



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 15, 2026



Exactly What I Need: Sight

The Fourth Sunday in Lent is traditionally known as “Laetare” Sunday. The Sunday derives its name from the Latin words of the Introit (i.e. the opening verses) of the day: “Rejoice (*laetare*) with Jerusalem and celebrate with her, all you who love her” (Isaiah 66:10 a).

Unbelief causes spiritual blindness. The person without faith in Christ is unable to see God, himself, and the world as they really are. That which is harmful, the unbeliever considers good. That which is good, he considers meaningless. He cannot see the consequences of sin, and he certainly cannot see the blessings that come through the Savior. In the Old Testament, the Lord God said that restoration of sight to the blind was one of the works of the Messiah. In his ministry, Jesus healed those who were physically blind. But even if our eyes work just fine, we still need Jesus to give us spiritual vision. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” Christ comes to shine his light into our darkened eyes that we might see him and live. Jesus meets our greatest needs. He provides sight for the spiritually blind.

First Lesson ¹

Isaiah 42:14-21

There are two kinds of spiritual blindness. One cannot see a way to salvation; the other sees the Way, but rejects him. Here, the Lord makes promises to both groups. To his helplessly blind children who cannot find a way out, the Lord promises certain deliverance and rescue. God himself will lead them to safety and will turn their darkness into light. But to those who reject the true God and look to idols, God promises judgment! Like the Pharisees in the Gospel, God promises that though they see, they remain spiritually blind—though they hear, they remain spiritually deaf.

Second Reading ¹

Ephesians 5:8-14

Notice what Paul says. He does not say that once we were in the dark and now we are in the light. No, once we were darkness and now we are light. Our conversion meant a total transformation of what we are, and therefore, it will lead to a total transformation of what we do. No longer producing fruits of darkness, we live in the light and shine the light into the sin---darkened corners of our world. With lines from an early Christian hymn, Paul shares Christ’s call to us and his promise for us. Once you were darkness, but now you are light. Live as children of the light. The difference between darkness and light is dramatic. The difference between believers and unbelievers should be equally so. They are as different as the nursery and the morgue!

Gospel ¹

John 9:1-7,13-17.34-39

In God’s plan there are no coincidences, and there is no karma. The man was born blind not because of his parents’ sin; nor was the man lying in Jesus’ path by accident. Both happened that the work of God might be displayed in the life of this man who was doubly blind: he could not see Jesus physically or spiritually. Christ opened the door to the latter by solving the former. It was no coincidence that this happened on the Sabbath. Christ had come not only to give sight to the helplessly blind—he also came to bring judgment on the Pharisees who should have seen him as the Messiah, but who refused to believe even what they saw with their own eyes. Yet for us, born in the blindness of sin, but looking to Christ as Savior, Jesus shines as the light of the world. We believe, and we worship him.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord Jesus Christ, by your almighty power you opened the eyes of the blind and showed yourself to them. Turn our eyes away from worthless things, and lead us to love you sincerely; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Psalm of the Day ⁴

Psalm 27 C

“The LORD Is My Light and My Salvation”

The Church sings Psalm 27 in services that emphasize the victory of the light of the Lord over darkness and unbelief; false gods and false doctrine. The psalmist makes many confident assertions of faith during days of trouble. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 27 is a psalm of thanksgiving, even though you might not see it at first. It is meant to comfort you when you encounter false teachers, which it calls false witnesses, people who blaspheme without being shy about it. For only good and foolish believers would testify about the promises of God with appropriate certainty and freshness, and daily we see that the more good and unlearned the people are, the more beautifully foolish and fresh they are to teach and preach to the entire world.”

Gospel Acclamation

Hebrews 12:2

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”

Hymn of the Day

515 “Christ Is the World’s Light” (Fred Pratt Green, 1903-2000)

Minor Festivals

St. Joseph, Guardian of Our Lord (March 19)

The few references in the first two chapters of St. Matthew’s and St. Luke’s Gospels provide the only information that we have about Joseph, the husband of Mary. He is described as a pious man of Davidic descent. God raised up Joseph to be the faithful guardian of his incarnate Son, Jesus. We pray that God gives us the same uprightness of life and obedience to his commands.

Church Year Season ²

Lent

The season of Lent leads the Church on a forty-day journey of repentance and prayer, of remembrance and renewal of our baptism. God calls to mankind: Return to the Lord! The journey begins with Ash Wednesday’s warning of mortality and culminates at the Service of Holy Baptism in the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday.

The Church’s Lenten worship is muted and quiet. For centuries, the Church has omitted her most jubilant songs of praise during this season of repentance (e.g. the “Gloria in Excelsis,” and the use of the word “Alleluia”) to reflect the somber nature of the season. Note, however, that the Sundays are designated as Sunday in Lent, not Sundays of Lent. The Sundays themselves are not considered part of the forty days, but are islands of refreshment in our Lenten walk.

Colors & Symbolism

Lent: Purple or Violet

These colors are a sign of royalty, self-discipline, sorrow and repentance. Purple also reminds us of sacrifice, not only because that colored clothing was very expensive (sacrifice of money), but also because in order to make purple clothing in ancient times, one had to dye the cloth in the blood of snails (sacrifice of life). Thus purple is a fitting color for the penitential season of Lent, during which we focus more intentionally on our sinfulness, and how our King and Savior, Jesus Christ suffered in our place and sacrificed himself on the cross to take away our sins.

Nain Paraments

Lent

Superfrontal: The lamb at the center of the parament represents Jesus, the Lamb of God who was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29; 3:16-17). The nimbus (halo) around its head reminds us that Jesus was a perfect sacrifice, even greater than the unblemished lambs required of the Passover meal (Exodus 12:5).

The palm branches remind us of Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem on the Sunday before he died (John 12:13). Palm branches were used in celebration of victory. Jesus entered Jerusalem to conquer sin, death, and the devil. Our crucified and risen Lord assures us in his Word that his victory is ours by faith (1 Corinthians 15:57).

[The significance of the crosses on the far left and right of the superfrontal are explained below]

Lectern & Pulpit antependia: The cross formed by four nails represents Jesus’ death by which he was nailed to the cross (Luke 23:33; John 20:25,27). The white sash around the arms of the cross symbolizes Jesus’ righteousness and his perfect victory over our enemies through his resurrection (Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23:54-57).

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

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

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

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