



ABOUT THE PROPERS

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Second Sunday of Easter

April 19, 2020



In the face of doubt, Christ gives us proof and peace

To the doubting disciples, Jesus gave certain proof that led to certain peace. Through the Gospel, Jesus gives the same proof to all people of all time. “Peace be with you,” said our Lord. Then he sent his people forth with this message of peace based on the proof of his resurrection.

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 Lesson¹

Acts 2:14a; 22-32

Jesus told Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” However, Jesus had good reason to let the disciples see him with their own eyes: they were to be his witnesses. When Peter stood before the crowds on Pentecost, we see the purpose for all the resurrection appearances of Jesus. He showed himself to them; he ate and drank with them; he let them touch his flesh and bones; he showed them his holy wounds. Jesus let them see and touch because they weren’t just looking for themselves. No, these eleven would be the witnesses of the bodily resurrection of Christ for all ages. Through the eyes of these eleven men, God gives his Church the gift of proof and the gift of peace.

Second Lesson¹

1 Peter 1:3-9

What brings more doubt into our lives than grief or sorrow? “Why did this happen to me?” “How could God let my loved one die?” “When will this sickness stop?” Grief and sorrow raise doubts about God’s love and God’s plan for our lives. Peter points us to the resurrection as proof of the living hope we have regardless of our outward circumstances. We may doubt when we face trials, but the trials themselves prove the genuineness of our faith. Faith clings to a Savior we have not seen, but love. And this unseen Savior gives us the inexpressible joy of proof and peace even in the face of doubt.

Gospel of the Day¹

John 20:19-31

Peace was one thing the disciples did not have. They had questions, concerns, and doubts. But they had no peace that Easter evening as they huddled behind locked doors. Jesus was dead—killed on a Roman cross—and now fear held them in its icy grip. They lacked more than peace of mind; the disciples also lacked any peace of spirit. Shame hung heavy on their shoulders. Grief and guilt weighed down their hearts. They had great doubts about their Lord, their lives, their salvation. But then Jesus came! In the face of all their doubts he offered proof that he was alive and sin was dead. Jesus showed them his nail-marked hands and riven side. These holy wounds are the proof positive that God is at peace with us. Thomas could be the poster child for our existential culture. No matter how many times the others told him about the resurrection, he set himself against them all. Thomas required more evidence. He must see him with his own eyes; he must touch the wounds—more than that, he must thrust his hand into Jesus’ side (cf. the coarseness of the Greek). Unless he got the evidence that he demanded, he would in no way ever believe it. What grace we see in Jesus! He comes again and repeats Thomas’ objections nearly word for word. Again, he gives the ultimate proof that he was alive, and sin was dead. Jesus gave the proof that led to peace for Thomas, peace that could only be found in his Lord and his God.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 16

We can trust our God for protection. The Lord is at our right hand, just as he was at David’s, so not even death can overcome us.

Verse of the Day

John 20:29b

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Alleluia. Ever since Christ's ascension, this is how the Holy Spirit brings souls to faith – through the preaching and hearing of his Word. Faith comes from hearing the message, and whoever believes has everlasting life.

Prayer of the Day

Risen Lord, you came to your disciples and took away their fears with your word of peace. Come to us also by Word and sacrament, and banish our fears with the comforting assurance of your abiding presence; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn of the Day

165 "O Sons and Daughters of the King" (Jean Tisserand, d. 1494)

This hymn is a narrative Easter carol; it begins with the Easter gospel from Matthew 28:1-10 (vv1-3) and concludes with the doubting Thomas story from John 20:19-29 (vv4-8). Because the narrative covers two Easter season Sundays, the verses can be divided as follows: for Easter Sunday morning, verses 1-3, 5, and 8; for Easter evening, verses 1-4 and 8; for the second Sunday of Easter (which usually includes the doubting Thomas story), verses 1 and 4-8.

Church Year Season ¹

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.

Minor Festivals

St. Mark, Evangelist (April 25)

St. Mark, the Evangelist, was a close associate with several of the apostles. He is believed to be identified as John-Mark of Acts and the cousin of Barnabas. Despite their earlier differences, he reconciled with Paul, who considered him "very useful...for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). Later, he worked in Rome (1 Peter 5:13), where tradition has it that he wrote his Gospel from St. Peter's sermons before founding the church in Alexandria and facing a martyr's death. He is remembered as the lion-hearted evangelist, depicted with his fellow evangelists as the four living creatures of Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4.

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).

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