



# ABOUT THE PROPERS

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



## Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 17

September 3, 2023



### God Wants a Church That Takes Up Its Crosses

Today Christ tells us that for him and for us, going God's way means death must come before life. He calls on us to deny ourselves and follow him on the way of the cross. Those words offend our sinful flesh and make our Old Adam cry with Peter, "Never!" They make us accuse God with Jeremiah. So today the Church prays for the never-failing mercy of Christ that we might avoid such wicked and harmful thoughts and instead be guided on the cross-laden path to salvation. Then, and only then, do these words of Christ cease offending our flesh and become a joy and delight for our heart.

### 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 Reading**<sup>1</sup>                      Jeremiah 15:15-21

The church is militant, and that means dying to self and the things of man. After a hard ministry, Jeremiah began to forget the things of God and concentrate too much on the things of man. The prophet Jeremiah struggled to carry the cross given him by his God. God's Word was a joy and delight to his heart, but Jeremiah's life had been anything but joy and delight. After bearing much persecution, God's prophet finally tired of self--denial. He wondered whether God's promises amounted to nothing, but were as failed and fruitless as a dried---up brook in times of drought. How does God respond? Does he remove the cross and persecution? No, he commands his prophet to repent and turn to God for mercy. Then, God will permit him again the privilege of carrying a cross in his name. God renews a promise that he had made at the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry. He didn't promise to remove the persecution, but to make Jeremiah strong enough to take it. May God make each of us bronze walls, certain of the fact that even as we follow the way of the cross--no, especially as we follow the way of the cross--our God is with us to rescue and save us, and redeem us from the grasp of the cruel. That knowledge renewed and restored Jeremiah to a ministry centered on the things of God as he served in the Church militant.

#### **Second Reading**<sup>1</sup>                      Romans 8:18-25

Paul teaches a lesson on longing for God's plans to come to fruition. Even creation groans for release from the bondage of sin and longs for the freedom of the children of God. One day, God will make all things new and return creation to the perfection with which he made it. Until then, we preach the Word that plants faith that looks for a better world to come and produces the fruit of hope that lets us wait for it patiently.

#### **Gospel**<sup>1</sup>                                      Matthew 16:21-26

Peter's great confession from last Sunday's Gospel showed the disciples understood who Jesus was. But though they understood his person, they still failed to understand his work. He had come to fulfill the redemptive mission for which he was anointed; he had not come to fulfill Israel's earthbound views of Messiah. He couldn't be the Messiah they wanted, and still be the Savior they needed. "He

must go..." Cross and death were necessary first. When Jesus spoke most clearly about his cross, Peter spoke Satan's words of compromise. Thanks be to God that our Savior saw the necessity of the cross before the crown! Now for Christian followers, cross comes before the crown as well. We die to self, but gain Christ, the Life.

**Psalm of the Day**                      Psalm 31 A

"In You, O LORD, I Have Taken Refuge." The faithful pray that God will deliver his own from trouble and encourage them to bear their crosses for his sake.

**Gospel Acclamation**                      Mark 8:34

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their crosses and follow me." Jesus means that we must deny our natural, sinful self, that evil nature within us which is dead in sins, which follows Satan, and which is under the wrath of God. Moreover, a follower of Christ must "take up his cross." To take up one's cross means willing to suffer for Christ's sake as his disciple. This is the way of one who has come to faith in Christ and wishes to be his follower.

**Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, your Son willingly endured the agony and shame of the cross for our redemption. Grant us courage to take up our cross daily and follow him wherever he leads; 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**                      694 "Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken" (Henry F. Lyte, 1793-1847)

**Church Year Season**<sup>3</sup>                      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.

**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).

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

<sup>2</sup> Courtesy of "Planning Christian Worship: Year B". Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

<sup>3</sup> Courtesy of "Planning Christian Worship: Year C". Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.

Clipart courtesy of "Ecclesiastical Art by Ed Riojas"