



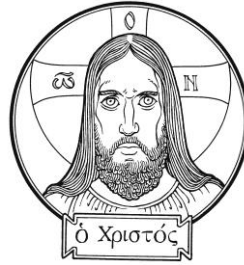
ABOUT THE PROPERS

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 6, 2020



The Church will stand forever

Nothing can keep our Redeemer from upholding his promised salvation. Neither false expectations nor the gates of hell, neither an Egyptian army nor a flowing river, not even the great tribulation of the end times will keep our God from preserving his Church. ¹

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 Lesson ¹

Exodus :2-8

To a people who wanted to know who God was, he responded, “I AM who I AM.” In this lesson he explains exactly what it means to be the LORD, the God of free and faithful love. It means that he is the living God who will preserve his Church forever. Why and how does he preserve it? God gives a striking answer by referring to himself 21 times in seven verses. The God of free and faithful love will redeem his people. And because our redemption is not based on our obedience, but on him and his faithfulness, his power and his grace, it is a covenant that cannot be shaken or removed. God will preserve his Church forever. How can we be certain? Look at the simple promise that brackets our lesson. “I am the LORD.”

Second Lesson ¹

Romans 11:33-36

This is the thirteenth in a series of sixteen lessons that run through Pentecost 17. Note the preceding context that falls outside of this lesson. Romans 11:25-27 remembers the covenant with Israel. Isaiah prophesied it. God fulfilled it. “This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” The living God preserves his Church forever by remembering his covenant. How can man respond to the illogical nature of grace? Only with awe; only with praise. Here Paul records a great doxology fit for our Redeemer God. The depth of his wisdom, his unsearchable judgments, his limitless grace in Christ—that truth is the rock on which the Church will stand forever. Worship him with awe! Praise him with joy!

Gospel of the Day ¹

Matthew 16:13-20

Who do people say the Son of Man is? That question is as applicable today as it was in Matthew’s Gospel. The question remains, “Who is Jesus?” As the disciples rattled off the popular misconceptions, one is struck by how illustrious that list actually was. There were no slouches in that group. But they didn’t even begin to compare with the truth. Many people today give similar answers: they call Jesus a teacher, a philosopher, the founder of a religion, an agent of change. Their answers miss the mark as widely as the answers of the people in the Gospel. Only disciples of Jesus, through the work of the Spirit of God, can confess him as he truly is. Could Peter’s answer be any better? *You are the Anointed One, the one set apart by God and prophesied by Scripture, the Promised Seed who would save us from sin.* But even more than that, Peter showed that the disciples confessed him to be the Son of the living God. *You, Jesus of Nazareth, are the Son of the God who is life and who gives life.* This living God is the hope of every sinful man ever since Adam in the face of death named his wife “Life,” because through her womb would come the Seed who is the Way, the

Truth, and the Life. Now here, in the flesh, stood the Son of the living God whose mission was to restore life to this world of death. This truth is the rock on which the Church stands. Because it stands on the rock and not on the pebbles of men who serve it, the Church will stand forever: its message is changeless; the ramifications of its work are eternal.

Psalm of the Day Psalm 34

The psalmist invites us to join him in praising God for the care and protection of those who trust in him.

Verse of the Day 1 Timothy 1:10b

“Jesus Christ has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Through his resurrection from the dead, Jesus has defeated sin, the devil, and mankind’s last enemy – death. Those who believe in him by the power of the gospel will no longer taste the sting of death. They like Christ are immortal.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day 536 “Lord Jesus Christ, the Church’s Head” (Johann Mentzer, 1658-1734)

Church Year Season¹ 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 teach us the characteristics of the Holy Ministry, the Christian, the Church, our God, and the Christian 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).

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