



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 22, 2024



The Need for Followership

Followers of Christ Are Humble Servants

Humility and pride are polar opposites. Pride exalts self at the expense of God and others. Humility exalts God and others at the expense of self. Pride is the essential vice, for it increases one's hunger for all other sins. Humility increases one's hunger for the forgiveness of sins found in Christ. The one who is proud demands to be served. The one who is humble is not content unless serving others. St. Augustine described it this way: "It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels."

As we see all Christ did to serve us, our hearts melt. Within us grows a Christ-like obsession to serve others, without counting the cost, without any desire to be repaid. Those who are in positions of Christian leadership understand that their leadership can only be achieved through service. For followers of Christ are humble servants.

First Reading²

Numbers 12:1-15

Of the many points that could be made from this lesson, the one that fits best with the context of this Sunday is the example of Moses in his imitation of the love of Christ. Moses' ambition is to reflect the love of God even to those who caused him to suffer. He didn't say to those who opposed him and now suffer at the hands of God himself: *See what you get? It serves you right!* Rather, even when his sister suffers in consequence of her sins against Moses and God, Moses prays for her.

Second Reading²

James 3:13-18

Gentleness and unselfish service are virtues that imitate Christ's own perfect gentleness and unselfish service to us. Selfish ambition and jealousy are from the devil; they not only add to the suffering of our fellow man, but also hinder the proclamation of the gospel. For where those virtues are not, the peace that comes from the gospel is crowded out by disorder and strife. Where those virtues are found among God's people, there the gospel of righteousness from him is sown in peace for the everlasting peace of those who hear and receive it. So let us resist the siren songs of *Me first!* and *It's not fair, the way they treat me and don't appreciate me.* Instead let God worry about justice while we worry about serving and then serving yet more. That is what Jesus did all the way to the cross, all the way to hell and back just for us!

Gospel²

Mark 9:30-37

How profound the love of Jesus! He is talking about his impending suffering and all the Twelve can think and talk about is the glory they expect to get out of it, and whether someone else might be getting more and therefore too much! Wouldn't you think that at least when he is describing his coming Passion he would get a little attention, just a bit of sympathy? But no! The perversity of the best of us is indeed deep and profound. But the love and compassion of the Savior is a thousand times deeper and more profound! He does not cast them off; he does not cast us off either. Instead he patiently demonstrates his love and bids us once more to be concerned only with receiving it and then imitating it.

Psalm of the Day⁴

Psalm 115 A

“Not to Us, O LORD”

The Church sings Psalm 115 in services that emphasize our humility in view of God’s grace. It was traditionally sung after the Passover meal. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 115 is a psalm of thanks. It praises God for being the true helping God, with all other gods identified as vain idols which cannot help us. We are taught not to look at how religious and respectable we are, but instead we look to the glory of God and to his name for our salvation.”

Gospel Acclamation

Mark 9:35

“Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Prayer of the Day

Mercifully grant, O God, that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, for without your help we are unable to please you; 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

767 “Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us” (Eliza S. Alderson, 1818-89)

Church Year Season¹

Season 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 cover a great body of doctrine for faith and life.

Colors & Symbolism

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.

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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