



# ABOUT THE PROPER

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



## Third Sunday in Lent

March 8, 2026



Exactly What I Need: Water

The Third Sunday in Lent is traditionally known as “Oculi” Sunday. The Sunday derives its name from the Latin words of the Introit (i.e. the opening verses) of the day: “My eyes (*oculi*) are always on the LORD, because he frees my feet from the net” (Psalm 25:15).

A person can survive a few days without water. Water is one of our greatest needs. This helps us understand what Scripture means when it says things like, “My soul thirsts for God” (Psalm 42:2). If one is separated from God, he is adversely affected. If he remains separated from God, he will die an agonizing eternal death. Everyone has a deep spiritual thirst. In our heart of hearts, we all long for everlasting life. Unbelievers try to satisfy that deep thirst with worldly things. Believers look to the One who has promised, “Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.” Jesus meets our greatest needs. He alone possesses the water that satisfies those who are spiritually parched.

First Lesson <sup>1</sup>

Exodus 17:1-7

The children of Israel contended with the Lord in the wilderness. They were so dissatisfied with God’s gracious provision that they wanted to stone Moses because they were thirsty. They didn’t deserve God’s help, but thankfully for them, the Lord doesn’t deal with us on the basis of what we deserve, but on the basis of his abounding grace in Christ. So God, in his grace, gave this underserving people water from a stone to remind them of his power and care.

Second Reading <sup>1</sup>

Romans 5:1-8

Christ the holy one, Christ the innocent, suffered for man the sinner, for man the guilty. The suffering was real. So too was its result: Christ suffering for sinners and in their place makes them innocent in God’s sight. Because we would never get the point or hang on to it, we suffer, too. Our suffering, whether from the purifying and purging hand of God or from his permission granted to the devil to scourge us as he scourged Job and Paul, helps us to despair of ourselves and our own strength and to live by faith in his suffering for us sinners. Reconciled we now cling to him confidently in suffering as we await the final manifestation of the glory of his resurrection. Therefore we embrace the suffering Savior and do not run away from our own suffering; both are gifts of grace for sinners who have become saints by virtue of Christ’s suffering and through faith in his merit.

Gospel <sup>1</sup>

John 4:5-26

Jesus defied popular convention by traveling through Samaria. He defied religious convention by asking a Samaritan woman for a drink. Why would Jesus even bother with this woman? She was a Samaritan and a habitual adulterer. Yet he had to be here (John 4:4), not because of convention or expectations but because of his mission to save all people. He had come to save the world, and that meant he had come for this woman, too. Not because she had lived a holy life—far from it! Only because of his grace. He used the mirror of the Law to incite within her a thirst for mercy that could only be sated by the living water of grace. A Samaritan...a sinner...and yet Jesus opens the flood gates of the water of life and reveals his true identity as the Promised Seed, the Anointed One, her Savior. He calls her to faith, and she believes and finds living water for her thirsty soul.

Psalm of the Day <sup>4</sup>

Psalm 95 A

“The Rock of Our Salvation”

The Church sings Psalm 95 in services that praise God as the source of the water of life and the rock of our eternal salvation. The psalm connects joyful worship of God with penitent listening to his Word. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 95 is a prophecy of Christ. The letter to the Hebrews cites a large portion of it as a prophecy of the time of the New Testament and the voice of the gospel. It educates and entices us to Christ and to the Word of God as proper worship. Christ had made us and is our shepherd, and we are his sheep.”

Gospel Acclamation

John 4:13,14

“Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.’”

Prayer of the Day

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word; 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

703 “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” (Horatius Bonar, 1808-1889)

Church Year Season <sup>2</sup>

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).

<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.

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