certain of our ascension into heaven because of Jesus' own (v1). He has gone to prepare a place for us and promises to take us to be with him (John 14:3, 6). Until that time, he works through his Word to bless us with the gifts he won for us. We have rest for our souls (v2) until he allows us to depart in peace in answer to our prayers (v3).

**Church Year Season <sup>1</sup>**

Easter

After forty days of repentance and prayer, the Church bursts forth in jubilant praise at the Resurrection of our Lord. The alleluias and glorias which were muted for Lent ring out again as the Bride of Christ welcomes her Bridegroom back from the dead. Easter is as the pinnacle of the Church Year, the oldest festival and season celebrated by the worshipping Church. For a full week-of-weeks (49 days) the Church celebrates the resurrection of Christ on the Sundays of Easter which culminate on the 50th day, Pentecost.

**Colors & Symbolism**

Easter: White

White is the color of our Triune God and heaven. It also symbolizes joy, celebration, gladness, light, purity and innocence. We receive these blessings through faith because Christ, our righteousness Savior, has forgiven all our sins.

**Traditions**

The Paschal Candle

Paschal, meaning "having to do with the Passover," is a word associated with Easter. It was at the conclusion of the Jewish Passover Festival (the "Pasch") that Jesus rose from the dead and proved himself to be the true Passover Lamb whose blood removes sin and death (Ex 12; 1 Cor 6:6-8). The candle is lit for services during Easter to symbolize that Christ is alive and lives among us. The candle is also lit for Baptisms and funerals, reminding us of our resurrection to eternal life.

**Nain Paraments**

Easter

**Superfrontal:** *Alleluia* is taken from a Hebrew word which means, "Praise the LORD." It is a word of joy and gladness and most commonly used in the Psalms (e.g. 103). An ancient custom is to refrain from using the term during Lent in order to distinguish the penitential nature of that season from the joy and hope filled nature of the Easter season that follows. The vines and vegetation branching out from the *Alleluia* represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God's children, the branches (John 15:5).

**Lectern antependium:** The doves flying in front of the cross represent purity, innocence (Matthew 10:16), as well as spiritual and eternal rest (Psalm 55:6). When the dove has an olive branch or leaf in its beak, it is a symbol of hope and peace (Genesis 8:11). Each of these blessings and more come by Jesus' death on the cross and through the gift of faith (Galatians 1:3,4).

**Pulpit antependium:** The cross is formed by the Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P). Chi and Rho are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ (Χριστός). This ancient symbol represents Jesus and his office as the Messiah, the anointed King of kings and Savior of the world (Matthew 16:16). The vines and vegetation branching out from the cross represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God's children, the branches (John 15:5).

<sup>1</sup> Courtesy of "Planning Christian Worship: Year A". Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author and Editor.  
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