



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



First Sunday in Lent

March 9, 2025



Open Door Policies

God's Surprising Strategies for Getting Sinners Back Home

One Stands; Everyone Else Sits

Normally in a family everyone must do their part. In God's family, he assigns and accepts the work of one on behalf of all. In God's house, his Son stands alone on the battle field against our enemies in our place. He fights vicariously. He fights victoriously. This week we see one man, Jesus Christ, stand against Satan. We simply sit and watch with eyes full of wonder and repentant faith. Because Christ fought that battle as one of us, he won that battle for all of us. The door to heaven stands wide open for those who believe in him.

First Reading³ 1 Samuel 17:4-11, 32-40, 45-49

One warrior from each nation stood and fought while everyone else sat. Against a powerful enemy an unlikely champion emerged. David's victory over Goliath is as much a spiritual victory as a military one, for it teaches us the battle is the Lord's.

Second Reading³ Hebrews 4:14-16

We have wandered from the way of the Lord to hoard and hide all that tempts. Yet the promise is sure: Jesus is our High Priest and has made atonement for our sin. Our High Priest has been tempted, even to the point of giving up his mission to redeem the world. Yet he was without sin. His perfect obedience is the source of our salvation. We need not fear divine retribution. We can come in repentant confidence relying on the grace of God. As the Father's sacrificial demands are placated we find welcome audience before his throne of grace to help us in our time of need.

Gospel³ Luke 4:1-13

It was the ultimate battle of Good versus Evil: the old evil foe battled the Son of Man while the fate of humankind hung in the balance. It almost seems trite to sensationalize the temptation of Christ in such language. Yet is this not the case? At any point, had Jesus failed to resist temptation, had he bowed, or jumped, or even simply made some bread...all would have been lost. But our Champion won the battle: Jesus the Christ holds the field, and the kingdom is ours forever.

Psalm of the Day⁴ Psalm 91 A "The Shadow of the Almighty

The Church sings Psalm 91 in services that focus on times of crisis, especially temptation or persecution. The lion and the snake (verse 13) are sometimes scriptural references to the devil, and the devil used this psalm to tempt Jesus (Luke 4:10,11). Martin Luther said, "Psalm 91 is a comfort psalm, it encourages us to trust in God through all distress and affliction. It is full of rich, comforting promises derived from the First Commandment. It is the second psalm (after Psalm 34) in which the dear angels are proclaimed to be our guardians, which is comforting and good to note."

Gospel Acclamation 1 John 3:8

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." The devil is the enemy of God and his people. But the believer need not fear, because the devil cannot lay hold of him. Through his death, Jesus, the Son of God, has crushed the serpent's head and destroyed his work. United by faith to Jesus, the believer shares in his victory over Satan!

Prayer of the Day

Mighty God and Father, our Lord Jesus walked into the wilderness to face the devil's temptations, but he did not succumb to Satan's lies or falter in his resolve to save the world from the prison of hell. Bolster our faith by his mighty victory that we may battle against the forces of evil with courage and confidence; 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

863 "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (Martin Luther, 1483-1546)

Luther's well known work has been nicknamed "the battle hymn of the Lutheran Reformation." Verses 1-3 of the original text were inspired by Psalm 46; verse 4 arose directly from Luther's persecution experience. The text expresses trust in God's protection amidst the battle that Christians wage against the devil and other evil forces – a battle won by Christ (v2). The closing line of the text provides much comfort: "Our victory is won; the kingdom's ours forever!"

Church Year Season²

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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