



ABOUT THE PROPERS

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



First Sunday after Christmas

December 26, 2021



The Almighty Takes on the Role of a Servant

The readings today give us a window into the boyhood years of Jesus. With an emphasis on the two natures of Christ, these words from Luke reveal Jesus' growth "in favor with God and men." Even as a twelve-year-old boy Jesus was zealous for God's Word. The holy family was on its annual Passover trip to Jerusalem with the rest of Israel. When the hoards left they assumed Jesus was with them. However, he was in the temple, his Father's house, to learn even more.

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 50:4-9

Jesus is the example of patient endurance in suffering. He listened to the Word of his Father and obeyed it perfectly. But no one suffered as he did. What was the outcome of his suffering? In his resurrection he was triumphant both in achieving the divinely ordained goal of our redemption and was delivered from all sorrow and pain. Those who now walk in darkness, i.e., who do not see the salvation and rescue promised by God, should nevertheless trust in his promise; for at the best time, when the goal is achieved, they will yet see that God is faithful to his Word. God kept his promise to his Son; he will not fail to keep his Son's promise to us!

Second Lesson¹

Hebrews 2:10-18

With the words of John 1 still ringing in our ears, the writer to the Hebrews lays out the loving purpose of God in Christ Jesus. It is fitting that the Author of Salvation should make his One and Only Son like those he came to save. As our brother, he knows our weaknesses and temptations. Yet, in service to God, he carried out the Father's will. Having overcome death and made atonement for our sins, he now claims us as members of his family.

Gospel of the Day¹

Luke 2:41-52

With an emphasis on the two natures of Christ, these words from Luke reveal Jesus' growth "in favor with God and men." Yet, very clearly, Jesus always understood his purpose was to carry out the Father's plan of salvation. Though he willingly he obeyed Mary and Joseph, more striking is his willing obedience to the Father's will.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 84

It is in his house that we enjoy that altar from which we are fed by God himself. The refreshment that comes from our fellowship with him in the gospel enables us to return to our daily lives trusting in his goodness and continuing grace (verses 11-12).

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, in mercy you sent your one and only Son to take upon himself our human nature. By his gracious coming deliver us from the corruption of our sin and transform us into the likeness of his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn of the Day

41 “Let All Together Praise Our God” (Nikolaus Herman, c. 1480-1561)

This hymn was part of a larger collection of hymns that the author based on the Gospel readings for each day of the Church Year. In it, he reflects on what it meant for almighty God to become a human being and what Jesus’ incarnation means for his people.

Church Year Season ¹

Christmas

The Christmas season celebrates the Incarnation of the Son of God. The eternal Word became flesh that he might be the Christ, anointed to redeem God’s people. God had to become man to live under the law and die in our place. Christ’s birth, then, is inextricably connected to his death: Good Friday necessitated Christmas. So great is the love of God that even though our sin required such a sacrifice, the Light of the world still descended into our darkness.

Colors & Symbolism

Christmas: 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.

Minor Festivals ¹

St. Stephen, Deacon and Martyr (December 26th); St. John, Apostle and Evangelist (December 27th); The Holy Innocents, Martyrs (December 28th)

In the fourth and fifth century, the Western Church established a triduum of martyr festivals on December 26, 27, and 28 to commemorate St. Stephen, St. John, and the Holy Innocents. Medieval commentators suggest that these three festivals reveal the triple kind of martyrdom endured by the faithful: St. Stephen, martyrdom in will and deed; St. John, martyrdom in will but not in deed; the Holy Innocents, martyrdom in deed but not in will.

The Name of Jesus & The Circumcision of Our Lord (January 1)

The child whose birth we celebrated last week came to fulfill the law. “When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Galatians 4:4, 5). Jesus needed to fulfill the law to establish the gospel. This fulfillment was to be perfect. Therefore, meticulous attention to the Lord’s command is revealed with the words, “On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.”

Traditions & Customs

Christmas

In addition to lighting the Christ candle at the center of the Advent wreath, decorating the church and house (including the Christmas tree), setting up the Nativity scene, engaging in charitable acts, and giving and exchanging presents. many families follow the tradition of gathering around on Christmas Eve or Day and reading the nativity story from Luke 2. Although many consider Christmas Day as the end of the Christmas season, this is not the case. Traditionally, celebrations and festivities began on Christmas Day (or Christmas Eve night) and continued throughout the Christmas season. The Christmas carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas* points to this. It was the practice to give/receive a gift on each of the twelve days; although some only celebrated during the ‘Christmas Octave,’ which was the eight days from Christmas Day through New Year’s Day.

Nain Paraments

Christmas

Superfrontal: “Immanuel” is Hebrew for “God with us.” This name for Jesus Christ was revealed to God’s people through Isaiah in a prophecy of the Savior’s birth (7:14). The angel Gabriel announced to Joseph in a dream that the child in the Virgin Mary’s womb would be that promised Immanuel – God who had come to be with us (Matthew 1:23) in order to save us. Sometimes the name is spelled *Emmanuel*, which is the Latin alphabet transliteration of the Hebrew pronunciation of the same name.

The vines next to Immanuel represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5).

Lectern antependium: *The Greek Cross*: distinguished by four arms of equal length.

Pulpit antependium: *The Celtic Cross*: similar to the Latin cross (†), but with a circle surrounding the center, which symbolizes the eternal nature of Christ and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him.

¹ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year C”. Joel J. Gawrisch, Author; Jonathan E. Schroeder, Editor.

² Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author and Editor.

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