



ABOUT THE PROPERs

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Good Friday April 10, 2020



Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world

Darkness descended on the world that day as God draped Creation in the gloom of mourning. The Light of the world was flickering out; the great Prince of the heavenly kingdom was dying. Though guiltless, he was tortured and cursed; though innocent, he died among criminals. All of human history hinges on this day. Humbling himself before the will of the Father and the blood-thirst of men, the Son of God is slaughtered. Even worse than a shameful death, the Father must reject his own Son since he bears the sin of the world. Who could ever call this day “good?” Only those who know the truth of the cross and the new life Jesus’ death brings to believers. The horror of what our sins caused can only be overcome by the peace Jesus’ divine love has brought. “It is finished,” and eternal life is ours.

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

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

The Messiah would come as an ordinary man—but would suffer extraordinary punishment. This Man of Sorrows had done nothing wrong. Yet when we look at what happened on Good Friday, we considered him stricken by God and afflicted. It offends our sense of justice. It makes no sense that the innocent should suffer like this. It makes no sense that the Son of God would cry that his Father had forsaken him. What punishment ever brings peace? What wounds ever bring healing? Yet, it was God’s will to crush him, because God made him to be a guilt offering—the offering God prescribed when sin needed to be atoned, and restitution was possible. On Good Friday we see the fulfillment of every guilt offering. Restitution was possible, but it would be very costly. Only one thing could restore the holiness Man had lost and pay the ransom price necessary: Christ’s holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. It is true that he deserved none of this. Yet—in a divine and holy paradox—he did. He deserved it all. Because Christ picked up our transgressions and carried our iniquities. God laid on him the sin of the world. And so, when the Messiah hung on the cross, he suffered there as the world’s biggest sinner—as the world’s only sinner. God made the Sinless One to be sin for us, and the punishment that brought us peace was upon him; by his wounds we are healed.

Second Lesson¹

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Here is the high priest that we need: though tempted, he was sinless; though guiltless, he died as a guilt offering. Jesus, our high priest, offered himself as the sacrificial victim (Hebrews 7:27) to win our forgiveness. Gone is the throne of judgment. Christ founded a kingdom defined by grace where even sinners like us can approach God with confidence in his mercy. Our Savior showed himself perfect and so became the source of salvation for us. This Friday most certainly is Good.

Gospel of the Day¹

John 19:17-30

Scripture records the greatest event in history with a shocking paucity of words: “Here they crucified him.” Here was the culmination of God’s plan since the Garden: the innocent for the guilty, the sinless for the sinful. The participants in this divine act are carried along fulfilling prophecy after prophecy. Pilate with his sign, soldiers with their lots, hyssop and vinegar. They are all just one drumbeat after another, sounding the cadence of Christ’s advance in the battle for mankind. He fulfilled every promise that Scripture made. He fulfilled every act of righteousness that we needed. He suffered every bit of judgment we deserved. And when it was all fulfilled, when there was nothing left for him to do, he cried, “It is finished!” It was God’s plan; it was Christ’s mission; it was our salvation, and now it was accomplished. As he died, he won. Every thorn in his crown was becoming a shining jewel in his diadem of glory. The nails in his hands were being forged into the scepter of a king, and his wounds were clothing him with the purple of empire. He won! And all things are now made new. Humanity is redeemed, and from that moment on, the eternal fate of all men of all ages would be determined by the cross.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 22

The Savior's words from the midst of his sufferings on the cross emphasize his great love for us. For us he endured all this agony. Lord, have mercy on us.

Verse of the Day

Isaiah 53:4

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.”

Prayer of the Day

God Most Holy, look with mercy on this your family for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, be given over into the hands of the wicked, and suffer death upon the cross. Keep us always faithful to him, our only Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn of the Day

100 “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth” (Paul Gerhardt, 1607-76)

Church Year Season¹

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

Good Friday: Black

Black is the absence of color. It symbolizes mourning, sin, death – especially Jesus’ death on the cross wherein he suffered the wrath of God against sin for all mankind.

Nain Paraments

Good Friday

Lectern & Pulpit antependia: The Cross is the most recognizable symbol for Jesus, his Church, his sacrificial death, and his victory over sin and death. The apostle St. Paul used the image of the cross as a way to sum up the Gospel of God’s saving work through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18; Galatians 6:14). On the cross, God’s Son suffered and died to pay for the sins of the world. By God’s grace and through faith, we are cleansed by Christ’s blood (Hebrews 10:10).

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