



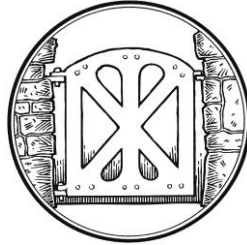
## ABOUT THE PROPERs

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



### Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 2, 2020



Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd and the Gate for the sheep

The Lord Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. His life is not taken from him, but he lays it down willingly, of his own accord, because he knows and loves the sheep. Jesus himself is also the Gate through which the shepherds must enter to get to their sheep. He is the one through whom the sheep must go in order to find good pasture. All who are truly shepherds are those who believe in him as their Savior and guide their sheep only by means of his Word. Thus, Jesus continues to love and serve his flock as the Good Shepherd and the Gate by the voice of his Gospel. He calls all people into the fold of his Church, so that there may be one flock and one Shepherd. His voice comforts our hearts and gives us courage to love one another.

### 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 6:1-9; 7:2a,51-60

Note the sharp contrast between true shepherds and false shepherds. The apostles’ care for Christ and his Church leads them to raise up more leaders to serve. See how these new leaders enter by the gate! Stephen holds to Christ no matter what the consequences! But how true were Jesus’ words about false shepherds: they come only to kill and destroy. With their words and teeth and rocks they testified to whom they belonged. Stephen was a martyr until the end, a witness of the Savior who waited to bring him to eternal pasture. Psalm 23 graces many funerals. How fitting that on this day when we hear of the Church’s first martyr, we sing Psalm 23 and remember Stephen, a true shepherd who now dwells in the house of the Lord forever.

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

1 Peter 2:19-25

Undoubtedly, the Church was rocked by the martyrdom of Stephen—Peter included. Yet Peter reminds us that not even suffering and tragedy can remove us from the care of our Good Shepherd. To be the gate for straying sheep meant that Jesus had to suffer for us. So Jesus did—willingly, silently—bearing the sins of straying sheep. Now Peter calls us to follow our Shepherd and Overseer, even if it means that we suffer for doing good.

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

John 10:1-10

In the three-year cycle of readings, Good Shepherd Sunday draws its Gospel lessons from successive readings of John 10. In this lesson, Christ only infers that he is the Good Shepherd. Rather, the great “I am” statement that sets the direction for this Sunday is “I am the gate for the sheep.” The preceding context of this lesson is crucial. After Jesus healed the man born blind, the Pharisees interrogated the man and his family about the healing. The Pharisees had already rejected Jesus as the Christ and were expelling from the synagogue anyone who confessed Christ. After throwing the man out of the synagogue, they verbally accost Jesus. This lesson is his answer to them. Jesus’ “I am” statements highlight the exclusivity of the Christian message. Christ is Savior, and there is no other! Jesus is the only gate for the sheep, and there is no other! When a man approaches the sheep, one only needs to see how he enters the pen. Does he use the gate, i.e., does he confess Christ as Savior? True shepherds use the gate, preach Christ, and love the sheep. False shepherds refuse the gate, reject Christ, and destroy the flock.

## Psalm of the Day

Psalm 23

Kings were often spoken of as shepherds, but the Shepherd-King of Israel is a monarch unlike any other. The Lord is our shepherd who provides for all of our needs in life and death.

## Verse of the Day

John 10:14

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me."  
Alleluia. Jesus spoke these words among of the Pharisees who were challenging his authority after he healed a man born blind. Those who believe in Jesus as the Christ know him as their Good Shepherd and enjoy the close, loving, relationship (the Good Shepherd knows his sheep) that can't be replicated by the false shepherds who try to steal the flock away from Christ.

## Prayer of the Day

O Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Good Shepherd who laid down your life for the sheep. Lead us now to the still waters of your life-giving Word that we may abide in your Father's house forevermore; for you live and reign with him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Hymn of the Day

375 "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" (Henry W. Baker, 1821-77)

The six stanzas of this hymn correlate closely to the six verses of Psalm 23. In this hymn, we contemplate the good care that our Good Shepherd gives us. Even as we often stray away from him "confused and foolish," and obviously do not deserve his mercy, God surrounds us with his gracious care. Truly his "goodness fails (us) never."

## 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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