



ABOUT THE PROPERS

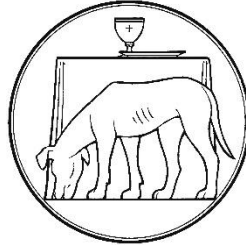
An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 15

August 20, 2023



God Wants A Church for All People

All of us—regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or social status—have the same problem of sin. And we all have the same Savior. Therefore, anyone who comes to Christ’s Church and cries out, “Lord, have mercy!” is more than welcome.

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 Reading¹ Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

The words of this lesson came to the mind and mouth of our Savior when he confronted the gross perversion of temple worship in Mark 11. Through Isaiah God told the world that God-fearing Gentiles would always have a place within his temple. Yet in his temple on earth, the religious leadership turned the court of Gentiles into a marketplace that robbed both man and God. Jesus cleansed it of both the commerce and corruption and quoted this lesson. The godly Gentiles described are the exact opposite of the Jews in Matthew 15. God in his grace calls the Gentiles into his presence and makes his Church a house of prayer for all nations.

Second Reading² Ephesians 2:13-22

This is the response that God wants to create by the proclamation of his pure Word: He wants to give us peace with him and then peace with each other as we see in Christ our all in all. That peace comes from the pure Word, not from compromise and error designed to gain peace. Christ makes us a people of God. Christ gives us an everlasting citizenship and homeland. Christ makes us individually and collectively into his temple, so that when we see one another we see the dwelling place of Christ. But that is only true to the extent that it has the Word of the apostles and prophets as foundation and Christ himself as the cornerstone from which every joint takes its measure and has its worth. It is all the fruit of his faithfulness to his Word, which calls forth our faithfulness and finds in it rich blessings indeed.

Gospel¹ Matthew 15:21-28

Note the context of chapter 15. The children of Israel—and especially their religious leaders—found nothing but fault in Jesus of Nazareth. The chosen people of God to whom belonged the patriarchs, the promises, the covenant and the temple, could see nothing in Christ but a breaker of man-made traditions. Jesus’ words to them could not be harsher. They were the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophesy: their outward rites and rituals belied an inward spiritual emptiness. The very people who should have been closest to Christ were most distant. So Jesus distances himself from them and goes to the Gentile land of ancient paganism, Tyre and Sidon. There he finds a most inexplicable thing. After leaving the land of God’s chosen people, Jesus finds a woman—a Canaanite woman—who received the Word of God and trusted in God’s promises in a way that shamed every one of the religious teachers. The male leaders of God’s people failed to recognize him, but behold! Look carefully! A woman, a Canaanite woman, cries out, “*Kyrie eleison!*” “*Lord, have mercy.*” And to whom does she cry? She called him “Lord, Son of David,” with all of its messianic implications. How amazing is the grace of God that chooses the weak and lowly things of the world to shame the wise and proud. Only twice are we told that Jesus called someone’s faith great. Both were Gentiles, and both exhibited a God-given trust in the Word and promises of God made man.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 67 D

“Let the People Praise You, O God.” Salvation, which comes through our Savior’s resurrection, is meant for all people and will fill all believers with joy.

Gospel Acclamation

Ephesians 2:13

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, in Christ you bring people from near and far into the fellowship of your church. Open our eyes to your saving plan and move us to embrace all who seek your salvation so that we may rejoice together at the banquet of your love; 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

855 “The Church’s One Foundation” (Samuel J. Stone, 1839-1900)

The hymn explores the doctrine of the Holy Christian Church, the bride of Christ. The first two stanzas focus on the invisible Church, believers who united to Christ by water and the Word. All Christians belong to this Church, whether living on earth today or with Jesus in heaven. The visible church seems to the world “oppressed,” “rent asunder,” and “distressed” (st. 4). Yet, she “ever shall prevail” and will be “the Church victorious” and the “Church at rest” (st. 4) because Jesus Christ is her one foundation (cf. Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10).

Church Year Season³

Sundays after Pentecost

After reliving the great events of the life of Christ, the worshipping Church spends half a year focusing on the teachings of Christ. The Church wears green during the season of Pentecost as the Spirit uses those teachings of Jesus to grow the faith of believers. The appointed lessons cover a great body of doctrine for faith and life.

Colors & Symbolism

Sundays after Pentecost: Green

Green is the color of life, refreshment, growth, and regeneration. Whereas the first half of the Church Year (the “Festival Half” or the “Half Year of Our Lord”) focused on the life of Christ during his earthly ministry, the emphasis for the second half (the “Non-Festival half” or the “Half Year of the Church”) shifts to the result of Christ’s work through the Word: the work of defining and creating faith, and inspiring its fruits. The theme of the Christian’s growth in faith (like healthy green plants) fills the season.

Minor Festivals

St. Bartholomew, Apostle (August 24)

Nain Paraments

Sundays after Pentecost

Superfrontal: When Isaiah was called to be a prophet of the LORD, two seraphs (a class of angels) appeared and called out to one another, “Holy, Holy, Holy” (Isaiah 6:3). The threefold repetition of the divine adjective emphasizes the infinite holiness of the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Some congregations count the Sundays in this season of the Church Year as the Sundays after the festival of the Holy Trinity, calling it the “Trinity season,” or the “Sundays after Trinity.” That is why most paraments for this season feature symbols of the Holy Trinity.

Lectern antependium: The equilateral triangle is one of the oldest emblems of the Holy Trinity. The three equal sides and angles represent the equality, unity, and co-eternal nature of the three persons of the Trinity. Though they are three distinct persons, they are of one essence as one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The three interwoven circles represent the three members of the Trinity and emphasize their unity and eternal nature; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are without beginning or end.

Pulpit antependium: At each point of the triangle (the significance of the triangle is explained above) is a nimbus, Latin for *cloud*. The nimbus appears as a circle, or a halo. In Christian artwork, nimbi surround the head of the Father (when he is depicted as a human), Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit (when he is depicted as a dove) to signify their glory and holiness. In artistic depictions of believers (saints), nimbi are placed around their heads to show that they have been made holy by God’s grace in Christ and through faith. The three fish in between the nimbi and that meet in the middle of the triangle signify Christians who are united to the Triune God by faith. Fish have come to represent the followers of Jesus because believers have been brought into the ship of God’s church through the efforts of those who proclaim Gospel (cf. “fishers of men” in Matthew 4:19).

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

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

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

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